

This background paper provides an overview of CERF's support for anticipatory action in the humanitarian sector. The document is an updated version of a similar paper prepared for the CERF Advisory Group meeting on June 13-14, 2024.

1. BACKGROUND

Building on a gradual expansion of anticipatory action pilot initiatives since 2019, OCHA is now systematically mainstreaming and scaling up anticipatory action (AA). In its [2023-2026 Strategic Plan](#), OCHA commits to *“support and facilitate a systemic shift to coherent and embedded anticipatory approaches, including anticipatory action. OCHA will use its own financing tools to facilitate, generate evidence for and scale up collective anticipatory action.”* OCHA implements this strategy, inter alia, by continuing to facilitate and expand [coordinated, collective anticipatory action frameworks supported by CERF](#). Taking proactive action aims to help vulnerable communities get ahead of predictable disasters by preventing and mitigating the impact of shocks through fast and dignified anticipatory humanitarian action. Providing predictability and speed to ensure financing is used in a timely and cost-effective way ahead of predicted disasters also helps to protect development gains.¹

Against this backdrop, CERF has been leading the way in advancing financing for anticipatory action in the humanitarian system since 2019 and continues to be the biggest financier of anticipatory action. Starting with its support to the first OCHA-facilitated, coordinated framework in Somalia in 2019 for an initial \$15 million², CERF's level of commitment to anticipatory action has consistently grown over the past five years. CERF is currently guided by a 10 per cent [average](#) anticipatory action expenditure ambition set by the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC). **Today, CERF's pre-arranged funding for AA frameworks amounts to more than \$100 million covering 4 million people in 17 countries.** In 2023 alone, CERF provided more than 50% of all global pre-arranged funding for anticipatory action.³

Anticipatory Action Frameworks

Collective and coordinated anticipatory action is facilitated by OCHA through the development of country-level, multi-partner AA frameworks. Each AA framework consists of four core components that enable predictable and rapid action ahead of crises:

- (1) **Trigger:** a robust forecasting mechanism linked to a clear decision-making process
- (2) **Action Plan:** pre-agreed activities to mitigate the humanitarian impact
- (3) **Financing:** pre-arranged funds (CERF and other) that can be released to immediately initiate time-critical activities
- (4) **Learning:** dedicated learning⁴ activities to systematically capture evidence from these efforts

AA frameworks are designed for out-of-the-ordinary shocks with a severity that is reached roughly every three to five years (i.e., have a 1-in-3 to 1-in-5 return period), and are not meant to address regular seasonal needs.⁵ CERF support is endorsed by the ERC, typically for an initial two years to limit CERF's financial exposure over time, but usually with the possibility of extension and a vision to integrate AA into the Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC) and attract increasing co-financing over time to ensure sustainability.

OCHA support to develop coordinated AA frameworks is requested by the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, including requests for CERF financing. Thus, CERF's support to anticipatory action is field and demand driven. To help

¹ For instance, according to FAO, every dollar invested in anticipatory action results in up to sevenfold returns through avoided disaster impacts and improved local food production.

² The framework was endorsed in 2019 but activated in 2020.

³ Anticipation Hub, 2023 [Global Overview Report 2023 WEB VERSION.pdf \(anticipation-hub.org\)](#). This refers to commitments for pre-arranged financing, not to disbursements.

⁴ All evidence generated from OCHA-facilitated AA frameworks (as well as all frameworks) can be found at [Anticipatory action | OCHA \(unocha.org\)](#).

⁵ 1-in-2 to 1-in-5 return period for the floods framework in Nepal.

ensure a systematic and prioritized investment of resources, OCHA has developed a set of principles and considerations to guide the selection of countries for the development of CERF-supported collective anticipatory action. These considerations include:

- Exposure and vulnerability to the risk; the anticipated level of humanitarian needs
- Feasibility of a predictive analytical model (trigger)
- Availability of CERF funding vis-à-vis the overall anticipatory action portfolio
- Past CERF allocations for country and hazard in question
- Likelihood for crowding-in or mobilization of additional and complementary pre-arranged financing
- Field commitment and capacity to lead the development and implementation of anticipatory action
- Commitment to maximize learning
- Integration of the framework into the country-level emergency planning/humanitarian programme cycle (HPC)

2. CERF'S ANTICIPATORY ACTION PORTFOLIO

Since 2019, CERF has supported anticipatory action in 20 countries as shown in the map.



Current anticipatory action framework commitments

At this time, the ERC has committed \$122.8 million in pre-arranged funding from CERF for OCHA-facilitated AA frameworks covering 4 million people across 17 countries. This represents the total funding amount currently endorsed by the ERC for active AA frameworks and those under development for which pre-approval from the ERC has been obtained. Of this overall commitment, \$108.2 million remain pre-arranged as of 15 November 2024 following recent activations of elements of the frameworks in Bangladesh, Chad and Nepal utilizing a combined \$14.6 million of the overall pre-committed funds. The table below provides an overview of these frameworks and CERF's financial commitment.

Country	Shock	Status	CERF Commitment
AA frameworks currently active or in development			\$122.8M (\$108.2M remaining)
Afghanistan	Drought	In development	\$10.0M
Bangladesh	Storms/Floods	Active since 2020	\$7.9M (\$1.7M remaining) ⁶
Burkina Faso	Drought	Active since 2022	\$15.0M
Chad*	Drought/Floods	Active since 2022 (drought) and 2024 (floods)	\$15.0M (\$10M remaining) ⁷
DRC*	Cholera	Active since 2022	\$1.5M
El Salvador	Drought	Active since 2024	\$2.5M
Ethiopia	Drought/Floods	In development	\$15.0M
Fiji	Storms	Active since 2023	\$2.4M
Guatemala	Drought	Active since 2024	\$4.0M
Haiti	Storms	Active since 2024	\$4.0M
Honduras	Drought	Active since 2024	\$4.0M
Madagascar	Plague/Cyclones	In development	\$3.0M
Mozambique	Storms/Cholera	In development	\$7.5M
Nepal*	Floods	Active since 2021	\$6.5M (\$3.1M remaining) ⁸
Nicaragua	Drought	Active since 2024	\$2.0M
Niger*	Drought/Floods	Active since 2022 (drought) and 2024 (floods)	\$15.0M
Philippines*	Storms	Active since 2021	\$7.5M

*Frameworks expiring in 2024/early 2025 for which extensions will likely be presented to the ERC for consideration.

In addition to existing commitments, active field consultations and preparatory analysis work is underway for potential future AA frameworks with CERF support e.g. in Nigeria (for floods and cholera).

⁶ The Bangladesh floods framework activated on 4 July for one (out of two) river basins. CERF disbursed the partial amount of \$6.2M with \$1.7M still remaining as of 15 November for a potential activation for the second river basin.

⁷ The Chad floods framework activated on 28 September. CERF disbursed the partial amount of \$5M with \$10M still remaining as of 15 November.

⁸ The Nepal floods framework activated on 28 September after water levels at the Chatara River station in the Koshi river basin exceeded the danger level. CERF disbursed the partial amount of \$3.4M with \$3.1M still remaining as of 15 November.

Anticipatory action framework activations and disbursements to date

In total, CERF has since 2020 disbursed \$104m⁹ to eight countries in support of coordinated anticipatory action frameworks after pre-agreed trigger thresholds were met (see table below).

Country	Year	Shock	CERF Amount disbursed
Bangladesh	2020/2024	Floods	\$11.4M
Chad	2024	Floods	\$5.0M
DRC	2022/2023	Cholera	\$1.5M
Ethiopia	2020	Drought	\$20.0M
Nepal	2022/2024	Floods	\$6.6M
Niger	2022	Drought	\$9.5M
Somalia*	2020/2021	Drought	\$35.0M
South Sudan*	2022	Floods	\$15.0M
Total disbursed			\$104.0M

* Not currently active with CERF support

In 2024, (as of 15 November), three frameworks were activated for flooding in Bangladesh, Nepal, and in Chad. In total, **CERF has disbursed \$14.6m for anticipatory action framework activations in 2024.**

In addition, it is noteworthy that CERF-funded anticipatory action frameworks have acted as a **catalyst for additional funding from other sources**. Six of the currently active frameworks in five countries (Bangladesh for floods and storms, Fiji storms, Haiti storms, Nepal floods, and Niger drought) have historically **crowded in at least \$17.5 million in complementary funding** for anticipatory actions from other sources, thus further expanding reach and coverage for people at risk of severe climate shocks. Section 3 provides additional information on co-funding as a means to ensure sustainability beyond CERF funding.

Summary of 2024 anticipatory action framework activations

Bangladesh [July]: The anticipatory action framework for riverine floods in Bangladesh was activated on Thursday, 4 July. CERF released \$6.2 million within just 16 minutes of early warning flood alerts, with other partners contributing another \$2.3 million. Over 80 % of the assistance was delivered within 5 days of the activation, reaching communities ahead of peak flooding and before they were cut off. Together, the UN, the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society, the Government, and other partners reached over 500,000 people prior to severe monsoon flooding in the Jamuna River basin. The affected people received multi-purpose cash transfers, water purification supplies, agricultural support, dignity and baby kits, and information services on gender-based violence. With this anticipatory and fast support, [affected community members](#) secured for example two weeks' worth of food, stored their valuables in safe places and bought a portable stove. As the Jamuna River swelled above the danger line, flooding entire villages, this early aid was even more crucial, given that stagnant floodwaters cut off people's access to post-disaster relief for weeks after the peak floods.

Chad [September]: The anticipatory action framework for riverine floods in Chad, focused on the capital N'Djamena, was activated on Saturday, 28 September based on national and international forecasts, including by the National Metrological Agency (ANAM) and the Directorate of Water Resources (DRE), that the Chari River would swell over the banks, leading

⁹ This includes an anticipatory allocation to South Sudan for flooding in 2022 that was based on forecasts without a formalized framework in place.

to floods in the capital. With over 230,000 people at risk, CERF released \$5 million to support coordinated anticipatory action to mitigate the river's flood impact. The assistance package includes multi-purpose cash transfers, dry storage and sandbag distribution, safe water provision, support for pregnant women and survivors of gender-based violence, and the distribution of dignity and reproductive health kits. This marks the first time on the African continent that multiple UN agencies and national partners have collaborated to deliver integrated, multi-sectoral flood-impact mitigation based on forecast data, creating important momentum to engage other partners across the region, with Niger following with the second collective flood framework in Africa supported by CERF (not yet activated) and other countries interested in replicating and learning from these efforts.

Nepal [September]: The anticipatory action framework for riverine flooding in Nepal was activated at 1 a.m. on Sunday, 29 September following severe monsoon rains. The action trigger was reached in Koshi river basin in the East, leading to release of \$3.4 million from CERF within 6 minutes to support coordinated anticipatory action for at-risk communities. The funding allowed WFP, UNICEF, UNFPA, and FAO, along with their partners, to provide multi-purpose cash transfers; unconditional cash assistance for pregnant women and women at risk of gender-based violence; distribute dignity kits, reproductive health kits, and seed storage bags; provide water treatment and hygiene supplies; rehabilitate WASH facilities; and provide psycho-social support. As the programming progressed, it was also clear that communities outside of the intervention area required support and some of the CERF funding was flexibly reprogrammed to provide immediate post-disaster assistance. WFP, in partnership with an independent research firm, will conduct a joint post-distribution monitoring of the activation on behalf of all partners.

Other 2024 CERF allocations benefitting from anticipatory action framework investments

Using existing AA framework action plans to accelerate post-disaster response: Bangladesh Rapid Response to Tropical Cyclone Remal: In July, the AA activation thresholds were not met early enough for effective anticipatory action ahead of Tropical Cyclone Remal making landfall in Bangladesh. However, as soon as the impact was known to be severe, CERF swiftly adapted and repurposed existing AA projects to support immediate post-disaster relief. Leveraging the groundwork laid by the AA framework, CERF was able to fast-track a rapid response allocation disbursing \$7.5 million shortly after landfall. This proactive and flexible approach capitalizing on existing AA elements, cut the typical disbursement time in half, illustrating the added value of investing in anticipatory action frameworks which can support a faster and more agile decision-making and allocation process, thereby expediting critical assistance, even when specific AA triggers are not met.

Leveraging existing AA framework elements for anticipatory allocations outside of frameworks: Ethiopia anticipatory allocation for drought: In September, CERF allocated \$10 million to Ethiopia to get ahead of a projected drought, benefitting from the ongoing work on a CERF-supported AA framework. When forecasts predicted below-average rainfall in the southeast of the country, CERF promptly made a \$10 million anticipatory allocation complemented by \$10 million from the Ethiopia Humanitarian Fund to mitigate the impact of impending severe drought conditions. This forward-leaning strategy is aimed at protecting livelihoods and preventing a potential nutrition crisis through the repair of critical water points, promotion of irrigation-based agriculture and provision of livestock feed. By leveraging existing elements of the ongoing work for the drought AA framework in development, CERF was able to respond earlier by launching the anticipatory allocation at a critical time. However, a fully finalized AA framework would have significantly accelerated the allocation timeline and enabled automatic disbursement of funds for pre-developed actions even earlier, following an activation of the framework based on pre-agreed triggers.

Expanding the use of AA tools to facilitate proactive rapid response: Hurricane Response across the Caribbean: In view of the 2024 Atlantic hurricane season that was predicted to be above average with an exceptionally high number of named storms and major hurricanes, the analytical work done to establish the forecast monitoring for the Haiti AA storms

framework was used to create a regional storm monitoring tool for the entire Caribbean region. This facilitated proactive monitoring and allowed CERF to make faster and timelier rapid response allocations immediately following major Hurricane Beryl in July (providing \$1.5 million to Grenada and St. Vincent and the Grenadines and \$2.5 million to Jamaica) as well as Hurricane Oscar in October (providing \$3.5 million for Cuba) and Hurricane Rafael in November (providing another \$6 million to Cuba).

Complementing formal anticipatory action frameworks: Other forward-looking CERF approaches

In addition to supporting anticipatory action through formal AA frameworks, CERF continues to be forward leaning by increasingly allocating funding based on forecasts and other global predictive analyses to ensure that people exposed to crises receive assistance as early as possible, ideally ahead of the full impact of a crisis.

In 2023, CERF provided around \$134 million¹⁰ for such proactive allocations to get ahead of rising food insecurity, disease outbreaks, flooding and drought, including \$22 million for crises driven by El Niño. So far in 2024, CERF has provided an estimated \$60 million based on this forward-looking approach. CERF also developed a proactive approach in anticipation of the predicted 2024-2025 La Niña. Building on learning, and principles from the anticipatory action work, this approach aims to enhance the effectiveness and timeliness of CERF-funded humanitarian assistance in countries that are projected to be susceptible to La Niña-related shocks.

Other noteworthy forward-leaning CERF allocations in 2024 include allocations to prevent a locust infestation in Madagascar and allocations ahead of a predicted peak in food insecurity following El Niño-related droughts in several countries in southern Africa, as well as Timor-Leste, and an allocation in February in view of a projected worsening of food insecurity in Sudan.

3. LOOKING AHEAD: SUSTAINING CONTINUED CERF ANTICIPATORY ACTION SCALE-UP

Maintaining the current trajectory of growth of the anticipatory action support may require certain changes to ensure that CERF can adequately manage the growing financial exposure and the associated risk.

Anticipatory financing is unique in that it is pre-committed for disbursement against the risk of a possible disaster taking place over an agreed period of time. This creates a financial commitment for CERF that is different from CERF's traditional funding modalities that are reactive and largely discretionary.

By pre-arranging more funding for more AA frameworks over time, guided by the 10 per cent average annual expenditure ambition for anticipatory action, CERF's financial exposure has continuously increased since 2019. This financial support to AA is being handled through dynamic cashflow management and by carefully considering AA exposure versus cash availability during the year, supported by analysis of seasonal activation probabilities and related financial commitments in each AA framework.

However, to support the scale-up that OCHA has committed to in the coming years¹¹, concrete measures to ensure sustainability and risk management of the AA portfolio for CERF will be a priority. This includes pursuing the following three possible avenues:

¹⁰ To the global overview report on anticipatory action in 2023 this amount is considered as AA in line with practices by other major AA actors ([Global Overview Report 2023 WEB VERSION.pdf \(anticipation-hub.org\)](#)). If counted as anticipatory action, CERF funded 70% of all anticipatory action globally in 2023.

¹¹ For example, at COP28, OCHA committed to continuing scale up of CERF's AA support to climate-related emergencies (<https://www.cop28.com/en/OCHA-package-of-solutions>)

I. Growing CERF's funding level

CERF's anticipatory action portfolio has grown from around \$48 million pre-arranged in 2020 to over \$100 million by the end of 2024. In the same period, CERF's annual income has decreased from \$624 million to \$559 million in 2023, and is currently (as of 15 November) projected to be around \$570 million in 2024. **It is paramount to reverse this trend and for Member States to increase their investment in CERF (towards reaching the \$1 billion funding set by the General Assembly) to allow for a continued scale up of CERF's support to humanitarian action, including to collective anticipatory action.**

In addition to pursuing an increase in 'regular' contributions to CERF from humanitarian donor budgets, this can also happen through innovation, for instance through additional dedicated climate-related contributions to the new [CERF Climate Action Account](#), which, among other, will help CERF increase investments in anticipatory action for climate disasters.

II. Increased co-financing for anticipatory action frameworks

For individual AA frameworks, OCHA has been increasingly seeking to **crowd-in other funding and encourage donors, agencies and other partners to commit funds to the frameworks**. This reduces the reliance on CERF as the only funding source and is a pathway to a gradual reduction in CERF's financial commitment to each framework. This would enable the use of CERF's financing in catalytic ways by freeing funds for other anticipatory action investments. **Out of the active frameworks, six frameworks in five countries (Bangladesh for floods and storms, Fiji, Haiti, Nepal, and Niger) have historically crowded in \$17.5 million in complementary funding for anticipatory actions from other sources** as shown in the table below.

Country	Total Funding	CERF	Co-financing	Co-financing by
Fiji	\$3.8M	\$2.4M (63%)	\$1.4M (37%)	6 UN agencies
Nepal	\$7.9M	\$6.2M (78%)	\$1.7M (22%)	4 UN agencies
Niger	\$21.1M	\$15.0M (71%)	\$6.1M (29%)	3 UN agencies
Bangladesh	\$13.7M	\$7.9M (58%)	\$5.8M (42%)	3 UN agencies / 7 partners
Haiti	\$6.5M	\$4.0M (62%)	\$2.5M (38%)	2 UN agencies

It is expected that this is not fully reflective of all current co-funding for CERF-supported AA frameworks, as co-funding is not always identified and reported as such and, in some cases, may materialize later as a result of an activation. In addition to mobilizing co-funding for the implementation of anticipatory actions (often referred to as "fuel money"), partners are also investing resources into the preparatory phases of an AA framework to ensure operational preparedness ("build money").

OCHA-managed Country-Based Pooled Funds (CBPF) and Regional Humanitarian Pooled Funds (RHPF) also represent a potential co-financing source as they are increasingly using forecasting and early warning mechanisms to make funding decisions. Continued work is underway to leverage opportunities for collaboration and increased complementarity of CERF and CBPFs for anticipatory action. For example, in October 2024, the acting ERC pre-arranged CERF funding of up to \$10m to support the development of a new collective AA framework for drought in Afghanistan, matched by pre-committed co-funding of up to \$10m from the Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund. This will be the first coordinated AA framework supported by complementary funding from both CERF and CBPF from the outset. In 2023, the Yemen Humanitarian Fund committed \$8 million towards a country-level anticipatory action framework for flooding with \$5 million allocated for preparedness measures and the remaining \$3 million designated specifically for AA. In addition, CBPFs in Somalia and South Sudan supported anticipatory action financially in 2023 and 2024.

Other pooled funds, notably IFRC's Disaster Response Emergency Fund (DREF) as well as the START Fund have provided complementary funding for the CERF-supported Bangladesh framework for monsoon floods. AA frameworks have also included dedicated donor co-funding through a participating agency, e.g., financing from Qatar to FAO in Somalia and Bangladesh.

Collaboration with other partners and financing mechanisms is underway (e.g., with *Education Cannot Wait* fund, the World Bank and private sector entities) to identify opportunities for joint and complementary anticipatory action.

III. Financial risk transfer for the anticipatory action portfolio

In addition to pursuing increased core CERF financing to fuel AA scale up, the predictive and infrequent nature of the AA portfolio also lends itself to risk transfer opportunities. **As each framework supported by CERF roughly carries a 1-in-3 to 1-in-5 probability of being triggered in any given year, CERF can - in a normal (average) year - support a large AA portfolio without having the cash at hand to fund the full total commitment.** However, as AA funds are pre-committed, CERF needs to be able to manage unlikely outlier years where most or many frameworks trigger, maybe due to a global climate phenomenon. If such extraordinary situations are to be handled through cash-flow management alone, it will set a natural ceiling for the cumulative AA portfolio that can practically be managed without impacting CERF's overall operation.

To that end, OCHA is currently exploring the potential benefits and feasibility of **a risk transfer/insurance solution for the most extreme (and unlikely) situations, where the risk that is beyond what CERF can manage is taken on by a third party for a premium.** This would enable CERF to significantly increase its ability to pre-arrange AA funding for predictable crises without having a comparable increase in income levels. Analysis and exploratory work are underway in collaboration with the Center for Disaster Protection.
