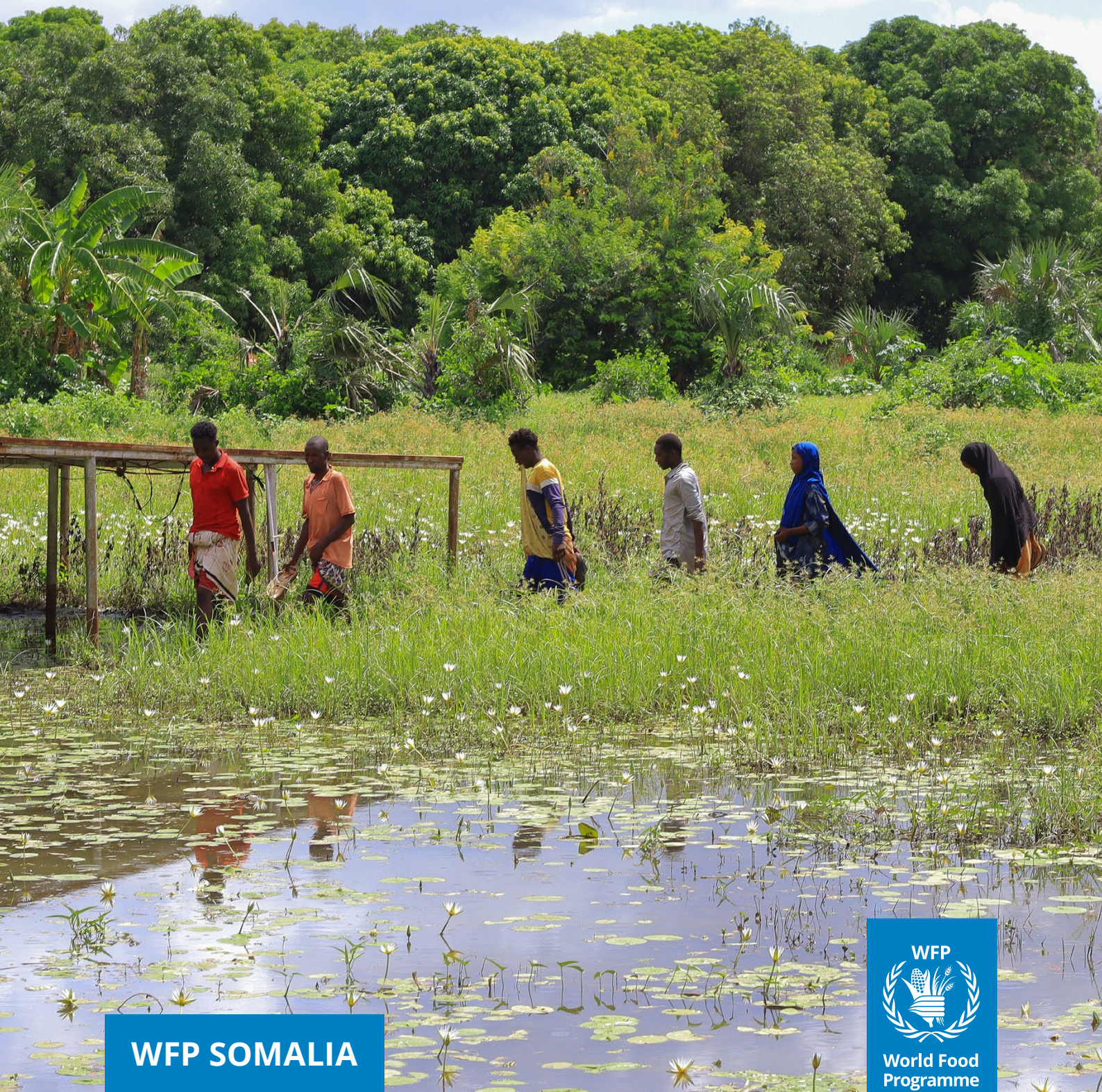




WFP SOMALIA



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Anticipatory Action Learning and Validation Workshop Report

May 2025

1. Introduction

This report presents key lessons learnt and challenges from the implementation of Anticipatory Action (AA) initiatives in Somalia, particularly in anticipation of riverine floods during the 2023 Deyr season and the 2024 Gu season. It focuses on community engagement, coordination among humanitarian agencies, use of forecast information, integration of AA into broader programmes, and general lessons learned.

The report underscores the value of community participation in AA planning and implementation, as well as strengthened preparedness through partner collaboration. It also identifies ongoing challenges to enhance AA's effectiveness and long-term sustainability.

1.1. Objectives

This report has collated learning and best practices from AA initiatives implemented in several districts in Somalia. It aims to:

- Examine the role of AA in enhancing disaster preparedness in Somalia;
- Highlight lessons learned, best practices and challenges in implementation; and
- Explore how AA can be effectively integrated into broader programming, including social protection systems.

Methodology



This report is based on insights gathered during the AA learning and validation workshop held on 30 September 2024.

Key findings are drawn from the following components of the workshop.

- AA learning and validation workshop panel discussions
- AA learning and validation workshop group discussions.

Across the two AA implementations in Somalia:



2.34M+

people were reached with early warning messages.



298,718

people received cash transfers.



30

boats were deployed to evacuate people to safer areas.



2. Key Topics Discussed

Discussions during the AA learning and validation workshop covered a range of topics, including coordination among humanitarian actors, community engagement in the general implementation of AA, lessons learned from AA initiatives, use of forecasting tools and methods, challenges encountered during implementation, integration of scientific and local knowledge, and the incorporation of AA into the social protection framework.

3. Key Findings

3.1. Stakeholder Engagement

3.1.1. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Communities were actively involved in both the planning and implementation of AA initiatives. Their participation helped ensure that local needs and priorities were reflected in the design of the activities, strengthening community ownership.

This inclusive approach also built trust in the AA process, leading to greater cooperation and openness among community members. As a result, increased trust and engagement significantly enhanced the effectiveness of the interventions, particularly by facilitating timely responses to flood risks.

Community involvement also ensured that anticipatory actions were contextually appropriate, contributing to more efficient and impactful flood preparedness and response efforts.



Recognizing that marginalized groups are often at risk of exclusion, deliberate efforts were made to ensure their needs and perspectives were integrated into the AA plan. Community feedback mechanisms played a key role in tailoring messages and ensuring that interventions were relevant, inclusive, and accessible.

Training at the community level on Anticipatory Action – such as evacuation procedures – contributed to the effectiveness of the intervention. Empowering local actors strengthened both ownership and their ability to take action ahead of emergencies.

This combination of approaches helped build community understanding of risks and provided sufficient time for preparedness and timely action.

3.1.2. COMMUNICATION AND COORDINATION AMONG ACTORS

Throughout various stages of AA development and implementation, coordination with other humanitarian stakeholders, including the WASH Cluster, Food Security Cluster, and local authorities, was actively pursued.

These efforts, particularly close engagement with local authorities, were critical in facilitating the timely development of an AA plan as well as its subsequent activation ahead of predicted floods. This collaborative approach was essential for delivering a comprehensive anticipatory action intervention in riverine flood-affected areas.

As for information sharing, communities received early warning messages via radio broadcasts, SMS, and other channels. These messages were translated into culturally appropriate languages, ensuring they were accessible, clear, and relevant to the community's needs.

Challenges:

Despite significant progress, several challenges have been identified that need to be addressed moving forward:

- **Duplication of efforts:** Multiple overlapping messages from different actors were shared with communities, leading to confusion. This highlights the need to optimize coordination among actors and standardize messaging to ensure consistency during the intervention.
- **Lack of clear communication protocols:** The absence of well-defined communication channels contributed to delays. This underscores the need for more streamlined coordination among humanitarian agencies and local authorities.

3.2. Forecasts and Data Utilization

In Somalia, riverine flood forecasting primarily relies on predictive models such as the Geospatial Stream Flow Model (GeoSFM). This model plays a critical role in flood prediction and is instrumental in triggering anticipatory action (AA).

The GeoSFM model, operated by ICPAC and used by WFP, was essential for monitoring the Jubba and Shabelle rivers during both the 2023 Deyr (October–December) and 2024 Gu (March–May) seasons. By simulating river water levels and streamflow using rainfall and hydrological data, the model supported the issuance of early flood alerts, enabling timely anticipatory action. However, technical challenges and limitations in data access during the 2024 Gu season affected the model's full operational capacity, underscoring the need for continued system improvements to ensure reliable forecasting.

In addition to the forecast-based GeoSFM model, real-time data from sources such as the FAO-managed Somalia Water and Land Information Management (SWALIM) portal provide important additional information that can inform AA-related decision-making.

That being said, the utility of both forecast- and observations-based models such as GeoSFM and SWALIM hinges on data availability. For instance, during the 2023 Deyr season, limited data availability hindered the timely implementation of AA interventions, whereas the 2024 Gu season saw improved forecasting – despite GeoSFM's technical challenges – leading to better-informed preparedness and anticipatory measures.

Challenges:

Two key challenges identified for the forecast and data utilization are:

- Lack of ground-truthing data and incorporating community-level indicators into the models have been challenging for ensuring timely and accurate AA interventions. There is a need to complement the forecast data with the ground-truthing data and community-level indicators.
- Shortcomings in forecasting models, such as GeoSFM, limited the effectiveness of anticipatory action activation, hence the need to recalibrate the systems for enhanced accuracy in forecasting riverine floods.

3.3. Integration of AA into Broader Programmes

Overall, the piloting of AA has been successful in addressing short-term needs. However, linking AA to longer-term development programmes remains a gap that many humanitarian agencies are actively working to address.

As extreme weather events become more frequent and severe, integrating AA with broader programming presents a key opportunity to better protect vulnerable populations before crises unfold. Several promising entry points and opportunities have been identified, including:

- Use of social registry systems: The unified social registry can serve as a tool to identify vulnerable households for assistance at the onset of disasters. For example, WFP has already registered about 60% of households in priority areas prone to extreme weather events.

- Vertical expansion of social protection: When forecasts indicate an impending shock, temporary top-ups can be provided to existing recipients of social protection support. This vertical expansion approach can help reinforce household resilience by offering additional support before the full impact of a crisis is felt.
- Strengthening local capacity: Building the capacity of local authorities and community volunteers to identify early warning signs – such as water scarcity, pasture depletion, and unusual migration patterns – can enable communities to implement timely anticipatory actions.
- River watch volunteer networks: Training local monitors to track upstream rainfall and river levels allows for community-led alerts when critical thresholds are reached. These efforts can complement the technical monitoring conducted by SWALIM and the Somalia Disaster Management Agency (SODMA) with grassroots-level verification.

Main challenges hindering the integration of AA into broader programmes include fragmented institutional mandates and limited financial support. In many cases, different agencies have unclear, overlapping, or conflicting roles in AA, resulting in poor coordination, delays, and gaps in implementation. Additionally, a continued over-reliance on donor funding remains a significant constraint. To address these challenges, investing in institutional capacity, particularly within government entities such as SODMA, the Ministry of Energy and Water, and the Ministry of Finance, were identified as critical steps towards ownership and ensuring long-term integration of AA into broader systems.

3.4. Lessons Learned

In many regards, WFP's AA programme in Somalia has been demonstrably successful. For instance, in Jubaland (Luuq), communities were trained on how to evacuate safely using boats before floods occurred, which helped save lives. However, there are also key lessons that need to be taken into consideration to ensure AA programming continues to improve:

- AA must be flexible. It cannot follow a one-size-fits-all approach; actions must be adapted to the specific local context and the needs of each community.
- Scientific forecasts alone may not always be sufficient. Communities often rely on their own traditional indicators to determine when to evacuate. These local signs should also be considered to ensure that anticipatory actions are both accurate and accepted by the communities.
- Strengthening local community organizations is essential. These groups are often the first to respond during crises. With adequate training and tools, they can take effective preventive actions even before external support arrives.

Overall, WFP's AA intervention in Somalia has already shown improvement over time. A comparison between the 2023 and 2024 activations indicates notable progress. The Gu 2024 season yielded better results, thanks to lessons learned from previous seasons such as Gu 2023 and Deyr 2023. With continued learning, improved planning, and strong coordination, AA has the potential to become an even more effective tool for protecting communities from future environmental shocks and hazards.

3.5. Recommendations

- Recalibrate forecasting systems, such as GeoSFM, for enhanced accuracy and reliability in predicting riverine floods.
- Improve coordination between humanitarian agencies to standardize messaging and avoid duplication of efforts.
- Strengthen community engagement and feedback mechanisms to ensure that interventions are relevant and accessible.
- Invest in institutional capacity, including government financing and ownership, to support the long-term integration of AA into broader programmes.
- Continue leveraging successful communication channels for early warning messages, ensuring that information is tailored to community needs and understood by all.
- Establish a national anticipatory action policy framework to institutionalize AA as a core disaster risk management strategy.
- Strengthen Cross-Border AA Coordination by establishing a Juba-Shabelle River Basin AA Task Force with Ethiopia to improve upstream-downstream flood forecasting and anticipatory action coordination.

4. Conclusion

The implementation of anticipatory action for riverine floods in Somalia has demonstrated tangible progress in disaster preparedness, yet critical gaps remain. While forecasting tools like GeoSFM and SODAR have improved early warning capabilities, operational delays and data limitations underscore the need for more reliable systems. Coordination among humanitarian actors has strengthened anticipatory support efforts, but duplication of messaging and unclear protocols reveals persistent inefficiencies. The integration of AA into long-term resilience strategies shows promise, particularly through mechanisms like pre-existing registries and localized early warning networks. However, fragmented institutional mandates and funding constraints

hinder scalability. Key lessons emphasize the importance of context-specific interventions, blending scientific forecasts with local insights, and reinforcing institutional capacity for timely decision-making. Moving forward, sustained investment in forecasting accuracy, cross-border coordination, and systemic linkages between AA and broader resilience-building efforts will be essential to mitigate the escalating risks posed by recurrent flooding. The progress made between the 2023 and 2024 flood seasons highlights AA's potential—provided these challenges are addressed with targeted, pragmatic solutions. Continued learning, better planning, and stronger coordination will be key to making AA more effective in the future.



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