



THE GAP BETWEEN BUILDING ANTICIPATORY ACTION FRAMEWORKS AND THEIR ACTIVATION

A global study on Anticipatory Action Readiness

A study conducted by CARE International, led by the CARE Climate Justice Center

Acknowledgements:

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Context

Over the past decade, Anticipatory Action (AA) has expanded rapidly in scale, geographic reach, and institutional uptake. Although the total amount of funding released per activation decreased in 2024 compared to previous years, the year saw an increase in total numbers of frameworks and activations. According to the Anticipation Hub 2024 annual report¹, AA reached over 17 million people through 121 activations, supported by financing worth 110.7 million US dollars. There were 154 active frameworks and 194 frameworks under development across 48 countries, representing 248 million US dollars in pre-agreed financing.

After more than a decade of progress, AA has reached significant levels of proliferation and institutional recognition. This may shift attention beyond questions of expansion and activation toward the effectiveness and sustainability of existing frameworks. The Anticipation Hub 2024 annual report² notes that, out of 154 frameworks reported as active, approximately 79% were activated in 2024 (121 activations during the year). However, the 2024 regional³ (AAF) in the Asia-Pacific, led by the Asia-Pacific Technical Working Group (AP TWG), identified 137 AAFs, of which 52 were activated (38%) since the frameworks have been built. This implies that around 62% of AAFs were never triggered.⁴ The AP TWG report also highlights that “some respondents informed that they had faced difficulties keeping their AA systems active due to the lack of access to flexible fuelling budget, or due to the country context (for instance in Myanmar)⁵”.

Despite significant investment in AA over recent years, there seems to be a gap between development of the frameworks and their effective activation. This gap could have notable implications: frameworks that are not triggered may fall short to fully deliver AA's core purpose of mitigating impacts ahead of disasters. It may also point to potential inefficiencies in financial investment and risk undermining the trust of local communities, national authorities, and donors in the approach.

As the number of frameworks continues to grow, alongside increasing calls for more effective and cost-efficient humanitarian assistance, there is a need to ensure that AAFs lead to timely and effective early action. This requires sustained attention to their operational readiness and long-term sustainability — including the regular updating of data and forecasting systems, maintenance of protocols, and ensuring operational and financial capacity.

¹ Anticipation Hub. Anticipatory Action in 2024: A Global Overview. Berlin: Anticipation Hub, 2025.

² Anticipation Hub. Anticipatory Action in 2024: A Global Overview. Berlin: Anticipation Hub, 2025.

³ Asia-Pacific Technical Working Group on Anticipatory Action. 2024. Anticipatory action in Asia and the Pacific: Results from the 2024 regional mapping. Bangkok.

⁴ Asia-Pacific Technical Working Group on Anticipatory Action. 2024. Anticipatory action in Asia and the Pacific: Results from the 2024 regional mapping. Bangkok

⁵ Ibid. .

Objectives of the study

The study, conducted by CARE International (CI) and led by CARE Climate Justice Center (CJC), seeks to explore the current state of AAF readiness, including what contributes to the readiness for activation and the key factors influencing readiness, maintenance and sustainability of AAF. The objectives of the study are:

1. To explore the status of frameworks worldwide.
2. To analyse the key enablers and barriers for maintenance, activation and sustainability.
3. To identify good practices and key recommendations to maintain the operational readiness of AAFs.

Methodology

A mixed-methods approach was used for this study, combining qualitative and quantitative data to inform findings. Primary data was first collected through an online survey published between January and February 2026 on dedicated platforms such as the Anticipation Hub website and disseminated through newsletters (Climate and Environment Charter for Humanitarian Organisations), targeted emailing and social media platforms (LinkedIn). Respondents were asked to provide qualitative and quantitative data on AAFs led by their organisations, the frameworks status (active/inactive), whether they had been triggered, maintenance processes in place, and the limitations or challenges encountered in successfully activating the AAF. The survey was completed by 24 informants providing data on 31 AAFs. Amongst the respondents, 19 were from INGOs and NGOs, 2 from the Red Cross/Red Crescent (RCRC) Movement, 2 from UN agencies and 1 from the academic sector. Informants provided information on AAFs implemented in 19 countries in Africa, 9 countries in the Asia-Pacific region, 2 countries in the Americas (South America and Caribbean) and 1 unspecified (global).

Following the survey, qualitative data was collected through 14 interviews with 19 key informants between mid-February and March 2026. The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner to discuss the status of AAFs, practices for maintaining operational readiness, challenges and limitations to activation, as well as good practices and key recommendations. The 19 key informants represented a range of organisations: 7 from (I)NGOs, 5 from the RCRC Movement, and 2 from UN agencies (see Annex 1 for a detailed list of key informants). They held a variety of roles, from global and regional technical AA advisors to national- level implementers of AAF (8 global advisor profiles, 4 regional technical advisors, and 7 implementing actors at national level).

Primary data from survey and key informant interviews was complemented by a desk review of key data sources and documents, including the Anticipation Hub 2024 report and database, AP TWG 2024 reports on AAF status and activation, as well as studies and reports identified by actors during interviews.

The collected data was analysed using a thematic analysis approach, based on an analysis framework developed in an abductive manner. Key themes were initially identified based on the research objectives and informed by the document review, and then complemented by recurring themes emerging from the survey and interview data (see Annex 2 for the analysis framework).

Limitations

While the study draws on multiple data sources and combines qualitative and quantitative methods, the findings should be interpreted in light of certain limitations. The primary data collection is based on a relatively small sample, including 24 survey responses and 19 key informant interviews. Although these inputs provide valuable insights across different organisations and regions, they may not fully capture the diversity of experiences and perspectives across all AAF globally.

In addition, the study relies partly on secondary quantitative data from global and regional mapping exercises conducted in 2024. Differences in how AAF status is defined, and how the activation ratio is calculated across these datasets present some challenges for comparison. Classifications such as “active,” “under development,” or “inactive” are not consistently applied between sources, which can affect the interpretation of aggregated figures. The Anticipation Hub 2024 global report presents 154 active frameworks, with 121 activations in 2024 and an additional 197 AAFs under development. The AP TWG 2024 report identifies 137 AAFs, including 64 developed, 53 under development, and 20 other AA systems, and examines activation across the lifespan of the frameworks. One key issue highlighted by the AP TWG is the lack of a clear definition of the term “active” which can be misleading, as some frameworks may be developed but not ready for activation, or may be dormant. As noted in the AP TWG 2024 report: “This highlights the need to have more nuanced categories to define what is⁶ in place (either the AA system is completed and active, under development and partly active, inactive, or AA is implemented in an ad-hoc manner without a pre-defined system)”. Respondents to the different surveys for global and regional mapping exercises, as well as for this study (Anticipation Hub, AP TWG, CARE) might not share the same definitions of framework status, which in turn may limit at comparability across dataset. At the same time, these variations reflect an evolving field where concepts and categorizations are still being refined. More broadly, differences in respondents’ understanding of key terms and concepts — both in this study and in the referenced datasets — may influence how frameworks are reported and categorized. While this may limit strict comparability, the use of multiple sources and methods helps triangulate findings and provides a more nuanced overall picture of AAF readiness and implementation.

⁶ Asia-Pacific Technical Working Group on Anticipatory Action. 2024. Anticipatory action in Asia and the Pacific: Results from the 2024 regional mapping. Bangkok

Key Findings

1. Limited activation of AAFs

Data from the AP TWG⁷ report indicates that in the Asia Pacific region, only 38% of the 137 developed or under-development AAFs have been activated since their establishment, while 62% have not been triggered. This figure is consistent⁸ with the data presented in the Anticipation Hub global report for 2024, which shows an activation ratio of 34% based on 351 frameworks reported as active (154) or under development (197).

The data collected through the survey for this study provides information on 31 frameworks that are currently active (25) or under development (6). Of the 25 active AAFs, 11 were finalised in 2025. Figure 1 below illustrates the year of completion of the frameworks and those still under development.

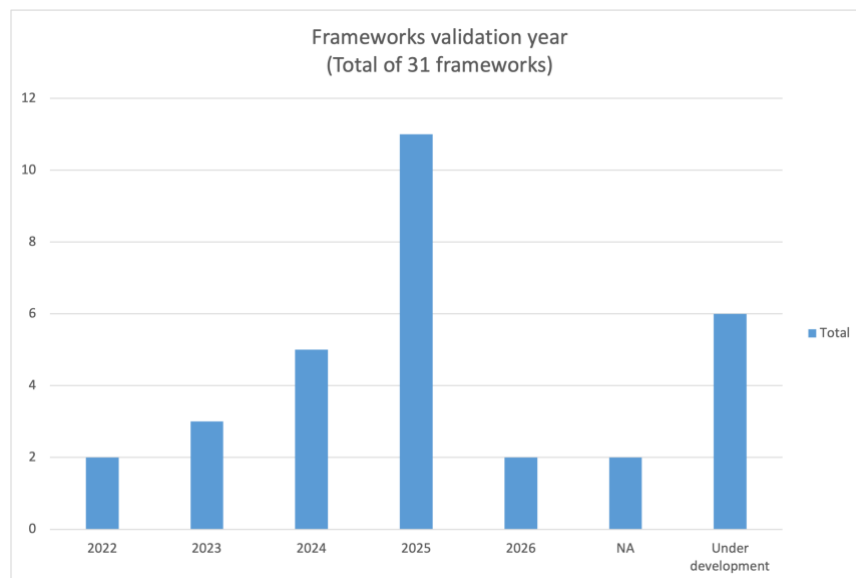


Figure 1: Number of frameworks per year of validation and frameworks under development extracted from the survey analysis.

Survey findings also suggest relatively low activation levels among AAFs. Of the 31 frameworks covered, 16 had never been triggered since their validation or development, representing 52% of frameworks with no recorded activation. This indicates that, beyond annual fluctuations linked to the occurrence of disasters, a substantial proportion of frameworks may remain inactive over extended periods.

When compared with secondary data sources, these findings appear broadly consistent with the relatively low activation ratios observed in both global and regional 2024 mapping exercises. However, the datasets are not directly comparable. While the survey

⁷ Asia-Pacific Technical Working Group on Anticipatory Action. 2024. Anticipatory action in Asia and the Pacific: Results from the 2024 regional mapping. Bangkok

⁸ Anticipation Hub. Anticipatory Action in 2024: A Global Overview. Berlin: Anticipation Hub, 2025. [Accessible here](#)

and the AP TWG report captures whether frameworks have ever been activated since their establishment, the Anticipation Hub focuses specifically on activations occurring within the year 2024. These differences in temporal scope and measurement approach may partly explain discrepancies in reported activation rates.

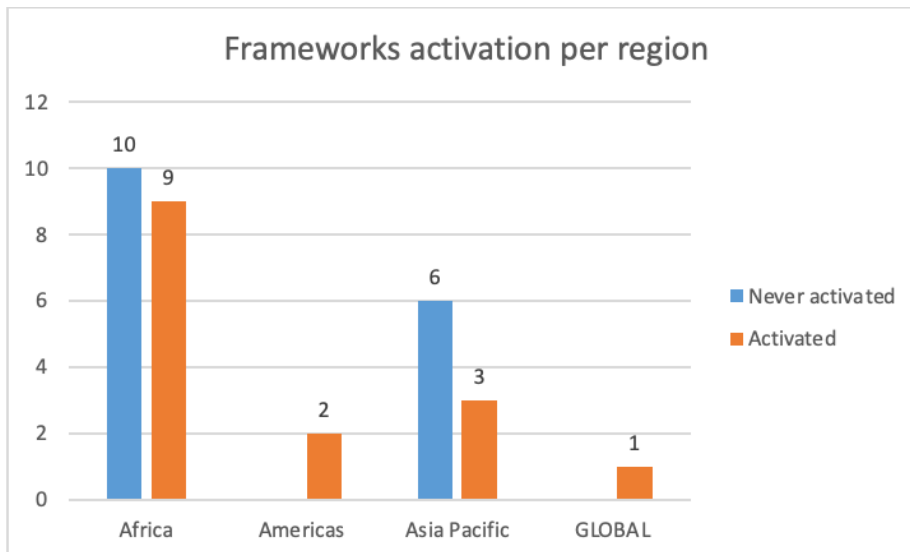


Figure 2: Activation of frameworks across region extracted from the survey analysis.

The survey also examined activation ratios by region and hazard type to explore whether factors such as geographic context (e.g. implications on political commitment, community engagement), or hazard characteristics might influence the maintenance and activation of AAFs. Results indicate that the Asia-Pacific region has a higher proportion of frameworks that were not activated compared with other regions (see Figure 2). Considering that this region is highly exposed to multiple hazards and has seen significant AAF development in recent years, this finding suggests a need for closer attention to regional dynamics affecting activation.

When analysed by hazard type, survey data on AAF activation suggests broadly similar activation rates across hazard types (see Figure 3). The only notable exception is the higher number of non-activations for flood-related AAFs, which may be linked to a greater number of flood frameworks or challenges related to trigger relevance. The absence of significant variation by hazard type points to enabling conditions, particularly trigger relevance, financing, and approval processes, as the primary drivers of whether a framework is activated.

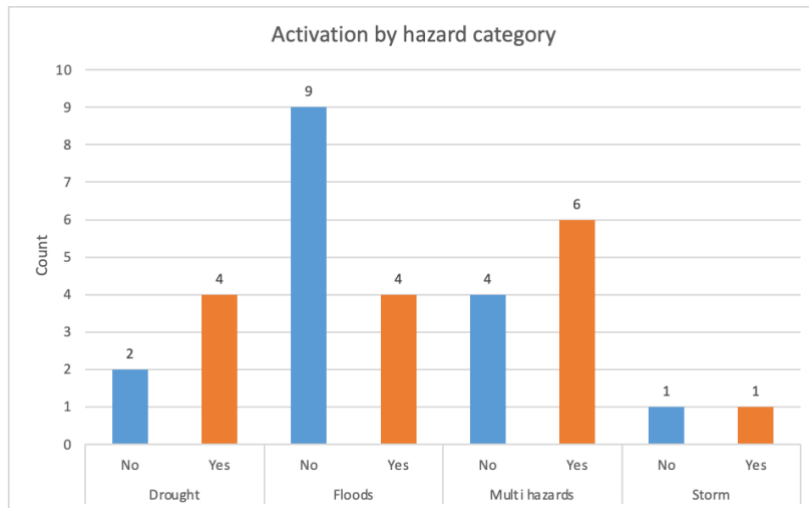


Figure 3: Activation by hazard category extracted from the survey analysis.

The survey was designed to capture these perspectives to better understand not just whether frameworks are activated, but why activation may fail or be delayed. By directly asking practitioners about barriers, the study aimed at complementing secondary data on activation rates, providing insights into the practical, institutional, and financial factors that influence AA readiness. As illustrated in Figure 4, survey informants identify two primary causes for non-activation: signal suitability including (threshold calibration, timeliness, and credibility), and timely availability of funding, referring to pre-arranged, rapidly accessible finance at the point of trigger. Other significant barriers highlighted by respondents include institutional approval processes and limitations in operational capacity.

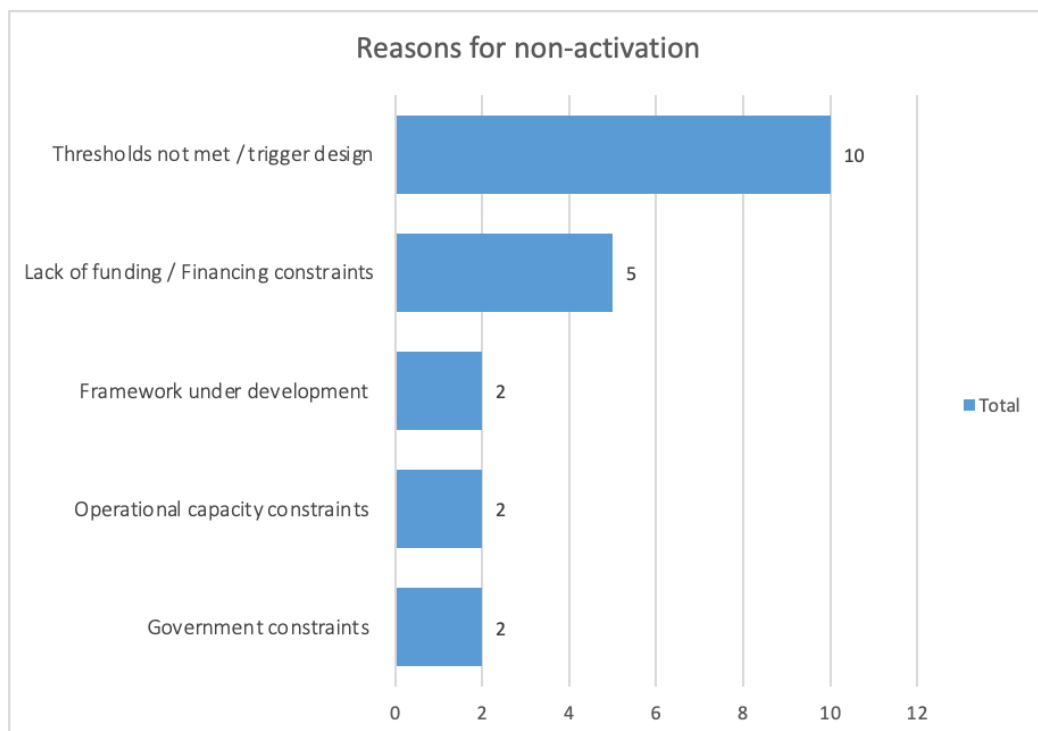


Figure 4: Reasons cited for non-activation, extracted from the survey analysis.

Another important finding from the survey analysis is a notable pattern in the timing of activations (see Figure 5 below): out of the 15 AAFs that were activated, at least 12 activations occurred within the first year following finalisation, and 4 were activated before the AAF was even completed. This suggests an operational momentum tied either to the readiness built during the development phase, to funding availability during that period - linked to short-term project timelines focusing on building the AA framework - or to the deliberate alignment of AAF completion with high-risk seasons. In other words, activation appears mostly during or immediately after the setup of the AAF, raising questions of the AA readiness beyond the first year after completion.

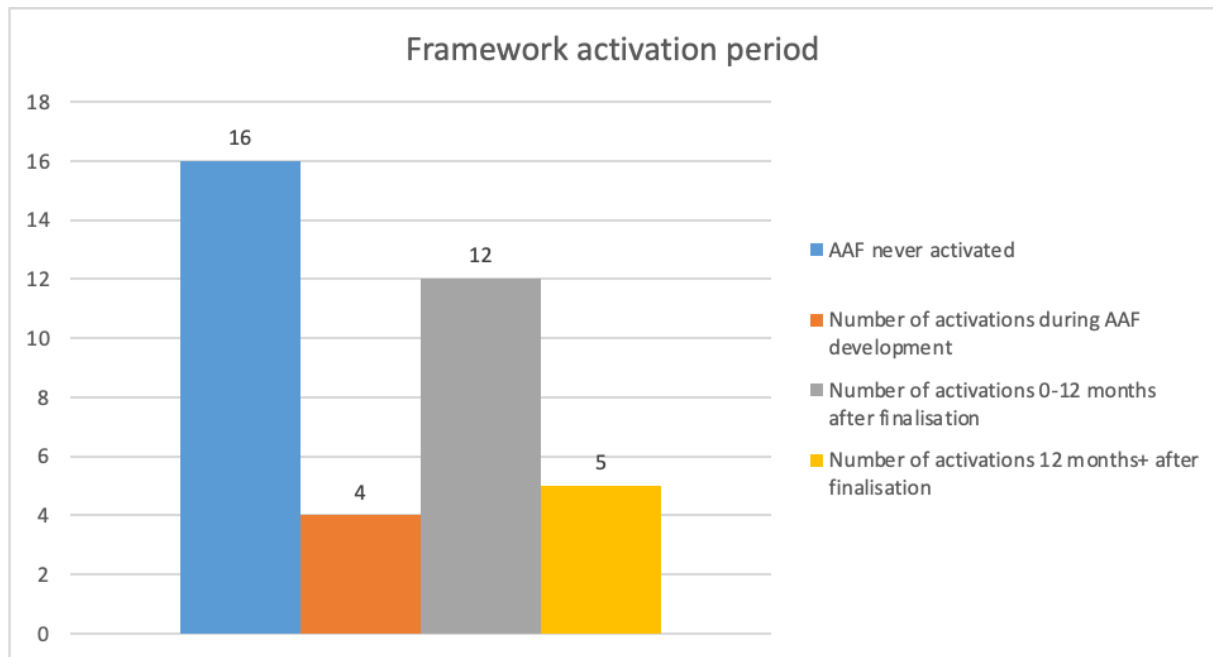


Figure 5: Frameworks activation timeframe extracted from the survey analysis.

Secondary data analysis highlights a key challenge: unclear definitions of AAF status. The term “active framework” is not consistently defined across different analyses, leading to a potential gap to identify AAFs that are dormant or inactive. In the 2023 and 2024 regional mapping exercises, the AP TWG used three categories to collect information on AAF, “developed”, “under development”, and an additional category called “other system” (ad hoc early actions without full protocols being clearly defined). Activation ratios were calculated by counting both developed and under-development frameworks, which aligns with observations in this study that some AAFs are triggered before full completion.

For the 2025 regional mapping exercise currently being led by the AP TWG, a key informant indicated that a distinction between active and inactive frameworks has been introduced. The 2025 data will therefore differentiate between frameworks that are under development, active (defined as validated and operational at some point during 2025), or inactive (completed but not operationally or financially ready to activate during the year). However, other analyses of AAF status, such as the annual global report and data sources from the Anticipation Hub, do not include a category or definition to report inactive frameworks. This definitional challenge reflects a structural gap in the AA

sector: the lack of common standards for describing framework status, which limits the systematic assessment of operational readiness.

An analysis of AAF distribution and activation ratios at the country level in the Asia-Pacific region (see Figure 6 below) reveals disparities between countries and raises questions about the relationship between the number of frameworks and operational readiness. Countries vary considerably in the number of frameworks developed: the Philippines, for instance, had 30 active AAFs in 2024, while Mongolia had 3. However, a higher number of frameworks does not appear to translate into higher activation rates. In the Philippines, only 7 out of 30 frameworks were activated, representing a 23% activation ratio. While this can partly be explained by greater exposure to multiple hazard types or to the absence of qualifying events during the year, it may also point to a more structural challenge: the proliferation of parallel frameworks within a single country could ultimately make it harder to operationalise AAFs when needed.



Figure 5: Overview of AAF and activation ratio in Asia-Pacific. **Source:** AP TWG⁹

These initial findings paint a consistent picture across global and regional data: despite significant investment in framework development, a high number of AAFs remain untriggered and activation tends to be concentrated in the early stages of a framework's life cycle. The barriers to activation — whether related to trigger design, financing, institutional approval or operational capacity — are systemic rather than hazard-specific, suggesting that the challenges lie in the enabling conditions surrounding frameworks. In addition, the absence of shared definitions of framework status across the sector may limit analysis and accountability regarding AAF operational readiness. Finally, the proliferation of parallel frameworks in some contexts raises questions about whether quantity of frameworks might be prioritised over their quality and sustainability.

⁹ Asia-Pacific Technical Working Group on Anticipatory Action. 2024. Anticipatory action in Asia and the Pacific: Results from the 2024 regional mapping. Bangkok.

Together, these findings suggest that while building new frameworks remains important, especially in countries with limited AA, more attention is needed to harmonize approaches (across all implementing actors and government), maintain existing frameworks, ensure their operational readiness, and strengthen their capacity for timely activation.

2. Trigger bottlenecks and their implications for AA maintenance

A first step in assessing whether an AAF is ready for activation is to examine whether it has been activated and, if not, why. While the absence of hazard events can naturally prevent activation, key informant interviews highlight multiple additional factors that can lead to non-activation.

Trigger design and validation emerge as one of the primary drivers of non-activation identified across the data. In the Philippines, a key informant reported that a typhoon-related AAF developed by their organisation was not activated over an extended period despite disasters occurring, indicating the lack of validity of the existing triggers and the need to review the AAF accordingly. In Ethiopia, a contrasting but equally instructive case was discussed during interviews with key informants: in 2024, flood triggers within the World Food Programme (WFP) AAF were consistently met, yet national authorities declined to validate the activation of the framework because the forecasts conflicted with government-issued data. Together, these cases illustrate two distinct but interconnected bottlenecks relating to triggers—the technical challenge of designing triggers that accurately reflect hazard realities, and the governance challenge of securing institutional recognition and validation of those triggers. Both can independently prevent activation, and both must be addressed either at the design phase or through periodic reviews of AAFs to ensure operational readiness.

Survey data reinforces this finding, identifying that one of the common barriers to activation is unmet triggers or thresholds—either due to an absence of qualifying events or flaws in trigger design. In response, a key informant from 510 (data and digital team of the Netherlands Red Cross) revealed that the RCRC Movement is conducting a study on missed activations, focusing primarily on trigger performance.

Operational challenges in setting triggers further exacerbate these issues. Limited access to localized forecasting data, reliance on global datasets, and misalignment with national meteorological agencies or governmental practices make it difficult to establish operationally relevant triggers. In addition, triggers that rely on non-scientific or local data can face resistance from donors who require scientifically validated indicators. This can restrict the integration of community-based knowledge, despite its relevance and potential to enhance localised early action.

Establishing and maintaining forecasting and monitoring platforms also requires substantial financial and technical investment, often beyond the capacity of national institutions. In some cases, AAFs are deliberately designed to be self-sustaining within national capacity. For example, Malawi's National Anticipatory Action Framework

(NAAF) includes only triggers that can be monitored using nationally held data, avoiding reliance on external datasets or additional funding requests from the government. While this approach ensures feasibility and sustainability by relying on localised data sources, it may exclude other global and scientific data inputs.

These trigger-related challenges have direct implications for maintaining the readiness of AAFs. If triggers are not reliable, validated, or consistently monitored, AAFs may remain dormant even when resources, stocks, and trained personnel are in place. This can lead to erosion of operational capacity over time, as staff, partners, and communities may become disengaged or unable to maintain protocols without regular activation. Furthermore, repeated non-activation due to trigger or validation issues undermines confidence in the system and makes it difficult to justify continued investment in readiness activities, from training and stock maintenance to community monitoring and coordination mechanisms. Ensuring robust, context-appropriate, and validated triggers is therefore not only critical for activation but also essential for sustaining the functional readiness of AAFs over the long term.

Within the RCRC system, triggers and early actions are systematically reviewed following each activation — or in some reported cases a lack of activation despite a qualifying event — and at the end of each AAF validation period (five years for full frameworks, two years for simplified protocols). This structured review cycle embeds learning and adaptation directly into the AA process, illustrating the opportunity to consider AAFs as part of a continuous, circular model in which triggers are regularly reviewed, both when activation does not occur despite a qualifying event or when triggers are met too frequently, potentially indicating misalignment with national data.

When triggers fail: learning from Madagascar

An example shared during by key informants from the RCRC Movement was the lack of activation of the AAF for cyclones in Madagascar in January 2026 despite the impact of Cyclone Fytia between January 31st and February 1st, 2026, across nine regions of the country. The cyclone AAF was finalised in October 2025; however, due to the particularly ‘explosive’ characteristic of Cyclone Fytia, the triggers were not met and the framework was not activated. RCRC actors immediately conducted an after-action review of the thresholds and activation protocols with the governmental agency for disaster risk management (BNGRC) which led to modifications of the framework. The AAF was subsequently activated in anticipation of Cyclone Gezani, which severely impacted Madagascar on February 10th, 2026.

In conclusion, trigger-related challenges — whether technical, governance-related, or resource-driven — can strongly impact the activation of AAF and operational readiness. These challenges cannot be solely addressed as a one-time process during the design phase but require continuous monitoring, review, and adaptation. Addressing this may require a shift from a linear, project-based approach focused on framework design toward embedding trigger validation and revision as a recurring, institutionalised practice throughout the full life cycle of a framework.

3. Absence of a clear definition of readiness, coupled with inconsistent approaches to maintenance and readiness practices.

Definition of readiness

A consistent finding across all data sources — survey responses, key informant interviews, and document review — is the absence of shared definitions for 'readiness' and 'maintenance'. The term 'readiness' is often used to describe both preparedness activities conducted during the framework development phase and the ongoing operational capacity required to activate a framework once it is finalised. Without a clear distinction between these two meanings, the period between framework completion and activation remains poorly defined and insufficiently resourced.

Similarly, terms such as “active,” “inactive,” and “maintenance” are applied inconsistently. As highlighted in the study limitations and in the AP TWG regional 2024 report, as well as during discussions with a representative from the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), it remains unclear what an “inactive” framework means in practice: whether it has been formally discontinued, is temporarily dormant, or remains partially functional. This lack of clarity makes it difficult to assess the true operational status of frameworks and to compare data across actors and regions.

This lack of conceptual clarity creates a structural gap between the completion of AAFs and their effective operationalization. As a result, readiness and maintenance activities — such as trigger monitoring, regular training, simulation exercises, stock prepositioning and management, coordination mechanisms, and periodic protocol review — are inconsistently identified, prioritised, and financed across AA funding streams and programme designs.

This ambiguity has important implications. Without a clear and commonly agreed definition of readiness, it becomes difficult to systematically plan, budget, and assess these activities, undermining the continuity and reliability of AAFs. Clarifying what constitutes readiness — including the minimum capacities, systems, and resources required to ensure an AAF remains functional and actionable — is therefore essential. It enables a shift away from a linear “build–activate” model toward a cyclical approach, where sustained investments in readiness and maintenance ensure that AAF remain operational, up to date, and capable of timely activation when triggers are met.

Simulation exercises drive AAF readiness

Survey data indicates that the most reported maintenance practices are regular data updates and monitoring, coordination meetings, SOP and forecasting system updates, staff training and capacity building, and simulation exercises. Among these, simulation exercises (SIMEX) stand out across all data sources as the most cited maintenance activity, valued for their role in testing protocols, updating stock management, and strengthening coordination.

A noticeable finding from the survey is that the barriers to maintaining readiness are similar to those cited for non-activation: funding and financing constraints that might

relate more to identifying fuel funding for activation and securing longer term resources to maintain staff capacities, trigger and threshold issues, governmental and donor approval processes, operational capacity and logistics, and data and forecasting limitations. This seems to indicate that readiness bottlenecks and activation bottlenecks are two sides of the same system.

Coordination of AAF and implications on readiness

Another operational challenge for AA readiness lies in the complexity of establishing AAFs and the resulting fragmentation once build-phase support ends. AAFs are typically designed through multi-stakeholder processes involving meteorological services, disaster response agencies, local government institutions, and community representatives in areas covered by the framework. In some cases, the need to develop robust, multi-indicator triggers further expands this network — for example, drought triggers may combine meteorological data with market price information and other sectoral inputs. During the build phase, AA projects often play a central coordinating role, convening these actors and ensuring coherent collaboration. However, sustaining this coordination structure after project completion remains a significant challenge.

Key informant interviews highlight that in the absence of dedicated maintenance funding — particularly where AAFs are financed through short-term, project-based build funding — implementing actors attempt to embed readiness within institutionalisation efforts during the design phase. This can include aligning beneficiary lists with national social protection systems, establishing community-based trigger monitoring mechanisms (such as river markers and local committees), or creating technical working groups tasked with overseeing maintenance activities after project closure. While these approaches are valuable and often necessary, they share a common limitation: once the build phase ends, supporting organisations have limited visibility on whether protocols, trigger thresholds, and beneficiary lists are regularly updated. Furthermore, except in some countries where AAFs are more mature — such as the Philippines and Bangladesh, where governments have established dedicated units to coordinate and sustain AA efforts — AA technical working groups often lack formal authority and enforcement capacity. There is typically no structured follow-up mechanism, nor sustained resourcing, to ensure that operational readiness is maintained over time.

The fragmentation of individual AAFs might also be compounded by the high number of frameworks developed in parallel adding challenges for the overall coordination of AA at a national level. This proliferation places additional strain on already limited readiness and maintenance capacities, increasing both the operational burden and the resources required to sustain the frameworks over time.

Localised triggers: a case from Timor Leste

A key informant interview highlighted concerns about a siloed approach to AAFs, where frameworks are based on unique triggers or approaches that lack replicability and pose challenges for long-term maintenance. In Timor Leste for instance, a cyclone AAF was developed using a trigger based on bird flight patterns. While the use of local knowledge and non scientific data can be essential for context-specific AA approaches, there is a question about the ability to integrate other actors into AAF coordination, align frameworks with national systems, and establish robust monitoring and maintenance mechanisms.

Global data from the Anticipation Hub 2024 Overview Report¹⁰ illustrates this trend: 154 active frameworks across 48 countries, equivalent to an average of around three AAF per country. In some contexts, this number is significantly higher. For example, Bangladesh and Philippines host approximately 17 and 16 frameworks respectively. In Bangladesh alone, 8 of the 17 frameworks focus on cyclones, hurricanes, tropical storms, or typhoons. This concentration raises critical questions around coordination — not only in framework design and trigger alignment, but also in long-term maintenance. Specifically, what are the costs of maintaining 16 or 17 parallel frameworks, and how can these be coordinated to ensure efficiency and avoid duplication?

One potential answer lies in stronger coordination by central governments. However, current data suggests that this role remains limited. Of the 154 active AAFs globally, only 5 are government-led and 5 are classified as multi-partner initiatives, compared to 57 led by UN agencies, 46 by NGOs, and 41 by the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement. In the Asia-Pacific region, the 2024 Technical Working Group report similarly finds that 62% of AAFs are developed by international and national NGOs, 28% by UN agencies, and 10% by the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, with only a small proportion effectively anchored in national government systems.

While the Anticipation Hub report notes that 24 out of 46 countries with active AAFs (52%) have made progress toward institutionalisation — through designated government authorities, national technical working groups, or formal AA strategies — government involvement in financing and day-to-day operational ownership remains limited in most contexts. This gap further exacerbates fragmentation and raises concerns about the long-term sustainability and coordinated maintenance of multiple AAFs operating within the same country.

Capacity for maintenance

The externally driven model of AA has direct consequences for readiness and maintenance not only on the coordination role and legitimacy, but also on the national and local capacity and resources to maintain AAFs. Evidence from key informant interviews consistently highlights gaps in technical capacity and resources within governments and national institutions to independently sustain core functions such as

¹⁰ Anticipation Hub. Anticipatory Action in 2024: A Global Overview. Berlin: Anticipation Hub, 2025. [Accessible here](#)

trigger monitoring, protocol revision, and coordination across meteorological services, disaster risk management (DRM) authorities, and humanitarian actors. As a result, the operational continuity of AAFs often remains dependent on external support even after the build phase has ended.

In contrast, where AA is embedded within national institutional and legislative frameworks, more sustainable and operationally coherent systems tend to emerge. In Bangladesh, the 2019 Standing Orders on Disasters formally integrate AA into national DRM structures, while in Philippines, the Republic Act 12287 on the declaration of State of Imminent Disaster provides a legal basis for anticipatory government action. These legislative anchors support clearer decision-making authority, more consistent trigger validation processes, and stronger, longer-term government commitment to maintaining readiness and enabling activation.

However, the predominance of short-term, project-based financing reinforces existing fragmentation. By focusing primarily on framework development, this model limits sustained investment in capacity building, technical support, and coordination mechanisms necessary for genuine transfer of ownership to national actors. Strengthening institutionalisation — through national legislation, government-led coordination platforms, dedicated disaster financing, and long-term technical capacity building — can significantly enhance the maintenance and operational readiness of AAFs.

Key informant interviews underline that one of the main constraints to effective activation remains the availability and technical capacity of human resources in the period between AAF completion and activation. Capacity building, training, and ongoing technical support are widely recognised as essential to sustaining readiness, yet they remain underfunded and frequently reliant on external partners. This persistent gap highlights the need to move toward more localised, embedded approaches that ensure national actors are not only involved in AAFs but are fully equipped and resourced to sustain them over time.

4. Financing mechanisms create gaps between AAF development, readiness and activation

Through key informant interviews and document review, most AAFs appear to rely on three types of financing mechanisms:

The first is project-based financing of the building phase, focusing on the development of an AAF within a fixed timeframe (typically one to three years), without pre-securing funds for activation or dedicated budgets for maintenance and readiness activities after the project ends. This model is more commonly found in INGO-supported frameworks where INGOs assist national counterparts in integrating AA into national plans and, in some cases, in identifying potential activation funding, a process described by one key informant as “planting seeds” for sustainability. However, once the building phase concludes, there is little structured follow-up on preparedness, maintenance, protocol revision, activation, or action reviews. Even where INGOs report

working on two parallel levels — operationalising the AAF and institutionalising AA, for instance through national technical working groups or implementation plans — this mechanism does not guarantee continuity of funding for activation or long-term readiness.

A second model combines project-based building phase financing with pre-identified activation mechanisms, such as crisis modifiers, START Network, or organisational pre-financing pending reimbursement (e.g. through CERF). While funds for activation may be identified, key informants note that disbursement delays can undermine the timeliness of early action. In this model, funds availability may also depend on global strategies that prioritise certain contexts or countries, leaving others under-financed. More fundamentally, this mechanism remains linear: it covers the AAF development and activation but does not allocate dedicated, continuous funding for readiness and maintenance activities, including training, simulation exercises, stock management, and trigger monitoring. As a result, the sustainability of AAFs remain uncertain once the project cycle ends.

The most comprehensive model identified is the DREF for Anticipatory Action within the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, which supports AA as an ongoing process rather than a time-bound project. AAFs are funded over longer validation periods (five years for full AAFs, two years for simplified Early Action Protocols), with financing covering not only AAF development but also readiness activities —including stocks, human resource capacity, training, and logistics — as well as activation and post-action reviews. However, AAFs generally specify a maximum number of activations within the timeframe (for instance, twice within five years for the Cholera AAF in Cameroon), which can create gaps when thresholds are met more frequently than anticipated.

Learning loops strengthen AAFs

One key informant from the Cameroon Red Cross described how the AAF is shared with all actors - humanitarians, governmental civil protection, and communities - enabling each actor to position themselves within the protocol to fund and implement preparedness activities and activation. At the end of each validation period, implementing and supporting partners review triggers, protocols, and early actions before renewing the plan, embedding a structured cycle of learning and adaptation.

Across these models, a key distinction in AA financing lies between “build” and “fuel” funding. Build funding refers to investments in developing the AAF itself — designing the framework, establishing triggers, building institutional capacity, and supporting coordination mechanisms. Fuel funding, by contrast, is required to operationalise the AAF: financing readiness (e.g. training, prepositioning, monitoring) and enabling timely activation when triggers are met.

In practice, most financing mechanisms are heavily geared toward the build phase, often through short-term project funding, while fuel funding remains ad hoc, delayed, or insufficiently secured in advance. Even when activation funding is identified, it is not always complemented by sustained resources for readiness and maintenance. These

findings on financing mechanisms are consistent with the survey results discussed in the previous section: the tendency for AAFs to be activated within the first year of completion, or even during the building phase, suggests an operational momentum closely tied to funding availability. This imbalance reinforces a linear conception of AA — build, activate, and end — rather than supporting AA as a continuous cycle requiring predictable, flexible financing across all phases.

Key practices and lessons-learned

1. Trigger design and data systems: flexible, context-adapted, low cost, locally managed and institutionalised

Operational readiness is fundamentally undermined when trigger systems are too rigid, too technically complex, or insufficiently grounded in the data and governance realities of the contexts in which they operate, making them difficult to review and update. A key recommendation emerging from this study is to move towards more flexible, simplified, and context-adapted trigger models that are realistic to monitor, maintain, and activate with minimal external support. This recommendation, shared by several actors during key informant interviews, is directly linked to earlier findings that triggers and thresholds need to be reviewed beyond the building phase.

To facilitate the monitoring, maintenance and activation of triggers over time, it is necessary to move away from exclusively reliance on global forecasts or rigid scientific data, and instead incorporate community-based signals, local knowledge and hybrid decision-making approaches. Protocols should integrate both global and localised data sources to define thresholds and triggers, in order to reduce the technical burden of monitoring and lower the risk of non-activation despite qualifying events.

Furthermore, where trigger systems rely on data sources or platforms that national institutions cannot independently sustain, implementing actors should support the identification of low-cost, locally manageable monitoring solutions, including community-based surveillance mechanisms, that governments and local organisations can realistically absorb and maintain beyond the build phase.

Continuous support of national and technical capacities is essential to ensure that adequate financial and technical resources are available for national meteorological agencies as well as technical working groups.

Aligning readiness with forecasts

A WFP representative highlighted the need to align AAF triggers and internal processes with data provided by the national meteorological agencies, to ensure that frameworks are grounded in available capacities and timelines

“We need to look at our own internal processes. For example, for the MAM season in East Africa, the science is really only good enough to provide a forecast two weeks before March and there is a lot of pressure on meteorological agencies to improve the science. However, we should look at our own internal processes and see what we can change in order to work effectively with that time scale. What actions can we meaningfully deliver with that timeline? We should have the operational readiness to whatever lead time the science provides.”

2. Operationalisation: harmonisation, integration into DRM, and institutionalisation

The fragmentation of AA across actors, methodologies, and frameworks — and its treatment as a standalone activity separate from national DRM systems — represents one of the most significant structural barriers to operational readiness, AAF maintenance, and sustainability. Addressing this requires coordinated, institutionalised, and integrated approaches at multiple levels.

Harmonizing AAF approaches and formats

Although some contexts require multiple and locally adapted AAFs, the current proliferation of parallel frameworks, with different approaches and formats, trigger designs, and protocols, can create confusion and inefficiency for national authorities and implementing partners alike. Efforts should therefore aim to harmonise AAF approaches and formats, establish shared data access agreements, align triggers, and create structured mechanisms for exchanging lessons learned — particularly on activation experiences and maintenance practices — across organisations and actors.

Harmonisation may help reduce the occasionally high number of frameworks addressing the same hazard within a country. However, interviews and data analysis reveal differing perspectives on the rationale for multiple frameworks and their implications for the maintenance and readiness. Some actors argue that multiple frameworks allow for contextual adaptation and risk coverage, while others suggest they may dilute resources, complicate coordination, and hinder consistent operational readiness.

For frameworks that are being revised or newly developed, adopting a multi-risk and multi-sectoral approach from the design stage can facilitate integrated coordination and reduce the need for later retrofitting, which is often more complex. At the same time, some interviewees cautioned that multi-risk and multi-sectoral frameworks may introduce additional challenges for harmonising triggers (e.g. multi-indicators and phases), protocols, and coordination mechanisms. These divergent views underscore the need for context-sensitive decisions when balancing harmonisation, integration, and the flexibility required for local adaptation.

Integrating AA into DRM frameworks

Embedding AA within existing DRM structures offers a strategic pathway to improve AAF maintenance and sustainability. By situating AA processes — such as trigger monitoring, protocol updates, and capacity-building — within national disaster management planning and budget, frameworks can benefit from established governance, resources, and decision-making channels. Integration also strengthens legitimacy, ensures clearer institutional responsibilities, and reduces the risk of frameworks being sidelined once the initial build phase concludes.

Integration Enhances Readiness

In Cameroon, for example, the Technical Working Group previously dedicated to AA and flood risks has been integrated into a broader DRM Technical Working Group led by regional civil protection authorities, with support from humanitarian partners such as FAO and the Cameroon Red Cross. This integrated structure enables actors to collaboratively review plans and protocols, align resources and capacities, and contribute to maintenance, readiness, and early action within a shared AAF reducing duplication and strengthening coherence.

Institutionalisation should also be strengthened within humanitarian organisations themselves

Embedding AA within organisational emergency protocols and internal policies, rather than treating it as a standalone project, strengthens coherence and ensures continuity beyond individual programme cycles. It is also a way to efficiently update and ensure the maintenance of AAF by implementing a horizontal approach across DRM projects.

Embedding AA in systems, not projects

For Save the Children, an efficient approach to maintaining AAFs is to integrate the updating of risk monitoring tools into internal preparedness procedures, as part of a mandatory annual review conducted by country offices. The aim is to streamline AA maintenance across all thematic areas as well as across the humanitarian-development-adaptation continuum, recognising that AA should not function as a standalone project. Plan International similarly reports strengthening the organisation institutionalisation of AA by integrating it into its ready-to-respond strategy for country offices and annual planning cycles.

3. Readiness and maintenance: from a linear perspective of build-activation model to a continuous AA cycle

Agree on shared definitions and maintenances mechanisms

To bridge the gap between the AAF build phase and activation, there is a need to establish a clear, shared definition of readiness, including how to classify inactive frameworks and maintenance practices. With a common understanding of what it

means for an AAF to be operationally - and of the continuous activities required to sustain that readiness - actors can share protocols and agree on shared responsibilities to implement and fund maintenance activities. Readiness activities should be explicitly planned and financed as recurring programme components, moving away from fixed-term, project-based approaches to AA. Clear roles and responsibilities should be assigned to national and local actors to ensure continuity. After-action reviews following each activation or non-activation, should be institutionalised as a standard practice, ensuring that lessons are systematically captured and translated into protocol revisions.

Localisation of design and maintenance: from externally lead to nationally sustained systems

The role of external humanitarian actors should evolve accordingly. Rather than designing and implementing complex AAFs in coordination with national counterparts, international actors should prioritise developing accessible guidance and technical support tools that enable governments and local organisations to independently sustain lighter, more affordable AAFs over time. This shift would support national actors in reviewing and maintaining AAFs in a sustainable manner, aligning processes with local resources and capacities, ultimately supporting timely and effective AA systems.

Governments have a central role to play in this process by providing validation of frameworks and the decision-making authority required for activation, and by progressively leading AA mechanisms within their national DRM architecture. Humanitarian and non-governmental actors should support this transition by promoting good governance, building technical knowledge and leadership capacity among national institutions and civil society actors, and gradually shifting from implementers to technical advisors. Advocacy efforts should also focus on shifting institutional mindsets — at both government and community level — from reactive response towards anticipatory action.

Humanitarian roles for sustainable AAFs

A key informant from WFP recommended that humanitarian actors focus on a technical supporting role, including developing guidance and providing technical support to country teams and governments to identify more flexible, lighter AA approaches that can be implemented and maintained over time without extensive budgets or reliance on external actors. In this model, the role of external humanitarian actors would shift towards technical service providers for national governments, enabling a more sustainable approach across all stages of an AAF: development, maintenance, activation and review.

Capacities and funding for sustainable coordination (TWGs)

Sustaining the operational readiness of AAFs between activations requires deliberate planning, dedicated resourcing, and coordination mechanisms that are systematically built into programme design from the outset — rather than treated as residual activities

once the build phase concludes. As highlighted in the findings above, Technical Working Groups on AA at national and local levels play a central role in maintaining coherence between actors, coordinating trigger monitoring, and ensuring protocols remain updated and relevant. Yet these groups are frequently left without dedicated funding and technical support once AAF development ends. AAF design should therefore systematically allocate budgets for TWG coordination activities throughout the full life cycle of a framework, not only during its development.

4. Financing mechanisms

Financing is one of the most consequential levers for improving the maintenance and operational readiness of AAFs. The current predominance of short-term, build-phase financing should give way to longer-term, multi-component funding models that explicitly cover trigger monitoring, readiness, maintenance, and activation as distinct and equally essential phases of the AA cycle.

For example, AA funding could be structured to cover the full build–maintenance–fuel cycle: embedding anticipatory components or crisis modifiers within longer-term institutional grants; simplifying programme design so that activation does not require new funding applications; and integrating maintenance support into instruments traditionally reserved for AA fuel and disaster response, such as CERF. Crucially, while activation funding must be ring-fenced and pre-secured to ensure timely use, these arrangements should be accompanied by dedicated support for the maintenance and operational readiness of frameworks.

Equally important is the localisation of activation financing. Fuel funds should not remain exclusively accessible through international implementing partners; they should progressively be embedded within national institutional budgets, social protection schemes, and government-managed disaster funds, as demonstrated in the Philippines. Localised fuel funding can enhance AAF readiness by ensuring that resources are immediately available where they are needed, enabling faster, more contextually informed responses, and reducing dependence on external actors for timely activation.

Embedding learning in AAF systems

In East Africa, the regional AA coordinator for WFP highlighted that dedicated processes and funding are in place to support AAF readiness. Frameworks are systematically reviewed on an annual basis to identify and address gaps. Funding is also allocated for system strengthening and simulation exercises, particularly in cases where AAFs are not activated despite significant events. After-action reviews examine both the trigger systems and forecasts, as well as the effectiveness of delivery systems.

As actors continue to explore, complementary mechanisms — such as index-based insurance instruments, organisational early action funds, or pre-positioned pooled financing — can help to reduce dependency on external actors for timely activation. In

fragile and conflict-affected contexts in particular, flexible pool funds positioned outside rigid AAF structures may offer a more viable and sustainable pathway for locally led activation.

CARE International's Early Action Fund

CARE International UK, with technical support from the Climate Justice Center, launched an Early Action Fund (EAF) in 2025, with funding from a private corporate donor. In 2026, the EAF evolved into a CARE pooled fund with a three-stream architecture. This structure supports the maintenance of existing AA systems and ensures that the right funds are available at the right time. CARE Country Offices and partners are therefor able to access timely financing for anticipatory action and early action activities.

Annexes

1. List of key informants
2. Analysis framework

List of references

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