

Anticipatory Cash Transfers and Early Warning Information Ahead of Drought in Ethiopia

Results from combining these anticipatory actions to protect lives and livelihoods in the Somali Region



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES

"We all depend on agriculture. And when we face any drought, it affects us a lot," said Elamu Rashid Ibrahim. She lives with her seven children and husband in Kobe, in the Somali Region of Ethiopia. "We may not get enough to eat if the drought continues," she concluded.

Elamu and her family realized they would face drought when the rain was delayed during the March to May 2021 season. They cultivate sorghum, cereals, maize and onions, and they have three cows and four donkeys. If a drought occurred, they knew they would be unable to cultivate their land to feed themselves, and their livestock would have no pasture.



IMPLEMENTATION OF ANTICIPATORY ACTIONS

Ahead of the March-May 2021 rainy season, forecasts indicated below-average rainfall was highly likely in the Somali region, in the southeast of the country, increasing the risk of further livelihood losses and food insecurity. As part of the **plan to move from reactive humanitarian response to pro-active risk reduction**, the World Food Programme (WFP) and its partners implemented two anticipatory actions:

- **Anticipatory cash reaching a total of 14,625 people.** USD168 was distributed per household over four months (March to June 2021), computed from a transfer of USD42 on average per household per month.
- **Early warning information, covering approximately 10,790 households,** through local meetings with the heads of households and megaphone broadcasts in marketplaces and homes.

Anticipatory actions are part of a comprehensive approach to food security and a broader risk-management strategy geared towards protecting vulnerable communities from hazard risks and impacts.

The anticipatory action approach complements long-term capacity building and early action, which takes place immediately after the impact.

KEY RESULTS

Findings from the endline assessment and focus groups show that:

- **Early warning information was used to make decisions** on how to cope with the impending drought.
- **Cash was used within the first 30 days of receiving** each transfer, mostly to cover food needs and repay loans.
- The **combination of cash and early warning information was more impactful** than cash only (See page 3 for details).
- The **Coping Strategy Index (CSI)**, which assesses the extent to which households use harmful coping strategies when they do not have enough food or enough money to buy food, **was 20.25% lower for beneficiaries** who received cash transfers and early warning information compared to the control group.





CAPACITY STRENGTHENING FOR SUSTAINABILITY

WFP Ethiopia, in partnership with the International Research Institute for Climate and Society (IRI) and the Ethiopian Meteorological Institute (EMI), has developed tailored seasonal forecasts for the Somali Region in support of early warnings for drought. The objective was to ensure that EMI could provide seasonal forecasts at different lead times to inform stakeholders on seasonal forecasts, support decision-making regularly, and, when a forecast predicts an extreme weather or climate-related event, trigger the implementation of anticipatory actions.

The development of a nationally owned early warning system is crucial towards the sustainability of an anticipatory action system, and fundamental to supporting linkages with other disaster management tools and processes. This also allows for continuous improvement of forecasting models and early warnings as Ethiopian stakeholders can update tools, data, and forecast verifications. These improvements have been implemented through various learning channels, including technical trainings on developing tailored seasonal forecasts, calibration and validation of model outputs, and developing drought impact-based forecasts and related skill information.

In the context of anticipatory action for drought, Anticipatory Action Plans (AAPs) are the protocols that link drought thresholds and forecast triggers with anticipatory actions, timelines, location, costs and entities responsible for such actions to ensure that planned activities are successfully implemented in the window of time available between the given 'forecast alert' and 'the event'.

In Ethiopia, anticipatory actions were implemented in **two woredas, Dollo Ado and Bokolomayo, identified as the most vulnerable to droughts**. The delivery of the anticipatory cash transfers used the beneficiary registration lists of the Satellite Index Insurance for Pastoralists in Ethiopia programme (SIPE), a livestock insurance and livestock management initiative implemented in pastoral communities in the Somali region, which targets vulnerable households. The **SIPE beneficiaries who received the anticipatory cash transfers were also recipients of the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP)**.

This intervention was coordinated by the Somali Region Disaster Risk Management Bureau (DRMB) and supported by the Ethiopian Meteorological Institute, Mercy Corps, and the Somali Micro-Finance Institute as a mobile money financial service provider. WFP collaborates with national and local government partners to build a national system that equips communities to take anticipatory action, minimizing the predicted drought impacts on their lives and livelihoods.

ANTICIPATORY CASH AND EARLY WARNING INFORMATION, A SUCCESSFUL COMBINATION

The results from the endline analysis show that the combination of cash plus early warning information was more impactful than anticipatory cash alone:

- **Food Consumption Scores (FCS)**, which measures the frequency and variety of different food groups consumed by a household, remained at an 'acceptable level' for 91% of those receiving both anticipatory cash and early warning information. In contrast, only 70% of the people who received cash alone remained at the same 'acceptable level'.
- **Regarding food stocks**, 23% of the beneficiaries who received anticipatory cash and early warning information confirmed having food stocks to last them through the season, compared to only 5% of the beneficiaries who received cash alone.
- The **Economic Capacity to Meet Essential Needs (ECMEN)** rate, which shows the population's capacity to meet their essential needs through their own economic means, was 52% for beneficiaries who received both anticipatory cash and early warning information, compared to 36% among the people who received cash alone. Note that this indicator only examines needs covered partially or entirely through the market.
- The **Dietary Diversity Score (DDS)**, which reflects the variety of different food groups consumed by a household, was 6.0 for beneficiaries who received both anticipatory cash and early warning compared to 5.2 for the group that received anticipatory cash alone.

The results from the Focus Group Discussions also show that the utility of the anticipatory cash can increase with the early warning information provided. Participants indicated that they were able to buy food for their families and fodder for their animals when they received this information.

"My family and I are benefiting from the anticipatory cash support. I used the cash to start a small petty trade business, to sell food items including vegetable to members of my community" explained Ebla Abubaker, a 32-year-old beneficiary currently living in Bokolmayo district with her six children.

ANTICIPATORY CASH TRANSFERS

Cash transfers were useful for the community. Participants in the focus group discussions reported that **most families spent the resources on maintaining access to food and expenses to protect their livestock**, including purchasing animal feeds, veterinary drugs, agricultural inputs, and restocking small livestock, such as sheep and goats.

EARLY WARNING INFORMATION

From the baseline-endline analysis, **85% of those who received early warning information found it accurate.**

The results from the focus group discussions reflect that the content of the messages was useful, as it included information about the forecasted drought and how families could mitigate its impacts. Some of the activities carried out based on the early warning information included:

- Growing more fodder;
- Selling some of their livestock before and during the season;
- Growing irrigated crops in group farms along the river (for those who had access to land and irrigation equipment);
- Moving to better grazing areas (in the case of the pure pastoralist communities);
- Moving to nearby towns to get manual jobs; and
- Buying by-products from a nearby grain mill to feed their animals.

CONCLUSION

Anticipatory cash transfers and early warning information contributed to the protection of communities' food security and livelihoods, preventing the worst impacts of forecasted poor rains during the March-April-May (Gu) rainy season in 2021.

Food insecurity and malnutrition are a significant concern in Ethiopia, increasing from more than 18 million people requiring food assistance by the end of the year 2021 to an estimated 20.4 million people in 2022. Within Ethiopia, the Somali Region is characterized by a hot arid climate which exposes the region and its communities to frequent droughts when seasonal rainfall fails.

This intervention's results influenced the subsequent implementation of anticipatory action in Ethiopia, where the delivery of anticipatory cash and early warning information was also combined with fodder production to provide a more holistic support to the pastoral and agro-pastoral communities. To ensure the improvement of our interventions, we follow an iterative learning process, where we build on lessons learned from past activations for future ones.

WHAT ARE WE DOING NOW?

As part of the Building National and Local Level Capacities and Systems for Anticipatory Drought Risk Management Initiative, WFP has been working with stakeholders to develop a drought Anticipatory Action Plan (AAP) and an Anticipatory Action decision-making tool (AA map room) for the Somali Region. The AAP is triggered by seasonal forecast information extracted from the AA map room. The AA map room predicted the drought in the Somali region ahead of the 2022 October-December rainy seasons.

Based on this, WFP Ethiopia provided anticipatory assistance to over 137,000 people at risk of adverse impacts from the forecasted fifth below-average rainfall season. The anticipatory actions implemented were disseminating early warning messages, supporting rangeland management and providing unconditional cash transfers. Based on the positive evidence gathered from implementing anticipatory actions in the Somali Region, WFP Ethiopia is expanding this approach to the Oromia region to enhance drought risk management in Ethiopia.



RECOMMENDATIONS

The evidence collected reflects how anticipatory cash and early warning information have a more significant positive effect when implemented in combination.

Moreover, the findings suggest the need to:

- **Improve the forecast trigger** to provide early warning information well in advance. More time was needed to disseminate the early warning information and distribute the cash transfers ahead of the predicted drought.
- **Increase the scale of the anticipatory action support provided**, as the number of people in need was twice that of beneficiaries.
- **Communication channels for early warning information need to be well structured** to reach vulnerable communities. Some pastoral communities were far away from the centres and markets, so they could not receive all the information.
- **Adopt a more mixed approach to monitoring and evaluation**, integrating the qualitative findings to triangulate quantitative results from household surveys/assessments.
- **Increase the frequency of broadcasting early warning information to targeted communities**, ensuring gradual broadcast throughout the implementation.
- **Have an early onboarding of the implementing partners and strengthen coordination with partners**, to avoid delays at the beginning of the implementation.
- **Ensure timely provision of early warning information and transfers**, enabling beneficiaries to act early in order to prevent and mitigate – to the extent possible – the effects of the predicted drought.

WFP is implementing anticipatory action in 21 countries and is collecting evidence in all our interventions to improve future interventions.

STORY FROM BOKOLMAYO, A DISTRICT IN THE SOMALI REGION

Ebla Abubaker is a smallholder farmer, a mother of six children and a stepmother of eight children. The father passed away, and Ebla explains that she and her family "have gone through a difficult time to survive". They are a large family with few resources, as they only have a small farmland with some livestock. They cultivate the farmland to consume the products and to have food for their livestock "We, as pastoralist community, depend on our livestock and their productions to feed our households". However, if they don't get products from the farmland, they use harmful coping mechanisms to get their daily household consumption, including "skipping meals, taking loans from families better off and decreasing the quantity of food for adults so the young children can eat for survival", she explains.

When a drought hits, there is no production from their small-scale farm and no food for their livestock, which deteriorates the condition of their animals. WFP supports smallholder farmers with anticipatory cash, so they do not adopt harmful coping mechanisms. Ebla did a small petty trade business with the cash given. She also said that the AA cash pay-out supported other communities in her area for "loan repayments, purchase food for household consumption and fodder for their livestock".





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Via Cesare Giulio Viola 68/70,
00148 Rome, Italy - T +39 06 65131

For more information, please visit WFP our
website:

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