



FROM THE FIRST THREE YEARS OF CRISIS ANTICIPATION

IN 2016, THE START NETWORK LAUNCHED 'CRISIS ANTICIPATION' FOR THE START FUND. THE START FUND IS A POOLED FUND WHICH PROVIDES RAPID AND EARLY FUNDING TO NGOS ON THE FRONTLINE OF CRISES GLOBALLY.

Anticipatory action enables funds to be disbursed using forecasts, to mitigate anticipated humanitarian impacts. To help their members shift to more anticipatory programming, the Start Network have provided a mixture of technical support, access to forecasts and risk analysis and 'no regrets' early funding to their members.

In doing so, they hoped to catalyse a shift across the Start Network from reactive to proactive humanitarian interventions. In 2019, the first independent evaluation of the impact of this work took place.

HOW WAS THE EVALUATION CONDUCTED?

A independent mixed-methods evaluation was commissioned, answering three key questions:

1. What was the impact of Start Networks enabling work around anticipatory action? (including training, technical support, development of forecasting partnerships, provision of funds for collaborative risk analysis)
2. What has been the impact of anticipatory action been at the community level?
3. Has anticipatory action at the Start Fund been good value for money?

Data sources included a portfolio review of programme documentation, including data from thirty crisis anticipation contexts. A range of primary data was collected including a quantitative survey (91 responses), 19 key informant interviews and community focus group discussions from anticipatory projects in Somalia, Nigeria and Sri Lanka.

WHAT DID WE LEARN?

01 Culture change around early action takes a long time and is resource intensive, but with the right mix of technical support, resources and commitment, it can work.

64% OF START NETWORK MEMBERS HAVE ACTED ON THE BASIS OF A FORECAST FOR THE FIRST TIME BETWEEN 2016 AND APRIL 2019

RECOMMENDATION FOR ANTICIPATORY ACTION PRACTITIONERS:

Building engagement in anticipatory action requires a continuous package of training, communication and awareness raising in order to be successful. Staff capacity must be made available to support this.

02 A 'Network' approach to building engagement works. By facilitating the FOREWARN group, which brings together humanitarians with forecasting practitioners and contributes technical inputs to our alerts, we have enabled our members to advocate for increased engagement in early action in their own organisations.

88% OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS AGREED OR STRONGLY AGREE THAT PARTICIPATING IN FOREWARN HAS ENABLED THEM TO ADVOCATE FOR MORE ENGAGEMENT FOR ANTICIPATORY ACTION WITHIN THEIR OWN ORGANISATIONS.

RECOMMENDATION FOR ALL ANTICIPATORY ACTION STAKEHOLDERS:

Get involved in the FOREWARN group, which brings together anticipation experts across organisational boundaries to support anticipatory action. For more information on FOREWARN please contact FOREWARN@startprogrammes.org. Other Networks supporting early action include the [Anticipation Hub](#) and the [Risk Informed Early Action Partnership](#) reap.secretariat@ifrc.org

03 The basic concepts of anticipatory action need to be repeated many times. Clarity around key concepts gives confidence when deciding if or not to request funds for an emerging crisis.



WHILE BUILDING CRISIS ANTICIPATION, START NETWORK HAS RECOGNISED THE CONFUSION AROUND TERMINOLOGY AND NEED FOR CONSISTENCY.

RECOMMENDATION FOR ANTICIPATORY ACTION PRACTITIONERS:

Use anticipation terminology clearly and consistently. Provide definitions and glossaries of key terms when appropriate.

The evaluation identified "While stakeholders have grown more confident and consistent in their use of terms since 2016, evidently doubts and different interpretations still exist" (p.18)

04 Not all forecasted crises will occur. 'False alarms' are part of a healthy anticipatory humanitarian system.

36% OF ANTICIPATION PROJECTS IN THE REVIEW REPORTED THE CRISIS WAS AS SEVERE OR MORE SEVERE THAN FORECAST.

63% REPORTED THE CRISIS WAS LESS SEVERE OR DID NOT OCCUR. THE SAME CRISIS MANIFESTS DIFFERENTLY ACROSS A LARGE GEOGRAPHIC AREA.

Of crises which did not occur

34% WERE DISEASE OUTBREAKS (8 PROJECTS IN TOTAL), WHERE START NETWORK ANTICIPATION PROJECTS COULD HAVE DIRECTLY LIMITED THE SEVERITY OF THE CRISIS BY FUNDING ACTIVITIES TO LIMIT TRANSMISSION.

RECOMMENDATION FOR DONORS:

Recognise that 'false' alarms are a part of a healthy anticipatory humanitarian system and communicate this regularly with peers.

RECOMMENDATION FOR ANTICIPATORY ACTION PRACTITIONERS:

Look back at forecasted crises, seeing the many ways forecasts can differ from reality and be open and transparent about these findings. Regular evaluation of forecasts can improve scenario planning and impact forecasting considerations for future anticipation projects.

05 Funding envelopes should match the level of uncertainty in a forecast. Decision makers are more comfortable making risk-based decisions when they are confident funding levels are appropriate. Even when uncertainty is high, a small cash injection can still be appropriate if the possible impact of the forecasted crisis is high.

68% OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS WHO HAD TAKEN A DECISION ON WHETHER TO FUND A FORECASTED CRISIS ADMITTED TO FEELING THEY WERE TAKING A RISK TO ACT ON DATA

85% AGREED THAT THE LEVEL OF FUNDS WERE APPROPRIATE FOR THE PERCEIVED RISK. 'NO REGRETS' PROGRAMMING HAS BEEN TAKING SHAPE IN PRACTICE, GIVING FURTHER CONFIDENCE TO DECISION MAKERS.

RECOMMENDATION FOR ANTICIPATORY ACTION PRACTITIONERS AND DECISION MAKERS:

Practitioners should make the level and type of uncertainty clear (for example, severity, geography, confidence in forecast etc) so that decision-makers can match the level of risk with appropriate levels of funding.

06 Gender is critical. Men and women access, interpret and act on risk information differently – understanding this is key to building quality anticipatory projects.

IN NIGERIA AHEAD OF THE ELECTIONS, MEN AND WOMEN ACCESSED RISK INFORMATION FROM DIFFERENT SOURCES, AND NOTICED DIFFERENT WARNING SIGNS.



RECOMMENDATION FOR ANTICIPATORY ACTION PRACTITIONERS:

Involve local networks in anticipation project design in order to more deeply understand gender dynamics when designing projects.



IN SRI LANKA, MEN AND WOMEN HIGHLIGHTED DIFFERENT IMPACTS FROM THE ANTICIPATION OF THE MONSOON PROJECT THEY HAD PARTICIPATED IN.

07 Timing remains a challenge.

Even with quality forecasts in place, reaching communities before crisis onset has been patchy. We must be clear about which 'window of opportunity' we are aiming for, and continue working on forecasting to lengthen our lead time between allocation of funds and crisis onset.



RECOMMENDATION FOR ANTICIPATORY ACTION PRACTITIONERS:

Deciding the level of forecast certainty which is required to implement various anticipatory interventions must be agreed upon in advance. This gives clarity around what lead time you will have for action and when to trigger. Anticipatory funding mechanisms must be adaptable and flexible so that they can be 'fit for purpose'.

08 Balancing breadth and depth when trying to build the capacity of a diverse Network is hard.

In our first three years, we cast our net very wide, working with many members and partners across a wide variety of hazards.



The evaluation identified that 'the time has come to be more focused' with one stakeholder commenting "They do too many initiatives at the same time, spreading themselves too thin" (p.40)

RECOMMENDATION FOR ANTICIPATORY ACTION PRACTITIONERS AND DONORS:

Quality anticipatory action work requires in-depth support to enable risk analysis/ forecasting information, action-planning, evidence building and enabling cross-organisational collaboration at the national level. Support available should be communicated clearly to all partners on the ground.

09 More collaboration and support around project impact measurement is needed.

The Start Network have developed a measurement framework for early action and commissioned work to compare methodologies used by others across the sector working on early action. More needs to be done to enable agencies on the ground to measure impact consistently.

The study found Start Network members "have not yet consistently applied methods to assess impact and traditional techniques to measure efficiency, sustainability and leveraging do not appear to tell the whole story" (p.44)



RECOMMENDATION FOR ANTICIPATORY ACTION PRACTITIONERS:

Prioritise evidence-building and support for impact measurement for anticipatory action. Tools and resources for evidence-building should be shared and communicated widely.

RECOMMENDATION FOR DONORS:

Funding is needed for quality impact assessments, these should take a holistic approach, focusing on both the value of the project and the impact of the project to at-risk communities.

10 Risk information has no benefit if it is not disseminated, relevant or accessed by humanitarian agencies for risk-informed decision making and dissemination to communities to enable their preparedness strategies.

The study found that effective risk analysis requires support to guide humanitarians on the ground through forecast monitoring and analysis processes and connecting humanitarians with relevant experts. For example, Start connected members in Pakistan with a Statistician from the London School of Economics (LSE), who developed guidance for them to use in heatwave monitoring and analysis, enabling them to present a robust alert and secure Start funding.

RECOMMENDATION FOR ANTICIPATORY ACTION PRACTITIONERS:

Strengthen collaboration and connections between first responders and national forecast & risk information providers. Risk information must be developed with local-end users in the driving seat.

