

Global Working Group on Anticipatory Action for Displacement: Inaugural Meeting Report

A Collective Step Toward Enabling Anticipatory Action for Displacement

The inaugural meeting of the *Global Working Group on Anticipatory Action (AA) for Displacement* marked a collaborative step toward transforming how the international community prepares for and responds proactively to the growing risk of forced displacement in partnership. Convened by IOM and the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and hosted by the Anticipation Hub, the gathering brought together more than one hundred representatives from UN agencies, NGOs, governments, academic institutions, and independent technical experts. These diverse stakeholders united around a shared ambition: to shift displacement risk management from a reactive to a proactive model by embedding forecast-based, locally grounded approaches into humanitarian and development systems.

With more than 123 million people forcibly displaced worldwide—and projections indicating a continued upward trajectory—participants underscored that business-as-usual humanitarian approaches are no longer sufficient. Displacement driven by climate shocks, conflict, and socioeconomic fragility is often predictable. Yet anticipatory action remains underutilized, constrained by fragmented systems, conceptual ambiguity, and a lack of local ownership. The formation of this Working Group responds to these challenges by creating a dedicated space to collectively address operational, technical, and policy gaps in applying anticipatory action to displacement.

Understanding the Gaps

A central theme that emerged throughout the meeting was the disconnect between growing forecasting capabilities and their limited application to-date in preventing displacement or mitigating its impacts on vulnerable populations. Participants highlighted that forecasting tools, while having increased in skill and geographic coverage over the past years, often lack the precision, resolution, and contextualization required to trigger timely action. Data systems remain fragmented across institutions, with inconsistent metrics and limited accessibility—particularly in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. Many models struggle to account for the overlapping, multi-causal nature of displacement, such as the combination of climate shocks, conflict, and economic pressures that drive mobility.

Equally concerning was the widespread agreement that anticipatory action is still perceived through a narrow lens, often conflated with early response or preparedness, and rarely adapted to the distinct dynamics of displacement. Participants also noted that the binary framing of displacement as either climate- or conflict-driven fails to reflect the complex, intersecting drivers faced by vulnerable populations.

Furthermore, the design and implementation of anticipatory action have often excluded those most at risk. Rather than being co-developed with displaced and at-risk communities, anticipatory action interventions are frequently imposed from above, limiting their effectiveness and eroding local trust. Ethical concerns—particularly regarding protection of sensitive data and the risk of unintended harm—compound these challenges, especially in politically sensitive or conflict-affected settings.

Charting a New Path Forward

Against this backdrop, the Working Group converged around a shared commitment to reimagine how anticipatory action for displacement is conceptualized, implemented, and institutionalized. Participants emphasized the need for forecasting systems that are both technically robust and socially anchored. This means integrating AI-powered models with local early warning systems and indigenous knowledge, to produce forecasts that are not only accurate but usable by those most at risk.

Localization emerged as a cross-cutting priority and foundational principle for effective anticipatory action. Participants stressed that anticipatory action must be co-designed with communities, acknowledging them as agents of foresight and decision-making. This entails rethinking how risk is defined, how success is measured, and how financial and technical resources are allocated. Investing in local capacity is not merely a moral imperative—it is essential for sustainability, impact, and scale.

In tandem with these operational shifts, the Working Group recognized the urgent need for strategic narrative change. A shared lexicon is essential to distinguish anticipatory action for displacement from other adjacent concepts and to foster cross-sectoral alignment. Participants called for a stronger collective voice that can position anticipatory action for displacement as a legitimate, cost-effective, and ethical approach to humanitarian protection in displacement settings. Joint communication efforts, policy briefs, and community-led storytelling were seen as critical components of this strategy. Equally important was the recognition that anticipatory action must be inclusive and rights based. Protection, gender, and inclusion considerations must be systematically embedded across all stages—from risk analysis and trigger development to anticipatory action plans and monitoring frameworks.

Looking Ahead: From Vision to Implementation

The Working Group discussed a preliminary vision for the next two years: to demonstrate the transformative potential of anticipatory action in displacement settings through collaborative, field-tested, and policy-aligned action. Pilot programs in high-risk areas such as Somalia, South Sudan, and Colombia will serve as learning laboratories for refining forecasts, operational tools, and coordination mechanisms. These pilots will help illustrate what success looks like when anticipatory action is applied to mitigate the humanitarian impacts of displacement.

The development of shared forecasting models, anticipatory action plans, and inclusive training materials will serve as foundational tools for this work. Equally, efforts will focus on building a robust and accessible evidence base, including comparative analysis of anticipatory action approaches in displacement settings, documentation of lessons learned, and the creation of standardized impact indicators. Monthly knowledge-sharing sessions and peer learning opportunities will keep the momentum alive, while coordinated advocacy will aim to elevate anticipatory action on the global humanitarian, development and climate agendas.

Ultimately, the Working Group's success will depend on its ability to convert collective ambition into sustained, coordinated, and contextualized action for impact. That means ensuring anticipatory action is not just a technical fix or funding trend—but a fundamental shift in how displacement risk is understood, managed, and mitigated. It also means building systems that are durable, scalable, and accountable—not only to donors and institutions, but above all, to the people they aim to protect.

The inaugural meeting of this Working Group signals a commitment to radically shift the paradigm of displacement response. By bridging scientific innovation with grassroots insights, operational coordination and scalability with principled inclusion and participation along policy influence, members of the Working Group are laying the groundwork for a future in which the adverse impacts of forced displacement are not inevitable but preventable.

For more information or to join the Working Group, please contact:

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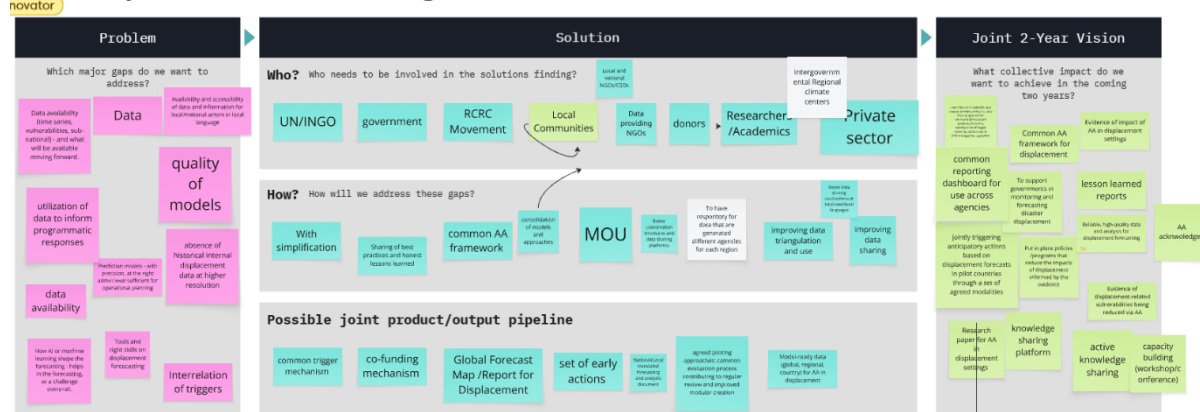
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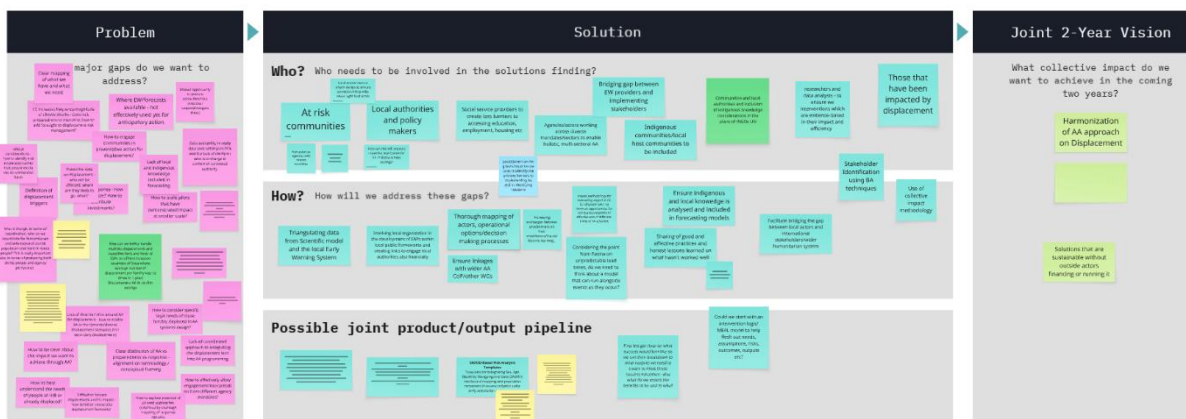
Annex. Whiteboards from Breakout Groups

[Access to miro board](#)

(1) Displacement Forecasting



(2) Operations/Programming: AA for Displacement



(3) Joint Evidence Generation, Advocacy & Policy Impact

