GUIDANCE FOR RAISING ANTICIPATORY ACTION ALERT NOTES

The Start Fund's enables members to anticipate crises and begin responding to a crisis before it turns into a disaster. This Guidance Note provides 10 recommended rules of thumb for Start Network membership when using forecasting tools and models for Anticipatory Action in conflict settings and raising Start Fund anticipation alerts for an upcoming conflict.

For a general overview of anticipating conflict see The Start Fund's Pre-alert guidance note on conflict and displacement, and for an in depth resource on forecasting conflict for Start Fund anticipation alerts see the User Guidance Package – Tools and Approaches to Anticipatory Action (AA) for conflict in the Start Fund.

This resource is intended to support Start Network members with approaches and tools to anticipate conflict and raise Start Fund anticipation alerts. It contrains a useful glossary of terms, looks at considerations for whether, when and how to employ forecasting and risk analysis tools for conflict-related anticipatory action, relevant categories and criteria to look out for when using tools and models, as well as tips for preparing a Start Fund Anticipation alert for conflict.

'10 Rules of Thumb': Guidance on using tools and approaches for anticipatory risk analysis

01 **Use forecasting tools** (see this definition and other relevant terms in this Glossary of Terms) **to information anticipatory risk analysis.** Data analysis and foresight are a critical element of anticipatory action. Anticipating conflict requires good understanding of hazards and vulnerability that determine the risk to populations. Continual monitoring of risk and using pre-identified quality sources will strengthen your alert note and increase the chances of an activation. Being also clear on deciding when to act. The aim is to balance between reliability of the forecast and the window of opportunity to intervene.

02 **Combine and complement conflict forecasting and risk assessment tools with other types of qualitative and mixed method approaches.** Adopt a systematic and multi-disciplinary approach – such as drawing on insights from a range of fields including political science, economics, and sociology - to provide a comprehensive understanding of the situation. Combining and triangulating different data sources and approaches to analysis supports a data driven and qualitative risk analysis.

Read these three testimonial case studies from humanitarian workers on the value and impact of combining the use of tools with direct community engagement and social networks.

03 **Engage with local communities and stakeholders to understand their perspectives on the potential sources of conflict (both actors and factors) and their concerns about potential risks.** This data can then be combined with other collated data and analysis to inform assessing vulnerability and exposure, and to triangulate, and verify data gathered under point two to further understand the impacts, especially for those most at-risk groups.

04 Look at what has been successful previously for approved anticipatory alerts to inform raising your alert note. This includes, among others:

- ensuring the alert is backed up by strong forecast and risk analysis,
- providing suitable lead time for anticipating the crisis and implementing the anticipatory actions,
- agencies capability of reaching identified hotspots,
- agencies that had considered the timeframe of activities in the proposal stage to ensure a balance before and after the peak date of the crisis, and
- proposing interventions that focus on small-scale and achievable aspects of the potential conflict, among others.

See here a fuller list of useful criteria that informed the Start Funds committee's previous allocations for acceptance or decisions not to fund.

05 When considering which tools are relevant to use in the process of conducting risk analysis for the context, the decision should be made on a case-by-case basis. Once you've selected the tool(s) you will use, ensure to review the data analysis type and the criteria it includes. It is important to consider and gain clarity on the feasibility, speed and timeliness of the forecasting tool or model, resourcing, costs, the context and complexity of the situation and potential risks and implications, as well as the strategic plans for implementation. Statistically-driven conflict forecasting and predictive analytics are two common techniques used in risk analysis. See here for further detail on the distinctions between using these machine learning techniques and other risk analysis techniques. See here for more information on these considerations.

For reviewing the data analysis type, consider: Is it qualitative (i.e., such as observations, interviews, questionnaires, or surveys, focus groups; recordings made in natural settings; documents; case studies etc.)? Is it quantitative (i.e., raw data, data visualisation, percentages, etc.)? Can you source data from both, to provide a mixed methods approach to complement your risk analysis?

In conducting your risk analysis, looking also at the following criteria:

- the **geographic scope** (national, sub-national, community level, etc.) in the data being looked at,
- **historical data** to apply the use of comparative analysis illustrates the urgency of escalation or unprecedented occurrence of potential conflict risks (i.e., Climate, agro-meteorological, vulnerability, exposure, damage or loss data to understand the location, timing and severity of past shocks, etc.)
- **Type of analysis produced** (i.e., Data mapping; Data collection; Scenario building; Interactive dashboard; Impact evaluations; etc.)
- **Type of conflict risk** (i.e., Broad or specific events such as political violence from elections or coup details; Security risks to sustainable development from impacts of climate change; Violent events; Explosions/Remote violence; Protests; Riots; Community violence; Displacements; Impacts on peace and security, development; and resilience due to climate stressors, etc.), and
- **Update frequency** (i.e., Weekly; monthly; quarterly; annually; etc.)

This list of key criteria and categories provides further details on points useful to consider and support the process of deciding which tool or model best meets your risk assessment and forecasting for conflict risk analysis needs.

06 **Understanding key pieces of information about the tool or model can inform a "statement of confidence" in the forecast provided.** Consider the effectiveness of the tool(s) being used, looking at how transparent the tool is and what kind of data it provides mapped against what you are looking to outline in the risk analysis. This includes criteria such as the timeliness of updates, transparency on methodology, accuracy, and limitations, as well as trustworthiness and credibility of the source. This type of information is something useful to include in a Start Fund anticipation alert note, as it helps Start Fund allocation decision makers understand the level of uncertainty in the given context.

07 **For Start Fund anticipatory alerts, focus on the current context and potential impacts from your proposed interventions, considering if the potential negative consequences of acting ahead been assessed through your risk analysis process.** While providing brief background context is useful, avoid providing extensive detail. Though it is important to prioritise AA to mitigate the impacts of potential conflict-crises, and in some cases prevent the conflict from occurring or escalating, consider the "Do no harm" approach to avoid exposing people to additional risks through actions taken.

08 **Use data and information gathered to build an account of the anticipated conflict risk.** Utilizing quantitative methods such as trend or comparative analysis and statistical modelling can help to discover patterns or trends in data that could potentially signal conflict risk – both to identify common patterns and trends across different conflicts, as well as to highlight differences and unique features of individual conflicts. This can help to provide context and perspective, and to identify potential opportunities and challenges for intervention and resolution.

Applying the use of historical data with current data through comparative analysis starkly illustrates urgency or unprecedented occurrence of potential risk. Observed data and comparative analysis of conflicts can also be used for contextualisation purposes in several ways. For example, observed data can be used to provide a factual and objective account of the conflict, including key events, actors, and trends. This can help to provide a more nuanced and accurate understanding of the conflict and its underlying causes and dynamics.

09 **Present a compelling account of the risk information and the potential impacts (various scenarios if there are multiple)**. Data visualisation is powerful for illustrating a compelling, data-supported narrative. For example, using maps can help to demonstrate the geographic distribution of the risk/event, and charts and graphs can help demonstrate the urgency of the risk (i.e., it is unprecedented, it hasn't been this bad for 20 years, etc.). Refer to these tips (Link) on depicting and presenting anticipatory risk analysis for anticipatory alert notes (pages 5-15).

10 **Clearly and concisely raise awareness of the potential risks and the designed actions that are proposed being taken to prevent or mitigate them**. Design activities in collaboration/consultation with local communities and tailored to their specific contexts and needs.