

Enhancing Education Resilience In Garissa County Through Anticipatory Action, Crisis Modifiers, and Preparedness



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Imagine you're a teacher in Garissa County, a region in North Eastern Kenya. Every year, your school faces the threat of floods, droughts, and even conflict. Each time disaster strikes, schools close, students miss months of lessons, and many children are forced to drop out. The impact of these crises is far-reaching, disrupting education and leaving the future of thousands of children uncertain. But what if we could predict these disruptions before they happen? What if we could prepare in advance to protect education and ensure that kids continue learning even when disaster strikes? This is where Anticipatory Action (AA) comes into play—a proactive strategy that's changing the way we think about crisis response. In this blog, we'll explore what Anticipatory Action is, how it can help education in Garissa, and why it's crucial for every school in the world to be prepared for the unexpected.

What is Anticipatory Action?

At first glance, the term “Anticipatory Action” may sound complex, but it's really quite simple. Anticipatory Action is about taking steps in advance to minimize the impact of a disaster. It's about acting early, based on early warnings, so we don't have to wait until a crisis hits and causes harm. For example, in Garissa, frequent floods or droughts can close schools for weeks, disrupting children's education. Anticipatory Action means the school can prepare before the floodwaters rise—moving furniture to higher ground, stocking up on emergency supplies, and setting up alternative learning options so the students don't miss their education.



The key components of Anticipatory Action are simple:

1. Early Warnings: We use forecasts and risk assessments to predict when a disaster might strike.
2. Pre-agreed Actions: Schools and communities have a plan in place to act as soon as a risk is detected.
3. Resources in Place: Funds or resources are ready and waiting to be deployed quickly when needed.

By taking these steps before a disaster happens, we can ensure that schools stay open, kids stay in school, and education continues without interruption.

Why Should We Care About Anticipatory Action in Education?

You may be wondering, "Why does this matter for schools in Garissa?" Let's take a closer look at the challenges that education faces in this region:

Floods: During the rainy season, floods affect nearly every part of Garissa County. Flooding forces schools to close, causing months of missed learning and leaving children behind. With Anticipatory Action, we can use early warning systems to know when floods are coming and take action to protect schools before they are hit.

Drought: Garissa is located in an arid region, where drought is a constant threat. Droughts lead to food shortages, water scarcity, and forced school closures. By using Anticipatory Action, schools can prepare by ensuring they have enough resources like food and water to keep students learning during drought periods.

Conflict and Insecurity: Conflict from groups like Al-Shabaab and local disputes can cause schools to close and children to miss education. In a region where violence is sometimes unpredictable, Anticipatory Action can help communities and schools react quickly to avoid long closures and protect students from harm.

Disease Outbreaks: The spread of diseases like cholera often leads to school closures. But with Anticipatory Action, schools can prepare in advance by setting up handwashing stations, ensuring access to clean water, and educating students on how to protect themselves from disease.



The TeachWell Project: A Real-World Example of Anticipatory Action in Garissa

The TeachWell Project is a great example of Anticipatory Action in action. This initiative, led by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and supported by the LEGO Foundation, is working to strengthen education resilience in Garissa and Turkana, areas frequently hit by crises like floods and droughts. The TeachWell Project has introduced a tool called the Crisis Modifier (CM). This flexible approach ensures that education programs don't stop during a crisis. It provides emergency funds, training, and resources to help schools continue operating during tough times.

The Crisis Modifier can help teachers stay on the job, prevent school closures, and ensure that education keeps going despite disasters. For instance, if drought threatens Garissa, the Crisis Modifier can quickly mobilize resources—like water trucks, food aid, and mobile classrooms—to help schools remain open and keep students learning.



Could Anticipatory Action Work in Other Parts of the World?

The best part of Anticipatory Action is that it's not just limited to Garissa. It can be applied anywhere in the world where crises disrupt education. For example, in areas of South Asia, Southeast Asia, or other parts of Africa, schools can use Anticipatory Action to prepare for floods, droughts, or conflict, ensuring that children's education doesn't stop when disaster strikes. The Global Education Cluster, a group that coordinates education efforts during emergencies, recognizes the importance of Anticipatory Action and is working to integrate it into national education systems worldwide. The idea is simple: act early to protect education and ensure that every child, no matter where they are, gets the chance to learn—even in the face of a crisis.

How Can We Make Education More Resilient?

Imagine a world where every school—whether in Garissa or anywhere else—has a plan for preparedness. A world where schools are ready to face crises, and education doesn't stop even when the world feels uncertain. This is achievable with Anticipatory Action. Here's how we can make it happen:

Build Resilient Schools

Schools should be designed to withstand natural disasters like floods and droughts. By ensuring that school buildings, resources, and infrastructure are resilient, we can minimize disruptions to education.

Train Teachers and School Leaders

Teachers and school administrators need to be trained on how to react during crises. By teaching them how to use early warning systems, how to respond to emergencies, and how to keep students safe, we can keep schools open and functional during disasters.

Invest in Flexible Funding

Governments and donors can support schools with flexible funding mechanisms, like the Crisis Modifier, that allow money to be quickly reallocated when an emergency hits. This enables schools to respond without waiting for months for aid to arrive.

Coordinate Across Sectors

Education doesn't exist in isolation. During a crisis, schools need the support of other sectors—like health, water, sanitation, and child protection. By ensuring that these sectors work together, we can create a more holistic response to crises, ensuring that all aspects of a child's well-being are addressed.

What Can You Do?

Now that you know what Anticipatory Action is and how it can transform education in Garissa and beyond, we need your help to spread the word. What if every school was ready for a crisis, ensuring that every child's right to education was protected, no matter the circumstances?

Here's what you can do:

- Share this blog with others to raise awareness.
- Support local initiatives and policies that promote Anticipatory Action.
- Start a conversation in your community about how preparing for crises can help keep education strong, no matter what.

By supporting Anticipatory Action, we can make sure that schools aren't just places of learning—they are resilient, adaptable institutions that continue to thrive in even the most challenging times. Let's start planning for a future where no child's education is ever interrupted

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