

Roundtable synthesis: Setting a demand-driven research agenda for advancing Anticipatory Action and addressing Fragility, Conflict, and Migration dynamics



INITIATIVE ON
Fragility, Conflict,
and Migration

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CGIAR Initiative on Fragility, Conflict and Migration

The CGIAR Initiative on Fragility, Conflict, and Migration aims to enhance the resilience of food, land, and water systems in fragile and conflict-affected settings, where migration-related challenges are prevalent. By taking a systems approach and working in partnership with local stakeholders, the Initiative seeks to generate evidence to inform effective policies and programs that promote social and gender equity, climate resilience, conflict mitigation, and peace building in these settings.

Learn more about the initiative here: <https://www.cgiar.org/initiative/fragility-conflict-and-migration/>.

Disclaimer

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Executive Summary

In fragile and conflict-affected settings and host communities, hunger, severe malnutrition, and water insecurity are on the rise, directly impacting the resilience of food, land and water systems. The interplay of these issues often gives rise to conflict and forced migration, with women and other marginalized groups disproportionately affected due to their limited access to channels of power and influence during shocks and crises.

In these fragile contexts, the agri-food system is central to food security, livelihoods, and sustainable development. These systems are often characterized by instability, restricted access to resources and gender inequalities. While these challenges are extensive, their causes, manifestations and impacts can vary widely. To address these compounding challenges, government, humanitarian and development organizations need evidence to inform collective efforts.

The concept of anticipatory action has emerged as a proactive approach to mitigate disasters and crises. Anticipatory Action involves a series of measures strategically implemented to prevent or mitigate potential disaster impacts before a shock occurs or before acute impacts are felt. This document compiles stakeholders' expressed needs for CGIAR research. It presents insights from a roundtable discussion at the Global Dialogue Platform on setting a research agenda that guides good practices for anticipatory action initiatives in fragile and conflict-affected settings. This discussion was part of an ongoing series of learning and exchange events coordinated through Work Package 1 (WP1) of the Fragility, Conflict and Migration Initiative to promote an anticipatory action-community of practice led by the International Water Management Institute.

Continuous engagements with diverse organizations are essential for shaping a demand-driven research strategy. This report, therefore, lays the foundation for an ongoing commitment to continued collaboration; it summarizes the strategic importance of demand-driven research in addressing the complex challenges of Anticipatory Action and dynamics of fragility, conflict and migration. The roundtable stressed the significance of advancing research, policy, and practice in strengthening anticipatory action and conflict resilience. It emphasized the importance of evidence-based approaches, highlighting the need for tailored strategies in addressing the unique dynamics of anticipatory action and fragility, conflict and migration issues. Interdisciplinary analyses were deemed crucial to addressing the interconnectedness of climate, conflict, displacement and political dynamics. Recommendations include integrating social, political and cultural dimensions into research methodologies while respecting local dynamics without compromising neutrality.

Section 1: Introduction and Context

1.1. Anticipatory Action evidence

The Fragility, Conflict and Migration Initiative (FCMI) aims to contribute to the Anticipatory Action (AA) global community of practice by helping to define and advance an AA research agenda. There are numerous theoretical and pragmatic discussions around the interplay between AA, conflict dynamics and the resilience of food, land and water systems in fragile and conflict-affected settings (FCASs). There is also a need to delve into national realities and contexts and leverage the expertise of researchers and practitioners to push discussions forward and identify knowledge gaps and priorities that can drive transformative change and foster resilience.

This workshop summary reports on the main outcomes from a side session on "Setting the Research Agenda for Anticipatory Action and Conflict" held at the 11th [Global Dialogue Platform on Anticipatory Humanitarian Action \(anticipation-hub.org\)](https://anticipation-hub.org) (GDP) Conference in Berlin in October 2023. The report explores emerging research priorities for stronger AA evidence and a new research agenda with a focus on prevailing challenges, interventions to enhance capacity and identification of potential partnerships and study areas and countries. A summary of the trends that emerged from the roundtable is in Table 1. Section 3 provides summaries of the research priorities (framed as questions) and priority focus areas and levers for enhancing organizational capacity as expressed by the roundtable participants.



Participants at the 11th global development platform, Berlin, 10–12 October 2023. Photo: International Water Management Institute.

Section 2: CGIAR Fragility, Conflict and Migration participation at the Global Dialogue Platform

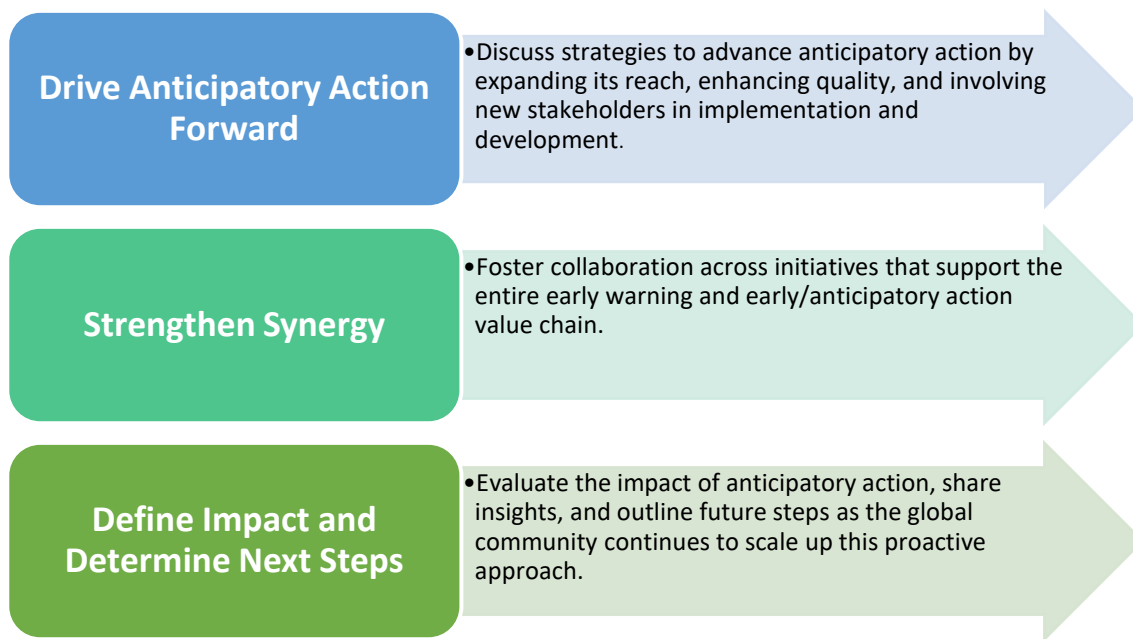
2.1. Overview of the 11th Global Dialogue Platform

Under the overarching theme of People at the centre: scaling up anticipatory action, the 11th Global Dialogue Platform (GDP) took place in Berlin from October 10–12, 2023. The conference was hosted by Anticipation Hub, a collaborative initiative involving the German Red Cross, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), and the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre. The conference was organized in partnership with the German Red

Cross, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), the Red Cross – Red Crescent Climate Centre, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Food Programme (WFP), Start Network, and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, with invaluable support from the German Federal Foreign Office.

Drawing on a diverse audience from across the globe, the GDP brought together policymakers, practitioners, scientists, and experts representing a range of sectors, including the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, the United Nations, non-governmental organizations, governments, donors, academia and the private and the financial sectors. The objectives of the dialog are outlined in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1. Objectives of the 11th Global Dialogue Platform.



The GDP served as a platform for exchanging ideas and experiences, emphasizing the crucial role of people in these discussions.¹ Particularly relevant for research and empirical analysis was Theme 4 (of 5): Using evidence to establish what matters most in anticipatory action.

2.2. FCMs contribution to the GDP

An IWMI team attended the event on behalf of the CGIAR and actively engaged in discussions on more evidence-based AA and good governance for strengthened AA while underscoring the importance of incorporating conflict-sensitive approaches. This perspective helps ensure that interventions respond to immediate needs and addresses the underlying causes of fragility and conflict, particularly in relation to water resources and security.

The team called for more and stronger collaborative efforts and highlighted the importance of bridging gaps between different sectors, fostering dialogue, and collectively working toward more sustainable and climate-resilient futures. This collaborative approach was well received by partner institutions, including the Red Cross Red Crescent's Climate Centre, who are working hand-in-hand with IWMI and FCM toward a more holistic understanding of resilience.

2.3. Joint Event by IWMI and Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre

To contribute to the thematic area, '*Using evidence to establish what matters most in anticipatory action*', the IWMI joint workshop partnered with the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre on a session focused on integrating conflict

¹ Full agenda: https://events.anticipation-hub.org/global-dialogue-platform-2023/_assets/Agenda-PDF-version.pdf

sensitivity into AA. The session was titled "*Doing better, not just doing more: conflict-sensitive anticipatory action as a commitment and a way of working.*"

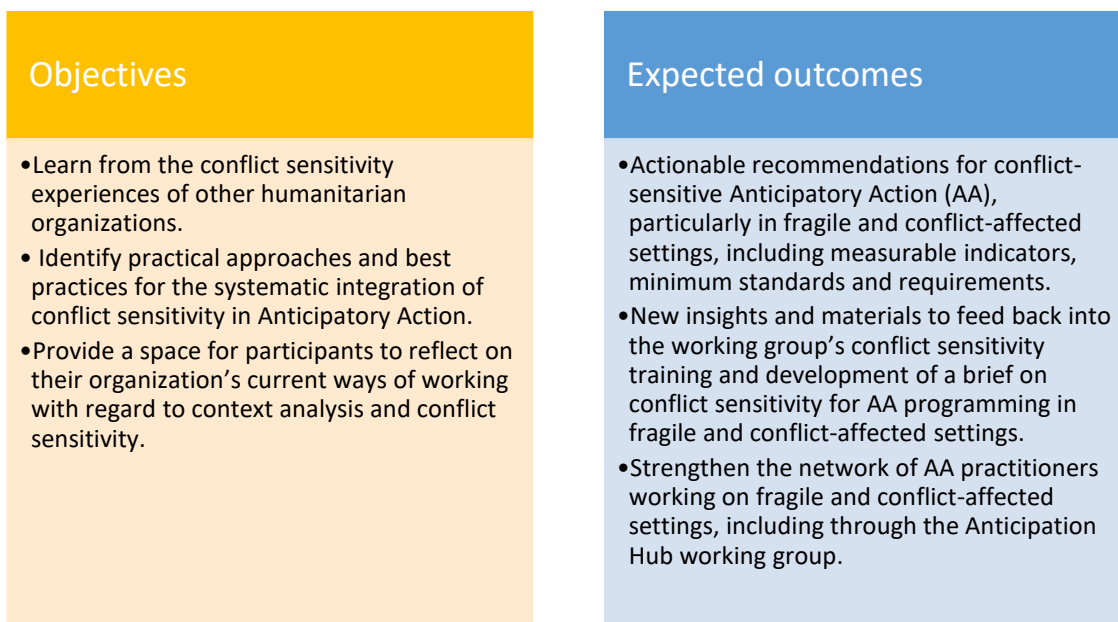
The workshop adopted a roundtable/World Café format. The session had four in-person roundtable discussions and three virtual discussions. Participants engaged in small groups, exploring specific topics of interest. Roundtable convenors included IWMI and other key partners such as FAO and WFP, along with prominent organizations like the German Red Cross and International Committee of the Red Cross. The roundtable discussion was led by Dr Sandra Ruckstuhl (FCM Work Package 1 Lead), Dr Juan Carlos Sanchez (FCM Work Package 1 Deputy Lead) and Ms Ngowenani Nohayi (Knowledge and Learning Lead for FCM Work Package 1). The primary objective was pinpointing emerging topics for a new research agenda and guiding best practices for AA initiatives in FCAS. It was hoped that insights and strategies would enhance the effectiveness of AA initiatives in challenging contexts.

The joint workshop contributed to the spirit of the Global Dialogue in positioning conflict-sensitive AA as a commitment and a way of working. It emphasized the need to contextualize AA measures to ensure that every intervention is context-sensitive and creates more benefits than tensions and unanticipated consequences. This is what the AA community is beginning to understand—the need for conflict sensitivity to address in FCAS contexts. The community is also learning about more practical approaches and best practices for the systematic integration of conflict sensitivity in AA and an overall perspective on how to strengthen AA within larger humanitarian and development initiatives.

One aspect emphasized during the workshop was the importance of carefully documenting evidence for cross-learning. This involves sharing experiences and lessons across diverse geographies, organizational levels and sectors, by fostering collaboration between practitioners and conflict-sensitivity experts.

The primary objectives of the roundtable were to gather insights from the conflict sensitivity experiences of various humanitarian organizations, identify practical approaches and best practices for the systematic integration of conflict sensitivity in AA, and provide a platform for participants to reflect on their organizations' current ways of working in context analysis and conflict sensitivity (Figure 2).

FIGURE 2. Objectives and expected outcomes of the joint workshop.



2.4. The roundtable discussion

IWMI led a roundtable discussion titled '*Setting the Research Agenda for Anticipatory Action and Conflict: catalysts for increased resilience of food, land, and water systems in fragile and conflict-affected settings.*' The guiding question

was: "What are the emerging research topics for a new research agenda?" Participants were prompted to consider points such as identifying challenges, reflecting on potential capacity interventions, identifying collaborations and partnerships, and exploring specific areas or countries as case studies (Figure 3).

The aim of the discussion was to define and shape a research strategy to help guide the development of best practices for anticipatory action initiatives in FCASs. Participants shared their field experiences, reflected on knowledge gaps, identified opportunities, and explored potential areas for innovation that would help inform the design or implementation of more effective anticipatory action initiatives.

Participants included stakeholders from academia, extension services, development practitioners, humanitarian organizations and government entities. High-level participants included representatives from the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management South Sudan, Amrita Center for Wireless Networks and Applications (Amrita WNA)-India, WFP, FAO, IFRC, the Start Network, Insecurity Insight, and the Sri Lanka Red Cross Society, among others.

FIGURE 3. Discussion point summary.

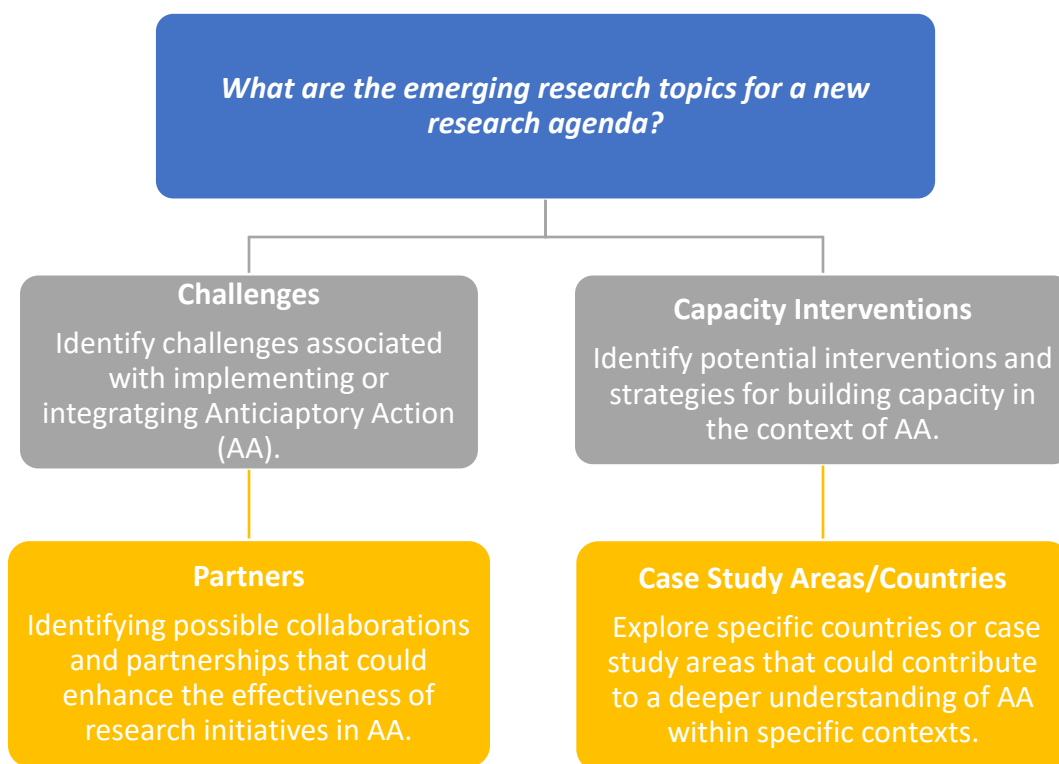


Table 1 summarizes the action areas discussed, outlining the main 'pillars' of a possible research agenda, building holistic resilience and proposing research-driven action steps. While the team acknowledges the complexity of conducting research in FCASs, it endeavors to pioneer research efforts aimed at anticipating and mitigating the impacts of climate-related disasters and conflicts under FCM's WP1: Anticipatory Action and Governance. Participants in the roundtable made clear the need for more evidence-based AA. Each area of focus represents a distinct core area of work, presenting challenges in research and policy needs but ultimately shaping the global AA Community of Practice work toward a more resilient future.

TABLE 1. Emerging trends from the roundtable.

Action Areas	Details
<i>Shaping the Research Agenda</i>	The participants outlined research priorities that align with the real-world needs of Fragile and Conflict Affected Settings (FCASs). Experiences shared in the discussions and throughout the three days during the Global Dialogue Platform (GDP) resulted in a long list of issues needing investigation to inform effective Anticipatory Action (AA) programming, given the complexities and nuances of the regions grappling with fragility and conflict.
<i>Building Bridges for Holistic Resilience</i>	Practitioners and researchers agreed on emphasizing the interconnectedness of food, land and water systems and advocated for AAs that address these elements in tandem. By building bridges between sectors and stakeholders, joint collective action can facilitate more effective resilience strategies that can respond to an immediate crisis and contribute to long-term sustainability.
<i>Research-Driven Action Steps</i>	The research-driven action steps highlight elements to guide future work, research, and evidence-building in the field of disaster risk management. The commitment to research excellence ensures that anticipatory actions are effective and contextually relevant. By translating insights from the research agenda into action steps, the CGIAR Fragility, Conflict and Migration Initiative and its partners will continue to work toward a lasting impact on the lives of those living in FCASs.

Section 3: Toward more efficient Anticipatory Action

3.1. Outcomes: Shaping IWMI's Research Agenda for AA in FCM contexts

This section explores strategic approaches and initiatives aimed at refining the role of research in strengthening AA and fostering conflict resilience in FCASs. These insights emerged from the roundtable discussion, providing a foundation for shaping the FCM research agenda.

3.2. Priorities for a demand-driven AA in FCM contexts

This section summarized the research priorities (framed as questions) as expressed by the roundtable participants. The research questions are:

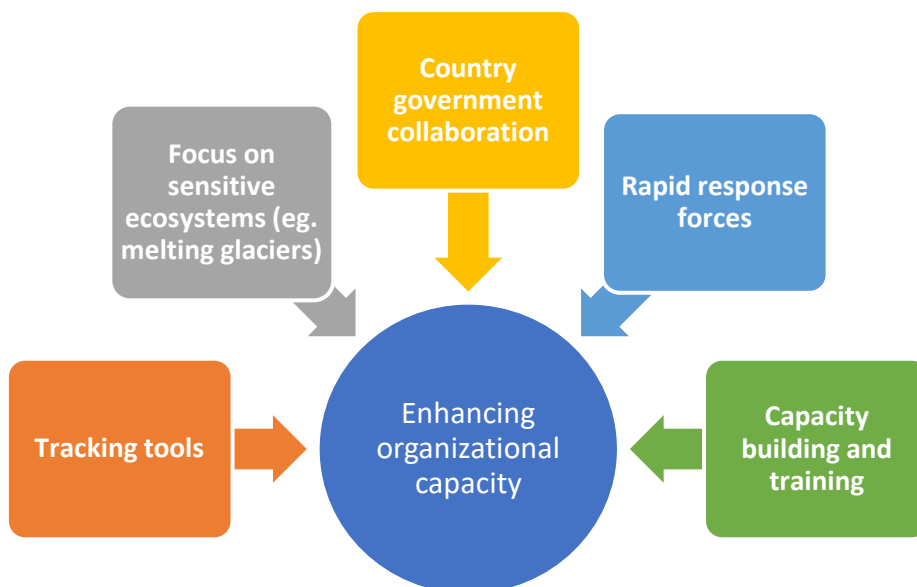
1. **Changing nature of droughts:** How can anticipatory strategies be developed to comprehensively and effectively address the evolving nature of droughts and their far-reaching implications for vulnerable populations?
2. **Interconnected dynamics:** What interdisciplinary research approaches are needed to unravel the complex relationships among and between climate, conflict, displacement and political dynamics to formulate holistic AA strategies that can intervene in multiple layers of vulnerability?

3. **Local conflict drivers:** How can the drivers of conflict at the local level be analyzed, giving priority to those events that exert the most significant impact on communities? How can anticipatory measures be tailored to address specific triggers and vulnerabilities identified at the grassroots level?
4. **El Niño and conflict:** What role does El Niño play in precipitating drought conditions and subsequent conflicts, and how can anticipatory measures be developed to factor in El Niño-related patterns? What AA systems can be established to mitigate the impact on communities?
5. **Conflict-health nexus:** What is the nature of the nexus between conflict and health outbreaks, and how can anticipatory health interventions be formulated to address the unique challenges posed by conflicts, ensuring timely and effective responses to health crises in FCASs?
6. **Vulnerability of populations to drought:** How can anticipatory strategies be designed to address the changing nature of droughts and their implications for vulnerable populations?
7. **Holistic research methodologies:** What methodologies can be employed to integrate social, political, and cultural dimensions into AA research? How can research be sensitive to local dynamics while maintaining neutrality for effective AA?
8. **Integration of climate and conflict considerations in AA:** How can the integration of climate and conflict considerations in AA be effectively advanced, leveraging IWMI's expertise in water data to pioneer innovative tools for AA and advocating for the recognition of water scarcity as a crucial factor in the interconnected landscape of FCM contexts?

3.2.1. Focus Area: Levers for enhancing organizational capacity in AA

The following levers emerged as important factors for strengthening organizational capacity. For each lever, challenges and opportunities were also acknowledged. By considering these factors, organizations are better placed to promote AA in FCASs and to support a demand-driven research agenda (Figure 4). We also outline the priority research activities needed to capitalize on the opportunities identified. The result serves as a roadmap for organizations promoting AA in FCAS contexts.

FIGURE 4. Levers for enhancing organizational capacity.



➤ **Tracking tools**

Developing comprehensive tracking tools faces persistent challenges, particularly in terms of standardization and compatibility. The diverse range of data sources, formats and systems within FCASs necessitates a harmonized approach to overcome these obstacles to effective tracking. To meet this challenge, research should explore measurable indicators that can monitor and assess the effectiveness of resilience-building initiatives.

➤ **Focus on sensitive ecosystems (eg. melting glaciers)**

Obtaining precise data on sensitive ecosystems can be challenging in many geographies in the world. For example, data on the level of melting glaciers in fragile contexts suffers from the lack of monitoring infrastructure. Common challenges to melting glaciers and sensitive ecosystems include limited access to remote areas, reliance on unreliable data sources and the need for innovative technologies. To meet these challenges, research could focus on using advanced monitoring technologies and methodologies, including GIS and remote sensing, to more precisely measure current levels of ecosystem degradation and their impacts on human dependant populations.

➤ **Country government collaboration**

Collaborating with country governments poses challenges related to bureaucratic processes, differing levels of capacity and political sensitivities. Turning these challenges into opportunities involves fostering collaborative partnerships. This includes engaging in dialogues, sharing insights and coordinating efforts to align initiatives with national strategies. By actively pursuing such partnerships, there is an opportunity to create a unified approach that would enhance the effectiveness of FCAS initiatives.

➤ **Rapid response forces**

Establishing and maintaining rapid response forces poses challenges related to funding constraints, logistical complexities and the need for continuous training. Overcoming resource limitations is crucial to ensure agility and preparedness. Turning these challenges into opportunities requires establishing and strengthening rapid response forces equipped to handle emergencies in FCASs.

➤ **Capacity-building and training**

Implementing capacity-building programs confronts challenges in tailoring training to the diverse contexts. Adapting to local languages, cultural nuances and varying levels of existing knowledge present potential barriers to effective skills transfer. These can be seen as opportunities to invest in capacity-building programs and training initiatives aimed at empowering local communities and organizations with the skills and knowledge needed for effective AA and conflict resilience.

3.2.2. Focus Area: Building strategic research partnerships in FCASs

Participants identified partners and priorities along with perspectives on the research directions needed. This collaborative process, driven by stakeholders' expressed needs and priorities, provides a foundation for a research agenda that is responsive to the real-world challenges of building resilience in FCASs. The key partners and priorities include:

➤ **Country governments**

Collaborating with country governments provides an opportunity to align research with national agendas and presents a chance to contribute to mainstreaming AA in national policies. This involves leveraging existing knowledge, experience and resources, while actively engaging with policymakers to ensure that AA principles are included in national policies and legislative frameworks. Securing endorsement from policymakers, community leaders, NGOs and other influential figures will be crucial to successfully implementing impactful FCAS research initiatives.

➤ **Local partners (NGOs, CBOs)**

Engaging with local partners, including NGOs and community-based organizations (CBOs), unlocks opportunities for incorporating diverse perspectives and leveraging localized knowledge. Collaborating with these organizations fosters a bottom-up approach, ensuring that research is contextually relevant and directly benefits local communities. Participants emphasized the effectiveness of community-driven disaster risk reduction as a model for preparedness and highlighted the importance of aligning research initiatives to bottom-up approaches. This collaboration could also help strengthen community-led innovations in AA to ensure that local perspectives are integrated into governance structures.

3.2.3. Focus Area: Exploring new geographies

Participants identified specific locations where they see research gaps. This emphasizes the need for additional analysis to augment the design and strengthening of AA in FCM contexts, aiming for greater effectiveness and impact and a more nuanced understanding of the diverse challenges faced in these regions.

➤ **Himalayas**

The Hindu Kush Himalayan (HKH) region was identified as a critical location for research support because of its distinct characteristics, including an estimated 210 million people who live within these mountain systems and some 1.3 billion people who live downstream of the HKH and rely on the freshwater obtained directly or indirectly from the rivers and tributaries of the region.² Conducting case studies in the Himalayas offers a unique opportunity to investigate the impacts of climate-related disasters and conflicts in high-altitude, ecologically sensitive regions. This research is essential to address the need for insights into glacial melting, flash flooding, and community resilience, providing a basis for scalable anticipatory action strategies.

➤ **Sahel**

The Sahel region was identified as a key location because of its multifaceted challenges and the need for a more comprehensive understanding. Exploring case studies in the Sahel presents an opportunity to delve into the complexities of climate variability, food insecurity and conflict dynamics. Research in the Sahel is crucial for contributing to our understanding of the intersection of environmental challenges and conflict and guiding the development of anticipatory action plans that specifically address the vulnerabilities of this region.

➤ **South Sudan**

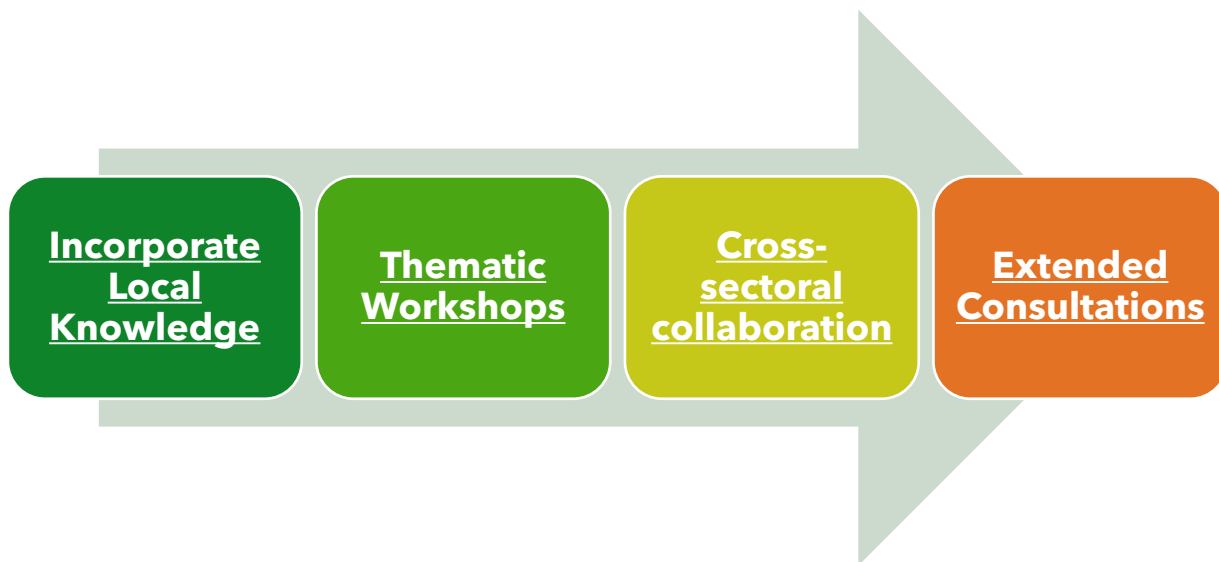
South Sudan faces significant challenges in disaster risk management due to a combination of natural hazards and ongoing conflicts. The country is prone to frequent floods, droughts, and epidemics, exacerbating an already precarious humanitarian situation. Protracted internal conflicts have strained resources and infrastructure, hindering effective disaster preparedness and response efforts. Limited institutional capacity and a lack of comprehensive policies impede South Sudan's ability to effectively mitigate and manage disasters.

3.3. The Way Forward: Steps to Implementing the AA in the FCM research agenda

Several recommendations and opportunities emerged from the discussion. These serve as a guide for a demand-driven research agenda for AA in FCM situations. However, further consultations and collaborative efforts are needed to strengthen a comprehensive and inclusive research strategy.

² <https://www.orfonline.org/research/retreating-glaciers-and-water-flows-in-the-himalayas-implications-for-governance>

FIGURE 6. Further steps toward developing AA in the FCM research agenda.



Recommended steps to expand this research strategy (Figure 6):

1. **Incorporate local knowledge:** Place a strong emphasis on incorporating local knowledge and perspectives into the research agenda. Community engagement and participatory approaches are vital for ensuring that the agenda reflects the realities and priorities of those living in FCASs.
2. **Thematic workshops:** Organize thematic workshops to delve deeper into specific focus areas identified during this session. These will allow participants to share new experiences, identify challenges and propose innovative solutions.
3. **Cross-sectoral collaboration:** Foster collaboration between different sectors and organizations to promote interdisciplinary research. Creating partnerships with organizations specializing in FCM and humanitarian action will enhance the research agenda.
4. **Extended consultations:** Continue the conversation to monitor progress, integrate new information and adapt to changing condition by ensuring that most vulnerable stakeholders have a voice and are represented at national and eventually regional discussion forum. People from local communities were not as well represented in these sessions as they could have been.

Operationalization steps:

5. **Regular feedback mechanism:** Establish a feedback mechanism to gather insights and inputs from stakeholders at various stages of the research agenda's development and implementation. Regular feedback loops will enable iterative improvements and adjustments based on practical experiences.
6. **Resource mobilization:** Identify and mobilize resources to support the research agenda. Collaborate with funding agencies, governments, and philanthropic organizations to secure financial and logistical support for research initiatives.
7. **Knowledge sharing:** Promote knowledge sharing through publications, workshops, and conferences. Disseminating research findings and insights will contribute to a global dialogue on AA, fostering cross-learning and collaboration.

FIGURE 6. Steps for operationalizing AA in the FCM research agenda.



These proposed steps lay the foundation for an inclusive and adaptive process toward developing and operationalizing a demand-driven research agenda. Recognizing that this is an evolving process, ongoing commitment and engagement from all stakeholders will be pivotal in shaping the future of AA in FCASs.

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