

# GLOSSARY OF EARLY ACTION TERMS

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**2022 Edition**

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with the Risk-informed Early Action Partnership



Risk-informed  
Early Action  
Partnership



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# INTRODUCTION

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## Why a Glossary?

Over the last three years there has been a rapid growth in interest in and implementation of risk-informed early action approaches towards crises and disasters. A variety of stakeholders are involved, including humanitarian, development and climate actors; organisations working on risk finance; and providers of early warning and risk analysis information.

These different institutions are often working on very similar issues while - as the recent *Early Action: The State of Play* report (REAP 2022) demonstrated - employing very different terminology to describe their activities. Alternatively, they may employ the same terms to mean very different things.

This confusion on key terms and concepts is not just happening at a sectoral level - it also occurs within individual organisations.

## About the definitions

There are a number of reasons for confusion around the key terms outlined in this glossary. In some cases, a term may have a generally understood (*demotic*) meaning, but also a different, more specific meaning in certain professions or sectors. The term ‘risk’, for example, is often used in a fairly broad way in discussion of disasters and crises, while having a very specific meaning to people working in the insurance sector. Confusion can arise over whether the term is being used in a demotic or sector-specific sense.

Similarly, the meaning of a term often depends on the context in which it is used, and the nature of work with which it is being associated. The term ‘early’ (as in early warning or early action) will describe very different timescales depending on whether it relates to drought-related food insecurity or to the arrival of a tropical storm. In the first case, acting ‘early’ may entail acting months ahead of the first cases of malnutrition. In the second, acting ‘early’ may mean acting only a few hours ahead of the storm. The word ‘early’ will also relate to different timescales - and very different activities - depending on the nature of the work to which it refers: development actors may see acting ‘early’ to reduce the risk of food insecurity in terms

Whether within or between organisations, differences over language can lead to confusion and disagreement, impede collaborative work and reinforce the silos that early action approaches need to overcome in order to fulfil their potential. Lack of clarity around key terms and concepts is also off-putting to new and potential stakeholders and may make them less keen to engage in early action work.

In an attempt to clarify some key terms, and in keeping with its aim to “bring coherence, alignment, and complementarity” to the field of risk-informed early action, REAP has developed this glossary as a tool to support productive conversations around the topic.

of agricultural or market interventions that take place years before any specific instance of acute food insecurity. Humanitarian actors, on the other hand, may see ‘early action’ in terms of destocking or cash payments once a drought has occurred, or even once crops have failed, perhaps only weeks ahead of the first cases of malnutrition.

In all of these examples, there is no single ‘correct’ use of the term. Rather, the term takes on meaning depending on the context and user.

For this reason, **this glossary is descriptive, not prescriptive**. It does not present a single, definitive definition for any term, but attempts to outline how the term is used by the various actors engaged in risk-informed early action. For each term, the glossary provides a ‘common denominator’ definition - that is a broad definition that all, or almost all, stakeholders can agree on. It then provides notes that outline in more detail differences in how the terms are currently used by different stakeholders.

The ‘common denominator’ definitions and additional notes were developed in two broad stages. In the first, draft definitions and notes were developed by comparing

the existing definitions available in twenty glossaries and a number of additional documents that contained in-text definitions or clarifications of meaning. In the second stage, the definitions and notes were considered by a steering group of experts. Members of this steering group, who, while drawn from a wide range of stakeholder organisations, were generally engaged in an individual capacity, worked together to improve the draft definitions and notes on the basis of consensus.

The exception to the descriptive approach is for those terms which have already been defined through an

extensive, state level, multi-stakeholder exercise as part of the process for developing the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. For these terms, the glossary provides the Sendai approved definition (as contained in *Report of the open-ended intergovernmental expert working group on indicators and terminology relating to disaster risk reduction* (UNGA 2016)) and notes on how the term is used in a REAP context, particularly where these uses differ from the Sendai definition. In these cases, steering group members worked to clarify and improve the notes but did not make any changes to the definitions.

## Common areas of difference in the use of Early Action Terminology

While there are a number of ways in which the usage of key terms differs from one person or organisation to another, there are two axes in particular along which the meanings of terms consistently differ.

The first relates to timing. As outlined in the section above, users often differ on how far in advance of a disaster or crisis an action has to be in order to count as ‘early’ or ‘anticipatory’. Some users restrict terms related to early / anticipatory action to activities that take place before a hazardous event occurs that is, for example, before the onset of a drought or of heavy rains. Others accept that activities that take place after the hazardous event can also be ‘early’ or ‘anticipatory’, as long as they occur before the hazardous event has become a ‘disaster’: before any crop failure or livestock loss associated with the drought has had an impact on health, nutrition or livelihoods; or

before flood waters have reached human settlements. Still others allow any action that occurs before a reactive relief-focussed response to the disaster to be described as ‘early’, on the grounds that these actions, founded on early warning, are earlier than they would otherwise have been if no warning was given.

The second area in which users often differ is the degree to which early / anticipatory action processes have been planned and structured in advance. For some users, only those activities which have been planned and agreed in advance, are initiated when predetermined indicators reach agreed trigger values, and for which funding has been prearranged, count as ‘early’ or ‘anticipatory’ action. Other users are open to a wider range of activities with a lower degree of pre-planning being defined as ‘early’ or ‘anticipatory’.

## On the use of language in Risk-informed early action

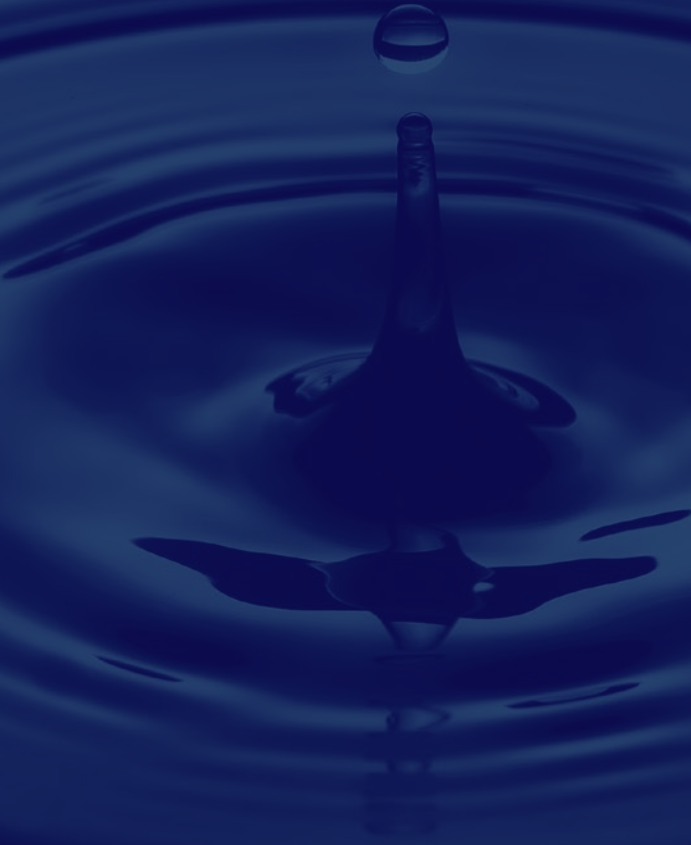
It is important that specialists in the growing field of risk-informed early action recognise the challenges to clear and effective communication that exist where many different stakeholder groups – often with their own specialised vocabularies – work together, and where key terms are open to a variety of interpretations.

Specialists and practitioners should aim to communicate in a way which is comprehensible to their audience. At a minimum, this might mean using generally understood language instead of specialised vocabulary wherever possible; clarifying what is meant when using terms that can be interpreted in a number of ways; and ensuring that they check that conversational partners have understood the message in the way that it was intended.

In particular, Early Action specialists should be careful that interlocutors understand any risks or uncertainties inherent in approaches they are describing. The use of specialist language such as ‘basis risk’, while providing clarity to an expert, may actually obscure the understanding of a generalist that early warning systems do not always work, and that this needs to be taken into consideration in the design of anticipatory action systems. Specialists should also be clear, when using umbrella terms such as ‘early action’, ‘early warning’ and ‘anticipatory action’, what types of activity they are referring to – by using more specific descriptions or examples.

# DEFINITIONS

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# Anticipatory Action

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## Definition

Anticipatory action is defined as acting ahead of predicted hazardous events to prevent or reduce acute humanitarian impacts before they fully unfold.<sup>1</sup>

## Notes

Anticipatory action often refers to mechanisms incorporating pre-agreed predictable financing for pre-agreed plans, released when an agreed *trigger* point is reached. However, in some cases the term describes more informal approaches, where – although a mechanism incorporating triggers, financing and activities has not been established in advance – action is taken in anticipation of a crisis or disaster on the basis of a *forecast*.

Some users consider that ‘anticipatory action’ can include the development of systems and mechanisms when a hazard is understood in general terms (for example, when it is obvious that an area might be exposed to tropical storms), unrelated to any specific occurrence of a hazardous event (the forecast of a specific tropical storm). In general, however, the term is used for actions taken in relation to a specific, imminent event.

The terms ‘anticipatory action’, ‘*early action*’ and ‘*forecast based financing / action*’ are often used as synonyms (although see entries for these other terms for slightly different uses).

## Examples

- A situation where funding is set aside and programmatic elements (staff, vehicles, etc.) are identified to allow actors to conduct ‘destocking’ programmes for pastoralists when a drought is officially announced by the government.
- A situation where funding is pre-arranged and all elements (registration, transfer modalities, etc.) are put in place for actors to provide cash payments to pre-identified individuals on the basis of early warning of a tropical storm.
- A situation where the government’s social protection programme provides an increased payment to recipients in areas forecast to be flooded by the government meteorological office.
- A situation where, on the basis of a forecast of drought, an NGO consortium releases funds to members who then design and implement programmes to support vulnerable people in the areas where they work.

<sup>1</sup> This definition is essentially the same as the first half of the G7’s definition, included in the Foreign Minister’s statement ‘Strengthening Anticipatory Action’ May 2022, although the term ‘hazard’ in the original has been changed to the term ‘hazardous event’. There was not unanimity among the SG around the second half of the G7 definition, as outlined in the notes section.



## Contingency Planning

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### Sendai definition and annotation

A management process that analyses *disaster risks* and establishes arrangements in advance to enable timely, effective and appropriate responses.

**Annotation:** Contingency planning results in organized and coordinated courses of action with clearly identified institutional roles and resources, information processes and operational arrangements for specific actors at times of need. Based on scenarios of possible emergency conditions or hazardous events, it allows key actors to envision, anticipate and solve problems that can arise during disasters. Contingency planning is an important part of overall *preparedness*. Contingency plans need to be regularly updated and exercised.

### Notes

In the context of REAP, some users expand the term to include planning for conflict.

Some users expand the term to include planning for 'pre-response' DRM activities such as programmes to support community resilience.

Some users expand the definition to explicitly include financial planning.

### Examples

- The Bangladesh: HCTT Cyclone Contingency Plan (02 December 2018) | [HumanitarianResponse](#) outlines the actions to be taken by specified government departments and humanitarian agencies, as well as the funding that would be required, in the event that a category 1 cyclone struck Cox's Bazaar in Bangladesh
- Community-based contingency planning exercises, where community organisations develop contingency plans, conducting an inclusive multi-risk and vulnerability analysis and then determining prioritised actions to be taken before, during and after a disaster occurs utilising identified community capacities and resources and coordination with other actors.



## Disaster Risk Financing

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### Definition

A term covering financial mechanisms, arranged in advance of disasters, for use in Disaster Risk Management activities.

### Notes

For most users, the term DRF can refer to the financing of a variety of *disaster risk management* activities, from decreasing *disaster risks* and supporting *resilience* well before any hazardous event occurs to *preparedness*, *anticipatory action*, response and recovery after the disaster has occurred.

For some users, the term has more limited application, and refers only to mechanisms for financing activities that take place after a hazardous event has occurred.

*Pre-arranged financing* is a specific type of Disaster Risk financing.

### Examples

- Government budgets for Disaster Risk Management activities.
- Humanitarian funds such as: the [Central Emergency Response Fund \(CERF\)](#); the IFRC's [Disaster Response Emergency Fund](#); a central 'pot' of funding which can be rapidly disbursed to national societies in event of a disaster; and the [Start Ready](#) which provides rapid financing to underfunded small to medium scale crises, spikes in chronic humanitarian crises, and to act in anticipation of impending crises.
- Catastrophe bonds, which are sold on financial markets and pay a coupon to investors if the specified event does not occur: if the event does occur, the investors lose their principal, and this is used to finance disaster management activities.
- Examples also include those given under pre-arranged funding, as this is a sub-set of disaster risk financing.

## Disaster Risk Management

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### Sendai Definition and annotation

Disaster risk management is the application of *disaster risk reduction* policies and strategies to prevent new *disaster risk*, reduce existing disaster risk and manage residual risk, contributing to the strengthening of *resilience* and reduction of disaster losses.

**Annotation:** Disaster risk management actions can be distinguished between prospective disaster risk management, corrective disaster risk management and compensatory disaster risk management, also called residual risk management.

**Prospective** disaster risk management activities address and seek to avoid the development of new or increased disaster risks. They focus on addressing disaster risks that may develop in future if disaster risk reduction policies are not put in place. Examples are better land-use planning or disaster-resistant water supply systems.

**Corrective** disaster risk management activities address and seek to remove or reduce disaster risks which are already present, and which need to be managed and reduced now. Examples are the retrofitting of critical infrastructure or the relocation of exposed populations or assets.

**Compensatory** disaster risk management activities strengthen the social and economic resilience of individuals and societies in the face of residual risk that cannot be effectively reduced. They include preparedness, response and recovery activities, but also a mix of different financing instruments, such as national contingency funds, contingent credit, insurance and reinsurance and social safety nets.

### Notes

Under the Sendai definition, disaster risk management covers a broad range of activities related to disaster risk, including: the consideration of disaster risk in development activities; activities to support the development and maintenance of resilience in infrastructure, communities or households; anticipatory action; disaster preparedness activities, and humanitarian response.

In the context of REAP, some users understand disaster risk management as predominantly concerning what is termed in the Sendai definition ‘prospective’ and ‘corrective risk management, and so being a separate set of activities to those related to response and recovery. As noted above, the Sendai definition, however, makes clear that compensatory DRM includes humanitarian response activities.

Some users also use the term *disaster risk reduction* as a synonym for disaster risk management, and particularly for prospective and corrective disaster risk management – that is, for activities that reduce the exposure and / or vulnerability of people to hazardous events, conducted before any specific event is forecast (retrofitting homes to make them cyclone-resistant, raising riverbanks to avoid flooding, or reforestation to address landslide risks, for example). However, the formal Sendai definition is clear that disaster risk reduction describes an aim or objective, while disaster risk management describes the activities that are undertaken to reach this objective: disaster risk management leads to disaster risk reduction.

## Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)

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### Sendai Definition and annotation

Disaster risk reduction is aimed at preventing new and reducing existing *disaster risk* and managing residual risk, all of which contribute to strengthening *resilience* and therefore to the achievement of sustainable development.

**Annotation:** Disaster risk reduction is the policy objective of *disaster risk management*, and its goals and objectives are defined in disaster risk reduction strategies and plans.

### Notes

The Sendai definition clarifies that disaster risk reduction (rather like resilience) is not a term to describe specific activities, but rather a term to describe the results of those activities. The activities that contribute to disaster risk reduction are collectively termed *disaster risk management*.

In a REAP context, however, the term is often used as a synonym for disaster risk management to describe specific ‘DRR’ activities. It is particularly used to denote activities that reduce the exposure and / or vulnerability of people to hazardous events, conducted before any specific event is forecast (retrofitting homes to make them cyclone-resistant, raising riverbanks to avoid flooding, or reforestation to address landslide risks, for example). When used in this way, ‘disaster risk reduction (activities)’ are generally being described as being a separate category from disaster preparedness activities (such as training of disaster response teams) which are taken ahead of an event with the intention of facilitating an effective response to the event.

In a REAP context, speakers will often describe *anticipatory action* as a type of DRR activity, which builds on other ‘DRR activities’ (such as activities to increase understanding of risk), while recognising that there are a large number of DRR ‘activities’ which are unrelated to *anticipatory action* – such as improving building codes or making multiyear investments in infrastructure.

## Early Action

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### Definition

A set of actions to prevent or reduce the impacts of a hazardous event before they fully unfold predicated on a forecast or credible risk analysis of when and where a hazardous event will occur.

### Notes

For many users, the term has been replaced by ‘*anticipatory action*’ and ‘early action’ and ‘anticipatory action’ are often used as synonyms.

For other users, particularly those who see ‘anticipatory action’ as necessarily including pre-agreed financing and pre-agreed programmes, early action is sometimes used to describe actions taken before the impact of a hazardous event, based on a forecast, which have not necessarily been planned or allocated funding in advance.

Users differ over how ‘early’ early actions can be. Some users would broaden the definition above to allow ‘early action’ to occur along a longer timeline than anticipatory action and be less strongly associated with a specific hazardous event. This longer view of early action (which sees early action as potentially covering corrective as well as compensatory *disaster risk management*) is more associated with development and climate actors than with humanitarian actors.

Users also differ on how late actions can be and still be classed as ‘early action’. Some users restrict the term to actions that take place before the hazardous event occurs. Others include activities that take place after the hazardous event, but before the disaster reaches its peak (see introductory notes).

### Examples

- Distribution of cash or shelter supplies in advance of a forecast hazardous event, or before the full impact of the event is felt.
- Evacuation of people or livestock in advance of a forecast hazardous event

## Early Warning

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### Definition

Information provided in advance of a specific hazardous event, disaster or conflict to enable stakeholders to take timely action to reduce *disaster risks*.

### Notes

Users differ on whether early warning(s) relate exclusively to warning of hazardous events (such as drought) or also include the impacts of these events (such as acute food insecurity associated with drought). Humanitarian professionals have generally tended towards the latter (impact-based) meaning, and meteorological professionals towards the former.

The term *impact-based forecasting* is increasingly used to describe early warning systems with a meteorological component that also include a broader assessment of potential disaster risks.

Users differ over how 'early' early warning should be: some users restrict the term to information provided before a hazardous event occurs and which allows action to be taken before the hazardous event occurs or at least or before the event precipitates a disaster.

Some users restrict the term to information and analysis provided by specified institutions using predetermined indicators. For others, the term is used more broadly to include any credible information that warns in advance of the occurrence of a hazardous event, disaster or conflict.

### Examples

- Famine early warning systems, such as [FEWS NET](#), which provides estimates of the number and location of people likely to be affected by food insecurity, as well as the level of food insecurity they will experience.
- Government cyclone early warning systems, which provide advance information on the path and strength of cyclones.

## Early Warning System

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### Sendai Definition and annotation

An integrated system of hazard monitoring, forecasting and prediction, disaster risk assessment, communication and preparedness activities systems and processes that enables individuals, communities, governments, businesses and others to take timely action to reduce disaster risks in advance of hazardous events.

**Annotations:** Effective “end-to-end” and “people-centred” early warning systems may include four interrelated key elements: (1) disaster risk knowledge based on the systematic collection of data and disaster risk assessments; (2) detection, monitoring, analysis and forecasting of the hazards and possible consequences; (3) dissemination and communication, by an official source, of authoritative, timely, accurate and actionable warnings and associated information on likelihood and impact; and (4) preparedness at all levels to respond to the warnings received. These four interrelated components need to be coordinated within and across sectors and multiple levels for the system to work effectively and to include a feedback mechanism for continuous improvement. Failure in one component or a lack of coordination across them could lead to the failure of the whole system.

## Forecast

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### Definition

A definite statement or statistical estimate of the likely occurrence of a future event or conditions

### Notes

Forecasts can be made for a variety of timescales - including, for example, long-term forecasts of temperature rises or sea-level changes. In the REAP context, however, forecasts will generally refer to specific hazardous events likely to occur over the following days (such as tropical storms) or months (such as drought).

### Examples

- Seasonal hurricane forecasts, for [example](#) and seasonal [rainfall forecasts](#).
- Flood forecasts, such as those provided by the Govt of Pakistan's [FFD](#)



## Forecast Based Action

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### Definition

*Disaster Risk Management* Actions that are initiated on the basis of a *forecast*: more broadly, a synonym for Forecast Based Finance

### Notes

While it includes the word *forecast*, the term is also used to describe situations or systems where action is initiated on other types of information (for example, observations of current conditions).

The term is synonymous with the term *forecast based finance* and is increasingly used to describe an approach that releases pre-agreed finance for pre-agreed activities on the basis of pre-agreed triggers. It is preferred by many to the term forecast based finance because it emphasises that the process is not exclusively related to pre-agreed finance, but also to pre-agreed actions: this clarifies that FBA is an *anticipatory action* approach, and not a form of *pre-arranged financing*.

The terms ‘forecast based financing/action’ and ‘*anticipatory action*’ are often used to describe the same or similar processes: the term that is used often depends on the organisation. However, ‘forecast based financing / action’ is even more strongly associated with pre-agreed funding, activities and actors than ‘anticipatory action’. Users who see the terms ‘anticipatory action’ and ‘forecast based financing / action’ as being synonymous generally prefer a definition of ‘anticipatory action’ that, like forecast based financing, includes pre-agreed financing and pre-agreed plans.

### Examples

- Predetermined funding and programme design to distribute cash and emergency fodder to nomadic populations on receipt of a forecast of high levels of snowfall from the national meteorological agency.
- Predetermined funding and plans for public information campaigns on receipt of a forecast of heatwave from the national meteorological agency.

## Forecast Based Finance / Financing

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### Definition

An *anticipatory action* approach that releases pre-agreed finance for pre-agreed activities to prevent or mitigate the impact of an imminent hazardous event or shock when forecast triggers are reached.

### Notes

The terms forecast based finance and *forecast based action* are almost always used as synonyms. The term forecast based action is increasingly used instead of forecasting-based finance, because it emphasises that the process is not exclusively related to pre-agreed finance, but also to pre-agreed actions: this clarifies that forecast based finance / action is an *anticipatory action* approach, and not a form of *pre-arranged financing*.

The terms 'forecast based financing/action' and '*anticipatory action*' are often used to describe the same or similar processes: the term that is used often depends on the organisation. However, 'forecast based financing / action' is even more strongly associated with pre-agreed funding, activities and actors than 'anticipatory action'. Users who see the terms 'anticipatory action' and 'forecast based financing / action' as being synonymous generally prefer a definition of 'anticipatory action' that, like forecast based financing, includes pre-agreed financing and pre-agreed plans.

### Examples

- Predetermined funding and programme design to distribute cash and emergency fodder to nomadic populations on receipt of a forecast of high levels of snowfall from the national meteorological agency.
- Predetermined funding and plans for public information campaigns on receipt of a forecast of heatwave from the national meteorological agency.

## Hazard

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### Sendai Definition

A process, phenomenon or human activity that may cause loss of life, injury or other health impacts, property damage, social and economic disruption or environmental degradation.

### Notes

In the definition, the term hazard is used to describe a category: earthquakes, cyclones or wildfires, for example. A specific occurrence of a phenomenon in that category (a specific earthquake or cyclone) is properly referred to as a 'hazardous event'. In the REAP context, however, a specific occurrence is sometimes referred to as a 'hazard', rather than a 'hazardous event'.

## Impact based forecasting

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### Definition

Impact-based forecasting is an approach that forecasts the potential negative consequences of a hazardous event.

It does this by considering the underlying factors that create vulnerability or fragility to a hazardous event and the potential degree of people's exposure to the event alongside the characteristics of the event itself, such as hydroclimatic factors, to predict the possible consequences of the event and enable anticipatory action. Essentially, it means forecasting what the weather (or another hazard) will do, rather than what it will be.

### Notes

There is often an overlap between the term impact-based forecasting and the term *early warning*.

For those in the REAP community who have seen early warning as providing warning of hazardous events (such as tropical storms or droughts), impact-based forecasting expands early warning to consider risk more broadly – how the hazardous event will interact with exposure and vulnerability to affect a population.

For those who have seen early warning as an approach to consider the impact of events on a population, the terms impact-based forecasting and early warning have broadly similar meanings.

Some users see impact-based forecasting as a form of *early warning* that has a particular focus on supporting appropriate *anticipatory action*.

### Examples

- Meteorological office warnings of extreme heat, outlining effects on health and infrastructure.
- See also Famine Early Warning example under 'Early Warning'

## Losses and Damages

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### Definition

Losses and damages refer to the adverse effects of climate change on individuals, communities, societies and natural environments which cannot be fully prevented by climate change mitigation and adaptation.

These adverse effects can be permanent or reversible. They include harm from (experienced) impacts and (projected) risks. They may be economic or non-economic and include loss of life; negative impacts on health; and negative impacts on the environment and on culture and society.

## No Regret / Low Regret actions

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### Definition

*Disaster risk management* actions taken in advance of a hazardous event that provide benefits to the receiving population irrespective of how or whether a disaster occurs.

### Notes

The terms 'No regret' and 'Low regret' are generally used interchangeably.

However, some - but not all - users incorporate the idea of opportunity costs into the term, so that an activity can only be classed as 'no regret' if it provides benefits greater than those which could have been achieved by using the funds in another way.

No regret / low regret actions are often seen by humanitarian actors to take place in relation to a specific hazardous event. Other actors, such as those working on climate change and development, may see more general and long-term risk management activities (such as planting trees, below) as 'no / low regret' if they provide potential benefits in future scenarios, but are also cost effective under current conditions.

### Examples

- Supporting nutrition interventions for children and lactating mothers before food insecurity occurs.
- Including measures to develop community capacity and cohesion in preparedness programmes.
- Planting trees to provide shade and reduce the risk of run-off, soil erosion and landslides

## Pre-arranged Financing

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### Definition

Pre-arranged financing (PAF) is a specific form of *disaster risk financing* that has been approved in advance of a crisis and that is guaranteed to be released to a specific implementer when a specific pre-identified *trigger* condition is met.

### Notes

Pre-arranged financing can be part of an *anticipatory action* or *forecast based action/finance* mechanism, but it can also be arranged for use in response to a crisis (rather than being used for early or anticipatory action), and for use as general budget support or in ways that are not tied to specific pre-agreed plans.

### Examples

- The CERF has allocated specific funds for predetermined activities in event of [flooding in Bangladesh](#).
- The [Start Ready](#) fund provides pre-agreed funding for predictable crises for Start Network member agencies who have developed regional or national Forecast Based Finance systems.
- The World Bank's [deferred drawdown](#) option for development policy loans, whereby a government can access a pre-arranged loan in the aftermath of a natural disaster.
- Parametric Insurance mechanisms, such as the [African Risk Capacity](#) of the African Union, in which African states pool funds, and these are then released when a disaster strikes on the basis of the damage caused by the disaster as estimated by weather surveillance software.



## Preparedness

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### Sendai definition and annotation

The knowledge and capacities developed by governments, response and recovery organizations, communities and individuals to effectively anticipate, respond to and recover from the impacts of likely, imminent or current disasters

**Annotation:** Preparedness action is carried out within the context of *disaster risk management* and aims to build the capacities needed to efficiently manage all types of emergencies and achieve orderly transitions from response to sustained recovery. Preparedness is based on a sound analysis of *disaster risks* and good linkages with *early warning systems*, and includes such activities as contingency planning, the stockpiling of equipment and supplies, the development of arrangements for coordination, evacuation and public information, and associated training and field exercises. These must be supported by formal institutional, legal and budgetary capacities. The related term “readiness” describes the ability to quickly and appropriately respond when required.

### Notes

In the context of REAP, some users expand the term to also refer to conflict.

Some users expand the term to explicitly include financial preparedness.

Some users expand the definition to include development of early warning systems and early warning as a preparedness activity (rather than seeing preparedness as being “based on... good linkages with early warning systems”).

### Examples

- a. Contingency planning.
- b. Stockpiling equipment and supplies.
- c. Developing arrangements for coordination, evacuation and public information sharing.
- d. Training and field exercises.

## Resilience

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### Sendai definition (no annotations are provided)

The ability of a system, community or society exposed to hazards to resist, absorb, accommodate, adapt to, transform and recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficient manner, including through the preservation and restoration of its essential basic structures and functions through risk management.

### Notes

In the context of REAP, some users expand the definition of resilience to include resilience to conflict.

Some users expand the term to include the resilience of individuals, as well as of systems, communities and societies.

The Sendai definition concentrates on the property of resilience ('being resilient') and sees 'risk management' activities as contributing to this. In the REAP context, the term is often closely associated with the *disaster risk management* activities that contribute to resilience: 'resilience activities' or 'resilience programming'.

Users differ on the types of activity that fall under 'resilience programming'. Some make a clear distinction between resilience and response-related activities, seeing resilience activities as generally longer term, more 'developmental' interventions, unrelated to a specific hazard event, aimed at strengthening infrastructure or livelihoods (broadly aligned with the definition of *corrective disaster risk management*).

Other users include - and specifically mention - anticipatory action, *preparedness* and *early warning* activities as part of 'resilience building'.

## Risk

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### Definition

Risk is the probability of an outcome having a negative effect on people, systems or assets.

Risk is typically depicted as being a function of the combined effects of elements that together contribute to these negative effects: hazards, the assets or people exposed to hazard and the vulnerability of those exposed elements.

The Sendai Definition of 'Disaster Risk' is:

The potential loss of life, injury, or destroyed or damaged assets which could occur to a system, society or a community in a specific period of time, determined probabilistically as a function of hazard, exposure, vulnerability and capacity.

### Notes

The term is also sometimes used in a more general way to refer to possible negative impacts without quantifying their likelihood or extent: "people are at risk of starvation."

The term is also sometimes used in a more limited way to refer to the 'the risk of a hazardous event occurring': that is the potential, or in some cases the quantified probability that an event such as a cyclone will occur, without taking into account the degree of exposure or of vulnerability to the cyclone.

The concept of disaster risk is sometimes expanded (particularly in the context of climate change discussions) to explicitly include risk to social and cultural wellbeing, and to ecosystems and species.

Some users expand the term to include individuals, as well as systems, communities and societies, in recognition that disaster risk differs by individual on the basis of their different exposure, vulnerability and capacity. Civil society organisations, for example GNDR, use this to highlight those at highest levels of disaster risk in order to ensure a community-led (or locally led) anticipatory action policy and implementation.

# Trigger

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## Definition

A trigger is a predetermined criterion that, when met, is used to initiate actions.

## Notes

A trigger can be a predetermined value for a specific indicator, set of indicators or index that is *forecast* to occur (such as wind speed in 48 hours' time) or has been measured as having occurred (such as the amount of rainfall in a specific time). It can also be an assessment of loss (such as the proportion of damage to property), or a more general judgement of severity (such as a government declaration of emergency).

For some users, the term trigger implies that, when the predetermined criterion is met, actions will be initiated automatically. Others differentiate between 'hard' (automatic) triggers and 'soft' triggers, with the latter initiating decision-making processes that may lead to the action, rather than initiating the actions themselves.

## Examples

- Forecast temperatures of 41c triggers the opening of cooling centres (this is known as a deterministic trigger – any forecast over 40c would trigger the opening of cooling centres).
- Forecast of a 75% chance of temperatures rising above 40c triggers the opening of cooling centres (this is known as a probabilistic trigger, where any forecast over a certain percentage chance of 40c temperatures would serve as a trigger).
- Recorded precipitation levels below 15mm/month for the months of January and February trigger destocking activities.

# ANNEXES

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## Annex 1 – Methodology

The construction of the glossary was designed according to a process that aimed to create the highest degree of consensus possible around the definitions between experts from a variety of sectors, while identifying and highlighting areas where real differences of meaning and use exist.

This was achieved through a number of steps.

- 1.** The REAP secretariat identified an expert steering group, who were invited to participate in the process. This steering group was drawn from a range of organisations who are members of REAP and are engaged in risk-informed early action. Selection aimed to ensure the inclusion of experts from a number of sectors and professional backgrounds. Members of the expert steering group participated on a personal basis, and neither their inputs, nor the final outcome, is necessarily representative of the views of their organisation.
- 2.** The steering group identified key terms for inclusion in the Glossary. Each SG member was asked to suggest a minimum of three terms that were important to their work in early action, and which they felt were often misunderstood, or understood in different ways by different users. The final list contained those terms which were suggested by more than one SG member.
- 3.** The Steering group provided existing glossaries used by their organisations, or other documentation that contained definitions of key terms. The consultant augmented this set of documentation with additional literature identified through a short search using Google Docs.
- 4.** The consultant used these glossaries / definitions to create first draft ‘common denominator’ definitions and notes on where existing definitions differed.
- 5.** The consultant put these definitions and notes into an online survey, and SG members were invited to comment on the definitions, and to provide feedback on specific elements of the definitions that were unclear.
- 6.** The consultant and SG members reviewed the results of the survey in an online meeting.
- 7.** The Steering group provided descriptive documentation produced by their organisations related to risk-informed early action work.
- 8.** The consultant selected between two and four documents per organisation (the number selected depended on the length of the documents, with the aim of each organisation providing a roughly equivalent number of words), identified each occurrence of each term in the glossary in these documents using MaxQDA software, and conducted a textual analysis to identify which terms were most closely associated with one another.
- 9.** Using the feedback from the SG responses to the survey and the outputs of the textual analysis, the consultant created a second draft of ‘common denominator’ definitions and notes.
- 10.** These second draft definitions were then uploaded to Mural collaboration software. The SG was split into smaller groups of 3-6 people. Each group was asked to concentrate on, and where possible improve, the existing definition for one term as it appeared in Mural. Each small group was designed to give the broadest possible range of opinions as it related to that specific term.
- 11.** SG members were invited to consider, in Mural, all of the revised definitions and notes as developed by the small teams, thus providing an opportunity to input on terms which they had not worked on in their small group.

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## Annex 3 – Steering group members

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## Annex 4 – Organisational engagement

While Steering Group members participated in their capacities as individual experts, we are grateful to the following REAP member organisations who allowed them to devote time to the process of building consensus and agreeing on the definitions:

Anticipation Hub

Centre for Disaster Protection

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

Global Network of Civil Society Organisations for Disaster Reduction (GNDR)

Insurance Development Forum (IDF)

Insuresilience Global Partnership

International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED)

The NDC Partnership

Overseas Development Institute (ODI)

The Red Cross / Red Crescent Climate Centre

The Start Network

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR)

United Nations World Food Programme (WFP)

