

Putting women and girls first, before a crisis hits



©UNFPA Philippines



**UNFPA's Anticipatory
Action Journey in Asia
and the Pacific**



©UNFPA Bangladesh

Why Anticipatory Action matters

Emergencies in Asia-Pacific are becoming more frequent, intense and complex, driven in part by climate change and other compounding crises. Humanitarian actors are shifting from a primarily reactive approach to one that takes early, preemptive action. Anticipatory Action (AA) uses forecasts and risk analysis to act before hazards such as floods, cyclones, or droughts.

By acting in advance, AA aims to reduce human suffering, prevent the use of harmful coping strategies such as foregoing essential maternal healthcare or facing heightened risks of gender based violence (GBV), and help individuals and communities preserve their dignity, health and wellbeing.



How it works

Effective anticipatory action work is built on:

- Robust forecasting based on predictable hazards.
- Clear triggers and parameters linked to pre-agreed actions and financing.
- Triggers consisting of predefined indicators, such as rainfall levels, drought conditions, or cyclone wind speeds, as well as scientific and historical data, developed in coordination with Meteorological Services.
- Readiness to act within short implementation windows (as little as 3 to 5 days for sudden-onset hazards).
- A 'no-regrets' approach, acting even if the worst case scenario does not occur.
- Evidence showing that every USD invested in AA can yield up to USD 7 in avoided losses ([WFP, FAO, OCHA](#), May 2025)

UNFPA's Anticipatory Action in Asia Pacific

Drawing on its expertise in Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH), GBV prevention, risk mitigation and response and women's empowerment, UNFPA designs gender-responsive AA that addresses the specific needs of women, girls, transgender individuals and other key populations. Our presence in the field ensures a deep understanding of communities' unique vulnerabilities and priorities. UNFPA's anticipatory actions aim to protect and maintain health, dignity, and wellbeing through targeted measures that respond to these unique needs.

UNFPA's AA interventions include:

- Community awareness on SRH and GBV
- Gender-sensitive early warning messaging
- Distribution of prepositioned Reproductive Health kits and clean delivery kits
- Distribution of prepositioned dignity kits and menstrual health kits
- Cash assistance for dignity items and menstrual items
- Cash for access to SRH & GBV services
- Cash for GBV survivors in GBV case management
- Mobile SRH units and teams
- Relocation of birth facilities to safer locations ahead of disasters

UNFPA addresses a key gap in humanitarian aid by ensuring that the needs of women and girls are prioritized before and during climate-related disasters. Evidence from AA pilots shows that gender-responsive anticipatory actions deliver significant benefits for resilience, health, and protection. This work aligns with the Gender Action Plan (GAP) under the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, advancing efforts to close the persistent gender gap in anticipatory action.



In five out of six countries, UNFPA AA in Asia Pacific is implemented for sudden-onset disasters. Afghanistan is the first context where UNFPA is implementing AA for a slow-onset disaster, in response to the forecasted spring 2025 drought.



©UNFPA Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka - Pioneering UNFPA AA outside the CERF framework

UNFPA Sri Lanka is advancing its work on Anticipatory Action, marking it as the first UNFPA country office to do so outside an established AA CERF framework. It operates under the umbrella of a AA framework developed by the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), with triggers identified with the Meteorological Department. Given the central role of cash assistance as a key intervention, UNFPA convened a field workshop on cash assistance in AA, engaging 33 district-level disaster response stakeholders.

The next phase has focused on strengthening local capacity and integrating gender-responsive AA into national disaster preparedness plans, with preparations underway for the launch of a first UNFPA AA pilot in the District of Batticaloa. The AA actions being co-developed with the community and humanitarian actors comprise four key elements: cash assistance for SRH access, distribution of prepositioned kits, mobilizing community volunteers to ensure gender safety in evacuation centres, and early warning messages for pregnant and lactating women.

Results & Impact: best practices

In Bangladesh, a post-AA activation survey found:

- 96.7% of women said the assistance was timely
- 98.3% felt respected or highly respected when receiving support
- 99.3% found the assistance useful in coping with the flood's impact

UNFPA targets individuals based on dynamic realities

such as pregnancy status, high-risk pregnancies, or heightened GBV risks, and reaches key populations including persons of diverse SOGIESC, persons selling or exchanging sex, and persons living with HIV. This approach requires collaboration with diverse field networks and support groups, adding complexity to AA targeting.

In the Philippines, UNFPA pre-identifies pregnant women

who will be in their eighth or ninth month of pregnancy, ahead of the typhoon season, using databases from government partners, validated with implementing partners.

In Nepal, a data-sharing agreement with sister-UN agencies

enables UNFPA to identify pregnant women at risk of complications before monsoon floods. When triggers are activated, outreach is carried out by Female Community Health Volunteers and the Nepal Red Cross.





©UNFPA Pacific

Anticipatory Action in Collaboration with Government Actors

- **Fiji**, like other Pacific island countries, faces a range of climate-related threats, from frequent cyclones, flooding, sea-level rise, and extreme heat, that disproportionately impact women and girls. In addition to pressing SRH needs and high rates of GBV, many women and girls in the sub-region have limited access to early warning systems due to limited phone and internet use.
- In 2023, UNFPA developed a SRH and GBV-focused AA intervention under the OCHA-led framework, in collaboration with key government ministries. Building on long-standing partnerships, UNFPA co-leads efforts with the Fiji Ministry of Health and Medical Services and the Ministry of Women, Children, and Social Protection to deliver maternal health supplies and mitigate GBV risks ahead of tropical cyclones. Activities include distributing prepositioned clean delivery kits, dignity and menstrual health kits tailored to the Pacific context, and GBV support messaging, with plans underway to include cash assistance in preparedness efforts.
- **In Nepal**, UNFPA, together with the other UN agencies, contributed to the finalization of the national AA framework and to the development of a contextualized AA curriculum for the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority (NDRRMA), strengthening institutional capacity for early action.
- **In Sri Lanka**, UNFPA, in collaboration with the Technical Working Group on Anticipatory Action, has developed a Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) chapter for future inclusion in Sri Lanka's National AA framework, thereby ensuring gender-responsive and rights-based approaches are embedded from the outset.



©UNFPA Afghanistan

Afghanistan - leadership of the AA Early Warning System (EWS)

As part of its leadership of the AA Early Warning System (EWS), UNFPA has strengthened collective efforts in engaging communities, especially women, children and persons with disabilities, on thematic early warning messages in drought affected areas. Through consulting AA partners, UNFPA has developed and hosted [AA EWS dashboards](#) that capture community insights, outreach and methods in message dissemination based on communication channels operated by partners, as informed by affected communities.

The dashboards also feature a set of key messages (tested with communities) that partners can adapt to address information gaps at the community level. Additionally, UNFPA leads the design and implementation of radio broadcasts to strengthen community awareness of the potential drought impacts in the targeted areas. This evidence-based mechanism is regularly used by AA partners to support their decision-making process and address adjustments as needed.

UNFPA's Cash and Voucher assistance in Anticipatory Action

Cash assistance is one of the most widely used AA interventions globally and in the Asia-Pacific region ([Anticipatory action in Asia and the Pacific: results of the 2024 regional mapping, AATWG](#)). UNFPA's experience shows it is especially effective for meeting SRH and GBV related needs, helping women, girls and marginalized individuals evacuate safely, access lifesaving healthcare, and maintain dignity during crises.

Since 2020, UNFPA in Bangladesh, Nepal, and the Philippines has integrated cash assistance into their AA plans, with the other UNFPA AA-active countries preparing to follow. Cash assistance is a flexible tool that helps meet the specific needs of vulnerable individuals, such as GBV survivors and pregnant women, who may face barriers accessing services and items in preparation of, and just after, disasters.



©UNFPA Bangladesh

Within UNFPA's gender responsive AA, anticipatory cash can:

- Assist women, adolescent girls and other marginalized individuals to safely evacuate, protect themselves and access life-saving healthcare before an extreme weather event.
- Enable continued access to essential SRH and GBV services and supplies.
- For example, providing cash before a flood allows pregnant women to cover transport costs to reach maternal health facilities, even if they have had to relocate far from home. It also enables women, adolescent girls and transgender individuals to purchase items that preserve their dignity during evacuation or in the immediate aftermath of a disaster.



- In October 2022, UNFPA Nepal, in collaboration with WFP, the Nepal Red Cross Society (NRCS) and the Women's Rehabilitation Center (WOREC), provided cash assistance to 64 pregnant women at risk of obstetric emergencies to cover transport to maternal health facilities with the appropriate level of care, as well as to one GBV survivor to meet urgent life-saving and recovery needs.
- In July 2024, UNFPA Bangladesh's Anticipatory Action reached 18,729 women, adolescent girls, and transgender individuals to reduce SRH and GBV risks ahead of flooding. Cash assistance enabled pregnant women's access to facility-based deliveries, enabled the purchase of dignity items, covered transport to kit distribution sites, and provided vouchers for adolescent girls to buy menstrual hygiene products from selected shops.



"THE RAIN WAS POURING, WE KNEW THE FLOOD WAS COMING. WE BOUGHT SANITARY NAPKINS, PADS AND SOAP. IT HELPED ME AND MY SISTERS STAY HEALTHY."

-Adolescent girl CVA recipient during AA activation for the impending 2024 Jamuna basin floods



©UNFPA Bangladesh

These early successes demonstrate the power of acting before a disaster strikes. UNFPA remains committed to advancing Anticipatory Action so that preparedness becomes the norm, not the exception, in safeguarding the health and rights of women, girls and those most at risk.

UNFPA thanks OCHA and the CERF, and its long-standing donors like Australia and Japan for their vital support in AA preparedness and implementation.

asiapacific.unfpa.org
November 2025

