



World Food Programme

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LIVES

# WFP's Regional Urban Preparedness Initiative in Response to Climate and Food Security Crises in Southern Africa.

March 2025



## OVERVIEW TO DATE

The Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) region is grappling with a worsening climate and food security crisis. Currently, 59 million people are food insecure due to climate-induced challenges, including prolonged El Niño dry spells, flash floods, and the anticipated La Niña phenomena during the 2024–2025 rainy season. These compounding crises are further exacerbated by urban vulnerabilities such as poverty, unemployment, and inequality, against a backdrop of rapid urbanization expected to reach 70% by 2050. Addressing these challenges requires strong urban preparedness mechanisms and coordinated regional action.

Since 2021, the World Food Programme (WFP), with funding from DG-ECHO, has been collaborating with the governments of Lesotho, Madagascar, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe, with Malawi added during Phase II, to reduce food insecurity and malnutrition in urban communities facing multiple shocks and high-risk situations. This initiative, titled “Fostering Community Resilience in Southern Africa by Strengthening Urban Preparedness Systems,” aligns with the WFP Urban Strategy to combat urban hunger and involves a bottom-up, participative, and multistakeholder approach.

## 2021-2025 REGIONAL URBAN PREPAREDNESS



**PROJECT TITLE**  
Strengthening Urban Preparedness Systems in Southern Africa.

### TARGETED COUNTRIES

Madagascar, Mozambique, Lesotho, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Southern Africa Region.



**PHASE I DURATION**  
2021 - 2023

### TOTAL BUDGET

**EU 1.3 million**  
(EU 800k received contribution from EU-DG/ECHO)



**PHASE II DURATION**  
2024 - 2026

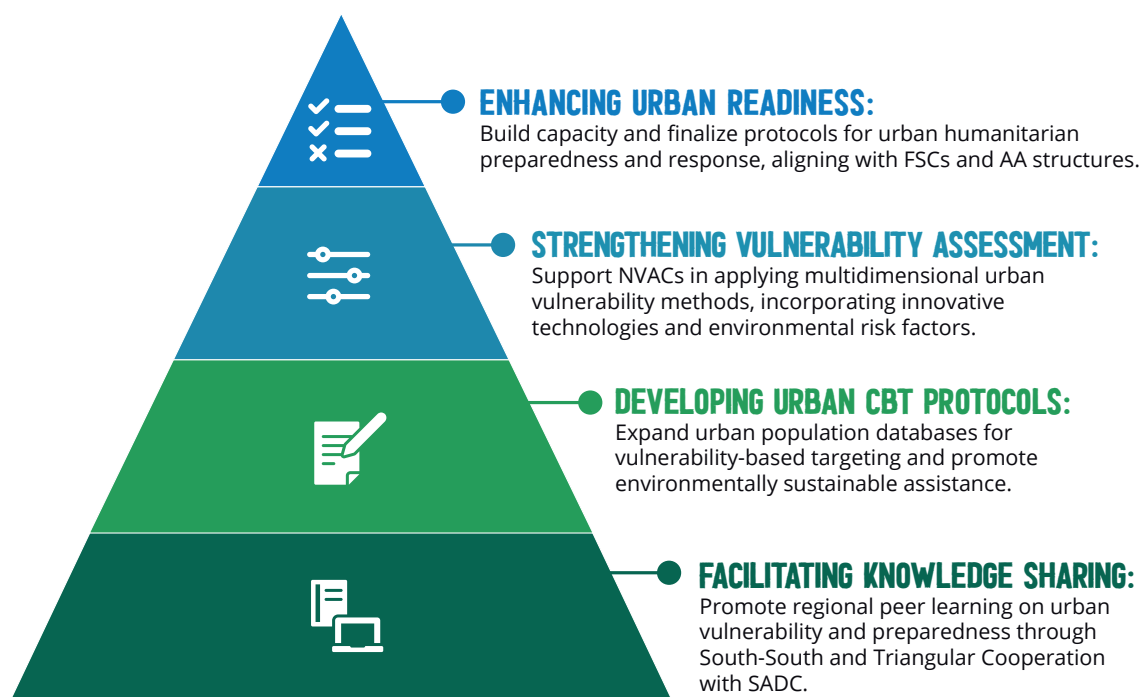
### TOTAL BUDGET

**EU 3.6 million**  
(EU 3 million received contribution from EU-DG/ECHO )



Phase I (2021–2023) of the Regional Urban Preparedness Project focused on understanding urban vulnerabilities, particularly for high-risk groups such as women, children, and the elderly. It established Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for urban preparedness, conducted household vulnerability assessments in urban hotspots, and integrated these findings into the 2023-2024 National Vulnerability Assessments (NVACs) and the SADC Regional Synthesis Report on Food Security. Additionally, Phase I laid the groundwork for urban cash-based transfer (CBT) programming by determining transfer values and modalities for humanitarian assistance. The project also identified key hazards, vulnerable populations, and their needs while fostering regional partnerships and multi-stakeholder coordination, culminating in a Regional Technical Consultation in November 2023, where governments and civil society stakeholders co-designed the framework for Phase II.

Phase I also highlighted the need for better regional integration and policy coordination within SADC to fully implement a common urban preparedness strategy. These findings directly informed the activities of Phase II (March 2024–December 2026), which is currently funded by a €3 million contribution from DG-ECHO and targets 16 urban areas across four countries. This phase is structured around four key pillars:





WFP's strategic partnerships in Phase II with CIMA Research Foundation, North-West University/ ACDS, and World Vision, alongside SADC and UNICEF, have enhanced regional coordination and integrated social protection into urban food security efforts. Through Phases I and II, the WFP Regional Urban Preparedness Initiative has strengthened Country Offices (COs) and government capacities in urban programming, shaping national urban response mechanisms.

The project's methodologies and evidence-driven approach have contributed to embedding urban resilience strategies within national policies, demonstrating a shift from research to policy to action in urban disaster preparedness across Southern Africa.



## STRENGTHENING REGIONAL URBAN DISASTER PREPAREDNESS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA: PHASE II

Phase II of the initiative builds on the successes of Phase I, adopting a strategic approach to enhance local, national and regional coordination in disaster preparedness through an urban vulnerability assessment lens.

This strategy refines emergency protocols to address critical needs of at-risk communities while advancing anticipatory action frameworks for urban areas. Insights from local urban flood risk mapping inform city-level readiness plans, while national vulnerability and prepositioning assessments, conducted in collaboration with national governments, contribute to regional practices through the SADC Regional Vulnerability Assessment Programme (RVAA) and SADC Humanitarian Operations Center (SHOC).

The Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) Secretariat leads regional efforts in urban preparedness, tailoring anticipatory action and logistical strategies to member states' needs. Platforms like the DG ECHO Southern Africa

Disaster Preparedness Workshop, alongside the 9th Africa Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (AfRP-9) and the 2025 SADC Regional Vulnerability Assessment and Analysis Annual Organizational Meeting (2025 RVAA AOM), framed by the Regional Urban Preparedness Initiative, fostered collaboration, shaping integrated approaches to disaster risk management (DRM) and sustainable resilience.

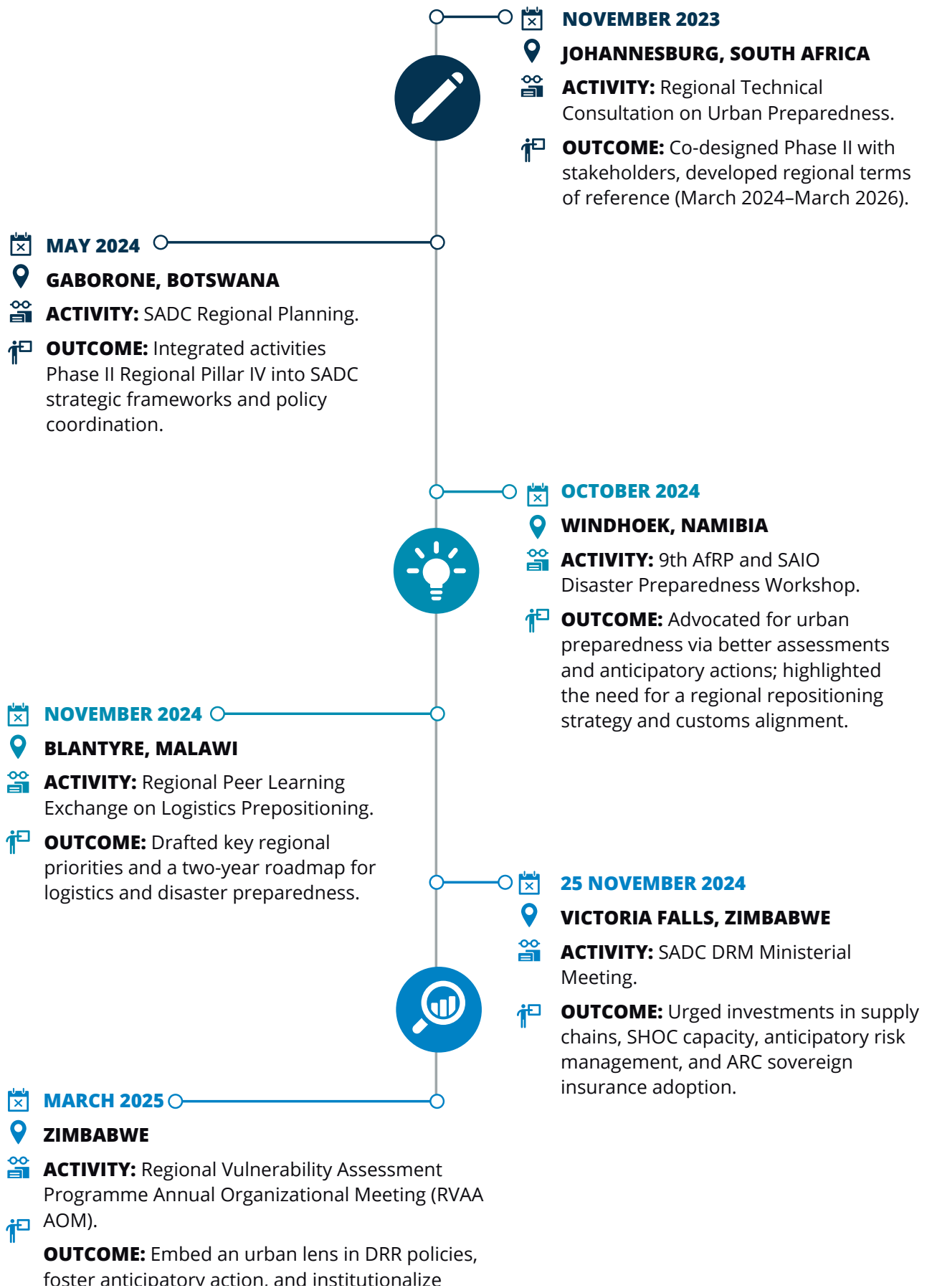
A Regional Peer Learning Exercise, hosted by Malawi's Department of Disaster Management Affairs (DoDMA) and WFP, facilitated South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) among Member States on prepositioning and logistics. It brought together representatives from SADC, national agencies, academia, and WFP to prioritize regional coordination, resource sharing, and infrastructure development. Key outcomes were presented to the SADC Ministers' DRM Committee in November 2024, emphasizing the need for actionable frameworks, capacity building, and partnerships.

Policy dialogues continue in 2025 during the RVAA Meetings, further harmonizing DRM efforts across the region.





## TIMELINE OF REGIONAL ENGAGEMENTS:



## NEXT STEPS

Phase II adopts a multi-tiered approach to refine emergency preparedness and enhance coordination across local, national, and regional levels.

### 1. Aligning Regional and National Strategies

- To ensure a cohesive response, Phase II focuses on harmonizing regional and national disaster preparedness frameworks. Key initiatives include:
  - Enhancing capacities of Vulnerability Assessment Committees (VACs) in urban areas to improve data quality and develop indicators tailored to urban needs.
  - Integrating risk information into governance through agreements between local and national authorities and embedding urban data in National Disaster Management Plans.
  - Expanding collaboration within the Anticipatory Action (AA) framework to address urban-specific risks, gender, and protection while aligning national AA systems with SADC/SHOC protocols.

### 2. Strengthening Logistics Coordination and Prepositioning

- Effective logistics are central to disaster response. Planned activities include:

- Enhancing supply chain data collection and conducting Prepositioning and Logistics Capacity Assessments to improve emergency preparedness.
- Operationalizing the Humanitarian Operations Centre (SHOC) and harmonizing customs systems to streamline transboundary aid movements.
- Hosting workshops and technical dialogues to assess infrastructure, map logistical needs.
- Developing regional protocols for prepositioning resources and strengthening logistics training through Emergency Response Training (ERT) programs.

### 3. Securing Sustainable Funding and Multi-Stakeholder Engagement

- Long-term disaster preparedness requires sustainable funding. Efforts in Phase II will:
  - Establish multi-stakeholder funding mechanisms to support resilience-building measures and anticipatory action.
  - Encourage governments to allocate disaster risk reduction (DRR) budgets and adopt decentralized financial systems to empower municipalities.
  - Promote private sector partnerships to leverage technology and corporate social responsibility for humanitarian logistics.



## REGIONAL BUREAU FOR SOUTHERN AFRICA JOHANNESBURG

If you have got any questions or suggestions feel free to reach out via email to:

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