

EVENT REPORT

Anticipating the Impacts of Fragility, Conflict and Violence

From Signals to Systems

DATE

8 May 2026

VENUE

Embassy of the Netherlands, Nairobi

FORMAT

Strategic Dialogue, Closed Roundtable

CO-CONVENED BY

Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Danish Refugee Council

On 8 May 2026, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Danish Refugee Council convened a Strategic Dialogue at the Embassy of the Netherlands in Nairobi, bringing together senior practitioners, donors, regional bodies, and community-level actors to confront one of the most consequential gaps in the humanitarian system: the absence of anticipatory action architecture capable of mitigating the impacts of fragility, conflict and violence at the scale and complexity the current displacement crisis demands.

Against a backdrop of record displacement, collapsing humanitarian financing, and growing recognition of the limits of climate-only anticipatory action frameworks, the dialogue brought together senior practitioners, donors, regional bodies, and community-level actors to make the case that the impacts of fragility, conflict, and violence are neither unpredictable nor untreatable by anticipatory approaches. Rineke van Dam of the Embassy of the Netherlands framed the roundtable as part of a deliberate strategy to move anticipatory action from sector buzzword to genuine systems-change lever, requiring donors, implementers, and networks to work as a unified precondition for operational change rather than parallel actors. Harriet Holder of DRC set the structural stakes: a USD 31 billion financing gap, deepening conflict across most operational contexts, and displacement rising faster than the systems designed to respond. The evidence already makes the case for acting earlier: USD 1 invested in anticipatory action ahead of predicted conflict escalation saved USD 6.6 in emergency response costs in South Sudan, while in Burkina Faso, assistance was delivered a full month ahead of conventional response. The central question put to the room was whether the current architecture matches the strength of that evidence, and whether the sector is genuinely willing to act ahead of predicted conflict impacts rather than respond after the fact.

113M

Forcibly displaced globally at end of 2025

+4.2M

Expected increase in displacement by end of 2027

\$31B

Current global humanitarian financing gap

ATTENDEES

Embassy of the Netherlands · European Union Delegation Somalia · US Embassy · Embassy of Switzerland · European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) · Climate Prediction and Applications Centre (ICPAC) of the Intergovernmental Authority on development (IGAD) · Youth Social Advocacy Team (YSAT) · Start Network · Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) · World Food Programme (WFP) · International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) · Netherlands Red Cross · United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) · Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) · Danish Refugee Council (DRC)



Opening plenary by Embassy of the Netherlands and DRC

02 THE EMERGING PRACTICE OF ANTICIPATORY ACTION FOR CONFLICT

Setting the Scene

Two scene-setting presentations grounded the dialogue in operational evidence and emerging practice: Start Network's emerging Conflict Anticipatory Action Project (CAAP) and DRC's global Anticipatory Humanitarian Action for Displacement (AHEAD) initiative implemented across eight fragile- and conflict-affected settings:

START NETWORK (online)

Conflict Anticipatory Action: State of Play and System Design Options

Start Network's Laura Highton opened with the scale of the challenge: in 2025, over 300 million people were estimated to be in need due to the combined effects of climate emergencies and conflict, with conflict remaining the primary cause of death, displacement, and hunger among civilians globally. Nevertheless, anticipatory action focused on conflict impacts remains significantly underdeveloped relative to AA for climate hazards. The structural gap is clear: the sector generates conflict early warning but consistently fails to connect those signals to activation systems and pre-arranged financing.

Closing that gap is the central question Start Network is working to answer under CAAP, developed with Dutch MFA funding, piloting in Somalia and South Sudan in 2026/27, and built on five design principles:

- P1 Mixed methods risk analysis combining predictive modelling with community foresight**
 Combining qualitative and quantitative methods to best capture the nuance and non-linear nature of conflict, from predictive models to community foresight.

- P2 Scenario-building over single-path forecasting**
 Planning for multiple possible or plausible futures to improve risk indicator selection, inform activation thresholds, and enable more targeted anticipatory actions.

- P3 Flexible activation protocols blending automated triggers with expert judgment**
 Blending automated triggers with expert judgement and consensus-based decision making to account for the complexity of conflict dynamics

- P4 Multi-phase activation across the crisis continuum**
 A phased activation approach with multiple points for triggering to maximise opportunity for early action and enable activities with different lead times.

P5 In-built ethical and security safeguards
 In-built stop mechanisms and conflict sensitivity approaches to uphold do no harm principles and protect humanitarian principles in implementation.

The Start Fund's existing capacity to disburse within 72 hours of trigger activation provides the financing backbone. Highton closed with a sector-wide call:

"Anticipatory Action for conflict impacts requires us to adapt not just our tools, but our underlying assumptions about evidence, triggers and decision-making."

Laura Highton - Anticipatory Action Advisor, Start Network

DANISH REFUGEE COUNCIL

Getting AHEAD of Conflict-Induced Displacement

DRC's Global Lead on Anticipatory Action grounded the presentation in AHEAD's 2025 Integrated Context Analysis: 99 focus group discussions and 236 key informant interviews across eight conflict-affected countries, constituting the largest community-level conflict early warning and anticipatory action dataset of its kind. The ICA's central finding was consistent across all contexts: communities are already executing strategic, pre-emptive behaviours in response to informal early warning, yet the formal AA system remains almost entirely blind to them. Community signals do not feed into predefined action protocols or pre-arranged financing. That gap, between what communities already know and what the system is designed to act on, is the core problem AHEAD is built to address. A second structural gap was also identified: the untapped potential of diaspora networks as carriers of early warning intelligence, remittance flows, and informal safety nets.

Not One Crisis: Diversity of Structural Types of Fragility, Conflict and Violence

A key analytical contribution was the disaggregation of FCV contexts into distinct typologies, each with different implications for predictability, lead time, and feasible anticipatory modalities: non-state armed group insurgency, cyclical intercommunal and resource-based conflict, fluctuating frontline and militarised contexts, and hosting fragility dynamics. Getting the typology right is not a taxonomic exercise; it is the prerequisite for designing triggers and modalities that are operationally coherent rather than generically aspirational. From that grounding, AHEAD operates a dual-trigger system combining AI-based displacement forecasting with community early warning intelligence, applied across diverse operational modalities spanning the full displacement continuum: origin-site prevention models leveraging local peace infrastructure; transit corridor models anticipating peak movement across borders; and arrival-site blended anticipation models bridging the gap between alert and response onset. The goal is not a set of parallel pilots but a connected, evidence-generating system linked to national structures, government duty bearers, and the wider peacebuilding architecture within which anticipatory action must ultimately be embedded.

Design Recommendations

Drawing from DRC's analytical base and emerging practice, the following anticipatory action design recommendations surfaced to set the scene for the strategic dialogue to follow:

- R1 Accept flexibility at the core of AA methodology for conflict impacts**
 Adopt a blended anticipation continuum, especially when action focuses on arrival sites where humanitarian access constraints and reactive displacement dynamics require adaptive trigger design.
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- R2 Position humanitarian access as a defining feature, not an exception**
 Access constraints in FCV settings shape what is operationally feasible. AA system design must incorporate access dynamics from the outset rather than treating them as implementation obstacles.

- R3 Design for dignified displacement where prevention is not feasible**
 In state fragmentation and active frontline contexts, forced displacement cannot always be averted. Programming should focus on safety, dignity, and conditions of transit and arrival rather than displacement prevention alone.
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- R4 Anchor AA within existing peacebuilding and development architecture**
 The South Sudan evidence shows that AA generates its highest return when it activates pre-existing community peace mechanisms rather than operating alongside them.
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- R5 Engage diaspora organizations as key stakeholders in AA system design**
 Diaspora networks carry early warning intelligence, remittance flows, and safety net functions that formal systems do not. Their systematic integration into AA design and governance structures is an urgent gap to close.
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- R6 Treat operational diversity as evidence of rigor, not inconsistency**
 The diversity of proposed operational models across the AHEAD portfolio reflects structurally different conflict dynamics, not design incoherence. Donors and coordination structures should resist pressure to standardize across FCV typologies.
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06 Panel Discussion

What the Dialogue Surfaced

The strategic panel brought together five voices representing the breadth of actors whose alignment is a precondition for conflict anticipatory action to move from pilots to systems: Dr. Geoffrey Sabiiti, Senior Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience Officer at IGAD ICPAC; John Jal Dak, Executive Director of YSAT, a refugee-led organisation operating on the South Sudan-Uganda corridor; Isabelle Ribot, Programme Manager for Migration at the EU Delegation to Somalia; Kim Kristensen, Anticipatory Action and FCV Expert at FAO; and Filip Lozinski, Country Director for DRC Somalia. A strong convergence emerged around one central point: the challenge is no longer whether conflict displacement can be anticipated, but whether humanitarian and governance systems are prepared to act on the signals already available.

"Nobody wants to leave and make the big displacement journey. There are lots of community indicators that don't exist on NGO dashboards. Traditional humanitarian response is at the arrival point, which is too late. We want to act earlier to reduce protection risks during the transit journey, and preposition support for safe and dignified arrival."

John Jal Dak, Executive Director, YSAT

A recurring theme was that communities already anticipate displacement long before formal systems respond. John Jal Dak highlighted indicators invisible to formal dashboards: livestock movement, market behaviour, changes in mobility patterns, and the activation of community networks along known transit routes. Communities already understand safer movement corridors and coping mechanisms, yet humanitarian action still tends to begin only once people arrive at displacement sites and needs peak. Filip Lozinski reinforced this from an operational perspective, arguing that the sector consistently underestimates local knowledge and agency, and that anticipatory systems must be co-designed with communities, local authorities, and national institutions rather than built in parallel to them. AA, he argued, is not a separate sector but a way of working within existing systems to maximise impact with constrained resources, and its value case extends beyond donor cost savings to the costs avoided for communities themselves. Kim Kristensen of FAO pushed the same logic across institutional lines: conflict, fragility, natural resource management, and food insecurity cannot be treated as separate technical agendas, particularly in the Horn of Africa where these dynamics are deeply interconnected, and AA generates most value when embedded within existing coordination structures rather than layered on top of them.



"We shouldn't consider anticipatory action as a separate approach, but as a way of working within the existing system to maximise impact with constrained resources. Acting earlier is also cheaper to communities: we save costs for them, not just for the system."

Filip Lozinski, Country Director, DRC Somalia

The discussion identified a structural gap that evidence alone cannot close. Forecasting capacities and conflict analysis have advanced significantly, but the systems for translating warning into action remain fragmented, under-financed, and institutionally underprepared. Rigid financing mechanisms, fragmented mandates, limited flexibility in trigger systems, and unclear decision authority were consistently named as barriers. Regional perspectives from IGAD reinforced the importance of integrated, multi-hazard approaches combining climate, conflict, socioeconomic, and displacement data, with Dr. Sabiiti pointing to IGAD's situation room and multi-hazard platform as infrastructure that needs to be more systematically connected to anticipatory action architecture. Diaspora remittance flows, substantially exceeding international assistance in Somalia, were identified as a major but underutilised resilience system the sector has not yet seriously engaged. The panel closed with a shared recognition: operational evidence is now emerging rapidly, but the institutional architecture has not kept pace, and closing that gap is the defining challenge for the field.

"We are moving into multi-hazard risk profiling as an embedded approach rather than parallel tracks. Conflict and resource competition are intertwined: in the Horn of Africa, most livelihoods are natural resource based. We have established a situation room with a multi-hazard platform and are adding socioeconomic and other indicators to better predict compounding crises."

Dr. Geoffrey Sabiiti, Senior Disaster Risk Reduction & Resilience Officer, IGAD ICPAC

Across the framing presentations and the panel discussion, five themes ran as consistent threads through the conversation.

- 1 Community signal-to-action systems are functioning, but remain disconnected from formal mechanisms**

Communities already anticipate displacement and act on early warning signals long before formal systems respond: livestock movement, market disruptions, mobility shifts, and informal communication networks are all in use. These systems are not absent or inaccessible; they are simply not integrated into institutional anticipatory action frameworks. Panellists repeatedly stressed the need to co-design anticipatory systems with communities, local authorities, and existing local information structures.

- 2 Conflict-induced displacement should be treated as forecastable and actionable**

A strong convergence emerged: conflict-induced displacement can no longer be treated as inherently unpredictable or outside the scope of anticipatory action. Growing operational evidence shows that displacement risks can be anticipated and acted upon when predictive analytics, contextual analysis, and community intelligence are combined. The central challenge is therefore less technical than institutional: whether humanitarian systems possess the risk tolerance, financing flexibility, and decision-making structures to act on available signals before crises escalate.

- 3 Diaspora networks are a major but underutilised component of crisis mitigation and management**

The discussion highlighted diaspora actors as a significant but largely overlooked component of community coping and informal pre-emptive action, particularly in contexts such as Somalia where remittance flows substantially exceed international humanitarian assistance. Panellists noted that diaspora networks often transmit information, mobilise resources, and support movement far more rapidly than formal systems, yet remain weakly integrated into humanitarian architecture.

- 4 Sustainable anticipatory action requires financing beyond traditional humanitarian models**

Several speakers argued that project-based humanitarian financing alone will not be sufficient to sustain anticipatory approaches in FCV settings. The discussion emphasized the need to engage a broader range of actors, including development finance institutions, private-sector actors, diaspora organisations, and regional institutions. Participants stressed that shrinking humanitarian and development funding environments increase the importance of integrated approaches capable of reducing duplication, strengthening local decision-making space, and connecting anticipatory action more directly to wider Humanitarian-Development-Peace nexus efforts.

- 5 Data only becomes actionable when it is accessible and trusted**

More data alone will not solve the anticipatory action challenge. Information must be translated into formats communities can understand, trust, and act on through locally appropriate dissemination systems. Unresolved tensions around data ownership and political sensitivities related to conflict information remain central challenges for conflict early warning and AA systems.

The work ahead is systemic.

The dialogue concluded with a shared conviction: that the question is no longer whether anticipating the impacts of fragility, conflict, and violence works, but whether the humanitarian system has the institutional will, financing architecture, and risk tolerance to transition it from signals to systems.



Annex I. Strategic Dialogue Agenda

Agenda Item
<p>Opening and Scene Setting</p> <p><i>Rineke van Dam, Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Horn of Africa Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Nairobi</i></p> <p><i>Harriet Bland, Principal Programme Advisor - East Africa and Great Lakes Danish Refugee Council (DRC)</i></p>
<p>Anticipating the Impacts of FCV – State of Play and System Design Options</p> <p>Framing presentation delivered by <i>Anna Lena Huhn, Global Lead on Anticipatory Action Danish Refugee Council (DRC)</i></p> <p><i>Laura Highton, Anticipatory Action Advisor Start Network</i></p>
<p>Break</p> <p>Strategic Dialogue – From Signals to Systems: Anticipating Impacts of FCV</p> <p>Moderator: <i>Yussuf Abdullahi, Chief of Party – Boresha, Danish Refugee Council (DRC)</i></p> <p>Speakers: <i>Dr. Geoffrey Sabiiti, Senior Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience Officer at IGAD ICPAC</i> <i>John Jal Dak, Executive Director, Youth and Social Advocacy Team (YSAT)</i> <i>Isabelle Ribot, Programme Manager for Migration, Delegation of the European Union to Somalia</i> <i>Kim Kristensen, Anticipatory Action and Fragility, Conflict and Violence (FCV) Expert, FAO</i> <i>Filip Lozinski, Country Director for DRC Somalia</i></p>
<p>Outlook and Closing Remarks</p> <p><i>Harriet Bland, Principal Programme Advisor - East Africa and Great Lakes Danish Refugee Council (DRC)</i></p> <p><i>Rineke van Dam, Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Horn of Africa Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Nairobi</i></p>
<p>Light Lunch</p>

Annex II. Framing Presentations