EARLY ACTION

THE STATE OF PLAY 2021

SUMMARY



REAP

Risk-informed
Early Action
Partnership

About REAP

Launched at the UN Climate Action Summit (UNCAS) in September 2019, the Risk-informed Early Action Partnership (REAP) brings together an unprecedented range of stakeholders across the climate, humanitarian, and development communities with the aim of making 1 billion people safer from disaster by 2025.

The Partnership is built around four ambitious targets that aim to drive a systemic shift towards acting earlier to reduce the impacts of disasters. It creates a space in which Partners and aligned organisations from across its various constituencies use the ambitious targets to mobilise commitments and inspire action.

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Cover photo

Farmers in the north of Haiti are working to build their resilience to extreme weather events in an attempt to better protect themselves from the loss of property and crops that often result from climate-related shocks.

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CALL TO ACTION

The impacts of climate change are coming faster and more fiercely than previously predicted, and it is the vulnerable who suffer most when disasters linked to climate change occur. But we can choose to act. Coordinated, coherent and systematic early warning and early action supports communities and people to respond to the increasing risks in a way that protects lives and livelihoods. We need to keep working together to drive a systemic shift towards acting earlier to reduce the impacts of disasters.

This report identifies a number of ways in which approaches to early warning and early action must be improved, if we are to succeed in creating the necessary systemic shift. The seven recommendations below are relevant to any actor working in or close to the field, and the final section of this report details how Partners of the Risk-informed Early Action Partnership (REAP/the Partnership) plan to drive progress in each area.

1. Risk-informed early action requires increased collaboration, coherence and understanding between key actors and communities that bridges silos to achieve greater collective impact.

2. There is a need for clear policy recommendations to better connect a broad range of available funding sources and financial instruments to risk-informed early action.

3. Funding for early warning and early action must be increased, including through earmarking percentages of existing funds and systematically incorporating early warning and early action into budgetary planning processes.

4. A robust evidence base must be developed to identify critical gaps across the full value chain of risk-informed early action, as a basis for future support and investment.

5. The international community must strengthen coordination and reduce complexity, to make it simpler for countries to access financial and technical assistance where required.

6. Locally Led Adaptation and people-centred approaches should be utilised in designing relevant national policies, Standard Operating Procedures, early warning systems and financial instruments supportive of local actors.

7. Countries must be supported to benefit from exchanges of effective practices and collective learning from different contexts and regions.



Rice fields in Toya, near Timbuktu with a dike under rehabilitation. Flooded for several weeks, the community receives Food Assistance for Assets to rehabilitate the irrigated area, essential for the food and nutritional security of thousands inhabitants. © WFP / Benoit Lognone

SUMMARY
MOVING TOWARD SYSTEMIC CHANGE

The urgency of a systemic change towards early action

The world is facing an unprecedented climate crisis. In the past ten years, 83% of all disasters triggered by natural hazards were caused by extreme weather- and climate-related events, such as floods, storms and heatwaves. The number of such disasters has risen almost 35% since the 1990s. However, there is still hope. While the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance due to climate-related disasters could double by 2050 to 200 million a year, concerted early action could also decrease that number to 10 million.

Early action initiatives that make people safer from disaster are being implemented across the globe. However, more work needs to be done to establish an effective evidence base from which lessons can be learned about what works, what doesn't, and what is still needed to take early action to the scale demanded by the increasing impacts of climate change. This *State of Play* aims to contribute to that evidence base.

What does systemic change look like?

There are challenges to assessing the state of play of early action. There is no established baseline against which to measure progress, and 'success' can be interpreted differently by different actors. To address these constraints, this inaugural *State of Play* provides a global snapshot of progress on risk-informed early action through the lens of REAP's 4 Targets. Progress against these four internationally recognised targets, while specific to the Partnership, can provide a proxy measure of progress in the field. This first *State of Play* therefore compiles and analyses information on effective practices, challenges, and progress towards each of the 4 Targets to illustrate the effectiveness of early action interventions. Our hope is that year by year, in subsequent reports, this analysis will be built upon and expanded to cover early action more broadly and will become a critical source of information for all actors working in or related to the field.

Where do we stand?

Comprehensive risk management and the **integration of risk-informed early action into national laws, policies and plans** are critical to creating an enabling environment for early action. REAP's **Target 1** aims, by 2025, for 50 countries to review and integrate their crisis/disaster risk management and climate adaptation laws, policies and/or plans to ensure that they reduce climate change impacts and exposure on people and the environment. As of December 2021, the Partnership's commitment tracker recorded 34 specific member commitments to this Target. The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) is rolling out its updated Comprehensive (Disaster & Climate) Risk Management approach and tools in 16 countries, and the International

Development Association (IDA) supported 46 countries towards institutionalising disaster risk reduction (DRR) between 2018 and 2020. Using broad definitions of DRR and Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) integration, this report concludes that the world is currently on track to achieve Target 1 by 2025.

However, there are still significant gaps, such as the absence of a formal baseline on the number of countries reviewing and improving their laws, policies and plans on disaster risk finance or early warning systems (EWS). Efforts towards Target 1 also suffer from inadequate resourcing, partial understanding of different types of risks, and limited international financial and technical support. Policies tend to be developed without consulting the most vulnerable groups and, when they are adopted, they are not necessarily operationalised due to the limited capacity of local authorities.

Stronger financing and delivery mechanisms that are **connected to effective early action plans** will ensure that early warning information can be acted upon. Under **Target 2**, REAP Partners wish to see 1 billion more people covered by such mechanisms and plans. A global mapping process coordinated by Partners in 2020 showed that more than 2 million people in 57 countries are already covered by financing and delivery mechanisms connected to early action plans within the humanitarian sector. However, anticipatory financing led by humanitarian actors is just one part of a much broader and more complex picture necessary to achieve Target 2, and the knowledge gap on what is being undertaken outside of the humanitarian system is an important and urgent one to address. The InsuResilience Global Partnership (IGP) annual report for 2020 indicates that 137.4 million people are covered by disaster risk finance and insurance solutions and a further 33 million are covered by microinsurance, which shows that the financing and funding ecosystem required to ensure 1 billion people are covered by early action plans is complex and multifaceted.

There are myriad ways that early action can be resourced and an equally broad variety of financing instruments that can be used to disburse this funding. Further exploration, analysis and evidence-building on both current and potential funding and financing approaches are urgently needed. While G7 investment commitments made in 2021 and ongoing concerted efforts by organisations such as IGP and the Insurance Development Forum (IDF) are highly necessary, important and impactful, more must be done to embed early action at a systemic level. The potential of early action funded by humanitarian funds, disaster risk finance instruments, social protection mechanisms, national budget management and climate and development funds must be further explored to translate into more ambitious action.

Only through **investment for extending early warnings to the 'last mile'** can we ensure that those most at risk benefit from early warning early action initiatives. The Partnership's **Target 3** seeks investment of USD 500 million in early warning system infrastructure and institutions that target early action in 'last/first mile' communities. As of December 2021, the Partnership's commitment tracker recorded slightly fewer commitments to this Target (30) than for Targets 1 and 2. While there are some significant financial investments noted, it is not possible to say definitively what proportion of this investment helps build the early action capacity of last mile communities. The most at-risk countries and communities lack equipment, skills, and engagement in early warning systems, so the bulk of funding is directed towards the capacity, infrastructure and financing of national hydro-meteorological (hydromet) systems, without acknowledging the broader social and economic components of hydromet early warning. National hydromet agencies need to invest in co-designing services with end users and vulnerable groups, involving them throughout.

The emerging risks posed by climate change underline the need to **drive early warning information to the people and places most affected by these risks in a way that is reliable, understandable, and actionable**. The aim of **Target 4** is to see 1 billion more people covered by new or improved early warning systems connected to longer-term risk management systems, and supported by effective risk communication and public stakeholder dialogue to prompt informed action. As of December 2021, the Partnership's commitment tracker recorded relatively fewer member commitments to this Target (17) than for Targets 1, 2 and 3. Two specific investment commitments have been made on Target 4 amounting to approximately EUR 700,000 over a period of up to 8 years, with an enhanced (but non-exclusive) focus on heatwaves. A range of organisations are specifically addressing the last mile barrier for effective early warning, ensuring that warnings are not only timely but also understood and acted upon by those at risk. Initiatives such as the World Bank's *Understanding Risk* are helping to develop existing EWS capacity for multi-sector coordination, communication, and dissemination of early warnings. Similarly, the Alert Hub of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) may help to accelerate progress towards Target 4 with the promotion of the Common Alerting Protocol (CAP).



Khadija working on her farm. As part of the crop insurance project, she has been trained on climate-smart agriculture. In the event of a bad season (low yield) a pay-out is triggered, allowing farmers to purchase food or invest in alternative livelihoods despite the reduced harvest. © WFP / Badre Bahaji



In Bangladesh, following Cyclone Yaas, hundreds of thousands of families were left fending high tidal waters. Over the years, disasters in general have become more frequent, thanks to climate change.
© WFP / Sayed Asif Mahmud

CALL TO ACTION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The impacts of climate change are coming faster and more fiercely than previously predicted, and it is the vulnerable who suffer most when disasters linked to climate change occur. But we can choose to act. Coordinated, coherent and systematic early warning and early action supports communities and people to respond to the increasing risks in a way that protects lives and livelihoods. We need to keep working together to drive a systemic shift towards acting earlier to reduce the impacts of disasters.

The key findings emerging from this *State of Play* have been translated into recommendations that will help to drive the needed systemic shift towards acting earlier to reduce the impacts of disasters. These recommendations are grouped under the three Drivers of Change identified by the Risk-informed Early Action Partnership: fostering collaboration and linking supply with demand (the 'marketplace'); global commitment on policy and practice; and enabling local- and country-level ownership and leadership.

All stakeholders aiming to bring about the systemic shift towards acting earlier are invited to adopt these recommendations and identify relevant actions that they can take to achieve progress over the coming 12 months. This *State of Play* has identified several such actions, around which the Partners of the Risk-informed Early Action Partnership can collaborate in order that the state of play on early action continues to improve.



In Bangladesh, three integrated approaches, Forecast-based Financing, Seasonal Livelihood Programmes and Climate Risk Insurance, have a much stronger positive impact on negative coping attitudes and food insecurity during climate shocks. ©WFP / Sayed Asif Mahmud

Driver of Change: Fostering collaboration and linking supply with demand (or facilitating a 'marketplace')

RECOMMENDATION 1

Increase collaboration, coherence and understanding between key actors and communities involved in the early action agenda in order to bridge silos and achieve greater collective impact.

No single agency, entity or group of entities has the capacity or expertise to be able to address the challenges facing the world today on their own. The need to collaborate across different sectors and bridge silos is often raised as a key means of reaching greater scale and impact. However, to do this in practice is not so straightforward; it requires time, effort and – most critically – a requirement to look beyond our own interests, mandates and areas of influence. Language often inhibits the level of understanding between different stakeholders, therefore limiting the level of coordination and collaboration possible or required. The lack of a shared language is an obstacle to progress.

In the coming 12 months, the Partnership will focus on:

1.1 Developing a glossary of key terms relating to early action through a consultative and participatory process involving key Partners.

1.2 Hosting and promoting opportunities that strengthen relationships and understanding between relevant stakeholders.

1.3 Initiating regional- and country-level discussions around the REAP Targets, building on existing Partner efforts and ongoing early action opportunities.

1.4 Developing knowledge products (case studies and infographics) that support early action communication.

Driver of Change: Global commitment on policy and practice

RECOMMENDATION 2

Develop clear policy recommendations regarding the various funding sources and financial instruments that are available or able to support risk-informed early action.

Whilst current resources that support anticipatory humanitarian action or risk-informed early action more broadly are largely from the humanitarian budgets of a few institutional donors, there is a need to complement these efforts with different types of finance and to ensure the entire international system is better aligned to achieve common outcomes. There are opportunities to utilise different types of finance (e.g., private capital) in order to support public finance and donor assistance. However, to do this effectively, it will be important to reflect on lessons identified to date and to develop clear policy recommendations that can guide future efforts.

In the coming 12 months, the Partnership will focus on:

2.1 Convening major donors to exchange lessons learned to date in terms of supporting early and anticipatory approaches, to identify good practice and common challenges, and make clear recommendations for collective action going forward.

2.2 Developing clear criteria to guide future donor investments that aim to support risk-informed early action.

2.3 Developing policy recommendations to inform Multilateral Development Banks and the role that they can play in supporting risk-informed early action through integrating these approaches into longer term development planning and processes, including how to incentivise *ex-ante* financing.

> **“There is huge potential for climate finance to invest in early action . . . and some actors are making strides towards integrating more anticipatory approaches within their core programming.”**

RECOMMENDATION 3

Increase the amount of funding specifically allocated to early warning and early action mechanisms, including earmarking percentages of existing funds to EWEA and systematically incorporating EWEA into budgetary planning processes.

Whilst institutional donors increasingly recognise the importance of early warning and early action in addressing the growing impacts of climate change and achieving return on investment, they are not yet meeting funding needs with the resources required to scale-up. As well as aligning existing financial instruments and international mechanisms, it will be important to invest further resources in both the capacity to deliver early action at community level, as well as the funds to be triggered in advance of hazards.

In the coming 12 months, the Partnership will focus on:

3.1 Supporting donors to identify good practice vis-à-vis investing in risk-informed early action and scaling-up investments accordingly.

3.2 Providing a platform (for example at COP27) to highlight new commitments and investments that will support the scale-up of risk-informed early action.

RECOMMENDATION 4

Develop a robust evidence base for the full value chain of risk-informed early action (which can be curated and maintained) in order to identify critical gaps that can guide future support and investment.

Whilst certain aspects of the early action value chain already possess a significant selection of academic research and evidence (such as risk financing), other aspects are still in the early stages of development. It will be important to consolidate existing evidence so that critical gaps can be identified and resources allocated accordingly. It will also be important to digest the findings in order to ascertain what works and what doesn't, share the learning and then inform programming as required. This will need to be a collective endeavour given the breadth of areas to cover.

In the coming 12 months, the Partnership will focus on:

4.1 Defining a process to strengthen the evidence base for the full 'early action value chain' set out and supported to create a 'living library' for early action.

4.2 Establishing progress monitoring processes to track progress towards the REAP Targets and increase understanding of what works (or doesn't).

4.3 Documenting progress against the MEL Framework Indicators.

Driver of Change: Enabling local- and country-level ownership and leadership

RECOMMENDATION 5

Support climate vulnerable countries by strengthening coordination of the international community and reducing complexity, thereby making it simpler for governments to access financial and technical assistance where required.

There are a wide array of actors, partnerships, initiatives, funds and mechanisms all aiming to support governments to make progress on development, become more resilient, adapt to the changing climate, reduce their own risk or manage humanitarian needs. However, these efforts are not always well aligned or coordinated, and the complex landscape can make it overwhelming for countries to engage or to know where to find the most relevant support on different issues. Indeed, competition for space, profile or resources between international actors can often complicate the landscape further. To support countries to take a leading role and to access the resources they need to scale-up risk-informed early action, it will be important to use existing structures, processes and mechanisms where possible and to simplify engagement requirements from the perspective of SIDS and LDCs.

In the coming 12 months, the Partnership will focus on:

5.1 Aligning efforts, through the REAP Target 1 Working Group, aimed at supporting governments to integrate their climate and disaster risk management policies, plans and legal frameworks, and promoting Comprehensive Risk Management approaches that reduce silos and foster coherence across relevant departments.

5.2 Working with Partners to develop helpful guides and tools for governments to navigate the complex array of funds, mechanisms, processes and initiatives that may be available to support them.

5.3 Working closely with the Adaptation Action Coalition to support State actors to adapt to the effects of climate change when it comes to scaling-up early warning and early action; and working closely with the Race to Resilience when it comes to supporting non-state actors.

RECOMMENDATION 6

Strengthen the linkages between the early warning early action community and Locally Led Adaptation and people-centred approaches that build on local and national capacity of relevant actors.

Over recent years, the importance of locally-led approaches has been gaining traction, with a number of recent announcements at COP26 endorsing and supporting them specifically. Nevertheless, until relevant policies are adopted at the national level, financial instruments are adapted to be more supportive of local actors, Standard Operating Procedures are revised to include communities, and early warning systems are more people-centred, locally-led early action will remain difficult to achieve.

In the coming 12 months, the Partnership will focus on:

6.1 Undertaking further research (potentially jointly with the Adaptation Research Alliance) on locally-led early action to guide relevant policies and financial investments.

6.2 Linking to the Locally Led Adaptation Community of Practice to identify and pursue areas of mutual interest.

6.3 Establishing a dialogue among REAP Partners on communicating risk effectively with 'last mile' communities, to enable exchange of good practice and learning to inform 'upstream' interventions.



RECOMMENDATION 7

Increase the exchange of knowledge and good practices between countries to draw on collective learning from different contexts and regions.

Despite various knowledge networks, partnerships and resources, much of the latest learning concerning climate change adaptation remains with international bodies and institutions. It will be critical that countries are supported to exchange learning directly and retain ownership of the implications in order to drive systemic changes at the national level.

In the coming 12 months, the Partnership will focus on:

7.1 Commissioning further case studies to help identify the common components required to scale-up risk-informed early action at national level in different contexts.

7.2 Facilitating peer-to-peer learning between governments through various events and initiatives, thereby strengthening collaboration and mutual understanding of what does and doesn't work regarding early action at a national level.

7.3 Reviewing existing Social Protection Mechanisms and Safety Nets (at national level) to determine whether they can be adapted to become more anticipatory or shock responsive.

7.4 Engaging with regional bodies (such as CDEMA and the CCCCC in the Caribbean, or ICPAC in East Africa) to acquire, contextualise and apply learning at a regional level.



Mangrove planting in Viet Nam. Planting and maintaining mangroves is a highly effective climate adaptation strategy. Mangroves provide coastal protection, water regulation, carbon sinks, and habitats for a broad range of species. © Vietnam Red Cross Society


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