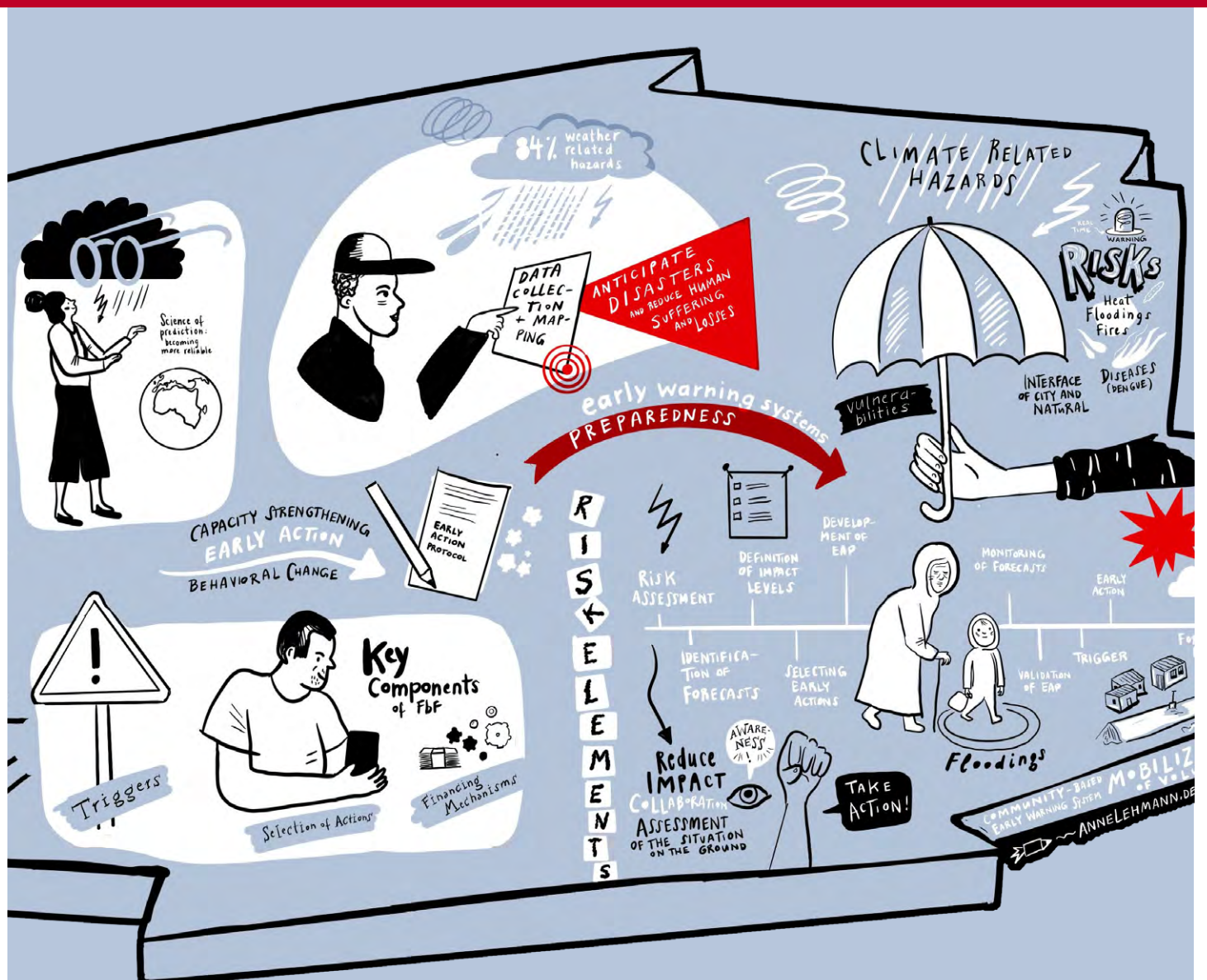


Conference Report – Berlin, December 7, 2020

Anticipatory Humanitarian Assistance in the Urban Context



Acronyms

DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
FbF	Forecast based Financing
GFFO	German Federal Foreign Office
GRC	German Red Cross
HNS	Host National Society
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross Red Crescent Secretariat
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NS	National Red Cross/Red Crescent Society
PNS	Partner National Society
UNDRR	UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction

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Introduction

In recent years, a growing number of humanitarian actors have been applying anticipatory approaches such as Forecast-based Financing (FbF) to urban contexts, yielding both opportunities and challenges.

Last year's 2019 Global Dialogue Platform showcased dynamic urban anticipatory action achievements, learning and exchange. Building on this achievement, the German Red Cross (GRC) together with National Societies and key partners have continued expanding upon this emerging topic, exploring how cities function and how to advance anticipatory action in urban contexts.

This year the German Red Cross took the opportunity to convene the urban anticipation community for a half-day conference to investigate the topic of operationalizing urban early action. The conference "Anticipatory Humanitarian Assistance in the Urban Context" took place on December 7, 2020, preceding the Global Dialogue Platform on Anticipatory Humanitarian Action.

At the peak of the event 56 dedicated and enthusiastic participants critically analysed and debated the challenges of anticipatory action in urban contexts, contributing greatly to the conference objectives:

- to strengthen the urban perspective of anticipatory humanitarian aid,
- to facilitate exchange between anticipatory action practitioners and urban decision makers at the city administration level,
- to convene urban practitioners and anticipatory action community to exchange ideas on current and emerging best practices for early warning early actions in (the context of) cities, and
- to identify opportunities to effectively implement anticipatory humanitarian actions in urban and peri-urban areas.

The following report captures key inputs, learnings, and discussion from the half-day event, the first of many Urban Anticipatory Conferences.

Humanitarian Assistance in the Urban Context

Urban spaces present unique challenges and opportunities in terms of their complexity, demanding a nuanced understanding of urban systems, and enhanced coordination in the provision of humanitarian assistance. The humanitarian community continues to recognize the dynamics of urban operations and is developing new methodologies and tools to support the provision of assistance and the development of anticipatory action.

In 2019, the German Red Cross formed the Humanitarian Assistance in the Urban Context project team, a component of the Thematic Cooperation Unit, to contribute to the global dialogue and to strengthen innovation and implementation of humanitarian assistance in urban settings as a key thematic cooperation priority area between the GRC and the German Federal Foreign Office.

The GRC provides targeted humanitarian aid in urban regions, concentrating on improving health care, cash assistance and shock-responsive social protection, anticipatory action and disaster risk reduction. A core GRC focus lies in further developing existing approaches to humanitarian aid for application in crises in urban contexts.

Conference Kick-off: Why the Need for Urban Anticipation?

To set the scene, facilitators, Eddie Jjemba, Urban Resilience Advisor, Red Cross Climate Centre, and Lucy Price, Urban Risk Management Coordinator, IFRC Asia Pacific Regional Office, welcomed participants to the online conference venue and introduced the first keynote speaker Dr. Thorsten Klose-Zuber, Head of the German Red Cross Thematic Cooperation Unit.

In his keynote speech, Dr. Thorsten Klose-Zuber stressed how cities, as complex systems, necessitate cooperative and coordinated humanitarian engagements. Humanitarian actors must position themselves in these systems – leveraging their own expertise and capacities - while working together and coordinating effectively and efficiently. He underlined, *“As humanitarian actors, we must all work together in order to succeed”*. This is addressed within the German Red Cross through the newly established Thematic Cooperation Unit, which brings together five key priority areas: Anticipation, Disaster Risk Reduction, Health, Cash Assistance and Humanitarian Assistance in the Urban Context. *“In our rapidly urbanizing world, disasters are becoming urbanized as well. There is an*

urgent need to learn from each other and make necessary adjustments to prevent extreme impacts from predictable weather-related hazards in densely populated urban areas”.

Keynote speaker Iria Touzon Calle, Risk Knowledge and Analysis Programme Officer at UNDRR Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, set further context for discussion, *“since 2018 the world is predominantly urban, with 55% of the global population living in cities. At present, three times as many urban dwellers are estimated to live in the less developed regions as in the more developed regions (3.2 billion versus 1.0 billion). By 2050, 68% of the world is projected to live in cities”*. Ms. Touzon Calle, shared how UNDRR through the global assessment reports and its advocacy mechanisms is promoting a systemic approach to risk management at all scales, including local level, addressing the cascading and interconnected nature of urban risks. The UNDRR Making Cities Resilient 2030 initiative supports strengthening of city coalitions to tackle urban disaster and enhance resilience.

What is Distinctly Different about the Urban Context?

Facilitators Eddie Jjemba and Lucy Price summarized urban challenges, opportunities and context together with conference participants, accompanied by live-animation by artist Anne Lehmann.

Although each city and urban area is unique, some common urban characteristics exist, which shape the urban contexts which humanitarian and urban actors must work within. Cities are complex and represent a “system of systems”, which typically include the following aspects:

- High population densities,
- A concentration of administration structures such as government and hospitals,
- Presence of essential services and infrastructure (paved streets, water and waste systems, electricity, etc.),

- Diverse livelihoods and income opportunities (not only/mostly agriculture),
- Cash-based economies,
- Diverse communities from differing social, economic, linguistic, and religious backgrounds. These vibrant communities are often decentralized, displaying an interconnectedness which extends beyond geographic boundaries.

As Eddie Jjemba stated, when in doubt, remember the 3D's cities encompass:” diversity, density, dynamism. The Conference welcomed examples from urban anticipation practitioners addressing the 3Ds on the ground in the form of a video – from Hanoi to Metro-Manila and Dhaka.



Voices from the City: Urban Practitioner Panel Discussion

Urban practitioners from cities in Africa and Asia – the fastest urbanising regions of the world, shared approaches and lessons learned.

Anticipating Floods for Livelihoods in Butuan City, Philippines

Gemma Clarin from the Department of Trade and Industry and Sir Alger L. Boter, Chapter Administrator Philippine Red Cross, Agusan del Norte, presented the case of anticipating floods and market-based early actions in Butuan. Butuan City sprawls across the Agusan River and the likelihood of flooding in the exposed barangays (settlements) is high. In times of flooding, many barangay residents, especially those with small and medium sized enterprises are severely affected.

Key achievements:

- In September 2020, the PRC Agusan del Norte chapter partnered with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) to conduct a markets assessment to map and prioritize vulnerable markets in flood-prone areas for early action relocation in times of flood.
- The DTI was among many city stakeholders working to develop an urban anticipatory action plan and played a key role in the assessment of markets in flood-prone areas as well as in the development of selection criteria to target people served.
- The project successfully highlighted the importance of the Department of Trade and Industry as a key actor in establishing urban anticipation programming. “Not all sectors prioritize especially the business sector in providing assistance/aid during disaster time. It is critical to integrate appropriate disaster response action specifically for business sector in the Local Disaster Risk Reduction & Management Plan”, said Ms. Clarin.

Addressing Climate Risk via Multi-hazard Early Actions in Cape Town, South Africa

Amy Davison, Head Climate Change, Environmental Management Department for the City of Cape Town presented a new Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan which integrates climate considerations into their multi-hazard approach and specifically their heat wave program. A current challenge for the city of Cape Town is that the National Weather Service is unable to monitor heat on a real-time basis. Nor do existing weather stations located in areas outside of the urban edge reflect the impact of the urban heat island effect. Several actions in the (draft) Action Plan have been identified that relate to early warning systems and taking early action.

Key achievements:

- Cape Town aims to develop and implement an early warning and real time monitoring system for heat coupled with Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to advise residents and businesses on changing heat conditions.
- Food risk mapping and winter readiness plans in place address seasonal winter challenges.
- Lessons learned included use of social media as a preferred communication method among city residents to receive weather warnings and updates.

Flood Forecasting and Sturdy Early Actions in Niamey, Niger

Floods are frequent in Niamey, the capital of Niger, affecting a large part of the population and causing significant economic losses. In recent years, the city has experienced an influx of rural- urban migration, resulting in increased informal settlements along the river basin, exposing the migrants to increased risk. Seydou Yayé, Disaster Risk Management Coordinator with the Niger Red Cross, shared experiences anticipating floods in urban areas of the city.

Key achievements:

- Through anticipatory action planning, the Disaster Management Department Met Office, Hydrology Service; Niger Basin Authority and communities set water threshold levels, prepared broadcasting of bulletins relative river water levels and strengthened protection dikes to seal at-risk portions of the riverbanks prone to breaches.

Alert thresholds

Level (in cm)

Yellow	From 550 to 579
Orange	From 580 to 619
Red	> = 620

- Reinforced dikes slowed down the speed of water flow to inhabited areas, allowing communities to have enough time to prepare well in the event of an evacuation.
- Lessons learned, according to Mr. Yayé, “Collaboration and community engagement is important for the implementing of the early actions”. Community mobilisation is different from one urban area to another. Ensuring service providers and communities always have the final say, e.g., in the relevant supplies (sand or laterite), is key.

Anticipating and Mitigating Dengue in Dhaka, Bangladesh

Ashraf Haque, a Forewarn Bangladesh Coordinator from Dhaka Bangladesh, revealed that more than 60% of the cases of dengue in Bangladesh are from the Dhaka division. Through behavioral change and inter-agency collaboration, a series of early actions ranging from epidemiological surveillance, strengthening institutional readiness for crisis response, policy advocacy and mass awareness and community engagement have been developed to pre-emptively mitigate the spread of dengue.

Key achievements:

- Formation of an interdisciplinary health expert group enabled the identification of early actions with an activation time of 22 hours, £50,000, 2,7 million people reached (1.7mio planned), 100 estimated affected.
- Through behavior change and inter-agency collaboration a community-led anticipatory epidemiological surveillance scheme was put into place.
- Lessons learned: community-led prevision and control mechanisms are very effective.
- Coordination with local government increases coverage.
- Use of social media for awareness reaches maximum people during a pandemic.
- Use of proper larvicide and epidemiological surveillance controls the number of mosquitoes and helps to reduce the risk of dengue disease.
- Virtual awareness activities avoided negative effects of COVID-19.
- Community engagement and tackling misinformation are an integral part of programming.

Urban Action Kit

Ramiz Khan, Urban Advisor, Red Cross Climate Centre, unveiled the hot-off-the press Urban Action Kit, a quick start, low-cost, do-it-yourself guide to urban resilience. Activities in the kit require little to no funding, are short engagements and utilise existing resources, networks, and skills.

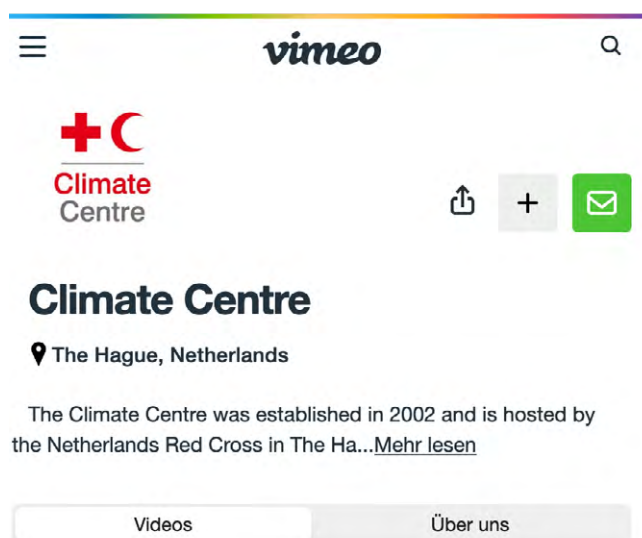
The main audience for the kit are community-based organisations and Red Cross and Red Crescent branches based in urban areas. The kit was championed by the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre, in collaboration with Global Disaster Preparedness Center, IFRC, Resurgence and Wetlands International with funding from EIT Climate-Kit, Netherlands Red Cross, German Red Cross and Partners for Resilience.

Link to video:

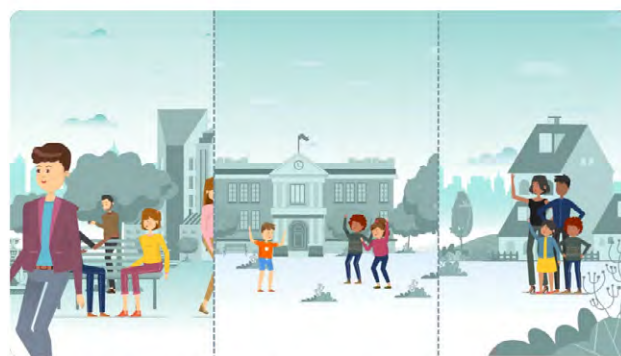
<https://vimeo.com/climatecentre>

Link to the Urban Starter Kit:

<https://preparecenter.org/toolkit/urban-action-kit/>



86 Videos



Urban Action Kit: Urban Agriculture

Breakout Sessions

How can we create strong urban anticipatory action? The “What Could Go Wrong?” sessions allowed groups to critically reflect on anticipatory approaches in cities, working through possible bottlenecks based on real-life experiences of early action in urban contexts.

Moody City: Drought, Floods and COVID-19

Moody City is home to over 600,000 internally displaced people (IDP), most of whom live in informal settlements. The recent World Cities Report ranks Moody City among the top five with highest population density in the world. Following decades of internal conflict and droughts, the city recently received heavy rains that caused enormous floods destroying infrastructure, lives and livelihoods. In the past, small and medium enterprises played a critical role helping Moody City to recover from drought impacts, however the current

COVID-19 pandemic drove most out of business. In this city access to land and credit is largely through informal means guided by local chiefs who also double as resident foretellers of weather and fortunes. At the time of this news bite, International humanitarian organisations and the local civil society organisations revealed their ambitions to implement anticipatory approaches to reduce the impacts of extreme weather events on Moody City.

Communication

What Could Go Wrong:

- 1 Ineffective communication, distrust, lack of coordination.

Recommendations:

- 1 Effective and efficient early action is mainly about coordination and communication, based on mutual trust. Establish networks that build on trust and can provide feedback mechanisms/loops. Map communication channels people/beneficiaries can trust, including and combining local knowledge as well as scientific forecasts. Establishment of feedback mechanisms is crucial. When planning an anticipatory action project ask: What are the communication channels being widely used? What are the information requirements in order to provide useable or actionable information for decision makers? How data literate are the stakeholders?
- 2 Even more than in rural context, intensively working in clusters and co-designing early actions is crucial in cities to build on existing capacities and closely coordinate with humanitarian actors/stakeholders already present. This implies a good understanding of urban stakeholders, their networks and the own positioning. One question to be addressed by all is how to identify and reach the most vulnerable in densely populated areas.
- 3 Lastly, it was highlighted that the urban context is characterized by a multiplicity of hazards, requiring multi-hazard (and cross-sectoral) approaches, keeping in mind the diversity, complexity, and dynamics of the specific context.

Banda: Coastal Cities, Monsoons and Heatwaves

Banda is a coastal city and a capital located in the South of Madeupsville Country. The city prides itself as the economic and political hub of the country. It is also a home to over 80% of the country's population. In the recent election, the main opposition leader was voted to be the Mayor. Her enthusiasm and commitment to reduce impacts of natural hazards have led to enhanced collaboration with the National Hydro-meteorological

Department. Ahead of the next monsoon season, the city is considering adopting Anticipatory Humanitarian Actions (FbA) to reduce the potential impacts of the heavy rains that have devastated the city in the past. Apart from floods, the city often faces extreme heatwaves and droughts that significantly impacts business including informal traders and motorcycle taxis.

Coordination with Governments

What Could Go Wrong:

- 1 **Difficulties coordinating and communicating with the new city government.**

Recommendations:

- 1 In the discussion of how to integrate forecast-based approaches in the imaginary Banda City, the members of the breakout session have put focus on the need to have a detailed and on-going sensitisation of the city administration to anticipatory approaches.

Data Reliability

What Could Go Wrong:

- 1 **In the fog of a disaster, it can be difficult to acquire and process accurate data. This is magnified in an urban environment due to increased population and the complexity of the built environment.**

Recommendations:

- 1 Any action must be built on reliable sources of data and a deepened understanding of the stakeholder network through thorough stakeholder analyses.

Practitioner Experiences

Group Three was not assigned a specific scenario and was encouraged to assess, from their own experiences, the major challenges to implementing anticipatory action in urban environments. While the discussion was extensive, they largely centred around the following themes.

Lead Time for Early Action in Urban Environments

What Could Go Wrong:

- 1 Experience is that early warnings (six days, for example) is not sufficient to reach/access all urban areas, specifically informal settlements/slums/urban IDP camps.
- 2 Outstanding question of whether IDP/refugee camps themselves can qualify as urban areas/settlements themselves.

Recommendations:

- 1 Early action protocols for urban areas need a longer lead time. As such, they may be restricted to slow-onset disasters with a high degree of predictability (e.g. cyclones).
- 2 Early action protocols for urban environments must put more emphasis on pre-identification of target communities and the most vulnerable. The same amount of emphasis must be put on trusted communications and the logistics of early action plans.

Identifying/Engaging Communities and Trust

What Could Go Wrong:

- 1 Urban environments are very heterogeneous and contain a multitude of communities.
- 2 Many of these communities are not geographically located together. Others are mobile, and still further some define themselves in non-traditional ways (e.g., employment).

Recommendations:

- 1 Noted that in identifying communities, both formal and informal channels (government and established social structures versus informal hierarchies and power/ influence centres) must both be leveraged.
- 2 This is especially true if trust is to be built with local communities. This is often very important where a lack of trust in government is pre-existing.
- 3 Communications must consider non-traditional, currently accepted channels. For example, sporting, religious/spiritual or popular music radio programming.
- 4 Leverage small and medium enterprises (private sector) not only to deliver services, but to act as agents of change and to build trust.

Tools

What Could Go Wrong:

- 1 Be aware that established tools may not translate directly from rural application to urban contexts. For example, shelter or cash and voucher assistance.
- 2 Partners may have tools more suitable for the urban environment.

Recommendations:

- 1 Traditional tools should of course be used (e.g. Community-Based Disaster Risk Reduction, CB-DRR), but existing tools should be updated with the challenges of urban contexts considered.
- 2 Consider tools from outside typical practice (e.g. conflict analysis and sensitivity, community engagement, trust building tools).

Weather Inequality

What Could Go Wrong:

- 1 Urban risk levels for weather-related events are not uniform. Due to socio-economic differences, geography, public service availability/reliability, transportation options, areas of a city experience different levels of risk.

Recommendations:

- 1 Early Action Protocols (EAPs) will need to be driven by an increased analysis of geography, communities, vulnerability, and security to accurately assess which actions the protocol should trigger to ensure the most vulnerable are reached.

Wrap up and Next Steps

Urban areas present unique challenges and opportunities for anticipatory humanitarian action. In this workshop we tried to scratch on the surface of the topic, more work is needed.

As a next step we present reflections on today's workshop at the session 'AntiCITYpation: Transforming Urban Humanitarian Action, a Dialogue With City Officials and Authorities' at the 8th Global Dialogue Platform on Anticipatory Humanitarian Action 8-10 December 2020.

If you are interested to link to the urban project team at German Red Cross and join us in our efforts to strengthen the urban angle in anticipatory action, please join our channel on MS Teams. You can request access by contacting Silke Degen at [s.degen\(at\)drk.de](mailto:s.degen(at)drk.de).

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