**Quality criteria for Early Action Protocols**

The following quality criteria are used by the IFRC Validation Committee as a benchmark to determine if the Early Action Protocol[[1]](#footnote-2) is eligible to be funded by the DREF. The ‘comments’ column gives further guidance which should be considered in relation to each of the criteria. If any of the criteria are not adequately met or just partially met, the Validation Committee may require further information or additional work to demonstrate that the criteria are justified.

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| Risk analysis and Trigger Model | Comments |
| The EAP triggers are based on a combination of the analysis of risk factors and the forecast in line with the steps of the [trigger methodology](https://manual.forecast-based-financing.org/chapter/set-the-trigger/) outlined in the FbF manual. The EAP contains a clear trigger statement  **(Section 3 EAP Template – Risk Analysis and Section 4.1 - Trigger Statement)** | The EAP should clearly show how on the basis of available data on vulnerability, exposure and impact of past events the trigger was determined.  The trigger should be clear as this information needs to be verifiable once the trigger is met, so the EAP needs to state in one sentence what exactly the trigger of your EAP will be, for example*: When [source] issues a forecast of at least [probability of magnitude of event or impact], then we will act.*  If the EAP has more than one trigger (e.g. phased or staggered triggers) then each trigger should be clearly explained along with explanation what action will be taken following each trigger and when transfer of the early action funds are required.  For slow onset hazards, the trigger can also be based on a combination of risk factors, forecasts and observation data especially if the impact is a result of accumulative factors (e.g. forecast of second consecutive failed rainy season). If unconventional triggers are used (e.g. combining multiple indicators, including socio-economic indicators like food prices), clear explanation should be given on which criteria/ conditions was used to assign certain weight to each indicator.  In case of drought, it might be more difficult to look back on the historical record of rainfall and its specific impacts and see a clear correlation between the two, as some drought-typical impacts are also highly affected by other socio-economic drivers (insecurity, weather patterns elsewhere that affect local food prices etc). Also consider the links between the effects of dryness and economic, social and environmental impacts and choices. If qualitative information is included in the trigger it should be from an authoritative source. |
| The EAP provides an analysis of historical disaster impact for the selected hazard and provides an evidence-based analysis of exposure and vulnerability.  **(Section 3.1 EAP – Hazard selection and section 3.2 – Exposed Elements and their vulnerability factors)** | The EAP should have an information management system, which shows how risk data is integrated into trigger model and how the data will be updated on regular basis according to the context.  In the case of drought, there may be limited historical disaster data in some countries due to the complexity of drought and also the fact that drought might be a new hazard in some areas (partly due to climate change). The EAP may consider profiling proxy data/ reference data either in other countries/ regions of similar context or general scientific findings to support this analysis. |
| There is an annex with a menu of forecasts and/or other relevant early warning and /or monitoring/surveillance systems, demonstrating a review of all available forecasts data relevant to this hazard.  **(Section 4.2 EAP template – Forecast selection)** | The menu of forecasts should include all available forecasts and list for each forecast or observation used for the trigger the lead time, the skill/confidence, the probability (if possible) and the source.  If other early warning information (non-hydro-met forecasts, satellite observation, socio-economic indicators, etc) are used (e.g. in the case of drought or epidemics), a review of the quality of available early warning and monitoring systems would be needed. |
| Data must be provided that shows that an event of the magnitude/strength of the event that the trigger is based on has caused disastrous humanitarian impact in the region in the past.  **(Section 4.3 EAP template - Definition and justification of impact level)** | The DREF allocates funding for EAPs to reduce the impacts of extreme events of a strength or magnitude that in the past have required humanitarian assistance. In order to demonstrate that the selected hazard has caused extreme humanitarian impacts in the past, information on the previous impacts of the selected hazard in the country should be provided.  In the case of drought, there may be limited historical disaster data in some countries due to the complexity of drought and also the fact that drought might be a new hazard in some areas (partly due to climate change). Regions that have rarely experienced droughts will be less resilience to these shocks and have less coping capacity and strategies. These may be the most vulnerable to the impacts of drought even though historical data might be limited. In these cases, climate change projections could also be taken into consideration (e.g. changing drought patterns). |
| There is a map or a clear methodology that will tell the NS where action should be taken based on a combination of vulnerability, exposure, and the forecast, when the EAP is activated based on the trigger model.  **(Section 4.4 EAP template – Identification of the intervention area)** | In the most advanced form, the forecast would be digitally combined with vulnerability and exposure information, to show which areas are predicted to be most severely impacted. This will provide a map-based tool or a list of prioritized districts villages, municipalities or other geographical areas where the early actions will be activated. Where no digital system is available, the combination of forecast and vulnerability/exposure indicators could also be done manually or qualitatively, explaining the process of deciding how the National Society will select where the action will take place. |
| The EAP trigger chapter includes calculations and evidence for the following points:   1. Frequency of the trigger being reached 2. Minimum 5-year return period of the event 3. Probability of acting in vain (false alarm ratio) 4. Lead time | An extreme event could be forecasted several times in a decade *(frequency of trigger being reached)*, but only happen once in that decade *(return period of the event).*  Forecasts/observation thresholds used for the trigger will provide the probability of the event happening, once the trigger is reached. A 5-year return period means that in any year there is a 20% chance or less of the event occurring. In exceptional cases, in very large countries with distinctive climate zones, the 5-year return period can be applied to separate regions, with appropriate justification.  Probability of acting in vain will need to be calibrated. If a seasonal forecast is used, the probability of acting in vain may be higher, so the EAP needs to include clear explanation if staggered triggers and stop mechanisms have been considered, and strong consideration of do no harm.  In the case of drought there might be more than one trigger, which will help to contribute to a lower ratio of acting in vain. |
| Early Actions | Comments |
| Forecast-based Early Actions are selected based on the reduction of risk that they will provide. The EAP describes the main steps used to determine which actions were selected to reduce a specific disaster impact.  **(Section 5.1 EAP template – Early Action Selection Process)** | The FbF design process described in the FbF Manual (chapter 4.2), should be followed and described in the EAP (it can be adapted to the respective context). If some disaster impacts are not addressed, an explanation should be provided and also indicate which actions were considered but not chosen |
| For each early action selected, the EAP must include a Theory of Change and show that the action chosen is appropriate to reduce the specific risk. Selected actions should be socially acceptable according to the context and there should be evidence of its effectiveness.  **(Section 5.1 EAP template – Early Action Selection Process and Section 5.2 EAP template – Evidence base)** | If evidence is available, it should ideally show that the action has reduced impact in prior (test or real) activations. In case evidence is available, there should be a description on the effectiveness of the action in reducing the targeted impact.  If evidence it´s not available, the EAP should describe in detail how they foresee that the action chosen will reduce the specific risk. |
| Actions are implemented in the window between the forecast and the impact of the extreme event.  **(Section 5.5 EAP template – Feasibility)** | It needs to be shown that actions can be implemented in the lead time provided by the forecast with enough time for the population to make use of the assistance received.  For slow onset disasters, the timing of impact may need to be interpreted as the timing of an expected spike in impacts or the expected peak of impacts, but the actions would still have to be early enough to reduce impact. In the case of drought, we will need flexibility as it is challenging to identify this specific moment. Each would be context specific. |
| The EAP support the Principles of “[Good Humanitarian Donorship](https://www.ghdinitiative.org/ghd/gns/principles-good-practice-of-ghd/principles-good-practice-ghd.html)” and “Do No Harm”  **(Section 5.4 EAP template 5.4 - Usefulness of actions in case of non-occurring event)** |  |
| The EAP includes an operational matrix with the activities to be implemented according to the IFRC focus areas and strategies for implementation  **(Section 5.3 EAP template - IFRC Operational Strategy)** | To facilitate the overview of all the actions to be taken by sector and their timeline, an operational matrix should be used. This operational matrix follows the IFRC programming framework, which should be aligned with the structure of the EAP budget. |
| If relevant for the type of intervention, actions are in line with accepted international and/or national standards, regulations, laws for the relevant sector. E.g. [SPHERE](https://www.spherestandards.org/), [LEGS](https://www.livestock-emergency.net/download-legs/), [Minimum standards for protection, gender and inclusion in emergencies](https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2018/11/Minimum-standards-for-protection-gender-and-inclusion-in-emergencies-LR.pdf).  **(Section 5.3 EAP template - IFRC Operational Strategy)** |  |
| The EAP includes a 4W description indicating who does what, where, and when. This should include also actors outside the structure of the National Society.  **(Section 6.1 EAP template – Early Action implementation process)** | The described implementation process shows that each step of the activation has been thought through and considered and that implementation in the lead time available is possible. The set of tasks described in this section should cover all activities from the moment the trigger is reached (Day 1) to the completion of post-impact surveys (Day X). |
| EAP activation | Comments |
| There is a mechanism in place to monitor the forecasts (ad /or trigger related indicators) and alert relevant actors as soon as a trigger is reached to initiate the early actions. This implies that the process to trigger the FbF system is clearly understood by all the key staff of the NS and relevant partners.  **(Section 6.2 EAP template - Trigger activation system)** | Ideally, there is a system in place to automatically monitor the forecasts and send an automatic message of alert to relevant actors as soon as a trigger is reached. It is expected that this will be executed by the national meteorological office and/or national DRM authority. If this automatic system does not exist, a mechanism needs to be in place to monitor the forecasts/indicators and alert relevant actors as soon as a trigger is reached to initiate the early actions  If the trigger is based on a combination of multiple indicators (e.g. for slow onset hazard) and no suitable product exists yet, the EAP needs to explain who will provide the data and how it will be combined and analyzed. This may need to be a consortium of institutions, each providing pieces of information, therefore a clear communication mechanism is vital.  Any risk (e.g. certain data is not collected in time) and mitigation measures (e.g.MOU) should be outlined. |
| The EAP clearly explains how the target beneficiaries within the intervention areas will be selected  **(Section 6.3 EAP template – Selection of target population)** | Once an intervention area has been identified, the NS still has to have a clear process to select which households in that area it will provide assistance to. The selection process needs to be feasible within the lead time. |
| The EAP includes the description of a stop mechanism for forecast triggers with a lead time of more than three days. For forecast triggers with a lead time of less than 3 days, the EAP should include the description of what the National Society would do if the forecast changes in strength or location within the last three days before the event  **(Section 6.4 EAP template – Stop mechanism)** | If the forecast triggers action, but then in subsequent days the forecast reduces below the trigger, the action should be able to stop. Exceptions might be accepted if the trigger chosen has a very high probability.  In some cases, a stop mechanism may not be possible (very short lead time or limited frequency of forecast for seasonal forecast) |
| M&E | Comments |
| The EAP includes an M&E plan to 1) assess the impact of the early actions and the extreme event after each activation and 2) identify if all activities were carried out as planned and document how early actions were implemented  3) learn from the process to improve the system in the future  **(Section 7 EAP template – Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL).** | Ideally, the M&E system should be set up in a way that the impact of the event in the community that received early actions is assessed by using data from comparison communities. Depending on the specific context of the hazard an impact evaluation might only be done several months after finishing the implementations of the actions. |

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| National Society’s capacity to implement the EAP | Comments |
| The EAP describes the National Society operational (Cash, WASH, Food Security, Shelter etc.) and administrative (Finance, PMER, Human Resources) capacity and experience to implement the EAP. If no capacity exists, the EAP describes how they plan to address this limitation in order to implement the EAP effectively and efficiently.  **(Section 8.1 EAP template - 8.1 Operational, thematic and administrative capacity)** |  |
| The EAP describes its alignment with the National Society Disaster Risk Management strategy (e.g. the existing contingency plan, response plan, DRR plan etc.)  **(Section 8.2 EAP template – Strategies and plans)** | In the mid-term the EAP should be integrated in the DRM strategy. |
| Budget | Comments |
| The EAP includes a budget in the IFRC template, detailing the costs for the readiness activities, pre-positioning and trigger-based Early Action.  The budget upholds to the established percentages: A maximum of 65% of the EAP budget can be allocated for readiness activities and prepositioned stock.  **(Section 9.1 EAP template – Budget)** | The EAP budget consists of all the costs linked to the activation of the EAP as well as readiness and pre-positioning costs. |
| The EAP should reach ideally a target minimum of 10,000 people  **(Section 9.1 EAP template – Budget)** | If EAPs are foreseen for sparsely populated areas or with high quality early actions, lower household numbers can be accepted.  Given the impacts of drought may be acutely felt for an entire calendar year (e.g. until there is a subsequent good harvest), or longer, it is possible that the most effective actions to support people will be expensive ones, or actions that are staggered and layered one on top of each there (e.g. cash + seeds and fertilizers). With appropriate justification the validation committee might accept exceptions to this criterion. |
| The shelf life of the items to be prepositioned equals or exceeds the EAP lifespan and there is a plan for stock management  **(Section 9.2 EAP template – Prepositioning)** | To ensure the feasibility of the rapid distribution of items in the short timeframe between forecast and event, prepositioning of goods might be necessary. They should normally have a lifetime of at least the lifecycle of the EAP and should only be replenished after an activation. |
| Coordination | Comments |
| The Forecast based Financing process has been conducted in a participatory manner with involvement of key stakeholders, including communities, movement components and external actors, especially Hydro-Met agencies, disaster risk management authorities, government ministries, development organizations, other hazard specific agencies (local and national level), and other major anticipatory humanitarian actors in the country/region.  **(Section 2 EAP template – Key actors)** | In order to avoid creating parallel systems and to minimize additional discussions on permissions, etc. when a trigger occurs, all relevant key stakeholders in the country should be involved in the development, and when necessary, the approval of the EAP. |
| The EAP should have prior approval from all relevant stakeholders. The EAP must be endorsed by the leadership of the submitting NS. The EAP should also be endorsed by other key relevant stakeholders, such as the national Hydro-Met agencies NHMS and the respective DRM authorities.  **(Section 10 EAP template – EAP endorsement)** |  |

1. Note that the Simplified Early Action Protocol has its own simplified quality criteria and feedback form. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)