



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Building Systems to Anticipate Drought in Southern Africa

A regional impact assessment of the country capacity strengthening interventions for drought anticipatory action

BACKGROUND

There has been growing evidence for the positive impact of pilot programmes for Anticipatory Action (AA) on households, but the question on how to sustainably scale-up AA remains. To achieve Zero Hunger, **WFP works with national actors to identify local capacity gaps and strengthen existing Disaster-Risk Management (DRM) systems. This process of capacity strengthening should lead to reliable national systems that can deliver AA at scale.**

From 2019 to 2023, WFP implemented the **Multi-Country Programme to scale up Anticipatory Action for Food Security (MCP-AA4SS Phase I)**, funded by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD). Under this programme, **WFP delivered AA directly to drought-affected populations while also providing national actors with AA capacity-strengthening for drought response.**

The [case study](#) assesses the impact of these interventions in Southern Africa, comparing findings at systems-level from Madagascar, Mozambique and Zimbabwe.

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SUMMARY IMPACT OF WFP'S SYSTEMS-BUILDING INTERVENTIONS

More accurate forecasting of drought and enhanced data systems:

WFP supported national hydro-meteorological services (NHMSs) to strengthen their drought forecasting capacities and Early Warning Systems (EWS), for instance, with tailored trainings on leveraging satellite data to complement gaps in weather-station data, data-rescue exercises and support on establishing trigger thresholds for drought.

By 2023, the NHMSs had better access to climate data and enhanced analysis capacities to produce high-quality climate information products. This includes regular forecasts and timely early warning messages that facilitate decision-making, thanks to clear benchmarks that underline different drought probability levels that can trigger an AA response.

"Madagascar has been publishing bulletins based on SADC's tools since 2005. But they didn't always include risk analysis. Now our monthly bulletin includes it systematically, particularly for drought and floods risks. Our tools and methods have improved, and the quality and precision [of bulletins] have increased." KII, DGM, Madagascar

Stronger communities of practice and Government leadership:

Communities of practice for AA have not only grown in members but have also expanded their outputs, resulting in improved nationwide implementation of anticipatory action (AA). WFP supported the establishment of Technical Working Groups (TWG) for AA where there were none. In all countries, WFP's contribution as an active member strengthened the community of practice by organising technical AA workshops, consulting with members on AA processes, and being a champion for the Government DRM agencies to take the lead of these TWG.

By 2023, national DRM agencies had a much stronger understanding and ownership of AA operational tools and had either established their own Anticipatory Action Plans (AAPs) with WFP support or were closely involved in designing and validating WFP-owned AAPs.

"WFP is playing a significant role in regard to putting the community of practice within Government DRM structures and are playing a very critical role in financing part of the fora activities." KII, Zimbabwe, AA TWG member

Stronger operational capacities:

In Madagascar and Zimbabwe, the AAPs were activated as a trigger threshold for drought was reached. National authorities and civil society were closely involved in the implementation of AAPs, from readiness activities to the timely delivery of assistance to households. These activations helped test the connection between national and district levels and provided valuable lessons learnt for future activations. In Mozambique, while there was no activation, WFP supported DRM actors in developing a government-owned AAP.

"I would say that the validation of the manual for anticipatory action was the biggest milestone, because it is the bible for AA. All institutions who want to do AA now have to align with this manual and the methodology, and WFP really helped to institutionalize this." KII Mozambique, Gruppo di Volontariato Civile

Improved national policies/frameworks that align all AA interventions

WFP advocated for national DRM institutions to revise their existing DRM frameworks and provided technical inputs to make them proactive and drought adapted. In all countries, DRM institutions developed umbrella frameworks to align AA initiatives as national policies and/or operational AAPs.

As a result, DRM institutions benefit from a more enabling environment for AA, with coherent policy objectives that have shifted from a focus on preparedness and rapid response to promoting proactive approaches. While policy revision was a multi-sectoral effort, WFP still played a key role by providing climate data and practical advice on how to integrate drought AA in existing institutional frameworks.



WHAT WORKS TO STRENGTHEN NATIONAL AA SYSTEMS

- Connecting NHMSs to reputable climate experts who can identify local capacity gaps and provide technical assistance tailored to the NHMS' needs.
- Leading AA conversations with data-backed evidence (preferably generated by/in collaboration with national NHMS), which provides a solid basis for exploring trigger models and AAPs.
- Institutionalising AA TWG within existing public structures for DRM. This boosts coordination and sharing of knowledge among AA and empowers national DRM agencies to take the lead on AA processes and discussions.
- Build consensus among multi-sectoral partners through the TWG by sharing information and methods, with a view of coordinating as much as possible to avoid fragmentation and confusion for national stakeholders.
- Support the Government in establishing national umbrella frameworks for AA that provide a guide for all AA implementers in the country and limit the risk of fragmentation of AA processes and systems.
- Implicate affected populations wherever possible, for instance, by supporting the Government in organising community consultations for the selection of AAs or [integrating indigenous knowledge](#) in national EWSs.

FURTHER OPPORTUNITIES TO SCALE UP AA IN THE REGION:

- Extract, package and share evidence from activations to improve AA outputs, boost advocacy efforts and increase funding.
- In countries that have not yet activated, organise simulations to test AA capacities and systems.
- Identify alignment options with other partners and interventions, focusing particularly on harmonising trigger models and early warning systems.
- Facilitate triangular cooperation between NHMSs and DRM institutions so they may exchange experience and knowledge, for instance, within the South African Development Community (SADC).
- Invest in strengthening sub-national capacities, such as local district authorities, civil societies, and finding new ways for shock-affected communities to participate.
- Expand into multi-hazard AA systems that provide timely assistance ahead of a drought, a cyclone, a flood, or even conflict or migration.
- Explore the integration AA with national social protection systems, for instance, by piggybacking on national social safety nets to further institutionalise AA while boosting the preparedness of social protection systems.



The full case study is available here:

<https://www.wfp.org/publications/2023-building-systems-anticipate-drought-southern-africa>

To know more about WFP's work on anticipatory action, follow this link:

wfp.org/anticipatory-actions

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

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