IFRC

ANTICIPATORY ACTION AND NATIONAL SOCIETY PREPAREDNESS

Guidance for National Societies

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PREPAREDNESS FOR EFFECTIVE RESPONSE

CONTENTS

INTEGRATING ANTICIPATORY ACTION AND NATIONAL SOCIETY PREPAREDNESS: Harnessing synergies towards complementary goals

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Purpose

This guide is meant to help Red Cross Red Crescent actors working on Anticipatory Action (AA) use the Preparedness for Effective Response (PER) approach—an existing methodology promoted by the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) to systematically measure and monitor the necessary capacities for response operations—to assess existing National Society capacities relevant to AA and plan, monitor, or evaluate capacities strengthened by AA programmes.

Content

This document details how the PER approach connects to wider Forecast-based Financing (FbF) processes. In doing so, it builds upon the IFRC's guidance note on *Connections Between National Society Preparedness for Effective Response and Forecast-based Financing.* It does not detail how to conduct a PER process or other ways to engaged with the PER Mechanism, as extensive IFRC guidance already exists on the matter and can be found *here*. More information can be requested by contacting IFRC regional National Society Preparedness focal points or writing to *ns.preparedness@ifrc.org*

Audience

This document is intended for anyone within or supporting a National Society that is planning, developing, or implementing either an Anticipatory Action programme or the PER approach. It will be particularly useful for AA programme staff and managers. It assumes a baseline level of knowledge and/or available support on AA and PER. For those new to one or both topics, we suggest consulting the *FbF Practitioners Manual* and/or the *PER reference information - promotional pack*, where different guidance are available; or reach out for support using the links below.

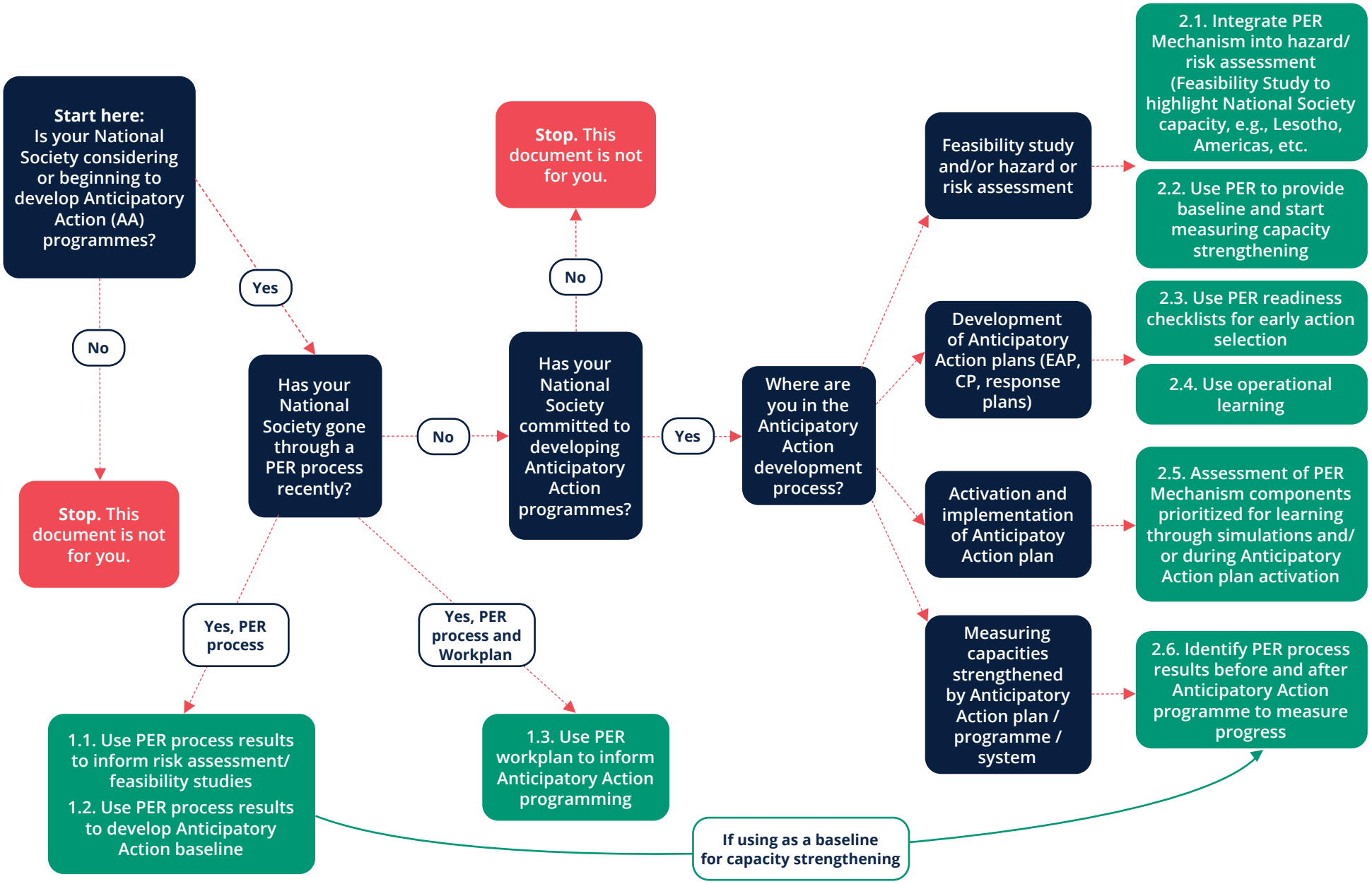
How to get the most out of this guide

The guide is designed to provide guidance on how to link Anticipatory Action and Preparedness for Effective Response no matter what phase of either programme a National Society is in. ***It is not designed to be read continuosly from start to finish.*** Begin by using the decision tree in Figure 1 to locate where your National Society is in the PER and/or AA process. Click on the corresponding box in the figure to be linked to suggestions and examples on how both processes can build upon one another.

Support and feedback

For additional support in using this guide and linking AA and PER, or to provide feedback on this guide, please contact Gana Gantulga (*gantsetseg.gantulga@ifrc.org*), Arielle Tozier de la Poterie (*arielle.tozierdelapoterie@germanredcross.de*), or *ns.preparedness@ifrc.org*.

Figure 1: Decision-tree—how to link Preparedness for Effective Response and Anticipatory Action



Background and rationale

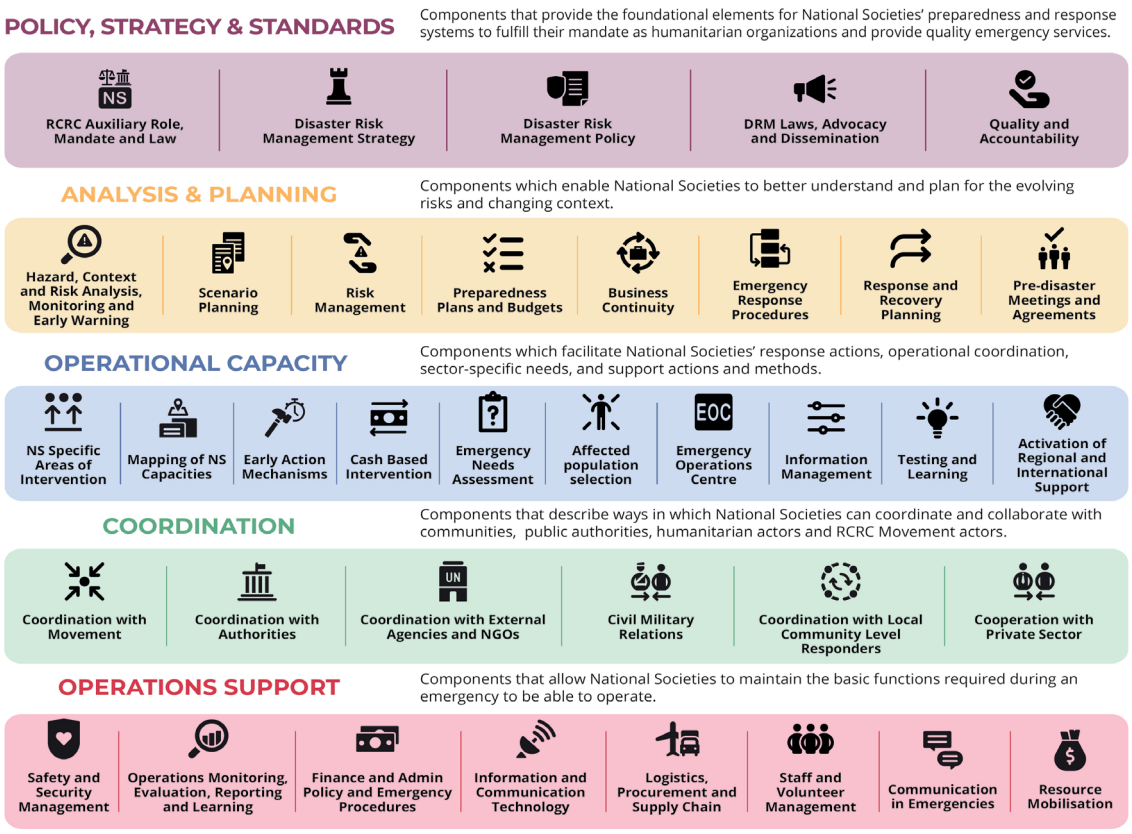
Anticipatory Action (AA) programmes are gaining traction within the Red Cross Red Crescent movement. Developing AA in Early Action Protocols (EAPs) is often a comprehensive process that is supported by broader capacity strengthening initiatives. To capture the full value of AA—not just to the recipients of early action, as done through post-activation impact assessments, but to overall institutional capacity and response systems—it is essential that National Societies find ways to systematically document how the development of AA systems contributes to broader capacity strengthening. Furthermore, having a strong, well-functioning National Society is crucial to sustaining AA after external support for programme development ceases. Rather than developing new tools to measure the co-benefits of AA, it makes sense to link such measurements into existing tools and approaches within the Movement.

a. The PER approach and its process

The Preparedness for Effective Response (PER) approach is a structured and systematic way of interacting with the knowledge, capacity, systems and processes that a National Society uses to respond to an emergency. It provides National Societies with a cyclical process to systematically measure and assess its strengths and weaknesses, identify priority areas for improvement, and develop a workplan to move towards short- to long-term response capacity strengthening goals. The process consists of five phases (orientation, assessment, analysis and prioritization, workplan, and action and accountability), in which a National Society assesses and works on improving its response mechanism).

The PER Mechanism consists of 37 components divided into 5 areas: Policy, Strategy and Standards; Analysis and Planning; Operational Capacity, Coordination; and Operations Support (see Figure 2). Many of these components are required to effectively implement early actions. For instance, the ability to conduct and use hazard risk analysis, receive forecast information, and transmit early warning messages are all encompassed in component 6 ("Hazard, Context and Risk Analysis, Monitoring and Early Warning"). Additionally, the ability to successfully act ahead of a hazard will also likely depend upon the functions, capacities and practices of Operational Support components related to logistics, procurement, HR, volunteer management, and finance and admin in emergencies. The PER Mechanism is a standardised summary of any National Society's preparedness and response system. Therefore, understanding strengths and gaps across all PER components provides a clear indication of a National Society's capacity to implement anticipatory action.

Figure 2: Overview of the PER Mechanism's areas and components



While working through the PER Mechanism could be a precondition for a successful Anticipatory Action implementation, many National Societies and/or AA projects will not have the time, nor resources, needed to engage in the full PER process. However, it is possible to assess what capacities a National Society will require to implement an Early Action Protocol and demonstrate the co-benefits of AA processes using subsets of the 37 components. This will help determine where AA can, will, or has contributed to advancing a National Society's capacity strengthening needs and goals. Additional guidance on how to engage with the PER Mechanism has been developed and can be found *here*.

1. SCENARIO 1: Starting an Anticipatory Action programme with a National Society that has conducted a PER process

If a PER process has been conducted by a National Society, it will already have evidence about its capacities in terms of Disaster Risk Management strategies/plans/policies, Analysis and Planning for response, Operational Capacities, and emergency service interventions that it provides (shelter, distribution, first aid, recovery, WASH and others), Coordination with national and international stakeholders, as well as support services in times of emergencies. This knowledge can be used in the following ways.

1.1. Using PER process results to inform risk/hazard assessment/feasibility study

Though feasibility studies provide robust information on historical hazards, impact analysis, and the availability and reliability of forecasts, there is no common/standardized way of collecting data on National Society capacities. Incorporating PER assessment information into a feasibility study is an ideal way to fill this gap. If a National Society has collected evidence against the PER Mechanism through a PER process, a readiness check, or in other ways, those conducting the feasibility study should request access to these results and incorporate them into the study. Several existing feasibility studies have incorporated PER[1] results, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the National Society capacities to be considered for subsequent phases of AA programmes (see box 1).

Box 1: PER process results and feasibility studies

In one example, the feasibility study used information from the PER process results to capture:

- The structure of the National Society
- Geographical presence in-country (branches, sub-branches)
- Active volunteers
- Financial systems and procedures
- Standard Operating Procedures
- Templates for rapid needs assessments
- Locations of strategically located warehouses and stocks
- Reporting, monitoring, evaluation and learning capacities in times of response (e.g., existing focal points, templates, DREF lessons learned workshops, among others).

1.2. Using PER process results to develop an Anticipatory Action baseline

If you are beginning an Anticipatory Action project and wish to measure relevant capacities, PER Mechanism components and benchmarks offer a framework for collecting baseline data. If recent PER process results are available, component scores can be used as an indication of baseline, pre-AA capacity within the National Society. This new or most recent assessment would then serve as a baseline against which to measure progress. See section 2.2 for a comprehensive explanation on how to use PER to measure capacities built through AA development.

1 *The results of a Disaster Response Capacity Enhancement (DRCE), the precursor to PER, can also be consulted/used.*

Box 2: Lesson: verify your baseline

Experience shows that even if a National Society has recent information collected against benchmarks from a PER assessment, it is important to assess the accuracy and relevance of such information before using it as a baseline. For example, a National Society beginning its Anticipatory Action programme in 2022 looked to its 2019 PER results to inform their baseline. However, since considerable time had elapsed, it was important to review and update the component ratings. It became clear that many of the component ratings were inaccurate for the current context. The National Society had ranked itself as a 4 or 5 in several areas that are key to Forecast-based Financing (FbF), indicating that most staff understood policies and procedures, or that the National Society served as a model or a trainer for others, but this was not the case. Recognizing that the 2019 rankings were dated, and that unrealistic baseline numbers would result in inaccurate measurement of change (i.e., under-reporting potential gains or showing losses), the National Society chose to reassess key benchmarks related to their AA programme and use those as a baseline instead.

1.3. Using the PER work plan to inform Anticipatory Action programming

Since the PER workplan outlines short- to long-term actions to strengthen a National Society's capacity to respond to disasters, it can be used to inform Anticipatory Action plans. AA is inherently connected to emergency response. Often, AA actions are the same as those performed in response settings, but the timing is shifted to before a hazard's impact. For example, distributing cash and non-food items (NFI), strengthening shelters, and evacuating populations are typical emergency services that National Societies can deliver before or after an event, as auxiliaries to the authorities. Therefore, PER plans that aim to strengthen systems and procedures to deliver such services could also be part of AA projects.

AA focal points could also use PER workplans to inform the selection of effective anticipatory actions. PER assessment results and workplans encompass the emergency services that the National Society provides, such as cash and voucher assistance (CVA), WASH activities, first aid, shelter, Restoring family links (RFL), food security and livelihoods, distribution of NFIs, or management of dead bodies. Understanding in which areas the National Society has expertise is critical to align anticipatory actions to its capacities. If a National Society has agreements with financial service providers and has delivered cash and voucher assistance during recent responses, CVA may be a feasible and appropriate anticipatory action.

In anticipation of the Dzud, the Mongolian Red Cross and the IFRC provided cash assistance to help those most vulnerable to withstand the expected impact. © IFRC/Mongolian Red Cross Society, 2023.

Box 3: The PER process and feasibility studies

The Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre (RCCC) and the German Red Cross (GRC) supported another National Society in conducting a feasibility study in 2019/20, with the purpose of identifying key hazards that could be forecast with sufficient lead time to allow for Anticipatory Action. The target National Society decided to conduct a full PER process based on the outcome of the PER orientation phase.

The PER-AA assessment took nearly two weeks, during which time the RCCC, the partner National Society, and the target National Society thoroughly assessed, prioritized, and analysed existing capacities, culminating in the development of a work-plan. The National Society chose a cold wave as its AA hazard with an expected 10-day lead time. With this information, it was easy for stakeholders to discuss PER Mechanism components and brainstorm anticipatory actions using that scenario.

The resulting PER workplan was fed into the overall AA project. Though the cold wave scenario was only applicable to certain branches and more focused discussions followed, the workplan channelled an increase in the National Society's institutional capacity, demonstrating that these processes can happen simultaneously. Table 1 depicts the PER components partners that the partners prioritized; these components then formed the basis of a PER-AA workplan (Table 2).

Table 1: PER Components prioritized in the above example

Component	Rating	Prioritisation
2. DRM Strategy	1. Does not exist	High
6. Hazard, Context and Risk Analysis, Monitoring and Early Warning	2. Partially exists	High
7. Scenario planning	4. Exists, could be strengthened	High
11. Emergency Response Procedures (SOPs)	3. Needs improvement	High
13. Pre-disaster meetings and agreements	2. Partially exists	High
16. Early Action Mechanisms	2. Partially exists	High
19. Affected Population Selection	4. Exists, could be strengthened	High
21. Information Management (IM)	1. Does not exist	High
22. Testing and Learning	4. Exists, could be strengthened	High
25. Coordination with authorities	4. Exists, could be strengthened	High
28. Coordination with local community level responders	2. Partially exists	High
30. Safety and security management	2. Partially exists	High
34. Logistics, procurement and supply chain	2. Partially exists	High

Table 2: PER-AA workplan for the above example

Strategic GOAL	Description
OUTCOME 1	**NS will define its DRM strategy and policies, and will strengthen emergency procedures for effective response in times of disasters**
Output 1.1	NS Disaster Risk Management multi-year (3-5 years) strategy is defined
Output 1.2	NS SOPs are updated based on previous actions
Output 1.3	Social media/comms policy is adopted and disseminated across NS volunteers at all levels
OUTCOME 2	**NS will strengthen its early and anticipatory action approach to disasters by leveraging a Forecast-based Financing project**
Output 2.1	Hazard, context and risk analysis is improved by NS to better anticipate disaster risks
Output 2.2	Disseminate information to other branches that are not involved in the AA project to advocate and create awareness about anticipatory actions to disasters
Output 2.3	Share the lessons learned from AA project and involve branches in the simulation exercises whenever is possible
OUTCOME 3	**NS operational support capacities will have improved to better respond to emergencies and crises**
Output 3.1	Recruitment of logistics personnel to set up NS logistics systems and procedures
Output 3.2	NS has strengthened its procedures for safety and security management of staff and volunteers, particularly during a response
Output 3.3	Monitoring, evaluation and reporting of the workplan.
Output 3.4	IM focal point is assigned and trained, and strengthens branch capacities on IM

Lessons learned

The target National Society could have shortened the 4-day PER assessment phase combined with an additional week of analysing, prioritizing and developing a workplan to allocate more days in connecting to anticipatory action and feasibility study findings. Readiness checks on PER could have provided an opportunity to invest more time on specific anticipatory actions for cold waves (identified as a priority hazard in the feasibility study), based on the current capacities of the headquarters and branches, given that high-risk branches affected by cold waves present in the workshop.

On the other hand, this example illustrates that anticipatory action plans are quite localized, and therefore, strengthening of overall institutional capacities should work simultaneously. For instance, the AA workplan development could be done with one branch, while at the same time strengthening the overarching DRM policy/ambitions of the National Society as a whole.

2. SCENARIO 2: Starting an Anticipatory Action programme in a National Society that has not undergone a PER process or begun an Anticipatory Action feasibility study[2]

2.1. Using the PER Mechanism as part of Anticipatory Action feasibility study

Starting Anticipatory Action and PER processes at the same time, this is an ideal scenario that allows for maximum flexibility and integration of the two processes. Feasibility studies may contain extensive analyses on historical data about hazards, their impacts, location, national hydrometeorological service capabilities, legal environment for anticipatory action, disaster risk management laws, and National Societies, among others. Since information about National Society capacities in feasibility studies is not standardised, the PER Mechanism can provide more streamlined and concrete data in this regard. The Mechanism can point to operational capacities, emergency services that the National Society delivers, existing Disaster Risk Management (DRM) procedures and plans, and coordination dynamics with wider national and international DRM stakeholders. This information can later be incorporated into the AA programme development (e.g., selection of hazards, early actions, trigger development, EAP).

The most resource-intensive alternative is to go through a full PER process, including the orientation and assessment phases, covering all 37 components with the National Society's leadership, heads of departments, personnel from support services, and technical sectors, and feed this information into the feasibility study. The duration of the PER assessment will depend on the type of assessment (i.e., self-assessment, simulation, operational and post-operational). All these types of assessments require external accompaniment from a trained PER facilitator.

Based on previous lessons and practice, there are adaptations that can be made for the PER process to capture the basic information regarding a National Society's capacity. A less intensive way to integrate PER into feasibility studies is to use the PER readiness check to inform discussions with National Society stakeholders, thereby assessing the status of the PER Mechanism's components as part of a data collection and consultation process. Questions to be covered include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Does the National Society have a clear mandate to respond to disasters and crises in the country?
- Does the National Society have DRM policies and strategies in place?
- How does the National Society receive forecast information? How does it use it (e.g., building scenarios)?
- Does the National Society have contingency plans, SOPs, pre-agreements and regular meetings with national authorities, the private sector, and other organizations?
- How is the Emergency Operations Centre / incident management system structured?
- How does the National Society conduct emergency needs assessment and select target populations?
- Has it successfully applied for Emergency appeals, DREFs, and other funding mechanisms for emergency response?
- What are its administrative (exceptional approvals), HR (deployment to HQ-branches), Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting (PMER), and Information Management (IM) (HQ-branch-internal/external stakeholders) functions in times of emergencies and what are the existing procedures?
- How does the National Society address the safety and security of staff and volunteers during emergencies?
- What are its procurement and finance procedures? How is this conducted?
- Where are the strategic warehouses in high-risk areas located? Is there an up-to-date list of items in the warehouses?[3]

2 *Country mapping where PER is being implemented*
3 *The full readiness checklist provides more information*

2.2. Using PER to provide a baseline and start measuring capacity strengthening and documenting the co-benefits of Anticipatory Action programmes

Given that one of the main purposes of the PER process is to systematically document National Society capacities, it can be used to measure Anticipatory Action contributions to National Society capacity strengthening efforts. Critically, this contributes toward the strategic objective of documenting the co-benefits of AA programmes. Recent PER results can be used as a baseline to establish key capacities before AA programmes are implemented, or the National Society can choose to produce new measurements.

As AA is not likely to impact all 37 components in the PER Mechanism, the National Society may wish to identify a subset of PER components most likely to be impacted by the AA project and track them over time, rather than conducting a full PER process. The initial assessment establishes a baseline using a globally agreed-upon rating system (0-5) for each component of the PER Mechanism (Figure 3). Over the course of project implementation, stakeholders should keep these PER capacities in mind and track activities that contribute to increasing them.

At the end of the project (and at its mid-point if resources allow), the same components should be assessed using a similar process, and so determine how much of the progress can be attributed to investments in AA. There is no set list of components a National Society should prioritize, as this selection will depend on existing National Society priorities, capacities, and the focus of the AA programme. Table 3 provides examples of the PER components that three different National Societies chose to strengthen through their AA efforts.

Mazen Abdullah, Disaster Preparedness Project Manager from the IFRC Delegation in Baghdad, gives instructions to the Red Crescent volunteers at the disaster preparedness workshop. © IFRC, 2021

Figure 3: Rating PER Component

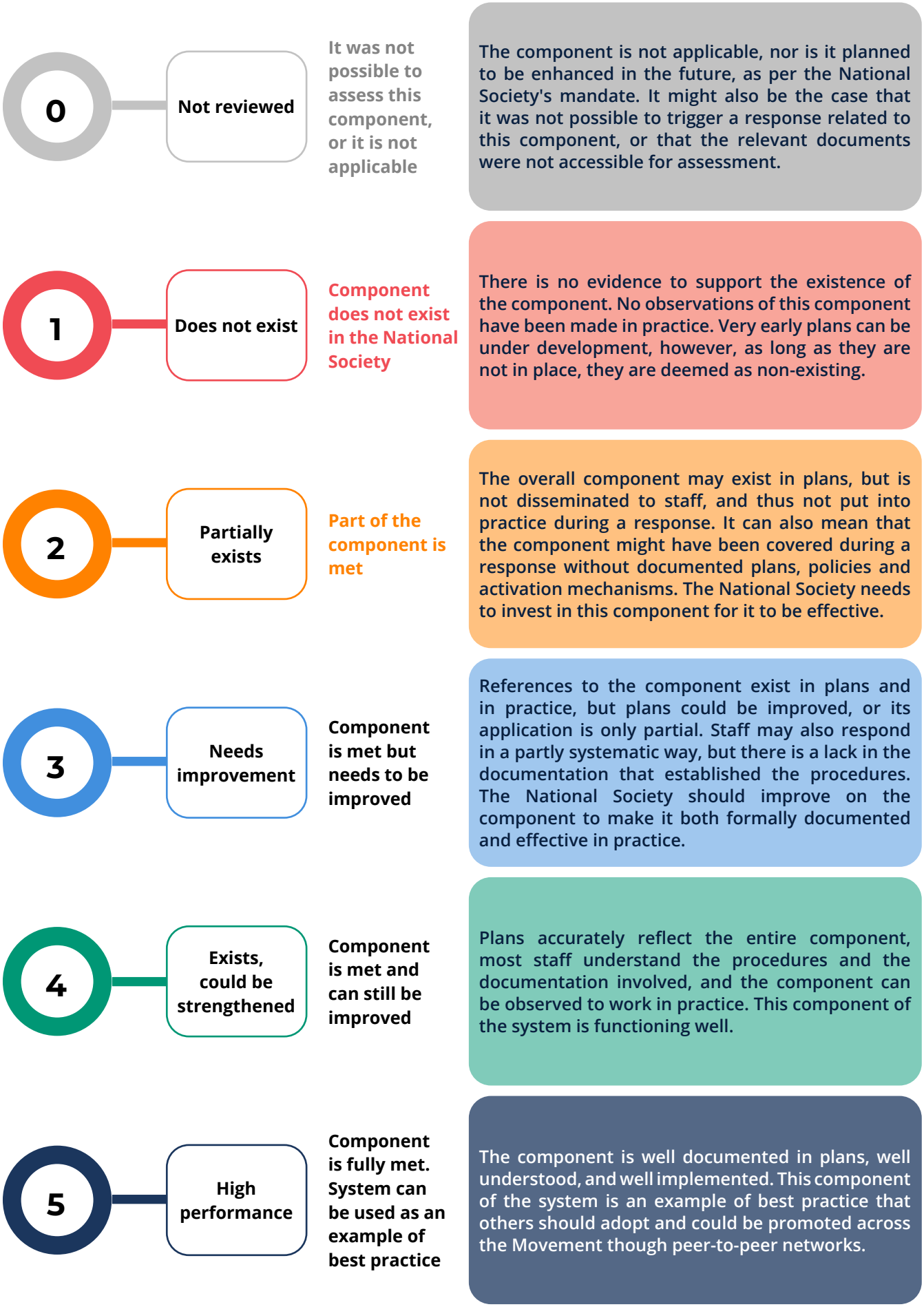


Table 3: PER Mechanism components prioritized for Anticipatory Action in Lesotho, Guatemala and Honduras

LESOTHO	HONDURAS	GUATEMALA
Analysis and Planning		
		6. Hazard, Context and Risk Analysis, Monitoring and Early Warning
		7. Scenario Planning
	11. Emergency Response Procedures (SOPs)	**11.** Emergency Response Procedures (SOPs)
Operational Capacity		
14. National Society-Specific Areas of Intervention: not specified	**14.** National Society-Specific Areas of Intervention: Livelihood security and safety nets	
15. Mapping of National Society Capacities		
16. Early Action Mechanisms	**16.** Early Action Mechanisms	**16.** Early Action Mechanisms
17. Cash-based Intervention	**17.** Cash-based Intervention	**17.** Cash-based Intervention
18. Emergency Needs Assessment	**18.** Emergency Needs Assessment	
19. Affected Population Selection		
20. Emergency Operations Centre (EOC)		**20.** Emergency Operations Centre (EOC)
21. Information Management (IM)	**21.** Information Management (IM)	**21.** Information Management (IM)
22. Testing and Learning		**22.** Testing and Learning
23. Activation of Regional and International Support		
Coordination		
		25. Coordination with Authorities
Operations Support		
30. Safety and Security Management		**30.** Safety and Security Management
31. Operations Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Learning		
32. Finance and Administration Policy and Emergency Procedures	**32.** Finance and Administration Policy and Emergency Procedures	
33. Information and Communication Technology (ICT)		**33.** Information and Communication Technology (ICT)
34. Logistics, Procurement, and Supply Chain	**34.** Logistics, Procurement, and Supply Chain	**34.** Logistics, Procurement, and Supply Chain
35. Staff and Volunteer Management	**35.** Staff and Volunteer Management	**35.** Staff and Volunteer Management
36. Communication in Emergencies	**36.** Communication in Emergencies	
37. Resource Mobilization	**37.** Resource Mobilization	**37.** Resource Mobilization

The following examples illustrate two ways in which National Societies have used the PER Mechanism to track capacity strengthening resulting from Anticipatory Action: using a readiness check or a lighter-touch approach to PER to determine which components to prioritize and to establish a baseline. Box 4 highlights possible challenges to using PER as a baseline measurement.

2.2.1. Example 1: Using a partial PER Mechanism to measure capacity strengthening

When beginning its Anticipatory Action activities, the implementing National Society did not have recent PER results to draw from. Consequently, at the beginning of its AA project it chose to identify and rank the PER components that relate to its AA efforts. In coordination with the National Disaster Management Agency and the National Meteorological Services, the National Society held a workshop entitled "National Society Operational Capacity Assessment for Drought Early Action", in which Senior Management from National Society Headquarters and District Branches conducted a self-assessment of the 18 components falling under the Operational Capacity and Operations Support categories of the PER Mechanism. The PER tool was used to conduct the assessment in one day (see Box 4 for an outline of the overall investment).

Box 4: Investments in measuring capacity strengthening using the PER Mechanism – example 1:

- **Format:** 2-day workshop, one day dedicated to self-assessment, the other to AA matters
- **Areas addressed:** Operational Capacity and Operations Support
- **Number of components:** 18
- **Total time invested:** Two weeks (two days of PER self-assessment workshop, 10 days for analysis of assessment and report finalization)
- **Cost:** Approx. 2,300 CHF
- **Number of participants:** 26 National Society staff members from the headquarters and branches.

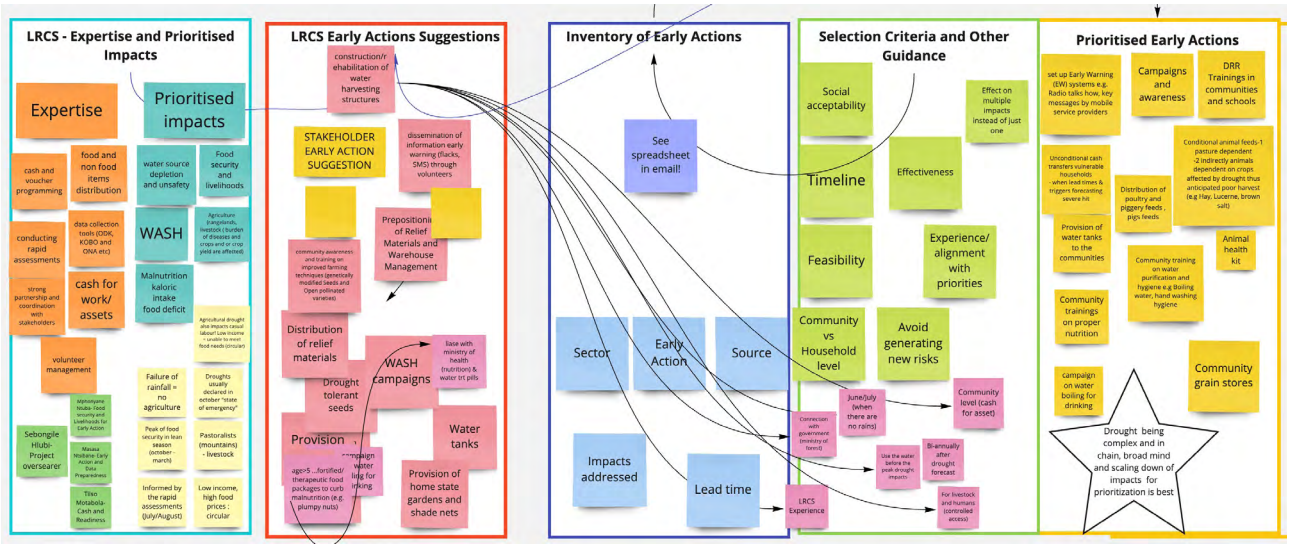
By bringing together representatives from the entire National Society together—ranging from senior management to provincial secretaries and Red Cross volunteers—, the self-assessment yielded an overview over the main operational strengths upon which the AA programme could be constructed. The two operational areas and 18 components (see Table 3) were selected because they included logistics, warehousing, information management and other aspects crucial to drought anticipatory actions and overall response capacities. To manage expectations, stakeholders further specified which elements among the 18 were to be prioritised for capacity strengthening, based on what the AA project could realistically support. Rather than developing a separate PER workplan, the AA team integrated key areas for capacity strengthening identified by the PER assessment into the AA workplan.

The National Society and the AA team would use the results of the abridged PER self-assessment in two ways. First, benchmark outcomes for the 18 components were monitored during the AA project's running-period, and key capacity gaps identified during the initial assessment were integrated into the AA workplan to be addressed through capacity strengthening. In parallel, the outcomes of the abridged assessment would inform the National Society's internal and external stakeholder co-design workshops aimed at shortlisting and prioritizing drought early actions to be included in the national drought early action protocol (EAP). Figure 4 illustrates how stakeholders paired the expertise and operational capacities identified during the PER process with prioritized drought impacts in the country (on the left).

The National Society used information about its expertise and operational capacities to identify potential anticipatory actions, define selection criteria, and prioritize drought early actions for theory of change development and exploration and to target overall AA project investments. The assessment identified extensive experience in cash-based interventions, strong methodologies for the identification and registration of people to be reached, as well as good data collection procedures for needs assessments, as central operational capacities. The National Society's solid base of around 4,000 Red Cross volunteers

is a signal of its strong integration with and proximity to the communities it serves, opening a window of opportunity to establish systems for community engagement and accountability, as well as community-based surveillance in support of the AA programme. Its intention is to reassess these 18 components at the end of the drought-AA project to measure any changes. The National Society's Cash and NS Preparedness focal points are responsible for continuity, oversight and monitoring throughout the project period.

Figure 4: Miro board showing how the National Society used PER to inform the selection of early actions



2.2.2. Example 2: A lighter touch - using PER to inform the selection of Anticipatory Actions in Latin America

Several Latin American National Societies, including Ecuador, Guatemala, Costa Rica, and Honduras have opted for an even lighter-touch approach to using the PER Mechanism to track and plan National Society capacity strengthening resulting from Anticipatory Action. These National Societies incorporated a quick PER self-assessment into four-day participatory feasibility study workshops for AA. These feasibility studies analysed capacities and opportunities within the National Society, as well as in the National Disaster Management System more broadly. During the second day of the workshop, National Societies were introduced to the PER concept in the morning, and in the afternoon, they worked with cards representing each of the 37 components, prioritizing them and defining how AA could contribute to increasing capacities in relevant areas. The analysis culminated in the development of a customized plan for how to move forward with AA and how to strengthen National Society preparedness/readiness and response capacities through AA activities.[4]

In Guatemala and Honduras, National Societies identified 14 and 11 components, respectively, across the 5 areas to which AA was likely to contribute (see Table 3). In Guatemala, stakeholders analysed the benchmarks of the 14 components they chose to review. In Honduras, they evaluated feasibility, urgency, and impact of each relevant component and made notes regarding how AA could contribute to its development (see Table 4). Both countries also developed a general AA workplan, outlining and prioritizing steps to be taken to strengthen capacity during the various stages of EAP development (six months, one-year, and two-years, and post EAP approval). This workplan provides key indications of where AA intends to focus. In contrast, other National Societies integrated PER assessments with the feasibility study, but they did not document specific PER components that were related to AA in the feasibility study report. Without systematic documentation of the baseline status of PER Mechanism components, it will be difficult to make baseline-endline comparisons and measure capacity strengthening when initial investments in AA are complete.

4 *For a sample agenda for such workshops, see Concept Note for AA Feasibility Studies*

Table 4: Example of analysis integrating AA and PER

PER Component	Feasibility	Urgency	Impact	Action to link AA - PER
11. Emergency Response Procedures (SOPs)	*High*	*Medium*	*Medium*	Revise the SOPs to include anticipatory action
14. National Society-Specific Areas of Intervention: Livelihood security and safety nets	*Medium*	*Medium*	*Medium*	Institutionalize livelihood issues by strengthening and enhancing the capacities of key personnel and including them in operational and strategic plans. Characterize livelihoods in areas prioritized for EAP implementation.
16. Early Action Mechanisms	*High*	*Medium*	*High*	Implement an AA-readiness project whose objective, among others, is to develop and EAP.
17. Cash-based Intervention	*High*	*Medium*	*High*	Mapping market to identify delivery mechanisms in each region.

2.2.3. Best practices when using PER to measure capacity strengthening through Anticipatory Action

The aforementioned experiences highlight several lessons and best practices for when using PER to establish a pre-AA baseline:

- **Explicitly document and assess each relevant PER component:** the benchmark and scoring analysis should include notes on the current status of each benchmark to help track specifically where AA contributed to capacity strengthening.
- **Cross reference AA and PER workplans:** cross referencing can take place in both the AA and the PER workplans to facilitate later tracking.
  - **Outline how AA can contribute to each component in the PER workplan** (see Table 4).
  - **Explicitly identify PER components in the AA workplan:** indicate a component or benchmark number —where applicable— for each area of the AA plan that seeks to contribute to capacity strengthening.

Box 5: Potential challenges in using the PER Mechanism to measure capacity strengthening

While a successful integration of PER and AA is ideal, examples from two countries below illustrate the potential pitfalls and possibilities of using results from a full PER process to track AA capacity strengthening.

- **External influences on capacities and benchmarks**

In 2020, a National Society planned to use a full PER process to measure baseline capacity for a Drought Anticipatory Action programme supported by partner National Societies. The programme was part of a holistic AA and Preparedness Programme designed to strengthen the National Society readiness for emergency response, operationalize an early action mechanism, and improve cash and voucher assistance preparedness (CVAP). Having external financial and technical support from two Partner National Societies enabled a full PER process and a more holistic approach to assessing existing National Society programs programmes.

The start of the AA programme was planned to coincide with a full PER process including all five areas (37 components). To clearly distribute roles and responsibilities throughout the PER process, a National Society PER task force was established, which was chaired by the programme director. The plan was for the National Society to complete the baseline PER self-assessment, track improvements in National Society disaster management capacity against indicators in the AA project logframe and reassess key components of the workplan at the end of the AA project period to measure changes in the components' rating. However, because of several changes in National Society leadership, turnover of key staff, and a reassessment of National Society priorities after the PER process, the original baseline results were no longer accurate, and could not be used.

- **Lack of resources or follow-through**

A National Society working on FbF conducted a full PER process in January 2021, choosing self-assessment as the assessment type. It was facilitated by an IFRC consultant and two National Society staff members. The AA project team considered the operational capacities indicated in the self-assessment when deciding which drought early actions would be feasible and should be included in the drought Early Action Protocol (EAP); however, because of insufficient stakeholder engagement, the workplan and follow-up measures were never taken forward and an endline measurement was not taken.

2.3. Using PER readiness checklists to develop Early Action Protocols

Prior to the development or during the development of an Early Action Protocol (EAP) (or other types of Anticipatory Action planning) a National Society can carry out a readiness check to refine the EAP. For instance, asking the stakeholders involved within the National Society if the response actions are within their mandate, if the National Society has experiences in conducting these activities (e.g., strengthening shelter, distributing cash), or having more nuanced conversations around National Society capacities such as volunteer management, warehouses, stocks, HR, to name a few. Another way to conduct a readiness check is to analyse the components that only relate to AA objectives.

2.4. Using operational learning for early action planning

The National Society operational learning platform (on the IFRC Go platform) collects lessons and challenges coming from National Society response operations supported by the DREF. Each operational learning is categorized by sector and by the corresponding component of the National Society PER Mechanism. They can be filtered by country, hazard, or type of learning. It should be noted that these lessons could be limited, as they only analyse DREF operations since 2017; however, if the data is available, it could be a useful tool for early action planning.

As an example, if Ecuador were inserted in the country filter, there are 3 response operations with recorded lessons and challenges in the country (as of October 2022). Once a component is specified, in this case "Hazard Context Risk Analysis", the platform reveals key information that should be considered when planning early actions. Table 5 outlines the challenges related to this example and explains how the information is relevant for the development of an early action plan.

Table 5: Incorporating challenges from operational learning into an Early Action Protocol

Recorded challenge	Consideration for EAP development
Limited communication channels between leaders, the population, and response teams due to the geographic location of homes and communities. Movement from one community to another for censuses and distributions took between one and two hours.	As a first step it is important to read the entire lessons learned workshop report for this operation to identify which geographic location is being discussed[5] If the early action planning is targeting the same communities for selecting an early action, it is worth considering the amount of lead time that will be needed given the limited communication channels and long distribution distances, as well as how this could be mitigated in the planning process.
Limited means of communication- minimal telephone coverage. Sending messages via radio stations was not considered as an option because of the COVID-19 situation and electoral period, the information could have been misconstrued.	If the early warning messages are being considered as early actions, it is critical to consider such nuances and timing, in this case, minimal telephone coverage and electoral periods.
No map existed of the identified high-risk communities because of the area's geographical location, which made it difficult to plan and implement activities in the short term.	While designing the early actions, it would be important to have a clear map of this area, if possible, to collaborate with the local chapter/ district authorities.
Road closures, both within the city and between provinces, limited the scope of care provided by ambulance personnel, as even ambulances were prevented from passing certain points.	This scenario should be reflected in the early action planning, and be anticipated accordingly.

5. *Note that all the DREF final reports which contain lessons learned and challenges are published online and can be found here*

2.5. Assessment of PER Mechanism components prioritized for learning through simulations and/or during Anticipatory Action plan activation

Once Anticipatory Action plans are developed it is important to (1) conduct a simulation exercise and (2) conduct a real-time evaluation if an activation/opportunity arises, especially with medium- to slow-onset hazards. For simulation exercises, depending on which components were prioritized from the PER Mechanism, exercises/scenarios can be developed to simulate a hazard that is relevant to the National Society AA plan. For instance, if Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) were prioritized and developed for an FbF project, it is critical that these SOPs are realistic and that everyone involved is clear on what their roles and responsibilities are.

It would likely be difficult to implement real-time monitoring once the trigger is met and the AA plan is activated. All the findings from the previously conducted PER process and the National Society early action protocol should be considered. Observers must determine if the selected anticipatory actions work in practice. For the PER operational assessments based on forecast information (such as "a typhoon will strike by late December"), few external evaluators will be on standby to conduct the assessment through observation and interviews to determine how the National Society is performing across the PER Mechanism components. This might be a slightly difficult process to conduct for AA.

2.6. Monitoring response capacity over time

If the intent is to measure capacities built by an AA programme, it is important to reassess the capacities and components/benchmarks related to the programme once it ends. See section 2.2 for a full description on how to measure capacity development.

Bangladesh Red Crescent cyclone preparedness volunteers move in groups to disseminate early warning messages in remote areas of Cox's Bazar, in advance of Cyclone Roanu making landfall in coastal Bangladesh.

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