REPORT

BEFORE THE STORM

A review of how gender equality, disability, and social inclusion (GEDSI) is integrated into Anticipatory Action across Asia

Gender in Humanitarian Action (GiHA) Working Group and
Asia-Pacific Technical Working Group on Anticipatory Action (TWG-AA)

GENDER IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION
Asia and the Pacific

ASIA PACIFIC ANTICIPATORY ACTION

Cover photo: UN Women/Nguyen Duc Hieu

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the last decade, anticipatory action (AA) has gained interest and momentum across Asia. Anchored in risk-informed disaster management, AA enables the implementation of life-saving actions before a disaster, reducing potential impacts and averting humanitarian crises. AA in the region takes on a holistic and system-strengthening approach with a strong focus on strengthening national and local institutions and policy frameworks, which includes support to early warning systems, contingency planning, and readiness, alongside agreement on targeting, delivery mechanisms, and pre-agreed financing. This enables the effective implementation of actions in the short time available between a forecast and an event.

Governments across Asia and the Pacific have incorporated elements of anticipatory approaches into disaster risk management (DRM) policies and planning processes at national and local levels, to varying degrees. For example, the inclusion of forecast-based financing and action into Bangladesh's Standing Orders on Disasters and the drafting of new legislation on imminent disasters in the Philippines. However, despite government interest in AA, especially through National Disaster Management Authorities (NDMAs), it continues to be largely financed and implemented by international actors.

Extensive research on disasters and disaster response has shown that existing vulnerabilities experienced by women, girls, people living with disabilities, minorities, and other marginalized groups tend to be exacerbated during disasters. Gender equality, disability, and social inclusion (GEDSI) must thus be incorporated into AA policies, strategies, and programmes. The most effective way to do this is to ensure that GEDSI is mainstreamed into both the design and implementation phases of AA. This allows for context-sensitive programming that reduces the risk of aggravated impacts on marginalized groups during disasters. In some cases, GEDSI can also empower these groups and enhance their roles in their communities.

At the global level, the Sendai Gender Action Plan (GAP) highlights key gender objectives across the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction priorities. At the sub-regional level, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has developed a Framework on Anticipatory Action in Disaster Management, which puts forward a definition contextualizing the approach in the sub-region and an action plan until 2025, as well as a policy brief on Strengthening Gender Equality and Social Inclusion in disaster-responsive Social Protection and Anticipatory Action in ASEAN with recommendations on strengthening implementation of the framework. NDMAs have also made efforts to integrate GEDSI in disaster risk reduction at the policy and operational levels. Some good examples include the Government of Nepal's Strategic Action Plan for Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion in Disaster Risk Reduction and Management, and the Government of Pakistan's Roadmap Recommendations from Local Women and Girls.

This review and the supporting recommendations were commissioned by the UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific to support the Asia-Pacific Technical Working Group on Anticipatory Action (TWG-AA) and the Gender in Humanitarian Action (GiHA) Working Group. The study aims to examine how GEDSI has been integrated into AA in the region, drawing from case studies from Nepal, Bangladesh, the Philippines, and Viet Nam to provide concrete insights into how GEDSI and AA can be actionably integrated.

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ACRONYMS

AA	Anticipatory Action
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CERF	Central Emergency Response Fund
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DREF	Disaster Response Emergency Fund
DRM	Disaster Risk Management
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
DRRM	Disaster Risk Reduction and Management
EW	Early Warning
EWS	Early Warning Systems
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FbF/A	Forecast-based Financing/Action
GAP	Gender Action Plan
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEDSI	Gender Equality, Disability, and Social Inclusion
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
GiHA	Gender in Humanitarian Action
ID	Identity Document
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
MEAL	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning
NDMA	National Disaster Management Authority
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
SADDD	Sex, Age, and Disability Disaggregated Data
SOD	Standing Orders in Disasters
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
SOGIESC	Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Gender Expression, and Sex Characteristics
TWG	Technical working group
TWG-AA	Technical working group on anticipatory action
UN	United Nations
UNDRR	United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
WASH	Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme

Photo: UN Women/...

SECTION 1
KEY FINDINGS

AA demonstrates a strong foundational intent towards GEDSI-responsiveness through its focus on at-risk and marginalized groups. This inclusive intent provides a promising platform for equitable action. However, GEDSI considerations are not yet consistently embedded across all phases and often remain viewed as supplementary rather than integral.

1. Current AA monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEAL) systems offer a robust starting point for inclusive analysis through routine collection of sex, age, and disability disaggregated data (SADDD). Despite this, the limited and inconsistent inclusion of protection and gender-transformative indicators constrains the ability to fully assess the safety, reach, and differential impacts of AA interventions.

2. Partnerships with local organizations are a notable feature of AA, offering strong potential to advance GEDSI outcomes. However, opportunities remain to deepen the involvement of local and women-led organizations in planning and decision-making processes and to ensure their equitable access to both 'build' and 'fuel' funds.

3. Government frameworks for AA show encouraging signs of development and growing institutional engagement. However, GEDSI integration within these frameworks varies in depth and consistency, and the participation of ministries responsible for women and other GEDSI actors in key technical processes and working groups remains uneven.

4. Cash-based approaches are widely used in AA and have demonstrated positive results. However, the extent to which GEDSI considerations are systematically incorporated varies. Structural barriers, such as identification (ID) requirements, uneven access to mobile phones, and limited financial literacy, continue to affect the reach and inclusiveness of cash programming.

Women farmers in Coc Ly commune, Lao Cai, Viet Nam, receive hands-on guidance on resilient farming practices to anticipate climate risks and better adapt to climate change, thanks to a UN Women project supported by Chanel Foundation (2019–2021).

Photo: UN Women/Hoang Bich Thao

SECTION 2
RECOMMENDATIONS

Integrate GEDSI priorities into efforts on strengthening national policies and systems for AA. Advocate for the adoption of the Sendai GAP within national DRM and AA policies and ensure GEDSI actors, including women's ministries and local advocacy groups, have institutional roles within technical working groups (TWGs) and decision-making bodies.

1. Consult the Sendai GAP when developing AA policies and frameworks to ensure the inclusion of gender. The Sendai GAP provides guidance on how to mainstream gender equality into DRM practices, emphasizing the importance of empowering women and girls in disaster preparedness, response, and risk reduction, all of which align with the broader goals of AA.

2. Mandate that a defined percentage of 'build' and 'fuel' funds be allocated to local organizations and authorities, especially to women-led and inclusion-focused groups. These organizations should not only be funded but should also actively be recognized for their leadership in AA. Strengthening their skills, leadership, and influence is critical to faster, fairer, and more accountable AA.

3. Adapt funding and financing mechanisms to be simpler, faster, and more accessible for local responders, particularly women-led and community-based organizations. This includes streamlining administrative requirements, providing flexible funding modalities, and offering direct funding pathways wherever possible. Donors and intermediaries must prioritize building equitable partnerships with local actors to ensure real access to both 'build' and 'fuel' funds.

4. Increase the capacities of women-led and community-led organizations to actively participate in AA initiatives by providing targeted training, technical assistance, and mentorship; facilitating access to funding; promoting their meaningful inclusion in decision-making forums; and supporting peer learning and data skills development.

5. Simplify and demystify AA to make it more accessible and understandable to organizations that are mandated to promote gender equality and social inclusion. Simultaneously, support these organizations to better define their roles and value-add within AA and to develop internal procedures to adapt and facilitate their meaningful engagement.

6. Embed GEDSI-focused local actors in all phases of AA design and delivery by proactively engaging women-led organizations, organizations of people living with disabilities, youth groups, and other GEDSI platforms. Their engagement should result in context-specific contributions on AA needs and barriers of marginalized groups, the co-design of inclusive strategies, resource provision for community outreach and mobilization, and monitoring of GEDSI outcomes. Provide dedicated funding and leadership opportunities to ensure this participation is meaningful, resourced, and recognized.

7. Facilitate the integration of women's ministries and organizations specializing in GEDSI into national TWGs and communities of practice. Strengthen their AA and DRM capacities, facilitate engagement between TWG-AA and in relevant GEDSI platforms, such as GiHA working groups present at national and sub-national levels in countries, to strengthen contextualization and operationalization of GEDSI

in AA. Similarly, provide capacity strengthening on GEDSI in AA to key DRM and AA actors.

8. Enhance coordination with AA partners and local government in all phases and areas of response, including understanding AA frameworks, distribution processes, beneficiary lists, relief items, distribution locations, monitoring, early messaging, developing and running feedback mechanisms, available services, etc.

9. Make context-specific gender and protection analysis a prerequisite for AA programming. Conduct robust, locally led gender and context analyses before the design of AA interventions to define triggers, design anticipatory actions, and inform targeting criteria.

10. Deploy GEDSI advisors during both the 'fuel' and 'build' phases to strengthen advocacy from a GEDSI lens, strengthen GEDSI-responsive approaches, and negotiate for the collection and analysis of GEDSI data. Strengthen GEDSI risk assessments in communities in advance of crises.

11. Strengthen inclusive targeting mechanisms to reach those most at risk. Review and refine targeting strategies to prioritize individuals and households facing compounded vulnerabilities and actively correct for biases embedded in government social protection lists to ensure AA equitably reaches all marginalized people, ensuring that targeting criteria do not exclude women or vulnerable groups.

12. Strengthen early warning information dissemination approaches targeting those most at risk and ensuring information is shared in relevant, accessible, and preferred ways.

13. Ensure that all AA MEAL systems include specific protection and gender indicators to track how AA reaches and impacts different groups. Protection and gender indicators are critical to ensuring that programmes do no harm, strengthen accountability to affected people, and enable real-time learning and adaptation. All data collected must also be disaggregated by sex, age, disability, and other relevant markers.

14. Design cash transfer systems that actively promote financial inclusion by modifying delivery mechanisms to address barriers faced by marginalized groups, such as supporting account setup, expanding access to mobile services, and providing financial literacy training when setting up AA systems.

15. Ensure that consultations are conducted directly with women, girls, and other marginalized individuals to understand how best to support them in coping with disasters, identify their priority needs, determine effective delivery methods, and reduce the risks they may face.

16. Support local governments in developing advance lists of at-risk and vulnerable groups, and in creating plans to prevent duplicative relief distribution.

17. Encourage the work and participation of actors whose AA efforts prioritize the protection and well-being of women, girls, and other marginalized individuals, and draw learnings from initiatives that demonstrate specific gender- and protection-related outcomes.

18. Allow the pre-positioning of essential non-food relief items at project locations to be managed by women's groups leading preparedness activities. Strengthen gender-based violence (GBV) hotlines, one-stop crisis centres, and safety model training during preparedness activities.

SECTION 3
METHODOLOGY

This study is based on a literature review of existing publications on AA and GEDSI, both globally and in the Asia-Pacific region, as well as on qualitative data collected from four countries: Bangladesh, Nepal, the Philippines, and Viet Nam. These countries were selected for various reasons, including: (I) implementation of AA and/or development of protocols covering a wide range of hazards; (II) extensive experience with AA and significant progress in the number of protocols currently active or under development; (III) active engagement of national and local level stakeholders in AA through TWGs; and (IV) progress at the policy and institutional level in incorporating elements of AA systems.

TABLE 1 HAZARDS, FUNDS, AND COORDINATION BY COUNTRY

	Hazards covered	Available fuel funds	Coordination
Bangladesh	Floods, cyclones, flash floods, dengue, riverbank erosion, heatwaves, cold waves	Disaster Response Emergency Fund (DREF), Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), Start Network[1], UN and NGO project funds	TWG co-led by the Bangladesh Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the World Food Programme (WFP)
Nepal	Floods, landslides, heatwaves, cold waves	DREF, CERF, Start Network, UN and NGO project funds	Community of Practice[2] co-led by Mercy Corps and DanChurchAid
Philippines	Typhoon, floods, drought, volcanic eruption	DREF, CERF, Start Network, UN and NGO project funds	TWG with rotating leadership (including 4 thematic sub-working groups)
Viet Nam	Drought, typhoon, floods, heatwaves, cold waves	DREF, UN and NGO project funds	WG co-led by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the Viet Nam Disaster Management Authority (VNDMA)

1 For ease of reference, we use Start Network in this table. However, this includes various mechanisms under Start Network for AA: FOREWARN and DRF programmes in 3 countries (Bangladesh, Nepal, Philippines), Start Fund Bangladesh, Start Fund Nepal.

2 The Community of Practice was initially established in 2021 by Nepal Red Cross Society and UNICEF; and later handed over to Mercy Corps and DanChurchAid in September 2023. Leadership is on a rotational basis.

This study, commissioned by UN Women in 2024, seeks to understand how GEDSI is being mainstreamed into AA in the four countries and to provide recommendations for more cohesive inclusion moving forward. An AA expert consultant was engaged to conduct interviews and focus group discussions with key AA actors, including representatives from national and local governments, disaster management committees, national Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, international and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society organizations (CSOs), United Nations (UN) agencies, and communities. In total, 36 interviews and three focus group discussions were conducted with 68 people, 42 of whom were women. Primary data collection occurred in person and remotely between July and November 2024. Coordination and engagement with partners were facilitated by UN Women and AA partners. In Bangladesh, UN Women's local partner, the Association for Alternative Development, and CARE supported setting up interviews and group discussions with local government officials, community members, and volunteers in Kurigram. In the Philippines, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Oxfam, and Good Neighbours supported setting up meetings with local authorities and communities in Eastern Samar.

TABLE 2 NUMBER OF ORGANIZATIONS MET WITH IN EACH COUNTRY

	Bangladesh (Dhaka and Kurigram)	Nepal (Kathmandu and Kailali)	Philippines (Manila and Eastern Samar)	Viet Nam (Ha Noi and Ca Mau)
Government	2	3	5	2
Red Cross / Mass organization	2	2	–	1
CSOs	–	–	–	–
Local NGOs	2	10	1	–
International NGOs	2	2	2	1
UN agencies	3	6	2	2
Networks / Platforms	1	1	2	1

SECTION 4
SETTING THE SCENE: COUNTRY OVERVIEWS

4.1 BANGLADESH

Bangladesh experiences a wide array of hazards, including floods, cyclones and storm surges, landslides and river erosion, and heatwaves. Approximately 80 per cent of the country is a floodplain (START Network 07/2021). Disaster-related loss in Bangladesh accounts for approximately 1.3 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics 2020). Disasters are occurring with increasing frequency, intensity, and scope.

In 2015, the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society and German Red Cross started working on AA through a few small-scale pilot initiatives. Since then, the number of organizations implementing AA has increased, leading to the establishment of a TWG in 2019 to better coordinate efforts, advocacy, and technical support for the government. The Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, international and local NGOs, and UN agencies focus on a wide range of climate-related hazards, developing and testing early action protocols for cyclones, riverine floods, flash floods, landslides, and heatwaves. These efforts have allowed for anticipatory response prior to disasters, with protocols activated four times between 2019 and 2024 (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) 28/02/2025; United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) 05/06/2019; START Network 07/2021; CERF 03/2025; Food Security Cluster 2020).

Bangladesh has the highest number of early action protocol activations implemented by the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC 28/02/2025), UN agencies funded through the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), and Start Fund Bangladesh. This includes key European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO)-funded consortia led by CARE and Action Contre la Faim. In 2019, the Government of Bangladesh included Forecast-based Financing/Action (FbF/A) into its Standing Orders on Disasters (MODMR 2019), which led to the establishment of an intergovernmental taskforce on FbF/A led by the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief. The Government of Bangladesh has also taken significant steps to review the status of early warning systems and is developing a national framework/roadmap under the Early Warnings for All (EW4All) initiative (START 12/2024).

GEDSI mainstreaming in Bangladesh remains a developing area, despite being recognized as a priority. GEDSI efforts appear to be primarily during the targeting and distribution phase of AA (WFP 02/07/2020; IFRC 05/06/2019). Challenges remain in systematically mainstreaming GEDSI across all stages of AA design and implementation. Continued efforts are needed to properly embed GEDSI considerations throughout the full AA cycle.

4.2 NEPAL

Nepal is highly susceptible to a range of hazards, including floods, glacial lake outbursts, cold waves, landslides, and earthquakes, among others (Anticipation Hub accessed 08/06/2025). According to the Risk-informed Early Action Partnership (REAP), water-induced disasters cause an average of 300 deaths per year and wipe out almost 1.5 per cent of the country's GDP annually. Disasters are occurring with increasing frequency, intensity, and scope.

Most of Nepal's AA frameworks are focused on floods and cold waves. These include localized initiatives such as the development of five municipal Early Action Frameworks in high-risk municipalities in the Karnali and Babai basins, including Kailali district (IFRC 15/06/2023). These frameworks use an Early Action Matrix, which sets forecast triggers and defines roles and responsibilities among the Red Cross, local governments, line ministries, and technical partners (Anticipation Hub 2022). The specific lead times for action are determined by a two-stage trigger system: a 'readiness' trigger, based on a seven-day forecast, which activates preparedness measures; and an 'action' trigger, activated within three days of the anticipated disaster. This approach was piloted in 2022 and again in 2023, with new forecast thresholds (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs 28/06/2023). The Government of Nepal has set out plans for developing a national framework on AA and set up an AA clinic to create a space to develop an understanding and contextualization of AA in the country.

GEDSI is considered and mainstreamed into some of Nepal's AA design through protection, gender, and inclusion in early actions such as early warning, evacuation, shelter, referral mechanisms, multipurpose cash assistance, and more. Forecast triggers are also protection-sensitive, intersectional indicators are included in vulnerability analysis, and GEDSI focal points have been appointed in municipal offices (Anticipation Hub 2022; UNDRR 23/03/2022).

4.3 THE PHILIPPINES

The Philippines experiences a wide array of hazards, including tropical cyclones, floods, landslides, droughts, and volcanic eruptions. Anywhere between 8-9 tropical cyclones hit the Philippines each year (PAGASA accessed 08/06/2025). The Philippines loses approximately 3 per cent of its annual GDP each year because of disasters (Swiss Re 28/02/2024). Disasters are occurring with increasing frequency, intensity, and scope.

AA in the Philippines has focused predominantly on tropical cyclones and floods. The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Law of 2010 guides disaster policy, mandating the establishment of disaster risk reduction and management offices at the city, municipal, and provincial levels. Each office is required to "formulate and implement a comprehensive and integrated local disaster risk reduction and management plan," which details the use of local disaster risk reduction and management funds.

In 2017, the Philippines Red Cross began working with its partners on developing early action protocols for floods and cyclones (Anticipation Hub 08/06/2025). Since 2015, the multi-agency TWG has brought together several government and humanitarian agencies to build consensus, align triggers, and standardize support. The group is currently co-led by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD). As a first of its kind, a significant bill passed by the Senate in June 2025 will help embed AA into law by opening access to local disaster risk reduction and management (DRRM) funds and enabling legal authority for pre-emptive action ahead of forecasted disasters (Philippines Senate 09/06/2025).

GEDSI is starting to be integrated into AA in the Philippines, with AA consulting with community-based and women's groups during the development of early action protocols and the targeting of women-headed households and people living with disabilities. The integration of protection is also emphasised, including gender-sensitive water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) facilities, lighting, and secure access for people living with disabilities (Plan International 07/2024).

4.4 VIET NAM

Viet Nam is susceptible to tropical cyclones and storms, flooding, landslides, droughts, and salt intrusion, experiencing up to six tropical cyclones every year, which can cause extreme flooding (FAO 2023). In the last 30 years, Viet Nam has, on average, lost 400 people and 1 to 1.5 per cent of its GDP annually to disasters (VietnamNet 15/10/2021).

In 2022, the Viet Nam Disaster and Dyke Management Authority (VDDMA) began developing AA systems and protocols, in collaboration with FAO, Viet Nam Red Cross, German Red Cross, CARE, and other partners.

These included provincial consultation workshops to develop AA processes, including hazard calendars, vulnerability information, early warning systems, standard operating procedures, and the development of anticipatory activities, to guide anticipatory response for typhoons, floods, drought, and saltwater intrusion (FAO 10/03/2022; VNDMA 24/06/2022). Collaboration between the government and humanitarian actors has ensured that AA is aligned with the DRM framework in Viet Nam, particularly the Community-Based Disaster Risk Management programme and structures at the local level. Furthermore, Viet Nam's leadership on AA has helped catalyze its adoption at the sub-regional level across ASEAN Member States. In 2023, Viet Nam led the drafting of the 'Ha Long Declaration on early action in disaster management,' which was adopted with high approval from member countries (MAE 13/10/2023; ASEAN 30/10/2023).

GEDSI principles are mainstreamed into Viet Nam's AA approach through the Inclusive and Gender-Responsive Anticipatory Action initiative implemented by CARE, Plan International, and World Vision, with a dedicated gender expert working alongside the Viet Nam Disaster Management Authority (VDMA) to develop community-led and inclusive AA systems (UNDRR 27/05/2022). Because national protocols are still in the early stages of development, GEDSI has not yet been fully incorporated, but the opportunity to mainstream GEDSI throughout its very early stages is available in Viet Nam.

At the evacuation shelter, participants receive guidance on safety measures, gender-sensitive regulations, and gender-based violence prevention during a disaster preparedness drill organized by UN Women, the Department of Dike Management and Disaster Prevention, and the Hoa Phu Commune Disaster Prevention and Search and Rescue Command, with support from the Governments of New Zealand and Sweden.

Photo: UN Women/Nguyen Minh Duc

SECTION 5
UNDERSTANDING GEDSI IN AA

AA and GEDSI are mutually reinforcing. Applying a GEDSI lens to AA enhances its precision and effectiveness by ensuring that anticipatory actions are grounded in the lived realities of those most at risk. In essence, GEDSI integration into AA ensures that actions are inclusive, context-specific, and responsive to the needs of all categories of people. At the same time, AA offers a powerful entry point to advancing GEDSI priorities precisely because it intervenes ahead of shocks, when vulnerabilities and protection risks can still be mitigated. Together, GEDSI and AA shift the focus from a reactive response to proactive resilience.

GEDSI can provide AA with analytical tools and can strengthen its technical and ethical grounding. GEDSI integration ensures that actions are designed to meet needs specific to women and vulnerable groups, such as caregiving responsibilities, mobility barriers, safety concerns, and access to technology and resources (e.g., ID, mobile phones). For example, integrating GEDSI in the design phase of AA interventions can help meet real-life needs of at-risk groups, such as dignity kits, anticipatory cash transfers timed with caregiving responsibilities or market access, and safe shelters for women and girls. Such actions, in turn, will increase uptake and effectiveness of AA, as more people are likely to act on early warnings and benefit from preparedness measures when they align with their realities.

5.1 GEDSI TERMS

Gender equality, disability, and social inclusion (GEDSI) refers to two intertwined concepts that speak to improved access to opportunities, rights, and resources for all people, including women, men, children, people living with disabilities, people who are less economically stable, and other people who tend to be excluded. Also sometimes referred to as GESI (gender equality and social inclusion), GEDSI is used in this report because it explicitly includes people living with disabilities.

Gender equality is defined by UN Women as the equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities of women, men, girls, and boys. It means women's and men's rights, responsibilities, and opportunities do not depend on whether they are born male or female, and implies that the interests, needs, and priorities of women, men, boys, and girls are taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity of different groups. Gender equality is a fundamental human right and a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable, people-centred development.

Gender mainstreaming is defined by UN Women as the process of assessing the implications of any planned action, including legislation, policies, or programmes for women, men, girls, and boys. It is also a way to incorporate women's, men's, girls', and boys' concerns and experiences into the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies and programmes to ensure that they all benefit equally, and that gender inequality is not perpetuated. Gender mainstreaming is not a goal or objective in itself; it is a strategy for implementing greater equality for women and girls in relation to men and boys. The ultimate goal of gender mainstreaming is gender equality.

Gender-transformative programming and policies are those which lead to a positive transformation in gender relations. This refers to both the processes and the outcomes, i.e., the approaches, practices, interventions, or other measures, and the transformation or change they

produce that leads to positive gender equality results. It seeks to shift structures and power dynamics that underlie gender-based inequalities, discrimination, and exclusion. Gender-transformative programming differs from gender-responsive programming in that it seeks to address the root causes of gender-based discrimination, such as gender norms, stereotypes, sociocultural attitudes, behavioural norms, and power relations that reinforce inequality, discrimination, and exclusion.

Social inclusion is defined by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs as the process of improving the terms of participation for people who are disadvantaged on the basis of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, economic status, or other factors. It emerged from concerns about social exclusion. Social inclusion is both a process and a goal, requiring the removal of barriers to participation and the adoption of active, inclusionary steps to facilitate such participation.

Although there are no universally agreed-upon criteria for the integration of GEDSI into development or DRM processes, existing GEDSI-transformative frameworks highlight a set of key areas which can be applied to AA and to this study. These are:

I) *Identification or recognition* of gender and inclusion differences in needs and capacities, including analysis of the barriers faced and opportunities available to various groups,

II) *Systematic integration* of different genders and social groups in the strategy, design, planning, budgeting, implementation, and monitoring processes; and

III) *Access* to results, i.e., resources and services, by different genders and social groups.

5.2 ANTICIPATORY ACTION

Anticipatory action (AA) is defined by the Grand Bargain caucus as "acting ahead of a predicted hazardous event to prevent or reduce humanitarian impacts before they unfold. This works best when activities as well as triggers or decision-making rules are pre-agreed, and decisions are made to guarantee fast release of pre-agreed funding". While AA takes different forms, caucus members agree on three common parameters:

- The objective of AA is to reduce the potential human suffering and impacts on lives and livelihoods as a result of forecastable hazard(s) while protecting development gains;
- Anticipatory actions are designed based on forecasts or predictive analyses of when and where a hazardous event will occur; and
- Anticipatory actions are implemented before a hazardous event occurs or before the most acute impacts are felt.

The TWG-AA builds its approach on similar definitions, combining "impact-based forecasting, anticipatory (or early) actions, ex-ante financing, and efforts to strengthen countries' operational capacity to implement actions ahead of a hazard." The TWG-AA has invested in initiatives to advance awareness, understanding, and scale-up of AA at the country and regional levels. This includes the development of several key documents to support progress toward common objectives and efforts on AA: the regional roadmap, technical standards, and a training module.

The ASEAN Framework on Anticipatory Action in Disaster Risk Management uses the same definition, but divides AA into three key building blocks:

i) Risk analysis, forecasting, and early warning;

ii) Design, planning, and operationalization of anticipatory actions; and

iii) Financing to enable anticipatory action

Each of these building blocks is necessary to develop an effective AA system. In practice, the progress and development achieved in each area vary depending on investment, technical expertise, resources, and priorities. Actions to develop each building block can take place at different times and to different degrees; they do not need to occur consecutively.

AA thus refers to the mechanism that releases financing and enables the implementation of pre-agreed actions ahead of extreme natural events. This includes strengthening and, where needed, developing national systems and mechanisms that incorporate pre-agreed actions and financing to be implemented when a trigger is reached. Effective AA requires these systems, including pre-agreed plans, pre-identified partners and implementing agencies, and pre-determined roles and responsibilities, to be in place well ahead of time.

IMAGE 1 ASEAN SECRETARIAT'S ANTICIPATORY ACTION BUILDING BLOCKS

Risk information, forecasting and early warning systems

- Weather forecasts
- Seasonal outlooks
- Impact analyses
- Situational monitoring
- Pre-disaster risk assessments

Planning, operations and delivery

- Standard Operating Procedures
- Menu of potential AAs
- Sectoral AA plans
- AA Protocols in contingency plans

Pre-arranged finance

- Dedicated AA funds in DRM budgets and contingency plans
- DRF instruments include AA and link to AA triggers/protocols

Photo: UN Women/Ploy Phutpheng

SECTION 6
A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR GEDSI-RESPONSIVE AA

Because women struggle more than men to access livelihood opportunities in many contexts, and because women often have less decision-making power than men, gender-blind AA risks unintentionally excluding women and other marginalized groups. As noted by FAO, "simply acting early does not guarantee that all benefit equally from anticipatory actions." Inclusion must be embedded into AA to ensure the principle of "do no harm" is systematically applied and that those most at risk of harm are protected from the impacts of disasters. This requires "a nuanced and context-specific understanding of the ways inequality impacts vulnerability and resilience," including understanding how different social categories intersect to exacerbate individual and/or collective vulnerability.

The importance of inclusion and its strong links to improved protection outcomes is reaffirmed by the Anticipation Hub and REAP. That said, GEDSI does not stop at considering and including different people's needs and experiences. Sustainable AA requires the full inclusion, involvement, and engagement of all stakeholders, including community members, from the very beginning, resulting in improved accountability and stronger ownership of AA. The inclusion of communities in building AA has also been emphasized by FAO, IFPRI, and the Anticipation Hub.

ASEAN has also developed the Policy Brief on Strengthening Gender Equality and Social Inclusion in Disaster-Responsive Social Protection and Anticipatory Action in ASEAN with recommendations on strengthening implementation of the AA in disaster management framework through collection of gender-, age-, and disability-disaggregated data; mainstreaming GEDSI into planning and delivery; pre-arranged financing; monitoring and evaluation; and institutionalization of multisectoral, concerted efforts.

This study examines how GEDSI is applied to each of the AA building blocks in different contexts. Current AA frameworks have five key areas: risk analysis, forecasting, and early warning; planning, design, and operationalization (which includes targeting); MEAL; financing; and policy and institutionalization. Within these areas, GEDSI-related priorities are identified, including the identification of needs and barriers faced by different groups, systematic integration of GEDSI across processes, and promoting equitable access to AA results. The key areas of focus for AA and GEDSI are presented as separate, but parallel. Protection, gender, and inclusion continue to be viewed as an add-on as opposed to a central part of AA. Additionally, the delivery of AA via women-led organizations is sometimes seen as less important, with UN agencies preferring to work with well-established, male-dominated humanitarian organizations. Applying a GEDSI-focused or gender-transformative approach to AA is needed to ensure that anticipatory actions are more inclusive, effective, and better utilized. This is why the Anticipation Hub also has a dedicated Working Group on Protection, Gender, and Inclusion in Anticipatory Action.

IMAGE 3 ADAPTED CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR GEDSI-RESPONSIVE AA

As a result of this study, some adaptations have been made to the current conceptual framework. These adaptations introduce direct linkages between each GEDSI area of focus and the five building blocks of AA. These linkages show that GEDSI is neither separate nor just an add-on component, but that GEDSI must actively inform and be integrated into every component of AA. This adapted framework thus promotes a stronger, systematic integration of GEDSI throughout AA processes rather than treating GEDSI as a background consideration.

IMAGE 3 ADAPTED CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR GEDSI-RESPONSIVE AA

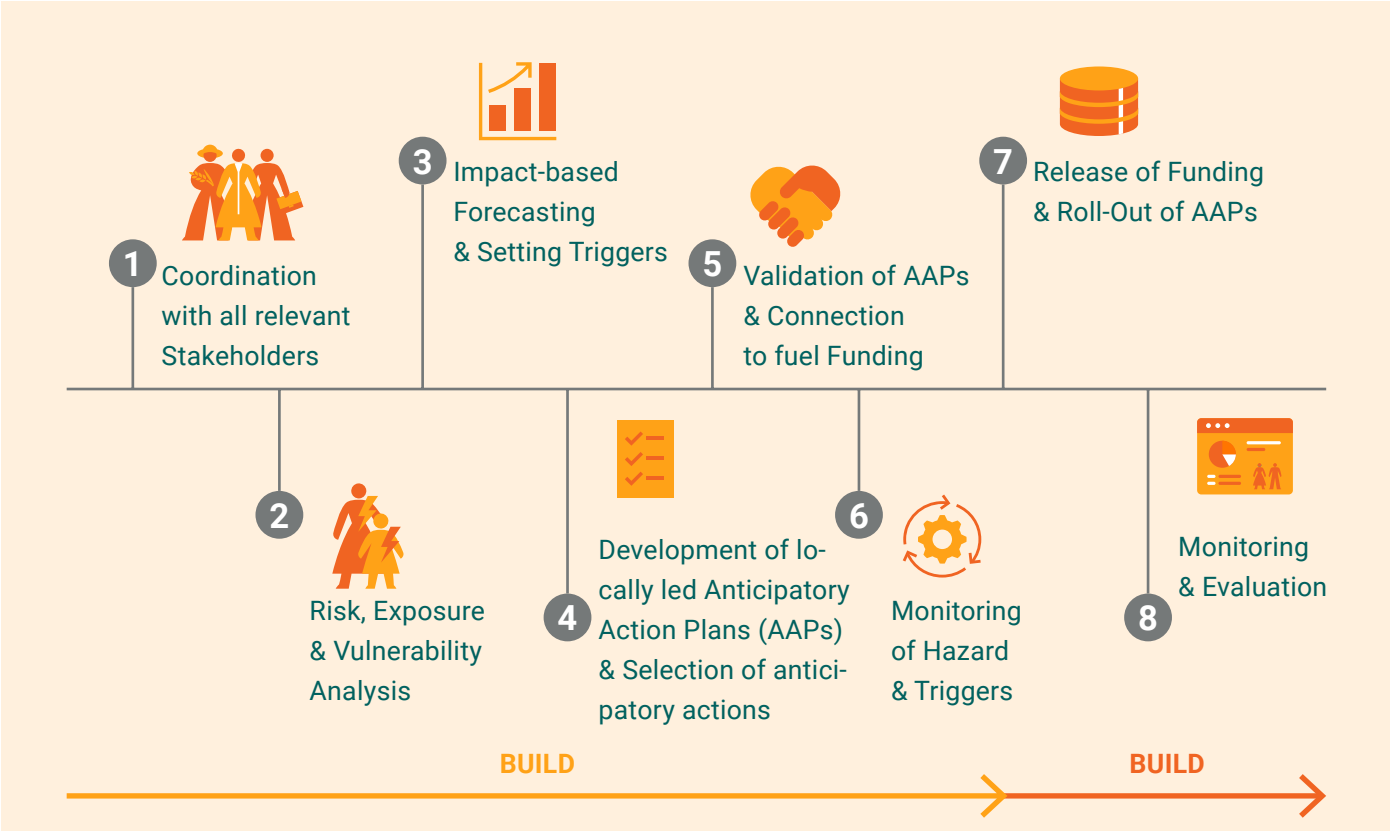
Photo: UN Women/Ploy Phutpheng

SECTION 7
THE INCORPORATION OF GEDSI IN THE PLANNING, DESIGN, AND OPERATIONALIZATION OF AA

Field visits and a review of the limited literature on GEDSI in AA found that GEDSI is integrated into AA processes to varying degrees. Most commonly, GEDSI is incorporated into actions that either target vulnerable groups through AA systems or by tailoring anticipatory actions specifically to address the needs of vulnerable groups. Most organizations engaged in AA target households with multiple vulnerabilities, including women-headed households and households with older people, people living with disabilities, and/or young children. The section below delves into current practices integrating GEDSI into AA, focusing on planning, design, and operationalization.

Most organizations follow similar steps when developing an AA mechanism. Broadly, these steps are divided into two parts: first, the 'build' actions to develop the AA mechanism; and second, the 'fuel' actions, which are implemented when a predicted disaster is likely to occur. Image 3 captures the key steps in developing and implementing AA. The key steps relevant to GEDSI-responsive AA are elaborated upon in this section.

IMAGE 4 IMAGE 4: WELTHUNGERHILFE'S STEPS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AA



7.1 SETTING THE OBJECTIVE FOR GEDSI-RESPONSIVE AA

When starting to develop an AA system, organizations set their objectives by focusing on specific hazards (e.g., floods, droughts, typhoons, heatwaves, etc.), depending on the availability and reliability of early warning systems and the sectoral focus of their anticipatory actions. For example, UNICEF may focus on WASH issues while FAO may choose to address food security, agriculture, and livelihood issues. Sometimes, the selected sectors are already inherently GEDSI-focused, like protection, while others require dedicated GEDSI mainstreaming and considerations. Whatever sectoral focus, however, a GEDSI-responsive AA system is imperative to address the needs of diverse groups when preparing for and responding to a disaster. This includes understanding which groups of people are disproportionately affected during disasters and how, along with which groups and individuals are at higher risk of different disaster effects. Often, these include women, children, older people, people living with disabilities, people with diverse SOGIESC, and other minority groups (be they religious, linguistic, ethnic, tribal, or other). Knowing who is most likely to be impacted, alongside how they may be impacted, defines the kind of anticipatory actions taken. For example, an organization may decide to address women and girls' sexual and reproductive health (SRH) needs or adaptive shelter needs for older people and people living with disabilities likely to be displaced in floods.

It is important to note that many organizations, especially national NGOs, women-led organizations, and community-based organizations, try to address multiple needs of at-risk communities through locally led or community-based AA. Locally led AA should target marginalized groups and individuals during the development stage of an AA system. This mainstreaming of GEDSI into locally led AA is an excellent opportunity for the integration of GEDSI into the final system and activities. The Working Group on Locally Led AA has developed guidance and resources for further information.

7.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTEXT AND GENDER ANALYSIS TO TAILOR AA FOR TARGETED GROUPS

Effective AA depends on a deep understanding of the diverse contexts in which hazards occur and how different groups experience risks and vulnerabilities. Gender, disability, age, and other social and cultural factors all shape exposure to shocks and the individual's capacity to anticipate, respond to, cope with, and recover from disasters. Without robust context and gender analysis, AA risks failing to reach those most in need of support or reinforcing existing inequalities. Evidence about who is most vulnerable to risks and why is critical to ensuring that AA is data-driven, equitable, and impactful. This requires not only an understanding of *who* is at risk, i.e., which individuals and/or groups are most impacted in disasters, but also *how* they are impacted, and how they usually cope with impact. Furthermore, this process should also seek to identify the root causes of this vulnerability, which can be attributed to a range of factors, such as gender-, race-, religious-, age-, or ethnicity-based discrimination, exclusion from decision-making, lack of access to information, or barriers to accessing services. Understanding the root causes of vulnerability allows for both responsive and transformative adaptations that address the specific needs of marginalized groups.

Integrating context and gender analysis into the design phase of AA will result in more relevant, targeted, and inclusive interventions. For example, adaptations to EWS to ensure they are accessible to everyone, combined with adaptive/inclusive evacuation plans, would ensure no one is left behind. Context and gender analysis, including a conflict sensitivity component ensuring that responders do not worsen conditions or reinforce existing inequalities, should be embedded throughout the AA process, from risk analysis to monitoring and evaluation. This would ensure a truly GEDSI-responsive approach that strengthens the effectiveness and legitimacy of AA and ensures that AA not only mitigates risk, but also advances broader goals of social inclusion.

7.3 ENGAGEMENT OF LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS THROUGHOUT THE DEVELOPMENT OF AA

The meaningful engagement of local organizations, particularly those representing women, people with diverse SOGIESC, people living with disabilities, and youth, is crucial to successful AA and achieving a truly locally-led AA approach. Locally-led AA refers to early action approaches designed, led, and implemented by communities and local actors, often working through local structures. This approach ensures that AA is context-specific, draws on local and/or indigenous knowledge, and moves quickly in response to localized risks. Locally-led AA strengthens community resilience, advances localization goals, and makes AA more effective and sustainable by embedding it in local plans, practices, and decision-making processes. Therefore, the participation of organizations representing women, people living with disabilities, youth, and other marginalized groups must be embedded throughout the planning, design, and implementation stages to ensure a truly inclusive approach. Organizations led by or working with these groups bring with them a deep understanding of community needs, learnings from previous disasters, barriers, and priorities, ensuring appropriately tailored AA interventions.

In all locations, capacity strengthening on AA at the sub-national and local levels is still needed for national NGOs and CSOs to fully participate in both building AA systems and implementing AA. This includes their participation in the design, targeting, planning, and implementation of AA, as well as the dissemination of EW to their communities.

7.4 DESIGNING APPROPRIATE ANTICIPATORY ACTIONS

The design of AA protocols or frameworks involves three critical streams of work: (I) defining or setting triggers, (II) identifying appropriate anticipatory actions, and (III) securing pre-arranged financing. Triggers are typically and primarily based on the capacity of relevant EW systems to provide necessary information and time for decision-making and implementation of anticipatory actions. Which means that the level at which the triggers are set will also need to ensure that there is sufficient time for actions to be implemented within a certain 'window of opportunity'. Therefore, the alignment between triggers, actions, funds, and timeframes is crucial for success. Organizations implementing AA have adopted a consultative process to develop AA protocols. Some good practices are highlighted below.

> In the Philippines, organizations representing people with disabilities contributed to the development of local government unit AA plans, bringing to the table critical perspectives and knowledge about accessibility and inclusion that may otherwise have been overlooked. In Nepal, CSOs have been actively involved in consultations and the development of AA implementation plans at the municipal level. Their contextual knowledge and close ties to local networks enables faster, more relevant, and more informed interventions and responses. Finally, in Bangladesh, UN Women's own projects included work with local GESI chapters in Kurigram District. These chapters – made up of both INGOs and NNGOs – ensured even participation in DRM and AA planning at the local level.

7.4.1 BEST PRACTICE: CO-DESIGN OF AA

Consultative, community-centered approaches not only empower communities, but they also foster a sense of ownership over the process of developing AA. **In Bangladesh**, the CARE-led Supporting Forecast-based Action and Learning (SUFAL) consortium project took a highly consultative and community-centered approach to designing AA for riverine floods in the Jamuna basin. Unlike the typical approach in setting triggers, which is very technical and focused on the science behind forecasting and early warning, SUFAL worked with communities to understand their priorities in the days leading up to a flood. The community, including women and girls who were consulted separately, was asked to identify what actions they would take at different stages before a flood, such as 10, 5, and 3 days in ad-

vance. This resulted in the design of AA that was both contextually appropriate and feasible, and ensured that the actions were based on both scientific data and the lived experiences of those most at risk. By involving the community in every step, SUFAL was able to design actions that were more effective and better aligned with local capacities and priorities.

In the Philippines, the Oxfam-led B-READY consortium project worked with community-level barangay disaster management committees and provided them with training to ensure that vulnerable households received necessary support. Lists of the most vulnerable families were developed collaboratively in advance and used during the anticipatory action phase to facilitate pre-emptive evacuations and implement other support needed by the barangay. This allowed B-READY to build on community knowledge to access and support households with mobility challenges and ensure that the necessary resources were available for safe movement. Along with cash programming (discussed in 7.4.2 below), this allowed communities and responders to be better prepared and take timely anticipatory actions ahead of typhoons.

7.4.2 BEST PRACTICE: THE IMPORTANCE OF DIGNIFIED UNCONDITIONAL CASH IN AA

Anticipatory cash has emerged as a critical component in successful AA projects, offering households the flexibility to make decisions in a dignified manner. Mobile money services have proven to be a timely and efficient way to deliver cash assistance, especially in areas where traditional banking infrastructure is limited. Women, older people, and people living with disabilities often face systemic barriers to accessing cash assistance, such as a lack of identification documents, limited financial literacy, and mobility restrictions, all of which can hinder their ability to receive and use cash assistance effectively. Organizations must work closely with the targeted individuals to understand what would work for them, through consultations, and with financial institutions to ensure that all population groups can access cash distributions. This includes facilitating the set-up of mobile accounts or collaborating with financial institutions to establish agents or mobile money outlets closer to communities, reducing the need for at-risk individuals to travel long distances to access money.

That said, protection mainstreaming is crucial as the relationship between cash transfers and increased protection risks is complex; for example, financial support can reduce stress and increase agency, but it can also create or exacerbate tensions within households where shifting power dynamics challenge traditional norms. In some cases, organizations also set aside a percentage, typically around 10 per cent, to deliver directly as cash-in-hand to people with reduced access and/or mobility challenges. In the Philippines, for example, older people and people living with disabilities said the use of mobile wallets would be difficult (TWG-AA and the Regional Cash Working Group (RCWG) 2022). Therefore, anticipatory cash feasibility assessments, particularly those looking at access by different vulnerable and inclusion groups, are important.

Cash transfers empower individuals to use the funds according to their specific needs, whether they are for food, medicine, or other essential items. Cash has also been used in some cases to support early recovery, such as repairing homes, replacing damaged assets, and reducing loan burdens. This is especially important for poor and marginalized households that often resort to borrowing from local moneylenders with high interest rates before a disaster, plunging them further into poverty. Anticipatory cash assistance thus has been linked to resilience-building, with households able to take anticipatory actions that suit their unique circumstances and needs. While cash may not be suitable in every context, it has proven to be especially effective in contexts where markets are still functional, and cash can be distributed in a timely manner and when designed to specifically target marginalized and at-risk groups (TWG-AA and RCWG 2022). It is also important to engage with communities prior to developing cash-based interventions to ensure that households have an understanding of and ability to execute mitigation measures before the onset of a disaster (CTWAG 20/2023). When delivered in a timely and dignified manner, cash transfers are highly effective. However, their success depends on the contextualization of delivery methods and the ability to disburse during the AA timeframe, ensuring that financial systems, infrastructure, and community capacities are all aligned with the available resources.

In Bangladesh, the World Food Programme (WFP) used

anticipatory cash as a key intervention before extreme flooding. Households received cash in a timely manner, allowing them to take anticipatory actions such as purchasing essential items, including medicines, and evacuating. The use of cash was also critical for households at risk of being further entrenched in poverty by preventing their need to take high-interest loans from predatory moneylenders. Importantly, households that received anticipatory cash assistance reported significantly better outcomes both during the floods and three months after. People receiving cash assistance were better able to prepare for the floods, which impacted their well-being after them (CGD 25/07/2024). According to the Cash Technical Working Group, multipurpose unconditional cash transfers should make up 60 per cent of the minimum expenditure basket and minimum beneficiary selection criteria should include: households affected and/or displaced due to a disaster; households who rely on day labour or charity and have no regular income; women-headed poor households; child-headed households; and poor households with pregnant and lactating women, people living with disabilities, older people, and/or chronically ill individuals (CTWG 10/2023). The flexibility of cash transfers provided recipients with the autonomy to address their unique needs. Households receiving cash prior to the 2020 monsoons reported higher well-being and were more likely to evacuate family members and livestock, and cash transfers mitigated asset loss (TWG-AA and RCWG 2022).

Financial inclusion and mobile money: the case of bKash in Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, mobile money platforms play a central role in delivering anticipatory cash transfers. bKash is widely used and trusted by humanitarian actors due to its robust verification systems, which require a national ID, to ensure funds reach the intended recipients. However, its stringent requirements and use of a secure PIN for access can result in the exclusion of many potential recipients, especially women and marginalized groups; approximately 87 per cent of Bangladeshi women possess a national ID card (World Bank 30/04/2025).

This poses a particular challenge for one-time anticipatory transfers, which rely on rapid cash-out capacity.

To address these barriers, financial inclusion must be built into the 'build' phase of anticipatory action. Responders should work with enrolled households, especially women, to ensure they have access to functioning mobile phones, are supported in opening and maintaining accounts, and can confidently use the system when needed. This process must also account for women's literacy and national ID possession, with support provided to access documents if women do not already have them; in Bangladesh, only 63 per cent of women have access to mobile phones (compared to 86 per cent of men), and only 24 per cent of women use mobile internet services (compared to 40 per cent of men) (Prothom Alo 29/04/2024; Prothom Alo 14/05/2024). Linking anticipatory cash to long-term financial inclusion and social protection systems will help build the resilience of women and other marginalized groups and improve the inclusiveness of AA.

In the Philippines, Oxfam employed cash transfers as a key anticipatory action. In this case, cash was distributed to entire barangays, without targeting specific households, to ensure everyone could take action before a storm. This allowed for dignified disaster preparedness, allowing people to buy food and other items. Cash programming not only supported households, but it also had a positive impact on local markets and shopkeepers. Because community members could afford to purchase the necessary items for their preparedness, small stores were able to move stock, reducing the burden of having to move all their wares before the storm hit. This also allowed stores to continue operating after the storm because there were fewer disruptions and damaged goods. In this vein, potential beneficiaries of cash transfers in the Philippines before Typhoon Rai said that had they received cash, they would have used it to purchase items prioritizing children's needs, first aid, and protective equipment, with food being the first priority (TWG-AA and RCWG 2022).

UNFPA has designed AA with the goal of strengthening the resilience of women and girls, with outcomes focused on both their protection and well-being. These actions have been implemented as sectoral top-ups, tailored to meet the personal needs of key individuals, whether within households or living independently. In the study countries of Bangladesh, Nepal, and the Philippines, UNFPA, through its field presence, local partners, and community health volunteers, targets individuals based on evolving vulnerabilities, such as pregnancy status, high-risk pregnancies, and exposure to GBV. Key populations are also included, such as persons of diverse SOGIESC, as well as individuals engaged in selling or exchanging sex. The provision of services or cash support ensures continued access to SRH and GBV services, while also addressing essential personal needs related to health, hygiene, and dignity in the face of impending disasters. In Bangladesh, for example, women who received anticipatory cash assistance ahead of flooding in 2024, intended to help them maintain access to birth facilities and purchase dignity or menstrual items, overwhelmingly reported that the support was timely, made them feel respected or highly respected, and was useful in helping them cope with the impact of the flood.

7.5 TARGETING

Within AA, there are two types of targeting: by geographic location and by household composition and/or individual characteristics. Many AA responders will use some combination of both. Because AA tends to have limited resources, GEDSI-responsive targeting is necessary to ensure that AA as a whole is also GEDSI-responsive and that these limited resources are focused on the most at-risk.

Geographic targeting does not mean it is not GEDSI-responsive. For example, focusing on low-lying areas outside flood embankments or on villages with high poverty rates takes into consideration the social, cultural, and economic limitations these communities may experience both prior to and in the aftermath of a disaster. Geographic targeting has the benefit of supporting an entire community in a given space, including the most vulnerable. However, it is important to consider that not all people within a marginalized community have equal access to support and warning systems, so even geographic targeting needs to include adaptations and considerations for at-risk groups.

Targeting by household composition and/or individual characteristics has the benefit of ensuring that the most at-risk receive the necessary assistance. This can include households with pregnant and lactating women, people living with disabilities, children, and/or older people, as well as women-headed households and/or minority groups within a community. That said, targeting by household composition and/or individual characteristics only can result in a decline in social cohesion or resentment against marginalized groups receiving support. To mitigate these risks, individual- and household-level targeting should be balanced with community-based approaches that promote inclusion and transparency. Engaging community members in the design and communication of targeting criteria can help manage perceptions of fairness, reduce tensions, and strengthen social cohesion, while still ensuring that those with the greatest needs are prioritized.

7.6 EXAMPLES OF ANTICIPATORY ACTION AND TARGETED RECIPIENTS

This section explores how AA has been implemented in the four countries covered by the study. The anticipatory actions included in Tables 1-3 are implemented by all AA actors in a country (i.e., Red Cross, UN agencies, and NGOs). However, not all agencies use triggers set at the same level of intensity of hazard, and they are not always set off at the same point in the crisis timeline. The logic of applying this lens was to examine the anticipatory actions, not to consider the window of time in which they are implemented.

Anticipatory actions in EAPs, AA frameworks, and other forms of plans used are designed depending on some key factors, in particular:

- *Actions that can minimize potential impacts:* Anticipatory actions are designed to mitigate potential impacts of climate-related and predictable hazards (e.g., flood, cyclone/typhoon, drought, heatwaves,

cold waves, etc.). Potential impacts can be determined by looking at information on losses and damages in previous disasters. For example, floods in Bangladesh's Kurigram District cause widespread damage to crops, livestock, and agricultural assets, reducing income-generating activities and impacting food security, particularly among poor households that are dependent on daily wages. Therefore, cash assistance ahead of a flood not only enables poor households to take measures to protect valuable assets, but also ensures they are able to purchase food, medicine, and necessities when livelihood opportunities are limited.

- *Actions that can be implemented within available Early Warning lead times:* Although the availability and skills of Early Warning Systems (EWS) determine whether AA is feasible at the outset, it is the lead time available that is critical in determining which actions are selected. Considering this key factor, hydrometeorological actors and disaster management actors work together to define the triggers, which is the point at which there is a high or sufficient probability that a hazard event will occur, and actions to mitigate potential impacts can be implemented[3].

In addition to the above, timing is an important factor in the design of AA, in that the *window of opportunity* for the implementation of some anticipatory actions occurs sooner, i.e., some anticipatory actions are effective if implemented earlier than others. Ideally, community-based anticipatory actions are more effective if implemented ahead of household-based actions because, at times, they require a longer time to implement. For example, CARE in Bangladesh supported local Disaster Management Committees in rehabilitating critical water points and access roads before flood waters reached extreme levels at which households needed to evacuate. In addition, anticipatory actions targeting households with pregnant women, young children, older persons, and persons living with disability started sooner as they often need longer to take preparations and preventative measures (e.g., evacuate, buy food and medicines, etc.).

An important distinction must be made between activities which are designed specifically for specific groups (e.g., menstrual hygiene management (MHM) and dignity kits for women and adolescent girls) and activities which are not specifically designed for but target multiple vulnerabilities. As highlighted in Tables 1-3 below, many AA actions are GEDSI-responsive, but GEDSI is narrowly applied at the targeting stage, for example, by prioritizing women-headed households. This inclusion is applied after the core design of the intervention has been finalized, and risks treating GEDSI as an add-on rather than a foundational element. True GEDSI mainstreaming requires inclusion before and during the design phase, ensuring that sociocultural norms, power dynamics, patterns of marginalization, and differential access to resources are considered in the design itself, not just in beneficiary selection.

While current GEDSI efforts are admirable, there is still room to strengthen GEDSI-responsiveness in AA. For example, one AA responder in the Philippines conducted a detailed gender assessment to better understand current situations and improve actions to support women and at-risk groups in programming. Similarly, another responder is exploring GEDSI indicators in its post-distribution monitoring, to investigate the gendered impacts, protection risks, or shifts in household decision-making power as a result of its programming. Truly embedding GEDSI into AA means including GEDSI in the MEAL of AA as well as in the design phase, specifically by incorporating gender- and protection-specific outcomes among MEAL indicators, alongside traditional humanitarian indicators.

As a whole, AA plans or frameworks are generally GEDSI-responsive. Some common measures or practices to incorporate GEDSI across different AA plans are as follows:

- *Strengthening the role of women and vulnerable groups in planning, design, and delivery:* Involving women in planning and decision-making enhances inclusive governance and recognizes them as active agents, not just vulnerable groups. Institutionalize the participation of women-led organizations,

3 In EWS, the probability that a predicted hazard will occur is inversely related to the lead time. Which means that the likelihood of the event occurring is higher closer to the time it is anticipated. As such, AA triggers are set at the point when there is a likelihood of occurrence and acceptable levels of risk of the actions being implemented even if the disaster does not occur (i.e. no regrets).

organizations of people living with disabilities, and local networks in AA design and implementation. Provide training, funding, and leadership pathways to build the capacity of women and inclusion groups, including women-led organizations, organizations of people living with disabilities, and local networks.

- *Access to EW and risk information:* Early warning delivered through GEDSI-responsive communication channels, such as via women's groups, youth groups, local radio channels, in local languages, and SMS voice messaging, broadens the range of women and vulnerable groups (people living with disability, the elderly, and minority groups) who can be reached. It is thus important to include women and vulnerable groups in all their diversity in the design of EW and risk communication.

- *Minimizing losses to income and livelihoods:* Women are often overrepresented in informal and unpaid care work, making them more economically vulnerable during shocks. Anticipatory cash assistance or livelihood support targeted at vulnerable women (e.g., female-headed households, minority women, etc.) can minimize income or asset loss and ensure food security before disasters. A few organizations are also exploring the opportunity of targeting women's cooperatives and savings groups to expand financial resilience.

- *Design actions specifically targeting vulnerable groups:* In addition to the agreed multi-purpose cash transfer amount, organizations also provided top-ups to inclusion groups, such as female-headed households, the elderly, people living with disability, etc., to ensure access to food and basic necessities, which would otherwise become more challenging for them compared to other households. In remote areas ahead of floods and storms, organizations provided support for households with the elderly, people living with disability, pregnant women, and other groups to enable pre-emptive evacuation through deployment of volunteers and means of transportation (e.g., boats). Actions also included pre-positioning reproductive health kits and ensuring access to maternal and reproductive healthcare, which are often deprioritized during crisis response. AA plans have included the deployment of mobile SRH teams and supplies in hard-to-reach areas.

- *Addressing GBV and protection concerns across all actions:* In many settings, displacement and shelter overcrowding increase GBV risks to women, girls, children, and other vulnerable groups. Interventions such as identifying and retrofitting shelters with gender-sensitive designs (including gender-segregated sanitation facilities, private areas for women and girls, lighting), scale-up or deployment of GBV referral mechanisms and protection services as part of AA protocols can help reduce exposure to GBV at the AA phase. Relevant to WASH, safety around water collection points can be ensured by the deployment of community WASH volunteers and ensuring water points are in close proximity to homes and community villages.

Below are examples of anticipatory actions grouped according to hazards and sectors. Anticipatory actions are listed in the table below.

7.6.1 FLOODS

Floods affect millions of people across the region, with climate change increasing the frequency of high-risk floods every year. The economic impacts of floods are high because of damage to infrastructure (buildings, roads, bridges) and agriculture. However, poor households in remote and low-lying areas are hardest hit, at times temporarily or permanently displaced. Riverine floods, which are more common and cause widespread damage, especially when compared to pluvial and coastal flooding, are easier to predict and can provide longer lead times. For example, in Bangladesh, EWS can provide a lead time of five to fifteen days[4], whereas it is only three days to six hours in Nepal. While this impacts the range of anticipatory actions which can be implemented, there are some common actions among the two contexts, and these are included in the following table.

4 Bangladesh's Flood Forecasting and Warning Center can provide lead time of five days for deterministic forecasts (i.e. high probability that the event will occur), and fifteen days for probabilistic forecasts (i.e. lower probability) which increases the time for preparations.

TABLE 3 EXAMPLES OF ANTICIPATORY ACTIONS TAKEN BEFORE INTENSE FLOODING IN BANGLADESH AND NEPAL

Sector	Anticipatory action	Target community	GEDSI-responsive
Food security and livelihoods	Provide storage items (e.g., silos, drums, hermetic bags) to protect grains, seeds, and other agricultural assets	Focus on rural women farmers, ethnic groups, *dalit* groups, poor farmers, smallholder farmers, and farmers with fewer assets	Yes
	Provide livestock supplementary feed	Focus on poorer farmers, smallholder farmers, and farmers with fewer assets	Yes
	Distribute water purification tablets and anti-parasite medicine for animals	Focus on poorer farmers, smallholder farmers, and farmers with fewer assets	Yes
Health	Equip health facilities with the means to respond to sexual violence	Health facilities and staff providing GBV support	Yes
	Conduct refresher trainings on the clinical management of rape	Health facilities and staff providing GBV support	Yes
	Equip health facilities and midwifes with means to safely deliver babies	Health facilities and staff providing SRH support	Yes
	Distribute RH kits	Health facilities and staff providing SRH support	Yes
	Scale-up provision of mobile medical camps	Women and adolescent girls	Yes
Multi-sector	Provide unconditional, multi-purpose cash to vulnerable households	Specifically targeting poorest households, including households with people living with disabilities, older people and women-headed households	Yes
	Support to pre-emptive evacuation	General support, with a focus on households with people living with disabilities and older people	Yes
	Prepare shelters and evacuation points	General support, with a focus on accessibility and protection, including the availability of gender- and age-segregated spaces and toilets	Yes

Multi-sector	Distribute comprehensive relief packages, including food and NFIs	Focus on women-headed households and households with multiple compounding vulnerabilities (age, gender, disability, etc.)	Yes
	Deploy gender and social inclusion experts	CSOs engaged in AA to ensure GEDSI-mainstreaming in their planning and operations	Yes
Protection	Protection services, including referral services and psychosocial counselling	Women and adolescent girls	Yes
	Distribute dignity kits and cash equivalent	Women and adolescent girls	Yes
	Distribute MHM kits and cash equivalent	Women and adolescent girls	Yes
	Cash top-ups to women and girls to facilitate access to obstetrics case and GBV services	Women and adolescent girls	Yes
	Deploy protection monitors	Blanket, visiting homes door-to-door, and community centers	Yes
	Deploy female community health volunteers for SRH and GBV services	Blanket, visiting homes door-to-door, and community centers	Yes
	Risk messaging on GBV and dissemination of referral information	Blanket messaging with the goal of reaching at-risk women and girls	Yes
WASH	Distribute hygiene kits including water purification tablets, jerry cans, buckets and mugs	Specifically targeting poorest households and households with multiple compounding vulnerabilities (age, gender, disability, etc.)	Yes

7.6.2 TYPHOONS / CYCLONES

In Asia and the Pacific region, cyclone or typhoon AA is increasingly being used to protect vulnerable communities before storms make landfall. Countries like the Philippines, Viet Nam, and Bangladesh have developed EWS that trigger pre-agreed actions such as evacuation, distribution of food and shelter materials, and livelihood protection. AA uses forecast-based triggers that consider wind speed, rainfall, storm surge, and projected impact zones. Due to advances in meteorological forecasting, lead time for typhoon-related anticipatory action can range from 3 to 7 days, allowing governments and humanitarian actors to act early and reduce potential losses. This proactive approach is particularly vital in the region which is frequently exposed to intense tropical cyclones annually.

TABLE 4 EXAMPLES OF ANTICIPATORY ACTIONS TAKEN BEFORE TYPHOONS IN THE PHILIPPINES

Sector	Anticipatory action	Target community	GEDSI-responsive
Food security and livelihoods	Establish safe storage sites for food and other livelihood assets in schools, local community halls, and places of worship	Farmers	Yes
	Evacuation of fishing boats and gear		
	Agricultural cash assistance	Focus on poorer farmers, smallholder farmers, and farmers with fewer assets	Yes
Health	Equip health facilities with the means to respond to sexual violence	Health facilities and staff providing GBV support	Yes
	Conduct refresher trainings on the clinical management of rape	Health facilities and staff providing GBV support	Yes
	Equip health facilities and midwifes with means to safely deliver babies	Health facilities and staff providing SRH support	Yes
	Distribute RH kits	Health facilities and staff providing SRH support	Yes
	Scale-up provision of mobile medical camps	Women and adolescent girls	Yes
Multi-sector	Multi-purpose cash assistance	Focus on poorer households, women-headed households, and households with people living with disabilities and/or older people	Yes
	Multi-purpose cash distribution around evacuation centers	Blanket support for families who had evacuated	No
	Support pre-emptive evacuation	General support, with a focus on households with people living with disabilities and older people	Yes
Protection	Ensure access to SRH and GBV services, commodities, and interventions	Women and adolescent girls	Yes
Protection	Cash assistance	Participants of the Pantawid Pamilya Pilipino Program (or 4Ps), a social protection programme to finance child-centered needs	Yes

Shelter	Provision of modular tents in government-recognized evacuation centers	Blanket targeting of people in tent shelters, without considerations for specific groups	No

7.6.3 DROUGHT

IDrought is a recurring challenge in Asia and the Pacific, affecting millions of people in communities that rely heavily on rain-fed agriculture and pastoralism. Climate change is intensifying the frequency and severity of droughts, increasing risks to food security, water access, and livelihoods. AA focuses on minimizing the long-term impacts on food security, water access, and livelihoods, especially in drought-prone areas like Afghanistan, Mongolia, and even parts of the Pacific. Triggers are often based on a model called a Combined Drought Index, seasonal rainfall forecasts, soil moisture levels, vegetation indices, and water availability. Unlike rapid-onset disasters, droughts develop slowly, providing a longer lead time, often ranging from six to nine months, to activate early interventions. These may include providing livestock feed, water trucking, cash assistance, and agricultural inputs to protect livelihoods before conditions worsen. Anticipatory action for drought is essential in this region, where many communities depend on rain-fed agriculture and are highly vulnerable to prolonged dry spells.

TABLE 5 EXAMPLES OF ANTICIPATORY ACTIONS TAKEN BEFORE DROUGHT IN VIET NAM[5]

Sector	Anticipatory action	Target community	GEDSI-responsive
Food security and livelihoods	Distribute drought-resistant seeds (rice and vegetable varieties)	Focus on poorer farmers, smallholder farmers, and farmers with fewer assets	Yes
	Distribute livestock feed, supplements and vaccinations	Focus on poorer farmers, smallholder farmers, and farmers with fewer assets	Yes
	Training on drought climate smart agriculture, water preservation and fodder management	Focus on poorer farmers, smallholder farmers, and farmers with fewer assets	Yes
	Enhance water storage capacities	Focus on poorer farmers, smallholder farmers, and farmers with fewer assets	Yes
Multi-sector	Multi-purpose cash	Focus on poorer farmers, smallholder farmers, and farmers with fewer assets	Yes

5 AA in Viet Nam is led by FAO and has a strong focus on agriculture. Although it is not one of the countries in focus under this study, Afghanistan's UN-led AA framework is a multi-agency and multi-sectoral which can provide more examples of actions relevant to droughts – such as rehabilitation of boreholes, scaling-up health services, protection services, etc. Furthermore, the Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund – which is a pooled fund accessible by national NGOs – have also mobilized funds for AA in 2025, which can showcase a wider variety of actions. Currently, reports are not yet available for review.

7.7 PROTECTION AND ACCESS ENSURED IN DESIGN, SIMULATION, AND DELIVERY

Protection mainstreaming is a mainstay of both DRR and AA. Protection mainstreaming ensures that AA activities do not unintentionally cause harm, exclude at-risk groups, or reinforce inequalities. The principle of "do no harm," used both in protection and development programming, is especially useful when thinking about protection risks. According to the Global Protection Cluster, "Do No Harm analysis can be used… to consider the impacts of interventions on communities and their relationships with each other and duty bearers and is therefore also applicable in prevention, preparedness and response to other types of disasters including those related to climate change or other hazards" (Global Protection Cluster). Protection of people and assets is also among the Sendai Framework's guiding principles. Ensuring protection and equitable access must thus be prioritized in all components of building AA systems.

Many organizations currently implement AA through a project-based approach, relying heavily on internal systems while aligning with certain national systems to inform their implementation. For example, organizations may use government social protection or poverty lists to support targeting, or they may rely on EW dissemination channels to deliver messages. Government lists may reflect systemic biases, and overreliance on these lists may thus reinforce these biases and/or result in the overlooking of marginalized groups. Similarly, reliance on national EW dissemination systems may result in people living with disabilities, older people, minority language groups, and other groups experiencing barriers accessing information being excluded.

Project-based models with a heavy focus on operational feasibility do not always allocate enough time or resources to participatory approaches or comprehensive context and gender analysis (as highlighted above). This may result in the identification of key protection risks only once implementation is underway, limiting opportunities to mitigate harm. The exclusion of protection outcomes from MEAL in AA may also result in these risks not being uncovered. Protection and equitable access, thus, must be integrated into hazard selection and risk analysis throughout.

Photo: UN Women/…

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Photo: UN Women/...

SECTION 8
GEDSI IN RISK ANALYTICS, FORECASTING, AND EARLY WARNING

AA relies on timely, accurate, inclusive, and actionable EWS. This requires EWS to be linked to well-defined contingency plans, financing arrangements, and risk data that reflect the needs and realities of diverse communities in the anticipated impacted areas. However, in many contexts across Asia and the Pacific, structural barriers like limited access to climate information, uneven dissemination mechanisms, and insufficient disaggregated data continue to marginalize certain groups and constrain proactive decision-making. This section explores the status of EW and risk data systems across the region, highlighting emerging practices and persistent gaps that shape the effectiveness and equity of AA.

8.1 ACCESS TO TIMELY, RELIABLE AND INCLUSIVE EARLY WARNING

AA pilots have highlighted the need for timely and reliable EW linked to plans with pre-agreed triggers, activities, and pre-arranged financing. In the Asia-Pacific region, EWS exists for major climate-related hazards in most countries. However, contingency plans developed by governments and humanitarian organizations as a part of disaster preparedness measures only consider early warnings to a limited extent, and actions taken ahead of disasters and based on EW are largely restricted to EW dissemination, evacuation, and shelter preparedness for some hazards, such as typhoons. As a result, actions are generally taken during or after a hazard occurs, primarily due to a lack of access to accurate risk information and early warnings.

Marginalized groups, including people in remote locations, women, children, older people, ethnic minorities, and people living with disabilities, experience challenges receiving information from existing EWS, and climate information services (e.g., advisories) are not widely available. The dissemination of EW information has thus been integrated into existing AA protocols and should continue to be a key consideration in AA plans, with a focus on access, interpretation, and utilization of end users in terms of both life-saving information and information regarding protection of assets and livelihoods (e.g., agriculture, crops, livestock, and fisheries).

In Bangladesh, the government, in collaboration with humanitarian and development partners, has adopted and taken significant steps to understand the status of EWS and action plans through the EW4All initiative, launched by the UN Secretary-General in 2022. At the time of writing, consultations were ongoing to develop a national roadmap on EW4All. This suggests that the Government of Bangladesh is committed to strengthening its EWS, identifying and mobilizing resources to ensure the inclusion of marginalized communities and their access to EW. It also indicates a commitment to linking EW to disaster preparedness, contingency planning, and AA at the local and national levels.

SADDD is the bare minimum to ensure GEDSI-responsive activities. That said, disaggregated data is not always available and can pose a barrier to designing and implementing inclusive and effective AA systems. In Nepal, there are several ongoing government-led initiatives that are important for the collection and utilization of data in DRR planning, preparedness, response, and AA. Nepal's National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority is planning to review the Bipad Portal, which maintains records of damages and loss from disasters used by humanitarian and development

organizations for risk analytics and planning purposes. The government is also looking at developing a household-level risk assessment to collect household- and community-level risk information that could be connected to the Bipad Portal at the national level. Both initiatives are already supported by UN agencies (WFP, UN Development Programme, and UNICEF). That said, there is still the need for a stronger GEDSI component, including in risk assessments, data analysis, planning of anticipatory actions, and longer-term DRR and resilience-building activities.

Data for AA and Development Planning in the Philippines

The Eastern Samar municipal officials are very clear about the processes for disaster risk assessments and planning. According to government processes each sector conducts data/information collection based on which annual development plans are developed including disaster response and recovery plans. Coordination among the key sectors of DRRM, health and social welfare is also strong. Both health and social welfare sectors maintain substantial population data and information. A couple of key gaps identified through the discussions are: (I) absence of a comprehensive database for joint planning with sectors; and (II) lack of gendered information and analysis to support planning in different sectors. These issues result in taking steps geared towards generic actions, as opposed to more targeted and meaningful actions for women and other vulnerable groups in AA response and long-term DRR planning. Through discussions municipal officials highlighted the need for better analysis and tools to utilize the gender data in their planning process.

8.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF INTEGRATING GEDSI INTO RISK ANALYTICS, FORECASTING, AND EW

Many existing frameworks and tools reference SADDD without engaging with the deeper challenges and opportunities involved in collecting, analyzing, and using SADDD to design truly inclusive interventions and AA. SADDD is particularly critical for AA because it enables tailored responses that address the distinct needs, vulnerabilities, and capacities of different groups. When used effectively, it strengthens disaster preparedness and response by revealing inequalities and supporting more equitable interventions. To move beyond rhetoric, attention to GEDSI must be paid during each step of the data value chain: collection, analysis, and use. This would ensure that throughout each step, the right people and/or organizations are engaged throughout. As a result, GEDSI would be effectively mainstreamed through research design, data collection, data analysis, and the meaningful application of data to design inclusive interventions. Similarly, the incorporation of SADDD and GEDSI into forecasting and the design of EWS should be considered a pre-condition for developing impact-based triggers. Without high-quality SADDD and the institutional capacity to analyze and act on it, AA systems risk reinforcing existing vulnerabilities instead of reducing them.

SECTION 9
GEDSI IN POLICY, FINANCING, AND EVIDENCE FOR ANTICIPATORY ACTION

9.1 GEDSI-RESPONSIVE AA IN POLICY AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

With the increasing recognition of the value of AA, a few governments in the region have taken significant steps to include AA in their DRM policy and legislative frameworks, such as Bangladesh and the Philippines. The Government of Bangladesh was one of the first to include AA at the policy level, reflected in the revised Standing Orders in Disasters (SOD) in 2019. Through the SOD, an interministerial Taskforce on FbF/A was established at the national level, which is responsible for developing a strategy, guidance for implementation, and a funding mechanism to enable the implementation of anticipatory actions. In 2024, the Government of the Philippines drafted the Bill on Imminent Disasters, which, once adopted, can enable local government units to access and utilize funds for actions, such as the distribution of anticipatory cash and food packages for vulnerable groups ahead of disasters.

Other governments, such as Nepal, are also looking at first building a common understanding and vision around AA through the development of a national framework. Although there are no national frameworks on AA yet endorsed in the region, governments looking at developing AA policy frameworks or roadmaps frame the issue around the three key pillars or building blocks similar to the ASEAN framework[6]: risk analysis, forecasting and early warning; design and operationalization; and financing.

While the discussion at the policy level is predominantly focused on risk-informed planning and pre-arranged financing, there is some consideration for GEDSI-related areas in AA and DRM. In Nepal's 3rd National Dialogue Platform on AA in May 2024, deliberations were structured around five thematic areas of which one was on Protection, Gender and Inclusion - anchored in recognising intersectional discrimination and addressing specific needs, capacities, and priorities of different groups in AA efforts (government strategies, protection protocols and inclusive AA plans) with equitable financing, data management and local leadership. The thematic areas will be used to frame the national AA roadmap in the coming months.

Integrating AA into the Philippines' DRM at the local levels

In the Philippines, Eastern Samar's Emergency Operations Center monitors the situation on ground based on typhoon forecasts and early warning generated and deploys resources accordingly. The Center shares regularly updated information on potential impacts based on the forecasts with the Municipal Disaster Management Committee, which comprises of representatives from key line ministries, including DSWD, responsible for overseeing disaster response initiatives targeting vulnerable groups. Largely backed by the initiative of the previous mayor and current board member, the Disaster Management Committee can implement anticipatory actions based on typhoon early warnings and their forecasted impacts. Actions implemented are mainly pre-emptive evacua-

6 ASEAN Secretariat's Framework on Anticipatory Action in Disaster Management: https://asean.org/book/asean-framework-on-anticipatory-action-in-disaster-management-2/

tions and preparation of evacuation shelters, prioritizing households in high-risk areas, women, children, elderly and people living with disabilities.

As governments continue to unpack and discuss AA strategies, the Sendai Gender Action Plan (Sendai GAP) should be consulted to ensure the inclusion of gender considerations in AA and DRM. The Sendai GAP provides specific guidance on how to mainstream gender equality into DRM practices, emphasizing the importance of empowering women and girls in disaster preparedness, response, and risk reduction, all of which align with the broader goals of AA. Governments and organizations are provided with a framework to ensure gender-responsive AA is not just conceptualized but effectively implemented. This can potentially serve as a foundational tool to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of AA.

9.1.1 AA AND ADAPTIVE SOCIAL PROTECTION

Social protection systems are designed to prevent individuals from falling deeper into vulnerability, providing a safety net against shocks and stressors. The value of adaptive social protection lies in its ability to respond proactively to climate- and disaster-related shocks. By integrating climate resilience into the design of social protection systems, adaptive social protection aims to reduce the vulnerabilities of the most marginalized groups to shocks and build their resilience to future shocks.

In the context of AA, the focus is on pre-emptive steps taken to protect at-risk groups before a shock unfolds. Evidence increasingly shows that acting ahead of disasters is both cost-effective and reduces the long-term consequences of disasters. The timing of AA is key, and AA strategies rely heavily on the identification of vulnerable households ahead of time. This is where existing social protection systems become crucial; existing social protection systems maintain beneficiary lists and provide targeted support to the most vulnerable.

Organizations working on AA, such as WFP and UNICEF, often leverage existing social protection programmes to implement their anticipatory actions. In Bangladesh, for example, WFP works with the Ministry of Women and Children to identify mothers and children using the mother-and-child benefit programme. This allows WFP to deliver additional cash support ahead of floods, ensuring households benefiting from this programme are better prepared. By targeting existing social protection beneficiaries, AA becomes more efficient, ensuring support is provided to the right people in a timely manner. This integration of social protection and AA both boosts resilience and ensures that GEDSI is embedded in AA.

Cash, anticipatory action, and adaptive social protection

The demonstrated effectiveness of anticipatory cash assistance highlights the importance of adaptive social protection and the critical need for social protection systems to integrate climate risk and AA. There is a mutually reinforcing relationship between AA and social protection. On one hand, AA interventions often leverage existing social protection registries to identify and reach at-risk groups, while on the other hand, social protection systems can adapt and expand based on lessons from AA. It is imperative that social protection systems learn to incorporate early warning triggers and have the ability to scale vertically (top ups to programme beneficiaries in high-risk locations) and horizontally (include additional beneficiaries) prior to an expected disaster. This will not only reduce the impact of disasters, but it also prevents households already experiencing vulnerability from sinking deeper into poverty. Dignified cash assistance that is delivered early, predictably, and through trusted systems serves as a foundation to support people in the face of climate shocks.

9.1.2 ESTABLISHMENT OF TWGS WITH GOVERNMENT AND LINKS TO GEDSI PLATFORMS

Currently, eight countries in the Asia Pacific region have

established national technical working groups focused on AA (TWG-AA). These National TWGs include members from various government agencies, particularly NDMAs, hydrometeorological agencies, agriculture departments, social protection, etc. In some countries, women's ministries are also engaged in meetings and discussions, but this engagement is not always regularized or systematic.

Although some women's ministries have been involved in AA-related discussions, their DRM and AA capacities remain limited. It is crucial not only to integrate these ministries into national TWGs and communities of practice, but also to facilitate their systematic inclusion in national TWGs and communities of practice. Efforts should also be made to ensure that organizations specializing in GEDSI, such as women's NGOs, organizations for people living with disabilities, and local and national groups supporting women, are actively engaged in these platforms to ensure that AA is inclusive and addresses the specific needs of marginalized groups. This could be done by facilitating engagement between TWG-AA and existing GEDSI platforms, which are already supported in many countries, and through capacity strengthening for these GEDSI platforms, which need a deeper understanding of the relationship between gender, disability, social inclusion, and AA and DRM.

9.1.3 ENGAGEMENT OF LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS IN GEDSI-RESPONSIVE AA AT ALL LEVELS

In order to ensure women and girls are targeted and their needs are included in AA Plans, GEDSI needs to be integrated into the process of developing AA Plans. However, cultural norms and practices, lack of access to economic and technical resources, information, and poverty make it challenging for local populations, particularly women, to participate in DRM at the local level, which can be seen in Bangladesh's Kurigram district. Furthermore, there are high rates of out-migration among men either seasonally or throughout the whole year, because stable income generation is unavailable. Women are left behind to take care of their homes, and in a lot of cases, younger sons are responsible for carrying out chores outside the home, such as going to the market. Women are still significantly underrepresented in decision-making roles within DRM structures, particularly in key roles. There is a need to continue building technical capacity among women and marginalized communities to enable them to participate meaningfully and effectively in decision-making and disaster management processes.

Engagement of local GEDSI platforms on AA

In Bangladesh's flood prone Kurigram, local NGOs and CSOs play a critical role in the DRM processes at the district level. The local GiHA chapter includes local and international NGOs which supports the capacities of the District Disaster Management Committee in disaster preparedness and risk reduction activities. Almost all the organizations are aware of AA, and some are engaged in projects. However, organizations are still only engaged in the delivery of AA cash and items, and not on the development of AA mechanism such as triggers, planning, etc. which limits their meaningful engagement in this growing area of interest. Sensitization and capacity building of GiHA organizations should be prioritized, as the government moves towards adopting triggers and protocols by the UN and INGOs at the national level. Furthermore, a stronger and more coordinated approach needs to be taken for AA and DRM activities in the form of multi organization joint planning and implementation.

9.2 FINANCING FOR AA

9.2.1 AVAILABLE FINANCING

There are two distinct types of financing required for AA: 'build' funds and 'fuel' funds. Build funds support the development of AA frameworks, including the design of triggers, risk analysis, the development of AA protocols, and overall system strengthening needed to enable AA. Fuel funds are the resources needed to implement anticipatory actions once triggers are met, allowing for rapid and early assistance to reach at-risk populations before a disaster. Despite significant investments made in strengthening EWS, there remains an important gap in financing efforts.

Support for the 'build' phase of AA includes investments in developing systems for EW, targeting, and response planning. This funding often comes from development donors like the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank and, more recently, climate mechanisms such as the Green Climate Fund. This includes funding for risk data, analytics, and the development of models to support disaster risk interpretation and to strengthen social protection systems, which are crucial for embedding AA into national mechanisms.

Several financing mechanisms exist to support 'fuel' needs. These include the IFRC's Disaster Response Emergency Fund (DREF), which requires organizations to have pre-agreed protocols with clear activities, timelines, and budgets in place, along with the UN's CERF, allocated to implementing partners or directly to people and contingent on the prior development of AA frameworks. Both sets of funds can be rapidly accessed after triggers are activated. Another more flexible source of financing is the START Network's funds, which focus more on risk-informed planning and forecast-based actions and do not require finalized AA protocols. However, START Network funds are only available to members, which include national and international NGOs, and in countries where there's a START Network AA mechanism. Currently, START Network's AA mechanism is active in the Philippines, where START funds have been activated for storm responses, and Bangladesh, where it has not yet been activated and is under development in Nepal. Fuel funding is also available through project-based funding from donors, primarily ECHO, which focuses on pilot projects or testing AA systems through smaller grants.

It is critical that both the 'build' and 'fuel' financing streams are designed to be GEDSI-responsive. More specifically, there should be earmarked allocations within 'build' funding to ensure GEDSI considerations are taken into account when developing frameworks and protocols, along with earmarked allocations within 'fuel' funding to ensure that anticipatory actions reach and benefit the most marginalized groups.

9.2.2 ACCESS TO AA FUNDS FOR LOCAL DISASTER MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES AND LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS

One of the most critical aspects of AA financing is ensuring that local actors, particularly local NGOs, community organizations, and local Disaster Management Committees, have access to AA funds. While some mechanisms, such as the Red Cross's DREF, inherently support national societies and the START Network's strong localization agenda ensures local access to funds, there remains a significant gap in how much UN agencies and international NGOs allocate directly to local organizations.

Localization empowers local actors to lead and deliver aid in their own countries, improving the relevance, efficiency, and impact of aid by centring local communities and their needs and priorities. Local actors bring deep knowledge of the local context, language, and culture to the table, enabling more relevant and effective interventions. They are also often more accessible and trusted by communities, leading to improved outcomes and stronger accountability to affected people. Localization is also a more cost-efficient and sustainable approach.

The current gap in direct financing to local organizations and committees is not due to lack of intent, but rather, is often because of complex donor requirements and administrative processes that prevent funds from reaching locally-led organizations. These challenges are exacerbated by recent funding cuts, which have led to a re-evaluation of operations. However, investing in the capacity of local organizations through training, resources, and leadership opportunities strengthens people's resilience, shifts power and decision-making closer to those most affected by crises, provides better value-for-money, and improves sustainability. This requires a genuine commitment from donors and international actors to work in equitable partnership with local organizations and authorities; localization cannot be achieved through top-down approaches and requires a rethinking of traditional humanitarian structures.

Local capacity strengthening and financing need to be reflected in both 'build' and 'fuel' funds. Although administrative hurdles make it difficult for local actors to access these funds, these same local actors have played a pivotal role in shaping effective DRM frameworks and AA protocols, as well as have designed more effective disaster response strategies. Local actors also play a significant role in shaping national policies.

9.3 EVIDENCE FOR AA

9.3.1 MORE EVIDENCE NEEDED, PARTICULARLY ON GENDERED IMPACTS OF AA

While admirable efforts have been made to incorporate gender in AA, there still remains a significant evidence gap regarding gender, disability, and social inclusion outcomes. Although SADDD is collected to analyze the differential impacts of anticipatory cash transfers on women and men (e.g., by WFP in Nepal, CARE in Bangladesh, and FAO in Viet Nam), it often stops short of assessing gender and protection outcomes or shifts. SADDD tends to focus on access and usage metrics, rather than capturing deeper gender or protection-related shifts. While it can help identify who received what and how they used it, it does not examine how interventions affected household dynamics, safety, or decision-making power. Nor does it consistently reveal how risks may have been mitigated or exacerbated for specific groups.

Without the explicit inclusion of gender and protection outcomes in AA MEAL frameworks, AA programmes risk overlooking critical dimensions of effectiveness and "do no harm" principles. For example, without evidence on whether AA reduced or increased exposure to GBV, or whether it enhanced women's agency, interventions may inadvertently reinforce existing risks or miss opportunities for positive social change. The absence of such evidence also makes it difficult to identify which anticipatory actions are most inclusive and transformative, and which fall short. Strengthening gender and protection analysis within MEAL in AA is essential for both accountability and learning, as well as for ensuring that AA reduces risks before crises escalate. Rigorous, outcome-oriented evidence on gender and protection would guide adaptive programme design and build more principled and effective AA.