

Diaspora in Anticipatory Action

The missing link in anticipatory action



Diaspora in Anticipatory Action: The missing link in anticipatory action

PRACTITIONER GUIDANCE NOTE · OCTOBER 2026

Acknowledgements

This note was prepared by DRC's AHEAD team and Diaspora Emergency Action and Coordination (DEMAC). We thank the diaspora organisations and local actors who shared their knowledge, time and experience through the AHEAD learning series and co-design process. We gratefully acknowledge the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands. The views expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the Ministry.

Suggested citation

Danish Refugee Council (2026). Diaspora in Anticipatory Action: The Missing Link in Anticipatory Action. Practitioner Guidance Note. DRC/DEMAC.

Disclaimer

This guidance note is a learning document. It reflects emerging practice and early learning, not a tested model, and will be updated as evidence develops.

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Summary

1**Informal AA actors, rarely recognised**

Diaspora sits at the intersection of a trusted, real-time information ecosystem. They are often among the first to know and the first to act and mobilise support when crises hit – often faster and further than established AA actors. Yet despite the role they already play and their vast potential, they are **rarely recognised in anticipatory action, and rarely have access to AA frameworks, forecasting tools or pre-arranged funding.**

2**Building the missing link**

This note explores how to **link established AA systems with the informal networks of diaspora and local actors** – so that each can take part across the AA early warning and alert chain, from risk analysis and early warning to action plans, financing and learning.

3**Emerging practice, not a tested model**

As **trusted receivers of early warning and fast mobilisers of support in areas hard to reach**, diaspora and local actors could strengthen community early warning and co-design locally led actions and financing. These approaches are still emerging, need testing, and must be conflict-sensitive by design.

4**From partnerships to coalitions**

Shifting power, resources and decision-making means moving from individual partnerships to coalitions across the three – including coalitions and pooled funds led by diaspora and local actors themselves.

Background

The global humanitarian ecosystem is in a state of flux as crises grow in scale and complexity, while a shrinking aid landscape exposes the limitations of conventional aid delivery. As a result, the gap between rising needs and dwindling resources is not only widening but accelerating at a pace that risks outstripping response capacities. **In 2026, 239 million people require assistance,¹ yet international humanitarian funding fell by an estimated 20% in 2025. Funding to local and national actors fell by 27%, and only 5% reached local actors directly.²** Yet much of the displacement that follows shocks is not sudden: it often follows recurrent and foreseeable patterns, creating a window to act before crises peak. This **calls for a systemic shift in rethinking how risks are anticipated, who acts on them, and how resources reach communities in time.**

Diaspora humanitarian actors, working alongside local and mutual aid groups, are among the most significant yet least recognised sources of rapid, locally anchored crisis response. Driven by their transnational-translocal ties to their homelands, they sit at the intersection of a trusted, real-time information ecosystem: through family, elder, religious and community networks, diaspora are often among the first to hear of rising tensions, unusual movements or urgent requests for support, and can channel resources rapidly, flexibly and at scale to areas often inaccessible to international actors. Remittances alone – often flowing from diaspora to immediate and extended families – surpass official humanitarian aid to conflict-affected countries by six times.³ Yet diaspora information and capacities sit largely outside established AA systems: they are **rarely captured in early warning, considered in activation decisions or linked to pre-arranged financing.**

¹ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). (2025). *Global Humanitarian Overview 2026: At a glance*. <https://humanitarianaction.info/document/global-humanitarian-overview-2026/article/glance-17>

² Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP). (2026). *Humanitarian reform and delivery*. In *Global Humanitarian Assistance (GHA) Report 2026*. <https://alnep.org/help-library/resources/global-humanitarian-assistance-gha-report-2026/humanitarian-reform-and-delivery/>

³ Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS). (2021). *Recognising diaspora humanitarianism: What we know and what we need to know more about*. DIIS Policy Brief, February 2021. [DIIS_PB_D_Hum_Web.pdf](https://diis.dk/PB_D_Hum_Web.pdf)

How they can be connected to established AA systems in a safe, conflict-sensitive way is still to be tested.

.. this is an emerging and largely unexplored frontier in AA with potential for rethinking how AA is designed, delivered and funded.

Meanwhile, **while diaspora are increasingly recognised as humanitarian actors**, they face structural barriers that limit their access to AA frameworks, forecasting tools and flexible funding, leaving diaspora humanitarianism largely reactive rather than proactive. With stronger knowledge of AA, better links to anticipatory action plans (AAPs) and improved capacity to secure resources for early action, diaspora and local actors could make better use of their joint strengths – mobilising quickly, advocating internationally and supporting communities – in ways that strengthen AA and the wider humanitarian response.

As part of DRC's work on anticipatory action, and through its Diaspora Emergency Action and Coordination (DEMAC) initiative, **we are partnering with diaspora organisations and local civil society organisations to build stronger linkages to connect their trusted networks, local knowledge and practices with established AA systems to deliver dignified, accelerated and locally led AA**, from context monitoring to activation and financing. In a global context marked by rapidly decreasing institutional funding, **this is an emerging and largely unexplored frontier in AA with potential for rethinking how AA is designed, delivered and funded.**

About this note

This Guidance Note explores the role of diaspora actors in anticipatory action (AA) and provides practical considerations for humanitarian and development practitioners seeking to engage diaspora communities across AA systems and processes. The note aims to contribute to broader discussions on locally led and inclusive anticipatory action by highlighting opportunities, challenges and emerging practices related to diaspora engagement.

While the note is relevant to AA more broadly, it draws extensively on learning generated through DRC's **Anticipatory Humanitarian Action for Displacement (AHEAD)** project. AHEAD is a multi-country initiative operating across eight countries that seeks to strengthen anticipatory action for conflict-induced displacement through forecasting, community-based early warning systems and anticipatory interventions that help communities prepare for and mitigate displacement risks before they escalate. **The inclusion of local actors, diaspora and hard-to-reach populations in AA is an explicit learning outcome of the project, providing scope for testing new modalities and practices.** Somalia has been selected as the first operational context given its strong global diaspora network, fit with DRC programming and priorities, and strong diaspora partner capacities across target locations.

This note shares what we are learning along the way. Rather than a tested model, it offers insights from our emerging practice and early learning on how diaspora actors and local actors could take part in AA alongside established AA actors – in early warning, financing and action – as actors in their own right. As such, it is intended to support country teams and practitioners in unpacking what this could look like in practice, from context monitoring to AAP design and implementation.

Informed by DRC's methodology on AA, this note is structured around DRC's **six stages of AA system building** – risk-informed analysis, early warning and triggers, anticipatory action plans, pre-arranged financing, capacity to activate, and learning and evidence – highlighting the roles of diaspora and local actors across each step.

Building on DRC’s experience with diaspora programming, this note recognises an often **invisible triangular relationship between established AA actors, diaspora actors and local actors**, and seeks to unpack how they interact – and how these links can strengthen AA.

A triangular relationship, one ecosystem

One AA ecosystem – diaspora and local actors are part of it, yet often invisible

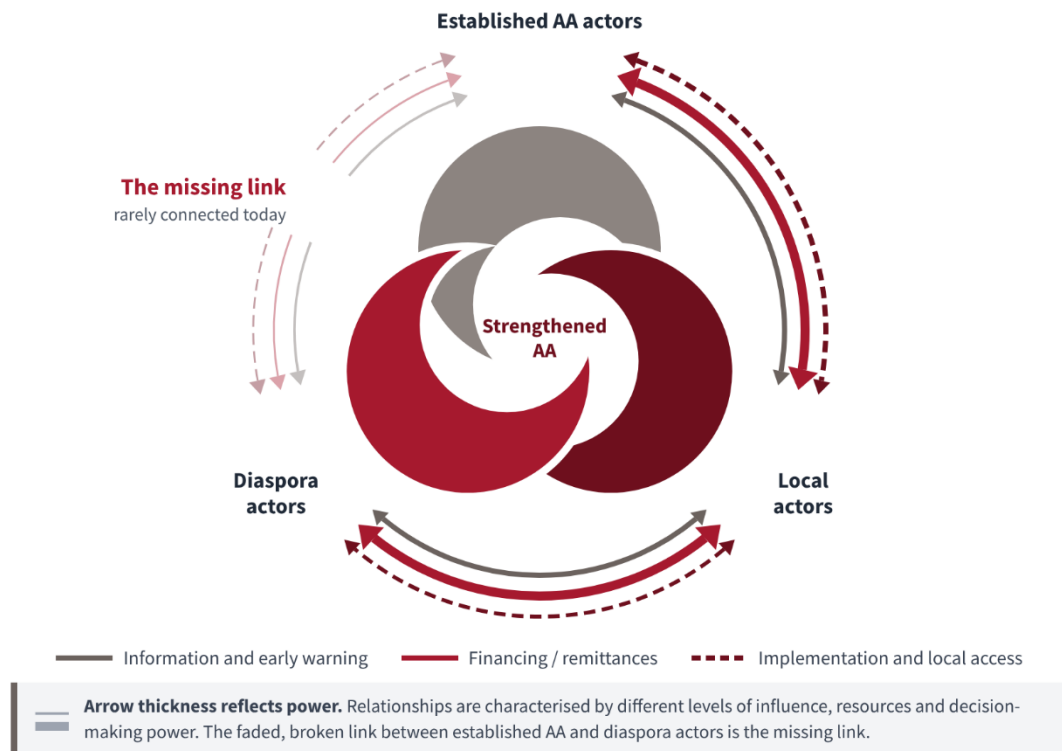


Figure 1. A triangular relationship

Figure 1 shows what flows between the three: information and early warning, financing and remittances, and implementation and local access. These relationships are characterised by different levels of influence, resources and decision-making power. Diaspora and local actors are often closely linked, while the link between diaspora actors and established AA actors remains weak – **the missing link this note seeks to address.**

Diaspora and AA practitioners do not always share the same language. Figure 2 sets out how key terms are used in this note.

What we mean by diaspora and anticipatory action



Figure 2. What we mean by diaspora and anticipatory action.

Why diaspora in anticipatory action

Diaspora actors are both transnational and translocal: connected across countries, yet closely tied to specific towns, villages and communities of origin. Their roles are often fluid – the same person may be a family member, a donor, a responder and an advocate at once. These ties give diaspora actors and communities **unique qualities and capacities that make them key actors in anticipatory action:**

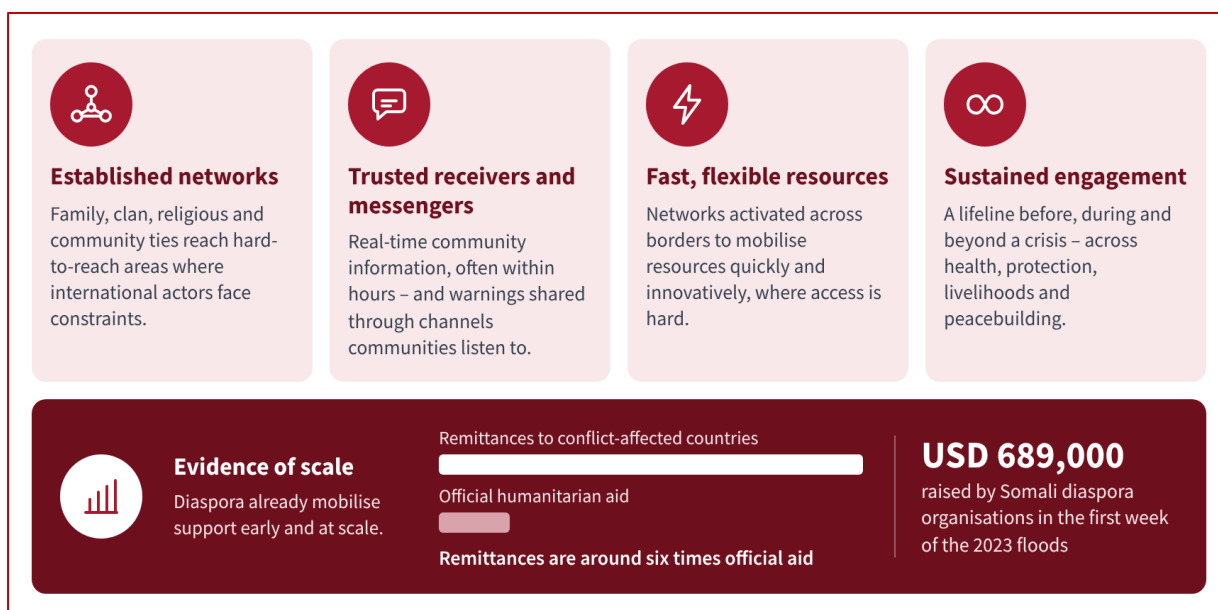


Figure 3. Unpacking the unique capabilities and roles of diaspora in anticipatory action – Sources: DEMAC mapping of the 2023 Somalia flood response.

Many of these roles are already played before and during crises, yet they largely sit outside AA systems: diaspora knowledge is rarely captured in early warning, their resources are rarely linked to pre-arranged financing, and their networks are rarely part of AAPs. Connecting them could make AA more locally grounded and able to reach communities others cannot. This does not mean diaspora engagement fits every context, or that diaspora actors should carry the burden of AA. The next section starts with how to assess this.

Getting started: assessing diaspora engagement in your context

Diaspora engagement is not suitable everywhere. In some contexts it is enabling; in others it is too sensitive – for example where diaspora networks are closely tied to parties to a conflict, where engagement could expose diaspora or local actors to risk, or where regulations restrict transfers and partnerships. Diaspora organisations are also not one group: they differ in capacities, values and approaches. A light assessment before starting helps decide whether, how and with whom to engage – building on the stakeholder analysis and mapping that already underpin AA design.

A key starting point is to map which diaspora groups are present and active, and how they are composed. The six questions below can then guide whether, how and with whom to engage. They are not a checklist to pass: answers will often be mixed, and engagement can build on what already exists.

Is diaspora engagement right for your context?

Six questions to ask before you start

MAP FIRST

1 Presence and composition

Which diaspora groups are present, and how are they structured – from loose informal networks to professionalised organisations? How do they work with local actors?

2 Access and operational presence

Do they and their local partners have operational presence and trusted networks in the areas at risk, including hard-to-reach areas?

THEN ASSESS

3 Positioning and risk

How are they positioned in power dynamics or conflict? Could engagement put at-risk communities in harm's way, reinforce exclusion of particular groups, expose local partners to security risks, or create reputational or fiduciary risks for your organisation?

4 Legitimacy

Are diaspora actors accepted and trusted by communities, local actors and authorities, and seen as acting in the interest of communities rather than particular groups?

5 Synergies and complementarity

Where can they complement and build on existing efforts – early warning structures, past responses, programming?

6 Constraints

Are there legal, registration, sanctions or financial constraints, e.g. on transfers?

DECIDE

Engage

Enabling context – proceed and co-design

Engage with caution

Selected actors, limited roles, strong safeguards

Do not engage (yet)

Risks outweigh benefits – revisit later

Figure 4. Six questions to assess the context for diaspora engagement – drawing on the DEMAC Toolkit and Good Practices Resource Guide (2022)

The assessment can be light and built into the stakeholder mapping and context or conflict analysis already used for AA design. Mapping can start with a desk review and online monitoring of diaspora organisations and their activities, followed by key informant interviews and consultations with diaspora organisations, their local partners and communities. This helps establish who is active, how they are structured, and where they operate. Questions 3–6 can then be explored through the same consultations and existing analysis. DEMAC's [pocket guide](#) and tools on [stakeholder analysis](#) and [mapping diasporas](#) offer practical guidance for each step.

Understanding how diaspora organisations partner with local actors is a key part of this assessment. Partnerships may be initiated by diaspora, by local actors or jointly – each with its own strengths and considerations, and implications for roles in the AAP and the support that fits.

How diaspora and local actors partner

Partnerships may be initiated by diaspora, by local actors or jointly – each with its own strengths and considerations

PARTNERSHIP MODELS BETWEEN DIASPORA AND LOCAL ACTORS

<p>Diaspora-driven</p> <p>INITIATED BY Diaspora organisation</p> <p>STRENGTHS Builds on diaspora expertise and donor know-how</p> <p>CONSIDERATIONS Needs close local consultation</p>	<p>Local actor-driven</p> <p>INITIATED BY Local actor</p> <p>STRENGTHS Rooted in community realities</p> <p>CONSIDERATIONS Diaspora mainly mobilised as a resource for local actors – their added value may be less visible</p>	<p>Collaborative</p> <p>INITIATED BY Joint effort</p> <p>STRENGTHS Shared ownership; draws on both perspectives</p> <p>CONSIDERATIONS Requires time and regular communication</p>
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Adapted from DRC's Diaspora Programme experience and the DEMAC Toolkit.

Figure 5. *Diaspora and local partner modalities.*

Once you have decided to engage and the modality of engagement, whether with informal or structured diaspora organizations, the six stages of AA system building below show where diaspora and local actors can take part across the AA system.

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Under the AHEAD project, diaspora engagement started with mapping diaspora networks across the various programme countries to inform feasibility and entry points, alongside an integrated conflict analysis (ICA) that looked at the role of diaspora in conflict and displacement dynamics, to gauge where engagement could add value without doing harm. In the context of Somalia, the ICA confirmed the dual role of diaspora – as a lifeline for communities and a source of support for peace, but also, at times, a factor in deepening divisions. At the same time, it found diaspora to be highly trusted and the most important source of support sustaining households across most locations. Somalia was selected by weighing these factors together with an organised diaspora with sustained engagement, long-standing relations with DRC and DEMAC, and synergies with DRC's programming. Rather than ruling out engagement, the risks informed who to partner with and how – from partner vetting and selection criteria that considered positioning, legitimacy, access and engagement of minority groups, to training through the learning series and a joint standard operating procedure on safeguarding and conflict sensitivity, among others.

The six stages of AA system building at a glance

The visual below sets out the six stages of AA system building and outlines the roles diaspora actors and local actors could play in each, alongside established AA actors – as partners in the AA system, not only as sources of information or funding. The six stages start with assessing the context: understanding risks, existing mechanisms and actors, including the diaspora engagement landscape. The **build phase** covers the systems, capacities and partnerships that enable AA – early warning and triggers, anticipatory action plans and the capacity to activate – and is co-budgeted through regular programming. The **fuel phase** is the activation finance that releases resources when a trigger is reached, through pooled mechanisms, external instruments and crisis modifiers. Learning from each activation feeds back into what is built. **Diaspora and local actors can contribute to both: to the build phase through their networks, knowledge and presence on the ground, and to the fuel phase through their own complementary funding streams.**

Six stages of AA system building – and the role of diaspora as partners

DRC's approach to AA (left) and the role diaspora and local actors could play alongside established AA actors (right)

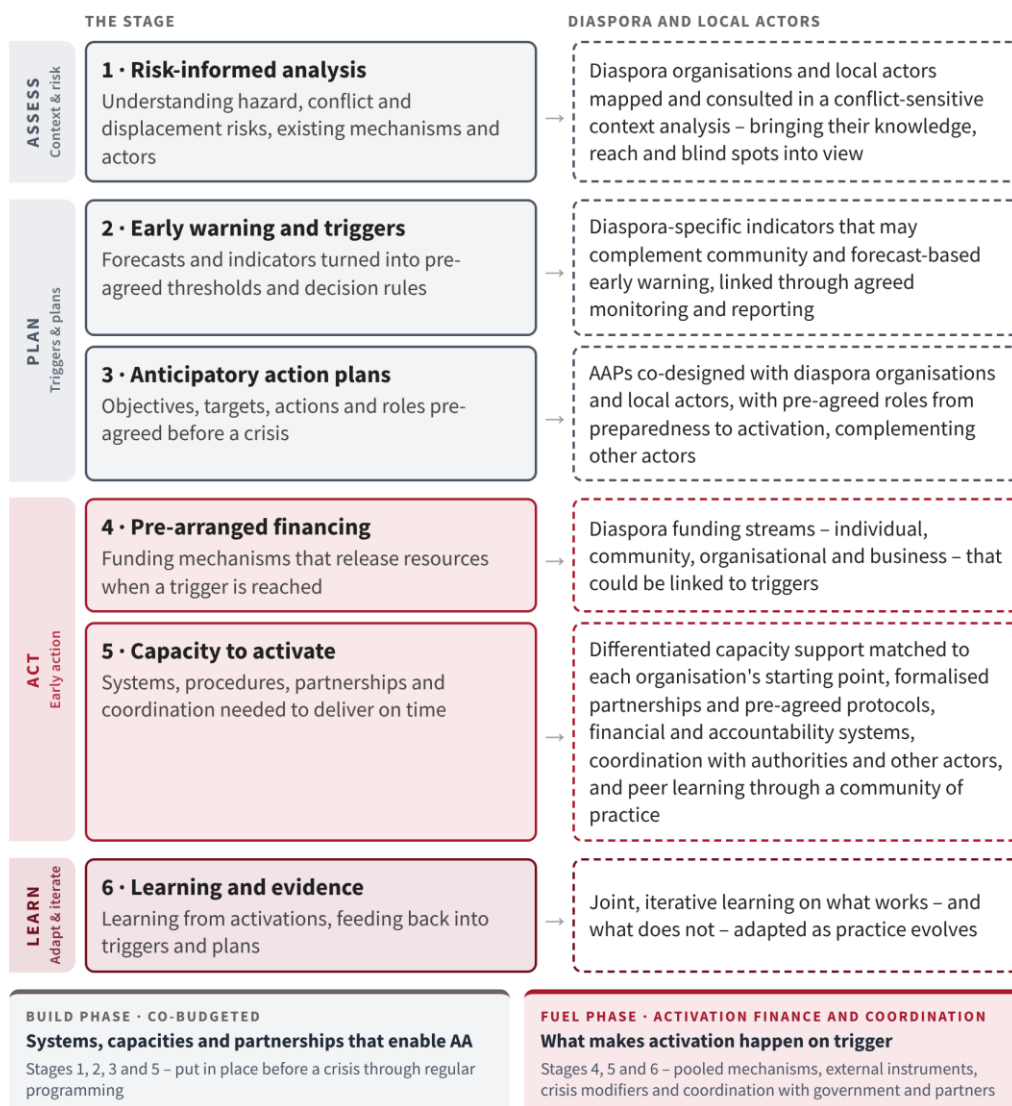


Figure 6. Six stages of AA system building and the roles of diaspora and local actors

1. Risk-informed analysis

Diaspora actors are often already part of how communities prepare for and cope with shocks. Through remittances, information and social ties, they influence who receives support and who does not – and in conflict settings, they may also be part of the dynamics that drive tensions. Their roles are therefore best understood as part of the wider risk or context analysis that underpins AA design, rather than through a separate assessment. This includes understanding existing mechanisms and actors on the ground, and what diaspora and local actors bring – their knowledge, their reach and their blind spots.

This means looking through two lenses.

- **Looking outside-in** starts from the diaspora: mapping diaspora organisations abroad and the local actors they work with, and consulting them directly.

- **Looking inside-out** starts from the communities themselves: asking households and local actors who their relatives and contacts abroad are, how they rely on them – for money, information or advice on whether to stay or move – and who has no such links. This also brings in the role diaspora play locally, including in shaping tensions, which may not be visible from the outside.

Together, the two lenses help answer a few key questions that feed into vulnerability assessments, early warning, conflict sensitivity and AAPs, as highlighted in the figure below.

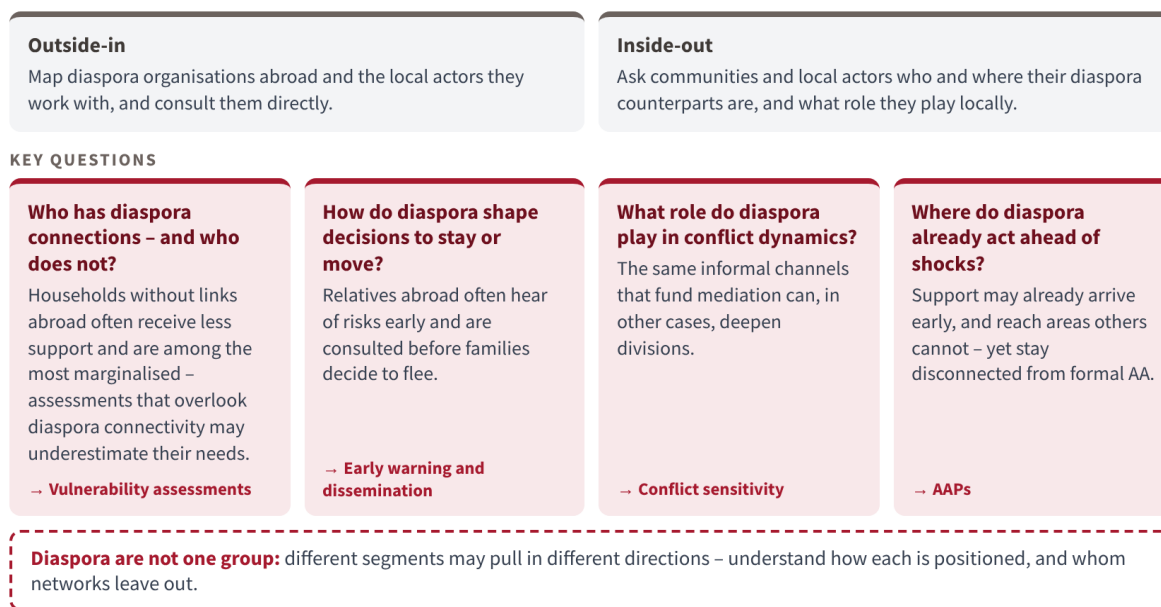


Figure 7. Key questions for a diaspora-informed risk analysis.

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For the AHEAD project in Somalia, the integrated conflict analysis included questions on the role of diaspora in conflict and displacement dynamics, complemented by focus group discussions with diaspora organisation leaders. Together, they showed that diaspora actors already act as informal anticipatory actors: they are part of early warning structures, often the primary point of contact guiding where people should flee to, and fund local peace initiatives. They send support ahead of an anticipated shock and sustain households through and after it, from food, shelter and medicine to the resettlement of displaced people. Yet they remain disconnected from established early warning and AA coordination. However, their role is not neutral – the same networks that support peace can, at times, deepen divisions. The ICA also showed that not all households can rely on diaspora support – those without diaspora links, often the most marginalised, receive far less or nothing at all. A conflict sensitivity lens therefore informed who to engage with and how – including selecting partners whose reach and representation span different communities, including marginalised groups. This further informed the AAP's targeting: diaspora connectivity is recorded at registration, and having no diaspora connections is included as a vulnerability criterion.

2. Early warning and triggers

2.1. Co-designing diaspora indicators

Diaspora actors often see a crisis coming through a different lens. Through family, community and business ties, they may hear early of rising water, failed harvests, sudden price increases, growing tensions or families preparing to move and requests for financial support can shift before other indicators register a change.

Together with local actors, they may also hold indigenous and local knowledge of how crises typically unfold. Diaspora indicators can therefore offer a complementary layer to forecasts and community monitoring, across hazards, crises or conflicts.

Much of this knowledge is tacit. It is taken for granted by those who hold it – people “just know” when something is wrong – and rarely spelled out in a form AA systems can use. Co-designing indicators with diaspora and local actors helps make it explicit, and grounds it in what they actually see and hear. This can follow two phases, set out below. Deconstructing how a crisis unfolds, from the least to the most visible signs, brings out the sequence of signs and who is best placed to see them. Operationalising then translates those signs into AA logic: what is normal, what counts as a change, who observes it and how often, so that they can be monitored consistently and linked to the triggers and escalation pathway of the AAP.

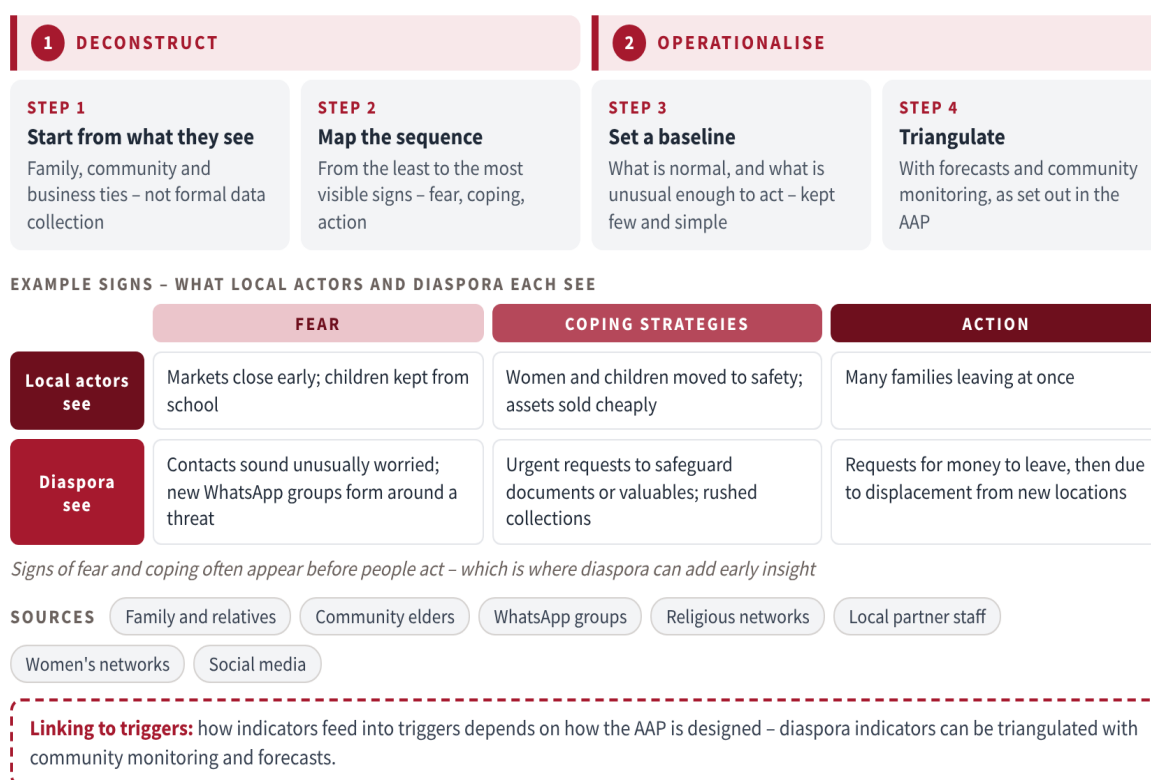
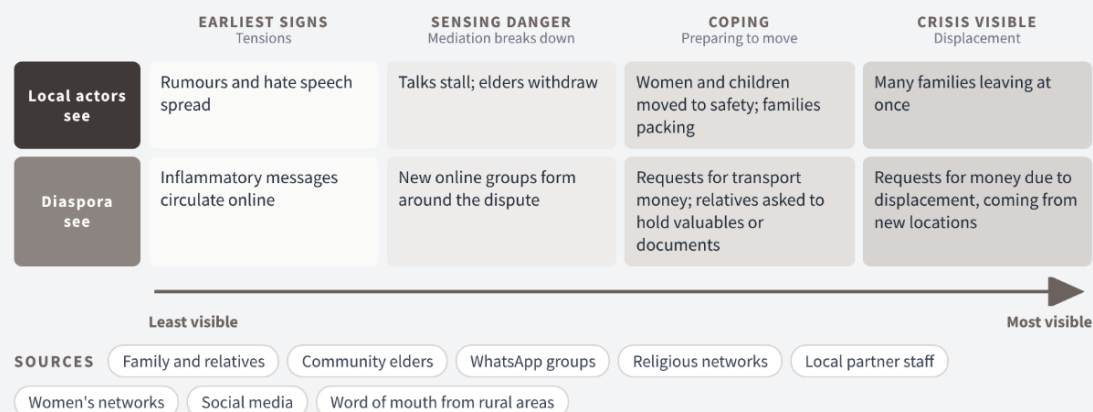


Figure 8. Co-designing diaspora and local actor indicators – from deconstructing to operationalizing.

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Deconstructing. In workshops with diaspora organisations and their local partners, we worked to deconstruct the early warning signs; starting from the most visible signs – those seen once people are already displaced or when crisis is imminent and backtracking them to the earliest signs of displacement. Participants also mapped the networks and sources they rely on to monitor and share information, including their existing early warning structures. This helped identify a sequence of events and indicators, and which signs diaspora and local actors are each well placed to monitor concurrently. *Please see extract below.*

Operationalising. As a second step, diaspora and local actors then worked through what is normal, e.g. establishing a baseline, what counts as unusual, who can observe it and how often. As part of these exercises, they also mapped the access, networks and existing mechanisms they can draw on for monitoring, such as early warning structures that could be leveraged or revitalised.



2.2. Monitoring and reporting

Once indicators are agreed, a clear monitoring and reporting arrangement turns them into usable early warning. Diaspora and local actors play complementary roles: diaspora organisations monitor remotely through their networks of relatives and community and business contacts, while local actors monitor on the ground through trusted local structures and existing committees. Their indicators may feed into existing community early warning structures and the escalation pathway of an established actor's AAP (Figure 8), or into diaspora and local actors' own AAPs, linked to wider early warning and coordination structures so that alerts and actions reinforce each other. How often indicators are reported, through which channels, how they are verified and how alerts flow back to communities must be agreed up front, and will depend on how the AAP is designed. Diaspora networks can also be a unique channel for disseminating warnings quickly, including where other channels do not reach.

The below figure seeks to draw out how diaspora and local actors can serve as a **complementary layer** into the monitoring, reporting and escalation pathway.

From early warning to action

How diaspora and local actor indicators can drive anticipatory action – whether led by established actors or by diaspora and local actors themselves

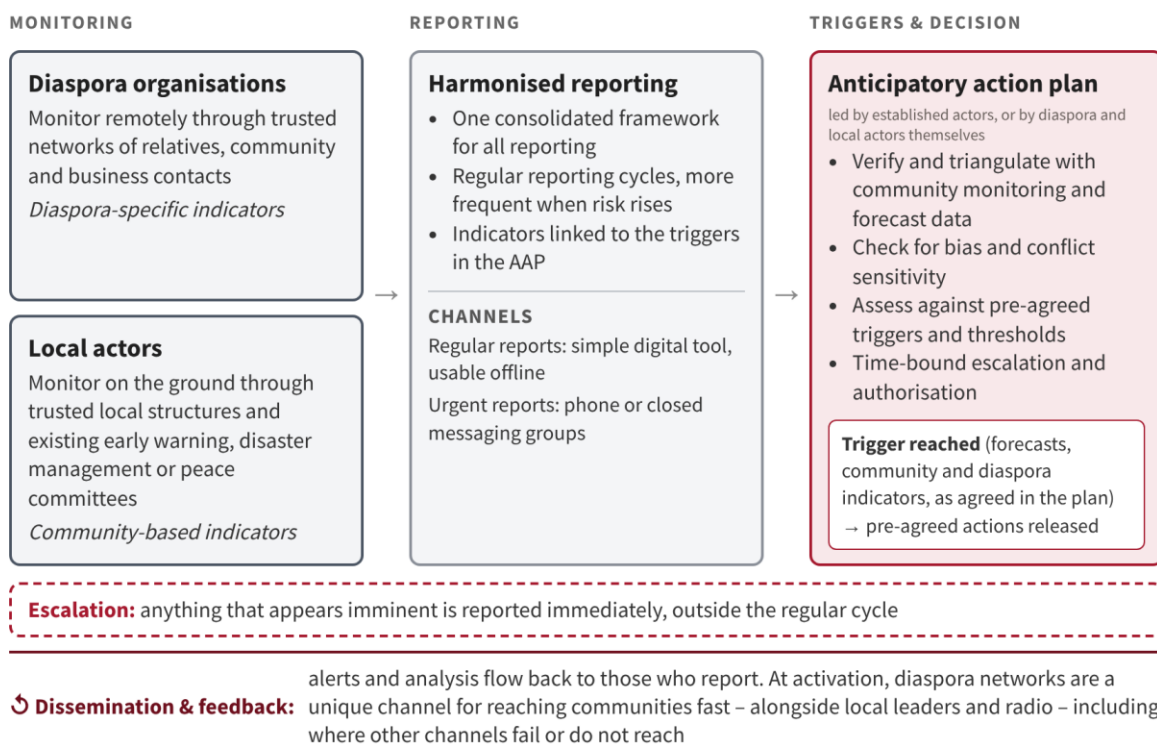


Figure 9. From early warning to action: how diaspora and local actor networks can feed an AA system

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AHEAD's trigger framework combines a forecasting model with DRC's community context monitoring. Diaspora organisations and their local partners were integrated as a complementary layer in DRC's AAP. Both report regularly on shared cross-cutting indicators, plus district-specific (local partners) and diaspora-specific (diaspora) indicators, through a common harmonized KoBo tool, with incident reporting for urgent information. AHEAD triangulates and verifies their reports. Ground rules on safeguarding and conflict sensitivity were set out in a joint standard operating procedure.

3. Anticipatory action plans

AAPs set out in advance what will be done, by whom and when – from preparedness, which runs continuously, to the actions released once a trigger is reached. Diaspora and local actors can take on roles at different stages. These roles work best when they are co-designed, grounded in what each actor can realistically deliver in its location, and planned to complement rather than duplicate the response of other actors. Testing plans against realistic scenarios helps show whether actions are fit for purpose.

Diaspora engagement should complement, not replace, the wider response. Information shared through diaspora networks should be channelled through existing community coordination and warning mechanisms to maximise coverage. Likewise, any assistance mobilised by diaspora actors should be guided by agreed targeting and vulnerability criteria, rather than personal, family or community connections, to help ensure equitable access and avoid excluding households without diaspora links.

Figure 9 shows an overview of how activity design could look like for diaspora engagement in AA programming.

Actions by diaspora and local actors, across hazards

Indicative actions from co-design, complementing interventions by established actors

	PREPAREDNESS Ongoing – not conditional on a trigger	PARTIAL OR FULL ACTIVATION Triggered by early warning – full activation scales up the same actions
1 Early warning Exploratory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diaspora alert structure with vetted focal points Structured monitoring through community committees and diaspora networks – from rising tensions to river levels, failed rains or price spikes Alert messages prepared in local language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Verified alerts through mosques, elders, radio and diaspora networks Diaspora calls across countries to align messaging Monitoring steps up to weekly
2 Peacebuilding, mediation and de-escalation Exploratory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peace committees, elders and trusted mediators mapped; early tension points – including over water, land and pasture – surfaced through family networks Training in peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity Dialogue contacts kept warm along likely displacement routes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peace committees, inter-clan dialogue and trusted mediators activated and co-funded at verified flashpoints; elder-led reconciliation Mediation of disputes over land, water and pasture as drought or floods increase pressure Rumour management; countering hate speech Dialogue between displaced and host communities
3 Livelihood and asset protection Exploratory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Options to protect livestock, seeds, food stocks and household assets agreed with local actors Market and transport contacts lined up for early sale or movement of livestock and assets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support to move, sell or protect livestock and assets early – ahead of floods, drought or violence Remittances to secure food stocks and household assets ahead of a shock
4 Protection and safe routes Tested	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safe routes, evacuation sites, services and referral pathways mapped, including GBV Trusted route contacts lined up for real-time updates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Verified safe-route, evacuation and arrival information shared Protection incidents (e.g. forced recruitment, GBV, threats) reported through alert structures Protection and GBV referrals supported
5 Resource mobilisation Partly tested	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Crowdfunding page ready; donor networks warmed Pooled-fund access confirmed; transfer channels checked 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Campaigns launched; pledges released Remittances for transport and immediate needs, alongside humanitarian cash assistance Funds transferred to local actors for last-mile delivery
6 Targeting and coordination Tested	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vulnerable households pre-identified Diaspora–local actor roles, channels and last-mile arrangements agreed; local suppliers pre-vetted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volunteers mobilised at reception points Community feedback used to keep targeting neutral

Maturity based on diaspora organisations' track record: **tested** in emergency response, or **exploratory** as part of AA. All actions are subject to conflict-sensitivity screening and Do No Harm protocols.

Figure 10. Actions by diaspora and local actors, by theme – from preparedness to activation, across hazards.

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The AAP was co-designed and validated with diaspora organisations, their local partners, national disaster management authorities and NGO coordination bodies, building on earlier online consultations. Working in their actual roles through scenario-based simulations, participants tested the chain from early warning to activation and identified the actions each partner could realistically deliver, location by location – from early warning dissemination and de-escalation to protection, safe routes and resource mobilisation (Figure 9).

4. Pre-arranged financing

Diaspora fundraising is often the fastest financing available in a crisis, yet it sits outside pre-arranged funding mechanisms. The modalities below could be explored and tested together with diaspora organisations – on their terms. The modalities mapped below are non-exhaustive and at different stages of maturity – from tested in emergency response to exploratory.

Yet diaspora resources are not a funding source to pre-arrange or tap. Diaspora giving rests on solidary giving, family ties, moral and religious obligation and trust – not on agreements with international actors. Remittances are private money that families decide how to use, and collective funds answer first to the communities that raise them. Pre-arranged financing should start from what diaspora already do and decide for themselves – not redirect their resources to fit external plans, or channel them through international organisations (Box 1).

BOX 1 · PRINCIPLES FOR LINKING DIASPORA FINANCING TO AA**1****Their priorities, their decisions**

Established actors align with and complement – not steer.

2**Tied to communities of origin**

Diaspora giving follows family and community ties. Its scale does not make it a resource to repurpose or channel into NGO fundraising.

3**Do not disrupt what works**

Diaspora giving runs on trust. Support should be sensitive to this ecosystem and never undermine it.

Sources: Kleist et al. (2024); Hassan et al. (2021); Horst et al. (2016).

With this in mind, **Table 1** sets out modalities that could be explored together with diaspora and local actor – on their terms. Some building blocks already exist.

Table 1. Diaspora financing modalities for AA

Non-exhaustive, and at different stages of maturity – to be explored with diaspora and local actors, starting from their own priorities

Informal networks and individuals Family, hometown and community-based giving

Diaspora mutual aid pool	A community fund with regular contributions, released at the trigger; could be strengthened through match funding
Trigger-linked remittance alerts	When a threshold is reached, diaspora receive an alert encouraging transfers to families before displacement peaks
Diaspora-backed guarantees	Diaspora remittances used as a guarantee, so families can access affordable loans to prepare – for example to make shelters safer

Diaspora organisations From small voluntary associations to larger organisations

Crowdfunding with match funding	Campaign prepared in advance and launched at the trigger; a pre-committed match adds speed and credibility
Diaspora co-financing of local preparedness	Diaspora raise funds and transfer them to local actors to co-finance pre-agreed activities against an agreed budget
Trigger-based transfers to local partners	Funds pre-authorised and released automatically to local partners once agreed thresholds are confirmed

Umbrella bodies and platforms Bringing several organisations together

Pooled diaspora funds	Contributions from several organisations or donors pooled and released at the trigger, with shared decision-making
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Through the AHEAD learning series, diaspora organisations and their local partners explored crowdfunding as a tool for acting early, including through a full-day training with the London School of Philanthropy on how to design and run effective campaigns. A key learning was that campaigns are most successful when around **25% of the target is secured before going public**. The lead time between a trigger and a shock can therefore be used to prepare campaign materials and secure initial contributions, through diaspora giving networks or pooled funds, before launching publicly. By the second workshop, half of participants had taken concrete steps towards crowdfunding readiness. Draft response and co-financing matrices were developed for each location, and sub-grant agreements with diaspora organisations and their local partners, with pre-agreed activities and budget envelopes, provide a modality for preparedness and activation.

5. Capacity to activate

Being ready to act when a trigger is reached depends on more than a plan. It requires the systems, procedures, partnerships, and coordination to deliver on time. For diaspora and local actors, this may rest on five elements.

- **Capacity support matched to each actor's starting point.** Diaspora engagement takes different forms; from informal family, hometown or community-based networks to diaspora organisations of different sizes, to umbrella bodies and platforms. Support should be tiered accordingly and go beyond compliance, covering AA concepts, risk and conflict analysis, early warning, planning and resource mobilisation.
- **Fit-for-purpose partnerships and pre-agreed protocols.** Roles, responsibilities and procedures for partial and full activation should be agreed in advance, so that each actor knows what to do, and when, once a trigger is reached. Partnership modalities should be adapted to the form of diaspora engagement, from supporting community-defined action plans and mutual aid, to sub-grant agreements with pre-agreed activities and budgets, to coordination and pooled funding through umbrella bodies (Figure 10).
- **Financial and accountability systems.** Actors need the systems to receive, manage and report on funds quickly with requirements proportionate to their size and form, so that they protect accountability without slowing action.
- **Coordination with authorities and other actors.** Diaspora and local actors' roles should be anchored in existing coordination structures, so that their actions complement rather than duplicate the wider response.
- **Peer learning over time.** Accompaniment and exchange between actors, for example through a community of practice, matter as much as one-off training.

Fit-for-purpose support

Matching partnership modalities to the different forms diaspora engagement takes



Drawing on DEMAC (2016) and Hassan et al. (2021).

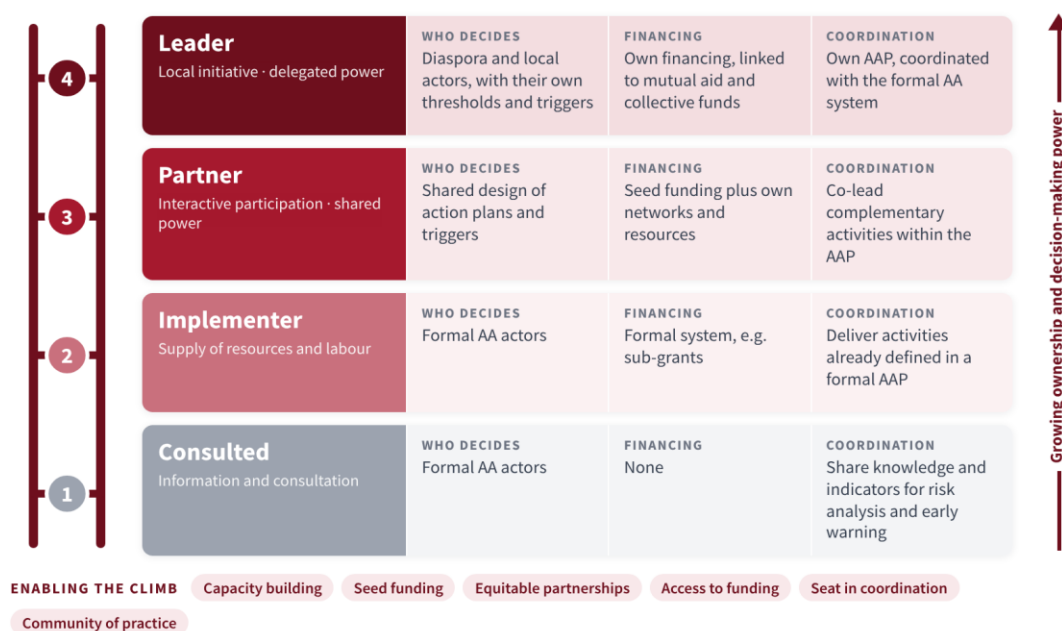
Figure 10. *Fit-for-purpose support.*

Sustainability built from the onset. Capacity to activate should be built with a longer-term vision from the onset: supporting diaspora and local actors to move from being consulted to implementing, partnering and, ultimately, leading AA.

Drawing on established ladders of participation and localisation frameworks, Figure 11 showcases a framework for unpacking different layers of engagements – looking at different dimensions including who decides, who finances and how actors coordinate and enabling factors to support each climb up the participation ladder. Thinking sustainability from the start means designing capacity support, systems and financing with that shift in mind, beyond the lifespan of individual projects.

Pathways towards diaspora- and locally led AA

A ladder of participation: what changes as diaspora organisations and local actors move up



Adapted from Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation (1969), ALNAP's participation handbook (2003) and the Pathways to Localisation framework (2019).

Figure 11. *Pathways towards diaspora- and locally led AA – adapted from Arnstein (1969), ALNAP (2003) and Pathways to Localisation (2019)*

IN PRACTICE · AHEAD SOMALIA

Under the AHEAD project, we have worked with diaspora organisations and their local partners from the outset, through a sustained learning journey rather than one-off training. The learning series moved from building a shared understanding of AA, early warning and conflict sensitivity, including training on crowdfunding, to putting it into practice through the co-design of the early warning structure and the AAP. Continuous learning is envisioned as a parallel track throughout implementation, with the ambition of building capacity beyond AHEAD and supporting strong humanitarian diaspora actors to become leading AA actors. Beyond learning, sub-grant agreements provide a basis for partnership beyond the scope of a single project, and for exploring synergies across DRC's wider AA portfolio.

6. Learning and evidence

Evidence on diaspora in anticipatory action sits across several bodies of literature, e.g. diaspora humanitarianism, remittances and shocks, community-based early warning and AA in conflict settings, but

few connect them. We know that diaspora are established humanitarian actors, that remittances act as a safety net when shocks hit, and that local knowledge strengthens early warning. Yet most of this evidence comes from response rather than anticipation. Whether diaspora signals are reliable enough to act on, whether early diaspora support improves outcomes, and how informal and formal systems can be safely linked remain largely untested, particularly in conflict settings (Figure 13).

Figure 11. Pathways towards diaspora- and locally led AA – adapted from Arnstein (1969), ALNAP (2003) and Pathways to Localisation (2019)

Diaspora in anticipatory action: what we know and what we do not yet know

Evidence sits across diaspora humanitarianism, remittances, early warning and AA in conflict – but few connect them

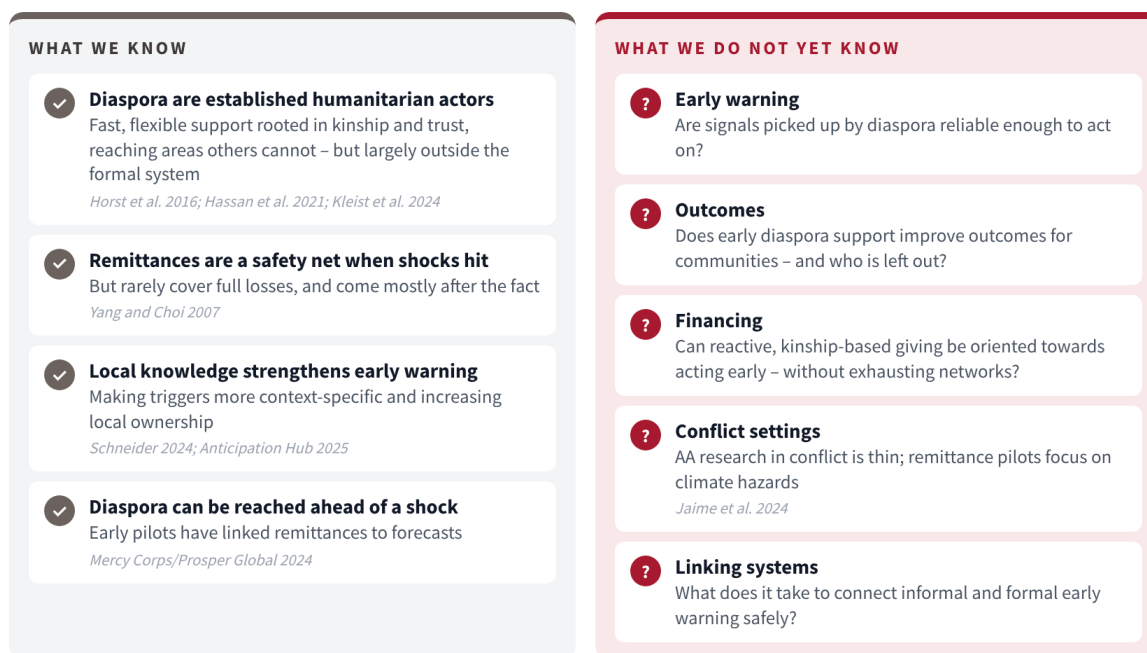


Figure 12. Diaspora in anticipatory action – overview and gaps in evidence.

Learning should therefore be iterative and openly shared - including what does *not* work – feeding back into triggers, plans and partnerships as practice evolves.

IN PRACTICE · AHEAD SOMALIA – CLOSING THE EVIDENCE GAP

AHEAD is generating learning on some of these questions in Somalia, drawing on monitoring data from diaspora and local partners alongside community monitoring and activations as they take place. Findings will be shared as they emerge.

Looking ahead: from practice to coalition

Engaging diaspora and local actors in AA is not only an operational question but also an advocacy agenda. It starts with **practice**: partnerships in which diaspora organisations and local actors co-design early warning, action plans and financing. From there, **coalitions** can connect with established AA actors, peace structures and donors around shared early warning, financing and learning. Over time, this collective **voice** can shape how AA works, from raising the alarm while there is still time to act to advocating for the recognition of diaspora in AA frameworks and coordination structures, as highlighted in the figure below. Sustaining this beyond project financing means anchoring roles in existing early warning and coordination structures, and capacity support that stays beyond the project: tiered, matched to each actor's starting point and delivered as a sustained learning journey. A diaspora AA community of practice can help carry this forward, connecting diaspora organisations across contexts to exchange lessons and build a collective voice.

From practice to coalition

How the relationship between formal AA, diaspora and local actors can grow from individual partnerships into a shared agenda

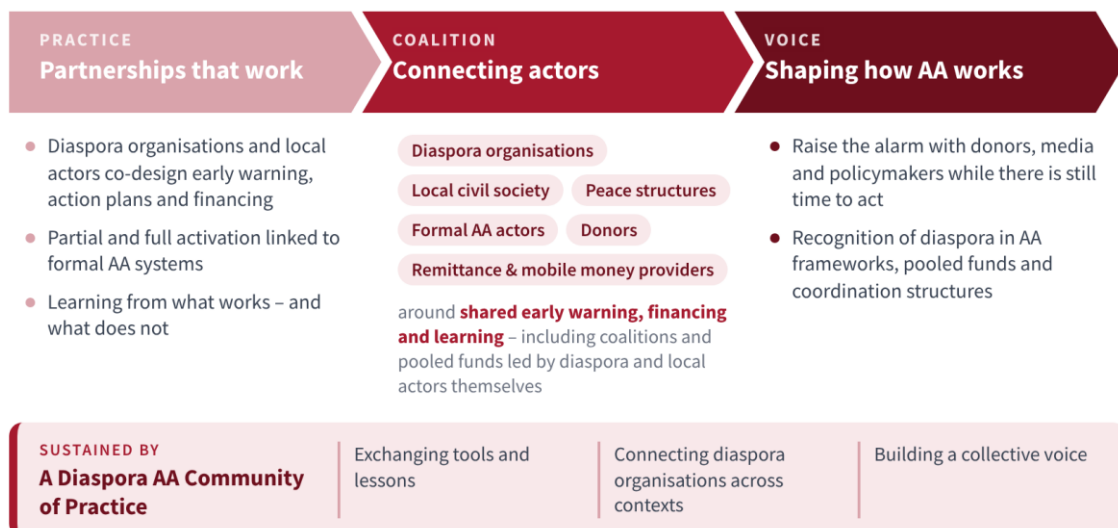


Figure 12. From practice to coalition

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 Check whether it fits.** Diaspora engagement is not suitable everywhere. Start by mapping which diaspora groups are present and how they are composed, and assess access, risks, legitimacy, synergies and constraints to decide whether, how and with whom to engage.
- 2 Look through two lenses.** Bring diaspora into the integrated conflict analysis, looking outside-in – mapping and consulting diaspora organisations and their local partners – and inside-out – asking communities who they rely on abroad, and who has no such links.
- 3 Co-design, build on what exists.** Co-design indicators and AAPs with diaspora organisations and their local partners, building on their existing strengths, capacities and early warning structures rather than creating parallel systems.
- 4 Start from their priorities.** Explore financing modalities together with diaspora actors, starting from their own priorities and ways of mobilising support.
- 5 Support capacity to activate.** Build capacity with a longer-term vision from the onset, through fit-for-purpose support and partnerships matched to each actor's form and starting point – from informal networks to diaspora organisations and umbrella bodies – and a sustained learning journey that supports diaspora and local actors to become leading AA actors.
- 6 Learn openly.** Generate and openly share learning, including what does not work, to build the evidence base on diaspora in AA, particularly in conflict settings.
- 7 Build a collective voice.** Through a community of practice, support diaspora and local actors to build coalitions and advocate for their recognition in AA and inclusion in AA coordination structures.

We are open to exploring collaboration, and welcome exchange with other actors working on diaspora engagement, localisation and anticipatory action.

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About DRC

The Danish Refugee Council assists refugees and internally displaced persons across the globe: we provide emergency aid, fight for their rights, and strengthen their opportunity for a brighter future.

About DEMAC

Diaspora Emergency Action and Coordination (DEMAC) works to strengthen coordination and collaboration between diaspora organisations and the wider humanitarian system.

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