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# Gender, Protection and Inclusion in Anticipatory Action - Southern Africa Analysis

Regional Report

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# Acronyms

<b>AA</b>	Anticipatory Action
<b>AAP</b>	Anticipatory Action Plan
<b>AGRITEX</b>	Agricultural Technical and Extension Services
<b>DRM</b>	Disaster and Risk Management
<b>EWS</b>	Early Warning System
<b>FAO</b>	Food and agriculture organization
<b>IFRC</b>	International Federation of the Red Cross
<b>FbF</b>	Forecast Based Financing
<b>SADC</b>	South African Development Community
<b>GBV</b>	Gender Based Violence
<b>OCHA</b>	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
<b>HIV</b>	Human immunodeficiency virus
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children’s Fund
<b>RAAWG</b>	Southern Africa Regional Anticipatory Action Working Group



## Executive summary

WFP has been anticipating climate-induced disasters in Southern Africa, particularly droughts, floods, and cyclones since 2020. In 2024, WFP commissioned the Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results in Anglophone Africa (CLEAR AA) based at the University of the Witwatersrand to conduct a study in 7 countries. This study aimed to assess the needs, barriers and risks faced by affected women, men, girls and boys in their diversity to climate shocks. The intention of this was to provide recommendations on how WFP can design, implement, and monitor anticipatory actions (AA) with these populations in mind. **The research aimed to influence future AA programming in Southern and West Africa, ensuring that AA programming is designed to mitigate gender, protection and inclusion risks, including actions tailored to the strategic interests of the people identified as particularly vulnerable to climate shocks in each country context.**

**The study was conducted across 7 countries in West Africa (Burkina Faso and Niger) and southern Africa (Madagascar, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Mozambique, and Tanzania).** The findings from the individual country reports were synthesized into regional summary reports. **This report focuses on the southern Africa region** (Madagascar, Malawi, Tanzania and Zimbabwe. In Mozambique, due to the unrest experienced in the country during and following the elections in 2024 (and early 2025), the data collection was delayed. WFP Mozambique will have a research report published separately by October 2025).

## Methods

A mixed methods approach was used including household surveys, separate focus groups with men, women, young men and young women and key informant interviews with AA practitioners from government officials, NGOs, International NGOs, etc. The distribution was as follows:

- Zimbabwe (Binga, Chiredzi, and Rushinga): 223 Households, 11 FGD and 24 KII
- Tanzania (Meatu, Monduli, Handeni and Micheweni): 744 Household, 24 FGD and 35 KII
- Malawi (Chikwawa, Nsanje, Kabudula, Champhanda): 790 households, 5 FGD and 11 KII
- Madagascar (Betroka, Tsihombe and Betioky): 720 households, 12 FGD and 18 KII

**Summary of findings and recommendations are on the next page/ below.**



## Summary of findings & recommendations

<b>Exposure to climate related hazards</b>	<b>Across the four countries, respondents believed the frequency and intensity of climate hazards were increasing</b> , i.e., 64% in Madagascar, up to 78.5% in Malawi. This is supported by evidence: Malawi alone had six major hazards between 2015 and 2023. The region is projected to experience more pronounced wet-dry seasonality with extreme dry conditions and flooding. This makes AA even more necessary to prevent humanitarian crises, losses of human life and to build community resilience to the inevitable changes in climate.
<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Invest in women, persons with disabilities and young people's resilience.</b> To transform inequitable gender conditions and inequitable impacts of climate hazards, AA interventions need to improve women's productivity in agriculture and explore access to alternative income sources for women and persons with disabilities.
<b>Access to early warning information</b>	<p><b>Providing early warning and risk analysis is central to AA, enabling communities to plan for future disasters.</b> WFP has been working with National Meteorological and Hydrological Services and disaster risk management institutions in Zimbabwe, Malawi, Madagascar and Tanzania to strengthen the capacity to forecast and identify trigger thresholds for climate disasters.</p> <p><b>Access to early warning information is still skewed by gender and ability.</b> In Malawi, Madagascar and Tanzania, women were less likely to have timely information from official sources. <b>For instance, 66.3% of men receive information via radio, compared to only 47% of women.</b> In Malawi, 70% of women reported not having adequate access to early warning information. Men were reported to have access and control over radio and mobile phones. <b>In Tanzania, 66.2% of women reported not receiving any information, compared to 33.8% of men.</b> Young people, children, and the elderly are often not as informed about climate risks as men and women of working age.</p> <p>Only in Zimbabwe, where bottom-up planning has been successful, and access to information is more widely distributed through the work of AGRITEX and community structures, did women report increased access to information.</p>
<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Ensure inclusive access to climate related information and early warning systems by using multiple communication methods based on current access trends.</b> For example, community meetings are seen as gender equal spaces to share information in Zimbabwe, whereas in Tanzania women's informal information sharing is an important avenue, and many people with disabilities rely on others for information. Designing approaches based on existing preferences and trends will improve the reach of messaging, including accessible mediums of communication and actions such as integrating messaging requesting information recipients to sharing the contents of messages with those around them, listing key groups at risk of exclusion (e.g. people with disability, children, elderly, spouses).

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**Systemic exclusion of persons with disability** **Across all four countries, persons with disabilities face systemic exclusion.** Those with vision, hearing, and mobility impairments were often left out of early warning dissemination and AA planning. Late or missing information prevents their needs from shaping AA plans and hinders timely action.

In Malawi, evacuation plans and shelters during flooding failed to accommodate them.

In Zimbabwe and Malawi, local committees and organizations lacked awareness of different disabilities and how to plan for them effectively.

**Recommendation** **Whenever possible, deepen collaboration with Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) in these countries and build skills to integrate the needs of people with disabilities.** This is required in some of the local, regional and national committees and structures to raise awareness about disability (there is still stigma about disability), understanding the needs of people with disabilities, and how to plan for those needs. The needs of people with disabilities are not met in early warning dissemination, resource distribution, and when evacuation is needed.

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**Impacts on children** **In all four countries, children were often pulled out of school during droughts, cyclones and flooding.** Financial barriers (e.g., direct and indirect costs of school, ability to purchase food) and school-related barriers (e.g., damages to school buildings) led to the dropout of boys and girls. In addition, girls are likely to face additional gender-specific barriers such as domestic chores, which usually fall on girls, and Gender-based violence (GBV), among others. All four countries already faced low educational attainment and school dropout; however, climate hazards are exacerbating the problem.

**Recommendation** **Strengthen child protection elements in AA:** Working with child protection systems in the respective countries and other UN agencies and relevant partners would ensure that children's rights are protected during climate disasters to reduce child labour and school dropout.

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<b>Access to water and food</b>	<b>Respondents reported adopting negative coping mechanisms when there are hazards. For example, in Malawi 91% of households reported reducing their food consumption to cope with climate-related hazards, this affecting 93% of women respondents.</b>
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Exclusion and lack of access of certain groups was highlighted as a concern during and after hazards. For instance, women headed households, orphaned children, and households with members with special needs or disabilities are not adequately accommodated and included. Cash transfers combined with adaptive and resilient agriculture can contribute to ensuring food security during and after hazards even for the more vulnerable if intentionally designed.

**Because of gendered divisions of labour in households and communities, access to water was rated as a critical need during hazards by women.** Interventions to strengthen access to water (e.g.: via existing or new boreholes) are protective for women and can significantly reduce demands on women's time. As such, decisions around water need to be made with the participation of women and persons with disabilities to ensure the infrastructure is accessible to them.

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Reduce implementation bottlenecks and barriers:</b> Implementation capacities are still limited in most communities and districts. Logistical bottlenecks can delay the supply of much-needed food to households with limited mobility or access to information, i.e., those with small children, the elderly, and those with disabilities. Barriers to accessing cash or food assistance (gendered, age, ability) can lead to negative coping strategies and increased protection risks exacerbating gender inequality, child maltreatment or exclusion of people with disabilities.
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<b>Women sexual and reproductive needs</b>	Access to hygiene products was reported as a challenge for women and girls, particularly when there is displacement. Shelters during floods in Malawi did not provide adequate sanitation and privacy for women to manage menstrual cycles. Women also did not have access to hygiene products.
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The prohibitive costs of hygiene products such as sanitary pads are magnified when there are climate hazards because families simply cannot afford them. In Malawi the average price of a sanitary pad is K700 (\$0.86) while in Zimbabwe's rural communities, pads can cost \$1 per packet. For families with more than one female, this can be unaffordable, even without the additional problems brought on by climate hazards.

Maternal health services for pregnant and nursing mothers are often strained during hazards and need attention.

In all countries, qualitative data from focus groups suggested that young women and sometimes adolescent girls are at higher risk of engaging in transactional sex to meet basic needs. This increases the risks of sexually transmitted diseases, and unwanted pregnancy, with no access to abortion. Access to contraceptives can be interrupted because of disruption to health systems during hazards but remains important for women.

**Recommendations** **Plan for health services for women and girls:** WFP should advocate for relevant partners (such as UN Women) to consider including the provision of sexual and reproductive health services as part of AA plans. This could include comprehensive planning for the needs of pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers, distribution of dignity kits to women and girls and access to family planning services and safe sex to reduce exposure to unwanted pregnancies, HIV and other sexually transmitted infections.

**Increased risks of violence** **Women report exposure to gender-based violence during climate shocks.** In Madagascar this represented 9% of women, and in Malawi 50% reported experiencing GBV during climate shocks.

**Recommendation** **Integrate GBV prevention and response in AA plans:**

WFP should consider developing guidelines for integrating GBV service planning and financing in AA to ensure availability of services. The guidelines should consider the needs of women and children with disabilities, and the special vulnerabilities of adolescent girls.

Working with children and women's rights organizations can ensure that AA strategies do not increase women and girls' risks to GBV and can meet the needs of survivors. The GBV Area of Responsibility (AoR) Helpdesk developed a helpful tipsheet that tailors existing guidelines for GBV in humanitarian contexts for AA

**Participation in local climate governance structures**

Women's leadership and participation in community level disaster management structures remain limited. In Tanzania, the research found all leadership roles in district committees were held by men. Cultural and religious barriers prevent women from holding leadership positions. In Zimbabwe, women are included in the management of district committees but often lead committees on issues important only to women. In Malawi, women found it difficult to participate in governance structures with some religious sects preventing them from leading and participating in community structures with men.

Recommendation: Women having a voice in AA planning is necessary for AA to respond to women's needs.

**Recommendation** **Improve women's leadership and active participation in local AA planning:** WFP should consider working with women-led organizations to improve women's participation and leadership in climate governance committees at local, regional and national levels.



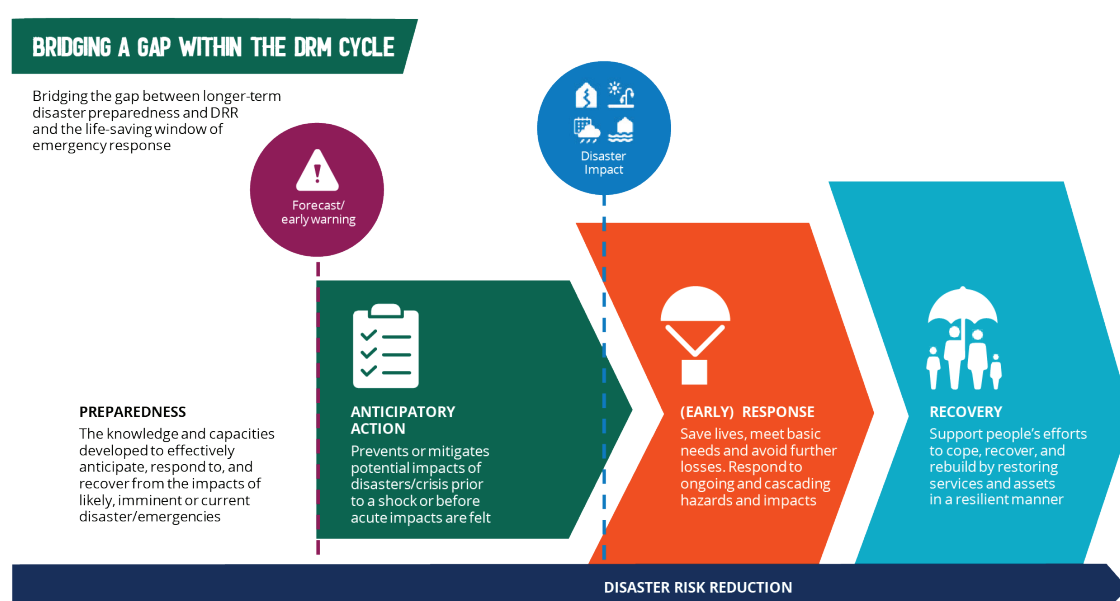
# 1. INTRODUCTION

Anticipatory Action (AA) is an innovative approach to humanitarian response efforts that emphasizes early warning systems, pre-emptive measures, and prearranged financing to mitigate the impacts of predictable crises (UN OCHA, 2022). The core premise of AA is that acting ahead of disasters can reduce human suffering, economic losses, and the overall burden on humanitarian aid systems. AA is grounded in climate science, risk analytics, and historical trends to trigger timely interventions (WFP, 2021). It represents a shift from reactive emergency responses to proactive preparedness, enhancing the resilience of vulnerable communities worldwide.

Anticipatory Action is one of the World Food Programme's (WFP) flagship initiatives for climate risk management. It is an innovative approach that enables implementing and financing actions to be put in place before an extreme weather event occurs. These actions aim to prevent and mitigate, as far as possible, the impact of extreme weather events on the food security and nutrition of the most vulnerable populations. Implemented since 2015, WFP's AA portfolio now includes 38 countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean, where together with national and local government partners, WFP supports the development of early warning systems and Anticipatory Action for critical natural hazards such as droughts, floods, and cyclones.

AA is distinct from preparedness; it relies on the trigger model in which pre-agreed plans are activated when a certain trigger threshold is reached. By activating prearranged financing and plans, humanitarian assistance can be provided to affected populations before food security deteriorates. This enhances household resilience and reduces long-term impacts of both quick-onset and slow-onset climate-related hazards. The availability of prearranged financing to implement AA where and when needs arise is instrumental in reaching scale and generating the necessary evidence to further institutionalize the approach (WFP, 2024). By activating interventions before major weather events, AA “prevent[s] hazards from becoming disasters through the provision of anticipatory assistance to exposed and vulnerable populations – which bridges the gap between disaster preparedness, life-saving emergency response and adaptation and resilience efforts” (World Food Programme, 2022).

**Figure 1 Anticipatory Action**



Agencies such as the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and others, have played a key role in strengthening civil society's early action planning. However, WFP has been instrumental in ensuring government involvement and putting disaster and risk management institutions in the driving seat of AA (World Food Programme, 2023a). The WFP AA aims to scale up AA by integrating it into government disaster management or social protection systems, while maximizing impact and ensuring sustainability. This is an important shift that should improve the sustainability of AA work and the resilience of vulnerable communities.

There is a growing recognition that climate-related hazards do not affect all individuals and communities in the same way. Gender, economic status/class, geographical location, age and other factors determine exposure to climate hazards and the ability to cope and recover from them (Women Deliver, 2021). However, protective, gender-transformative, and inclusive approaches are not yet consistently applied in AA plans and implementation. The first step in implementing gender responsive and inclusive AA is to understand the varied needs and impacts of climate-related hazards. As the Anticipation Hub contends, "Anticipatory Action must be developed on the basis of a clear understanding of how people are affected differently" (Anticipation Hub, 2023).

WFP commissioned the University of the Witwatersrand-based Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results in Anglophone Africa (CLEAR AA) to conduct a study in seven countries to assess the needs, barriers and risks faced by affected people in their diversity in the selected countries. It was to provide recommendations on how WFP could design, implement, and monitor anticipatory actions that respond to those realities. The research aimed to influence the remaining years of the AA programme in southern and West Africa, ensuring that AA programming was designed to mitigate the gender, protection and inclusion risks. It was to include actions tailored to the strategic interests of the people identified as particularly vulnerable to climate shocks in each country context.

The study was conducted across seven countries in West Africa (Burkina Faso and Niger) and southern Africa (Madagascar, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Mozambique, and Tanzania). The findings from the individual country reports were synthesised into regional summary reports. This report focuses on the southern Africa region and covers Madagascar, Malawi, Tanzania and Zimbabwe. WFP Mozambique will have a research report by October 2025, as outlined earlier, data collection plans were delayed due to unrest in late 2024/early 2025.



## 2. Anticipatory Action work in Southern Africa

Southern Africa is particularly vulnerable to climate change and extreme weather events because of its geographical location and socioeconomic development state. The region is projected to get drier, with a reduction in soil moisture and an increase in heatwaves and droughts. This is coupled with potential increases in cyclones and unpredictable rainfall and flooding (Engelbrecht et al., 2024). These climate extremes are a major impediment to resilient food systems in the region. Most countries in the region still rely on rain-fed agriculture, with little modernization or technological advancement to adapt to changing climates. Agriculture is also an important source of livelihood and employment in the region, with little economic diversification. Thus, climate change is a threat multiplier for those made vulnerable by poverty, lack of infrastructure, and few social protection systems.

WFP has been at the forefront of implementing AA interventions in southern Africa to mitigate the impact of climate-induced disasters, particularly droughts, floods, and cyclones. Of particular concern in southern Africa is the planning for slow-onset disasters such as drought. Southern Africa is already a hot, dry region, and it is warming at a rate faster than the global average. Fresh water availability is limited, and this is set to get worse due to the impacts of climate change increasing the risks of waterborne diseases (Scholes and Engelbrecht, 2021). It follows that in the past most of the work in the region focused on building capacity for early warning and building trigger models for droughts. For example, in Zimbabwe, WFP put in place a system to activate AA such as the creation of soil and water conservation structures, provision of drought-resistant seeds and training of farmers on agroforestry and water management when a trigger threshold for drought is reached (World Food Programme, 2019).

In recent years, WFP has been expanding its work to different countries in the region and into multi-hazard AA system building. This includes building systems for cyclones and floods, which are serious concerns in countries such as Mozambique, Malawi, and Tanzania.

Since 2020, the WFP has been implementing the “Multi-Country Programme for Scaling-up drought anticipatory actions for food security in Africa” (MCP-AA4FS) in Madagascar, Mozambique, Niger and Zimbabwe with support from the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD). From 2023, the WFP started implementing the European Commission Humanitarian Aid Office-funded Joint Programme on Strengthened Early Warning and Anticipatory Action in Southern Africa (2023-2025) with FAO and IFRC. Centred around four key programmatic pillars (forecasting/trigger development, anticipatory actions, financing, and advocacy), this project aims to enhance multi-stakeholder coordination towards more effective and scaled-up AA in the region. WFP has established pre-arranged financing mechanisms in Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and Madagascar. This enables pre-emptive cash transfers and food distribution to communities predicted to experience severe drought conditions (WFP, 2021).

WFP’s AA interventions in southern Africa are crucial for mitigating the adverse effects of climate-related disasters. Through AAs, early warning systems, social protection, community preparedness, and regional partnerships, WFP enhances resilience and ensures food security before crises escalate. In July 2023, forecasts for El Niño-induced droughts across southern Africa led to the activation of AA programmes in Lesotho, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Madagascar. This activation reached 1.2 million people with early warnings and disbursed \$14 million in prearranged financing before the disaster, thus preventing acute food insecurity and other challenges that would have followed (World Food Programme, 2025a).

In addition to WFP, other actors have been critical in strengthening systems to manage weather extremes and build resilient food systems and societies. The Southern Africa Regional Anticipatory Action Working Group (RAAWG) has played an important role in coordinating AA work in the region and is an important platform for promoting safe and inclusive AA. In 2022, the RAAWG developed a comprehensive roadmap to scale up early warning and AA in the region. This roadmap emphasizes robust multi-actor and multi-sectoral coordination frameworks, harmonization of triggers or anticipatory protocols, alignment of financing mechanisms, and evidence-based advocacy and awareness-raising. The roadmap includes reference, although limited, to gender and the integration of gender-based violence (GBV) reduction strategies in AA through collaboration with the GBV working group for East and southern Africa (RAAWG, 2022).

RAAWG collaborates with the Southern African Development Community (SADC), which has been supporting nation-states in strengthening their capacity for disaster risk management and reduction. SADC, through the Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy and Action Plan (2022-2030), SADC Regional Resilience Strategic Framework 2020-2030, Southern Africa Regional Climate Outlook Forum, and National Climate Outlook Forum, strengthens nation-states' ability to develop multi-hazard contingency plans. Important for the current assignment is the SADC Gender Responsive DRR Strategic Plan and Action Plan, referred to as the GRDP. The GRDP aims to support member states in integrating gender in disaster and risk reduction work to reduce the impact of climate hazards on women, men, girls and boys. It enables equal opportunities in decision-making and promotes disaggregated monitoring of the impact of initiatives (SADC, 2019).

The Multi-Hazard Early Warnings for All (EW4All) Action Plan for Africa 2023-2027, which aims to strengthen early warning systems on the continent and establish full cover by 2027, is also a significant addition to the AA policy ecosystem. The early warning system is critical to the implementation of anticipatory actions and the functioning of the trigger model. The action plan aims to strengthen the capacity for early warning systems in Africa, improve communication and community engagement, increase public awareness and protect livelihoods. These different interventions, though some are not part of AA, create an important framework for AA work in different countries.



## 2.1. Conditions of gender and inclusion in the region

Rural communities in sub-Saharan Africa, particularly those dependent on agriculture and natural resources, are among the most vulnerable to climate change. The disproportionate vulnerability and exposure of people in sub-Saharan Africa to the effects of climate change are more a consequence of non-climatic factors associated with the intersection of multi-dimensional inequalities. Myriad social, economic, political, cultural and institutional factors intersect to exacerbate the vulnerability, sensitivity and exposure of marginalized groups in Africa to the effects of climate change (Houria et al., 2016). In Africa, heightened vulnerability to such impacts is commonly experienced based on gender, social class, ethnicity, age, and disability (UN Development Programme, 2016).

According to socio-cultural norms that shape gendered labour roles, resource control and power in decision-making determine men's and women's varied responses and capacity to adapt to the impacts of extreme weather events (Adeyeye and Fischer, 2024). Important to resilience and adaptation is women's access and control of land and resources. Yet, in many societies in southern Africa, women still face discriminatory legal and cultural practices that confer land ownership to males (Mutangadura, 2004). This is despite women making up, on average, 40% of the agricultural workforce, with a higher share in Malawi and Tanzania (both 52%) (Palacios-Lopez et al., 2018).

Access to education and economic opportunities remains low for both men and women, which undermines the ability to diversify livelihoods and the capacity to adapt in the face of climate change. For example, Malawi has a significantly low Human Development Index score of 0.48, positioned 174th globally. Men continue to outnumber women in enrolment in secondary and tertiary education (Kouassi Yeboua, 2023). Even in countries like Zimbabwe, where there is parity in education enrolment, male literacy is still higher, though the gap is narrowing. With pre-existing inequalities, it is not surprising that women will face more negative impacts of climate change-related hazards. Climate change affects women more negatively in terms of agricultural production, food and nutrition security, health, water and energy, climate-related disasters, migration, and conflict (Awiti, 2022). Gender-blind climate adaptation strategies and disaster management interventions are likely to worsen inequalities (Women Deliver, 2021). Thus, it is important that AA planning and implementation take cognisance of the different needs of men and women during and after climate-related hazards.

Similarly, people with disabilities face structural and cultural barriers to accessing opportunities. The lack of infrastructure and inadequate social protection measures for children and adults with disabilities places a significant burden on families and social networks. According to the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), nearly 29 million children in East and Southern Africa have a disability (UNICEF, 2023). These children face barriers to education and opportunities due to cultural stigmas and lack of state investment in infrastructure, among others.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1. Summary of methodological approach and design

For AA plans and implementation to integrate protection, gender, and inclusive approaches, they need to be informed and understand how different populations are affected by climate-related hazards. This research is not an assessment of AA plans and implementation in the five countries, but an exploration of how different population groups are impacted by climate-related hazards and the barriers they experience, e.g., accessing information and assistance. The research aims to understand the differentiated impacts of climate change-related hazards to inform the design and implementation of gender-responsive, safe and inclusive Anticipatory Action. The research was guided by 10 key questions:

- What are the gendered dynamics of the hazards and risks AA aims to cover in target locations (exposure, impact, vulnerability)?
- What are the implications of different hazards for various socio-demographic groups (e.g. based on gender, age, disability) in target locations?
- What are the needs and priorities of women, men, boys, girls, and people with disabilities when disasters strike or in the case of fast onset of disaster in target locations (based on past experiences and current perspectives) that AA should address?
- What are the barriers faced by women, men, boys, girls, and others facing vulnerability in accessing support when exposed to a shock or hazard?
- What positive and negative coping strategies linked to climate shocks do women and men use?
- What roles and responsibilities do women, men, boys, and girls play and have [as] individuals, [in] households, and the community before, during, and after hazards/shocks/disasters in target locations (time use, household decision-making, community leadership/gatekeepers, economic activity, care work, etc.) and how do social and gender norms drive these?
- Who is consulted and makes the decisions in households/communities/local/regional and national government in community planning, such as the design of AA plans?
- To what extent do the structures used to co-design/implement AA plans account for diversity, particularly in terms of involving more local organizations, women-led, etc.?
- What approaches are acceptable, and what structures can be built on to facilitate inclusive and gender-responsive participation in HH/community/local government processes for the target locations?
- What early warning trends do women, men, boys, and girls identify?

In the southern Africa region, the research was carried out in Zimbabwe, Malawi, Tanzania, Madagascar. Delays were experienced in Mozambique, and the findings from that case study are excluded from the report. The remaining four countries are at different levels in implementing AA. For example, in Zimbabwe, WFP has worked on AA since 2015 under the FoodSECuRE initiative. The Zimbabwe Red Cross Society has been developing an early action protocol for drought since 2019, with support from the Danish Red Cross, the Finnish Red Cross and the Climate Centre (World Food Programme, 2023a). In 2021 WFP activated the first Anticipatory Action Plan (AAP) in anticipation of drought in Mudzi district (World Food Programme, 2022) while in both Malawi and Tanzania, the WFP work on AA is recent. This means the study population's experience with AA was variable across the five countries.



A parallel convergent mixed method approach was used to collect data in all the countries. Quantitative data was collected through a household survey, with qualitative data collected in parallel through focus group discussions (FGDs), and key informant interviews (KIIs). For quantitative data, respondents were randomly selected within predefined clusters to ensure representation of men, women, people with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups. Separate focus group discussions were also conducted with women, men, young women and young men. Focus group participants were selected to ensure the inclusion of vulnerable groups and people with disabilities. Table 2 below presents a summary of data collected per country:

**Table 1: Summary of data collected**

Country	Quantitative sample	Focus groups	KII
<b>Madagascar</b> (Betroka, Tsihombe and Betioky)	720	12 FGDs with women, men, young women and young men	18 local leaders (mayors, fokontany chiefs/ traditional chiefs), representatives of community organisations, officials involved in AA
<b>Zimbabwe</b> (Binga, Chiredzi, and Rushinga)	223		24 KIIs from government departments, local and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs), including the Meteorological Services Department, Ministry of Women Affairs, Community, Small and Medium Enterprise (Ministry of Women Affairs), Department of Veterinary Services, Agricultural Extension Services (AGRITEX), and organisations like Welthungerhilfe and the Zimbabwe Red Cross
<b>Malawi</b> (Chikwawa, Nsanje, Kabudula, Champhanda)	790	5 FGDs with women, men, young women and young men	11 local leaders, government officials, NGO representatives, community-based organisation members, and AA practitioners
<b>Tanzania</b> (Meatu, Monduli, Handeni and Micheweni)	744	24 FGDs with women, men, young women and young men	35 coordinators from the Department of Disaster Management at the Prime Minister's Office, private sector representatives, civil society organisations involved in AA, disaster management coordinators, and ward/mtaa/ village disaster management coordinators

## 3.2. Data analysis

The research was interested in understanding how different identity markers and social variables interact to create unique vulnerabilities for men, women and children. Descriptive statistical analysis was applied with cross tabulation to understand how men, women and children are differentially impacted by climate-related hazards, and what the coping mechanisms and emerging unique needs are of different groups.

Quantitative data was complemented by qualitative data analysed using thematic analysis. Analysis paid attention to the intersections of different variables and to power – that is, who has power and what the dynamics of power are within families, communities, and at the policy/strategy level.

The different country studies relied on different data sources, including both primary and secondary data. This data was triangulated to enrich interpretation and sense-making.

## 3.3. Limitations

The goal of the research was to study gender, protection and inclusion conditions in the communities to identify how AA programmes can be gender-responsive, safe and inclusive. The research did not seek to assess or evaluation AA programming, however. Sampling included those who have benefitted from activated AA, as in Madagascar, but it also included communities where AA has not been activated. We found that respondents were not always familiar with AA and did not always distinguish between AA and other WFP initiatives. Some of the comments on the accessibility of assistance or support provided generally spoke to assistance provided by WFP and other organizations.

The research was conducted within tight time frames and a limited budget. This impacted the sample size for both quantitative and qualitative approaches.





## 4. Country case studies

This section presents a summary of findings from the four countries. The findings are presented per country.

### 4.1. Zimbabwe



WFP/Derrick Botchway

Droughts have been a recurring challenge in Zimbabwe, especially in districts like Chiredzi, Rushinga and Binga. Zimbabwe's economic conditions continue to decline, with a growing informal sector. Documented ownership of agricultural land is low; only 2% of women and 3.8% of men are registered legal owners of land with a title deed. While a large number of women participate in agriculture, fewer earn a livelihood through farming (World Bank, 2023b).

It is estimated that 9.3% of the population comprises people with disabilities. Of these, 10.2% are female and 8.4% are male (UNPRPD, 2022).

Zimbabwe has a relatively strong policy framework on social protection, especially to provide safety nets in relation to poverty, access to education and healthcare. However, outcomes for women, children, people with disabilities and other minorities remain poor. For instance, women continue to be underrepresented in formal paid labour but are responsible for more unpaid labour (care, domestic and productive), they face higher levels of poverty (women headed households face higher multidimensional poverty at 19% in this category vs 13.3% for men headed households in 2017), and women's political participation is low, especially at local government (reaching 12% of elected seats). Further patriarchal gender norms affect women's access to healthcare, with approval to access healthcare for themselves directed to husbands, and GBV is high with 35% of ever-married women reporting physical or sexual violence by a male partner (Gender Equity Unit, 2023).

People with disabilities face similar barriers, in access to education, health care, and economic empowerment. Those with significant functional difficulty typically reached lower levels of education and were in households that face significantly higher levels of multidimensional poverty (Disability Data Initiative, 2017). In Zimbabwe, one in four children are without parental care and one in three children lives in a household facing multidimensional poverty (UNICEF, 2025b). Child marriage (1 in 3 women was married before turning 18 years old), violence against children (1 in 3 girls experienced sexual violence before turning 18 years old) and child labour (approximately 30% of children are estimated

to be affected) are all protection concerns. Low birth registration, at approximately 50%, additionally contributes to the vulnerability of children to exploitation (UNICEF, 2025c). These barriers, risks and their impact are likely to be exacerbated by extreme and unpredictable weather patterns for women, people with disabilities and children.

The research in Zimbabwe was conducted in the following districts: Binga (Pastoral), Chiredzi and Rushinga (agrarian). These are low-lying districts exposed to high climate change hazards like droughts, floods and disease outbreaks. Asked about exposure to climate-related hazards, most respondents from Binga, Chiredzi, and Rushinga indicated that men (98%) and women (99%) have nearly equal awareness of frequent climate-induced hazards, particularly drought, which is widely recognised due to its direct impact on agriculture and daily livelihoods. This parity extends to other common hazards, including heatwaves (men 71%, women 65%), pests and diseases (men 69%, women 64%), and human-wildlife conflict (men 49%, women 44%). For less frequent hazards, such as flooding (men 22%, women 33%) and storms or cyclones (men 20%, women 23%), awareness remains relatively balanced, though women show slightly higher awareness, likely reflecting their roles in water management. In contrast, awareness of wildfires is notably higher among men (35%) than women (14%), likely due to men's involvement in land clearing and cattle herding. Awareness of livestock deaths (men 2%, women 2%) and strong winds (men 4%, women 1%) is very low for both genders, especially among women who may have limited claim to livestock. The results highlight the importance of gender-sensitive approaches in climate adaptation and communication strategies, considering the distinct roles and exposures of men and women in rural communities.

#### 4.1.1. Access to early warning information

Access to information about weather patterns, climate hazard risks, and available assistance, as well as guidance on what to do, is important and empowering for people to manage climate hazards. Key sources of climate early warning information were as follows:

##### **Agricultural Extension (Agritex) Officers:**

- 76% of males and 60% of females rely on Agritex officers for climate hazard information.
- Highlights the critical role of local agricultural extension services in early warning dissemination.

##### **Radio:**

- 65% of males and 63% of females use radio as an information source.
- Radio remains a widely accessed and trusted channel for both genders.

##### **Word of Mouth:**

- 44% of females depend on word of mouth compared to 20% of males.
- Indicates the importance of informal, community-based networks for women.

##### **Mobile Applications (e.g., Eco-Farmer):**

- Used by 36% of females and 27% of males.
- Higher female usage is attributed to community activities focused on women's empowerment.

##### **Community Meetings:**

- Access is similar for both genders (27% females, 29% males).
- These forums are equally accessible to men and women.



## Social Media:

- Emerging as a significant information source, especially among younger populations in districts like Binga and Chiredzi.
- May eventually replace older methods such as newspapers.

Despite high levels of access to information and previous activations of AA in Binga and Chiredzi by the IFRC (IFRC, 2023) and WFP during the 2023 El Niño event (World Food Programme, 2023b), most respondents still rely on non-conventional sources of information, such as word of mouth, community meetings, although radio remains a trusted source of information. Moreover, these patterns show that while formal channels are essential for both genders, women are more reliant on informal and digital networks, emphasising the need for gender-responsive communication strategies in climate hazard preparedness.

The key takeaway from these findings is that:

- Women rely more on informal and digital networks, while both genders use formal channels.
- Auditory sources like the radio may exclude those with hearing disabilities.
- Gender-sensitive communication strategies are needed to ensure an inclusive and effective climate hazard preparedness.

### 4.1.2. Differing impacts of climate hazards

Perceptions of climate-induced hazards vary across genders and age groups, highlighting the need for inclusive anticipatory action planning. While a slightly higher proportion of women (60%) than men (56%) believed gender differences in impact do not exist, 40% of women and 44% of men acknowledged disparities, with a consensus that women are more affected. Among youth (18–24), 77% recognised gender-specific vulnerabilities, with awareness higher among females (71%) than males (29%), emphasising the need for targeted gender education. In the 25–44 age group, 73% of women and 27% of men perceived differences, suggesting increasing gender awareness among women due to socio-economic participation, while male recognition remains low. Among those aged 45 and above, 65% of women and 35% of men acknowledged gendered impacts, likely influenced by life experience and traditional roles, reinforcing the importance of engaging men in gender equity discussions. We explore some of the different experiences:

## Women

- In all three districts, women of all ages were concerned about access or lack of access to water because of the gendered division of labour, and women's primary role in food preparation and care responsibilities.



*Climate Change really affects older women more than older men. Here in Binga, older women spend more time looking for water. There is thus a need for bigger projects, such as constructing earth dams, to help with water retention. In all anticipatory action plans, there is a need to focus more on small livestock that will help address some structural gender issues. (Male Key informant in the 25-44 age group, Binga District.)*



- Increased workloads for women: Focus group discussions in Chiredzi and Rushinga revealed shifting demographics. Men's migration for work opportunities was expanding women's workloads, with women taking on traditionally male roles, like preparing land, looking for animal feed, etc. Even programmes like Pfumvudza and mulch-based conservation aimed at improving land preservation are having unintended consequences of increasing women's workloads.
- In Binga, focus group discussions indicated that young women and girls were at increased risk of engaging in transactional sex either through sex for work exchanges or by selling sex to meet their own and their families' financial needs. This exposes women and girls to sexually transmitted diseases and HIV infection, compounding problems that already-poor families face. AA planning should consider addressing the structural causes of young women's vulnerability and sustaining access to sexual and reproductive health services.

## Men

Selling assets was more likely to be reported. A higher percentage of men (55%) than women (48%) reported selling assets, reflecting men's relatively greater control over household resources and decision-making power regarding asset disposal.

- Focus group discussions in all three districts revealed that loss of income and inability to provide for families created significant psychological stress for men, creating a crisis of meaning and masculinity. The crisis of masculinity and the evolving definition of manhood require attention.
- AA interventions must recognise the shifting roles of men in relationships, families, and communities and the need for mental health support and economic empowerment initiatives for men. Failing to address these changes can lead to men's psychological needs and stress being overlooked or ignored. This not only undermines progress in gender equality but also increases the risk of violence, especially against women.

## Young men

- Focus group discussions with young men in the three districts highlighted their unique vulnerability. Unlike older men with established livelihoods, they often lack stable access to land, employment, or financial resources, making them highly susceptible to economic and social disruptions from droughts, floods, wildfires, and heatwaves.
- There were reports in focus groups of increased negative coping strategies, including substance abuse and exposure to exploitative and harmful labour practices.
- An AA programme in Zimbabwe has attempted to address some challenges through initiatives such as job creation linked to climate-resilient agriculture, sustainable farming training, and infrastructure projects. However, greater integration of young men into disaster preparedness and recovery planning is still necessary.

## Men and women with disabilities

- In Rushinga, participants indicated that the physical demands of responding to climate hazards, such as navigating flooded areas or walking to access relief services, were difficult for people with mobility or visual impairment.
- Public begging in Chiredzi, with reported increased cases, particularly among the blind community and children accompanying them, highlights extreme hardship.
- Reported lack of disability inclusive and accessible information sources and preparedness tools prevents proactive disaster response for persons with disabilities.

- The physical demands of disaster response are particularly challenging for women with disabilities due to caregiving responsibilities and societal stigma, while men experience stress linked to unfulfilled provider roles.
- Without targeted disability-sensitive assistance, they cannot access relief services like food distribution. If they are the head of a household, they might be missed in distributing drought-resistant seeds or cash transfers.
- For example, AA plans for El Niño in 2023 included a monthly \$5 top-up for pregnant and breastfeeding women and those chronically ill, but did not mention the needs of those with disabilities (World Food Programme, 2023b). Without inclusive AA, people with disabilities are often left with few resources to cope and recover from the impacts of climate disasters.
- Call for inclusive systems- Urgent need for disability-friendly disaster preparedness, including accessible early warning systems, inclusive infrastructure, specialised evacuation services, and livelihood support to ensure equitable participation in disaster risk reduction.

### **4.1.3. Coping with climate-related hazards**

#### **Food security**

- Reducing food consumption was the most widely adopted strategy, reported by 77% of women and 69% of men. This disparity may reflect traditional caregiving roles, where women prioritise the nutritional needs of children and family members over their own.
- Additionally, women were more likely to seek support from relatives or friends (54%) than men (42%), which could be attributed to their stronger engagement in informal social networks and reciprocal caregiving practices.
- Discussions highlighted that women with children were more likely to eat less to feed their children more. It is important to recognise that the decision to self-sacrifice is rational to protect children; mothers are unlikely to refrain from sacrificing their own food for their children's benefit unless the problem of scarcity is addressed.
- Consuming cheaper foods and heavy reliance on carbohydrates raises another challenge for young children, such as stunted growth. AA food security interventions must pay attention to the varied nutritional needs of young children to avoid long-term irreversible impacts. To mitigate the likelihood of women consuming less food during times of scarcity, AA interventions should focus on maintaining food security and nutritionally diverse food, already a key component of AA.

#### **Withdrawing children from school**

- Respondents reported cases of parents withdrawing children from schools in Rushinga and Binga. While both boys and girls are at increased risk of dropping out during drought because families cannot afford to keep them in school, this is more likely for girls than boys. AA initiatives need to work with other partners to reduce school dropout rates. Cash transfers and school feeding programmes can help parents continue to afford to keep their children in school while providing them with nutrition.

#### **People with disabilities are left with few resources**

- In Binga, participants reported that people with disabilities, particularly those with visual impairment, were increasingly turning to harmful coping mechanisms such as begging in public spaces as a way to contribute to family survival.

“

*We have realised that the increasing food insecurity in our homes is pushing everyone out to look for food, including those who should be cared for by society. For example, we have Mr X who should be resting at home and pay attention to his health with someone taking care of his daily needs. But this is not the case anymore. With everyone struggling to survive, he has been forced to go out and sell fruits. The same applies to many visually impaired people who have intensified their begging activities in buses and at local shopping centres. (Female FGD participant from the 25-44 age category).*

”

## Access to support

- Despite previous AA activation in the research areas, respondents lacked awareness of available support after climate hazards.
- Lack of information and limited mobility, particularly for the elderly, also featured prominently as access barriers. A more detailed age-gender analysis reveals nuanced patterns of vulnerability:
  - Among youth aged 18–24, the most cited barrier is lack of information (20%), followed by economic status (15%) and cultural norms (11%).
  - The 25–44 age group faces significant challenges from cultural norms (59%) and limited mobility (40%), often due to their central role in household and caregiving responsibilities.
  - Individuals aged 45 and older reported the highest barriers in terms of economic hardship (90%), lack of information (80%), and mobility limitations (60%), linked to reduced physical capacity and financial independence.

Across all age groups, women are disproportionately affected, particularly by:

- Limited mobility (87%)
- Cultural norms (73%)
- Economic constraints (54%)

These disparities point to deeply rooted structural inequalities that require targeted, age- and gender-responsive interventions to ensure equitable access to humanitarian support and disaster recovery resources.

In addition, the study identified several other factors that hinder timely access to recovery assistance:

- Lack of information was reported by 65% of female respondents and 49% of males.
- Inadequate resources at support centres were cited by 59% of females and 55% of males.

Other common challenges included:

- Transportation barriers
- Long distances to support centres
- Bureaucratic hurdles
- Food distribution. If interventions, especially food distribution, do not consider women’s needs (e.g. childcare, pregnancy), women may miss out on resources.
- Providing clear information on activation of triggers, integration with local indigenous knowledge learned from repetitive environmental observation, sharing information through multiple formats (paying attention to different needs, i.e. sign language, braille, audio, local languages, etc). Can improve access to available services.
- AA bridges the gap between long-term disaster preparedness and recovery and resilience.



### **Financial Support**

- 85% of women and 75% of men identified financial aid as the most important preparedness measure.
- Women emphasised the need for direct cash support due to their economic vulnerability and caregiving responsibilities.

### **Community Education and Training**

- 55% of women supported education and training compared to 45% of men.
- Women cited training to increase their participation in community preparedness and recovery planning.

### **Accessible Community Centres**

- 41% of women valued improved access to local centres, versus 31% of men.
- Proximity to services was essential to women with mobility issues or caregiving duties.

### **Early Warning Systems**

- 28% of women and 36% of men highlighted the importance of timely alerts.
- Men generally showed more interest in technological solutions and systems-based interventions.

### **Improved Infrastructure**

- Cited by 26% of men and 20% of women.
- Men prioritised roads, buildings, and physical systems supporting logistics and movement.

### **Other Interventions (e.g., mental health support, coordination mechanisms)**

- Noted by 19% of women and 15% of men.
- Women more frequently mentioned social support and protection services as part of preparedness.

### **Involvement in structures**

Zimbabwe has a comprehensive legal and regulatory framework to promote gender mainstreaming within disaster risk management (DRM) and AA planning.

- For example, National Development Strategy 1 promotes gender-responsive policies across various sectors, including climate change adaptation and DRM.
- The Civil Protection Act (chapter 10: 04) of 1989 is being revised to eliminate outdated gender language, facilitating a more inclusive approach and equal participation of women and marginalised groups in disaster risk leadership.
- The Zimbabwe Climate Change Gender Action Plan aligns with international frameworks like the Paris Agreement and UN Framework Convention on Climate Change Gender Action Plan, emphasising the inclusion in climate action of women, indigenous peoples, children, people with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups.
- In 2024, the Ministry of Women's Affairs launched the National Gender and Climate Change Task Force to strengthen women's participation and leadership in climate-related action processes.

## At the community level

- Community-based NGOs such as the Community Technology Development Organization in Rushinga actively promote women's participation in leadership, with women comprising 60-70% of community structures such as water point committees.
- AGRITEX in Rushinga is actively involved in identifying vulnerable populations through its network of extension workers to inform AA planning.
- Ward action committees and village action committees play a role in ensuring gender and inclusive AA policies at the District Development committee level.
- However, women's leadership and participation in community structures largely remain informal. For example, the Community Garden and Water Point Committees are project-based and driven by development partners, hence not part of the permanent structures like the village and ward development committees, which are dominated by men. A Ministry of Women Affairs key informant indicated how some local leaders resisted women leaders in decision-making processes, citing cultural considerations. She noted that some churches, such as Apostolic sects, do not allow women to speak when men are present, impeding their participation in ministry training and programmes.

There is growing awareness of the need to integrate gender and vulnerability considerations in AA strategies and planning in WFP-supported districts – for example, the People First Impact Method, which calls for age- and gender-differentiated community engagements. And during the 2023 El Niño event, WFP used its urban cash assistance to support the Stopping Abuse and Female Exploitation programme (World Food Programme, 2023b). However, gender responsiveness, protection and inclusivity are not yet widely adopted in AA, and some national gender, disability and child protection strategies are not widely implemented. It is crucial to focus on the implementation phase within communities to ensure that the values outlined in AA policies and strategies are upheld throughout the process.

### 4.1.4. Conclusion

The main takeaway from Zimbabwe is that climate change-related hazards create varying gender and age-specific intersecting vulnerabilities. Economic, social, and cultural factors together create unique vulnerabilities, protection and inclusion challenges for women, young women, men, young girls, boys, elderly people, and people with disabilities during and after climate-related hazards. Climate hazards such as droughts are causing significant hardships across the board due to a lack of safety nets or alternative livelihoods in the communities. Addressing the structural factors that make individuals vulnerable to climate change impacts requires holistic interventions that tackle social and economic vulnerabilities and strengthen family and community support systems in ways that are gender-responsive and inclusive.

## 4.2. Tanzania



Tanzania frequently experiences severe and widespread climate events, including droughts, floods, delayed rainfall onsets, early rainfall cessation, declining average annual rainfall and rising temperatures. These changes have resulted in reduced crop yields, increased climate-induced pests and diseases affecting crops and livestock, income loss, damage to infrastructure, recurrent food shortages, and heightened poverty levels.

WFP Tanzania's AA programme was initiated in late 2023 as part of the country office's broader efforts as aligned in WFP's Country Strategic Plan 2022-2027. The plan addresses the increasing frequency and severity of climate-related disasters hence strengthening resilience and enhancing the adaptive capacity of vulnerable communities.

The programme primarily targets high-risk districts in northern and central Tanzania, as well as Zanzibar, including Longido, Monduli, Kiteto, Simanjiro, Handeni, Same, Mkalama, Kondoa, Meatu, and Micheweni. These areas are particularly vulnerable to recurrent droughts, floods, and other climate hazards, severely impacting food systems and rural livelihoods.

Despite contributing 54% to the agricultural labour force in Tanzania, women own less than 20% of the land in that country. They face systemic barriers in accessing land, financial resources, and agricultural inputs, limiting their capacity to build economic resilience (FAO, 2021).

In Tanzania, men dominate rural leadership roles, including disaster preparedness and resource management, with women holding less than 25% of these positions, limiting their influence in water management and disaster response (CARE, 2023).

The research was carried out in four regions and districts, purposively selected with the support of the WFP country office. The research was conducted in Meatu, Monduli, Handeni and Micheweni, and two wards were purposively selected in each district – one representing rural areas and the other peri-urban areas. The four districts are diverse:

- Monduli – home to Maasai semi-nomadic pastoralists;
- Meatu – home to Tanzania’s largest ethnic group, the Sukuma, who are primarily farmers and cattle herders;
- Pemba is home to Shirazi/Zanzibarian clove farmers and has a wide Islamic influence; and
- Handeni – home to the Zigua, who are primarily farmers.

54.7% of respondents were Muslim and 37.9% were Christians. 5% of respondents were persons with disabilities. A majority of respondents (72.7%) reported having childcare responsibilities, while only 27.3% did not.

#### **4.2.1. Access to information**

- Only 33.8% reported receiving any early warning information while 66.2% of respondents did not. The low access could be because AA is new in Tanzania.
- Traditional media, especially local radio (67.3%) and television (44.0%), serve as the main sources of climate hazard information for many respondents.
- 24% of respondents said they accessed information from community groups, community meetings, community-based organizations, and farmer cooperatives.
- Women are less likely to access information and have limited knowledge of climate change hazards. 66.2% of women reported not receiving any information, compared to 33.8% of men.
- Women who do access information rely on television and personal networks. This highlights the need for targeted information dissemination and an effective early warning system.
- People with disabilities face unique challenges in accessing climate hazard warnings, as these are often communicated through media such as radio, television, or mobile messages that are not designed to accommodate their needs. For example, individuals with hearing impairments may miss critical audio warnings, while those with visual impairments struggle with text-based alerts. The findings underscore the need for tailored inclusive communication strategies, such as using visual aids like sign language interpreters for televised warnings, providing Braille or tactile alerts, and leveraging accessible mobile applications with audio descriptions.

In focus group discussions and interviews with key informants, early warning information was also reported to be issued by different agencies, leading to confusion and sometimes missed opportunities in providing communities with clear messages about risks and how they should prepare. Consequently, 62% of respondents wanted improvements in early warning systems.



### 4.2.2. How climate hazards impact households

Drought was the hazard experienced the most in the areas surveyed. 88.4% of respondents had experienced drought, followed by pests and diseases (like locust outbreaks) (49.1%), and flooding (46.5%). Lack of food, water shortages and loss of income were the most noted impacts of climate change hazards.

- **Impacts on men and women**

- Water scarcity was particularly concerning for women (93.5%), because of women's role in food preparation and household care work.
- 91% of men reported a loss of income compared to 75% of women. This is because, as the focus group discussions in Handeni and Micheweni highlight, men are more likely to be primary breadwinners, while women manage household responsibilities.
- When asked about their pressing needs during hazards, 95.8% of women chose food, followed by water (75%) and financial support (71.9%). The order was slightly different for men: 84% chose financial support, followed by food (81.9%) and water (63%).
- Focus group discussions in Monduli, Handeni, Meatu and Micheweni highlighted that droughts contribute to shifts in local demographics. Because of loss of earnings, men often seek temporary employment, spending some time away from home, leaving women alone with their children and other care responsibilities. In the agro-pastoral areas of Meatu and Monduli, men migrate with their cattle in search of grazing pasture. Similarly, in Micheweni, men travel to fishing camps, leaving women and children at home. Overall, 41.4% of men said they were more likely to migrate temporarily, compared to 16.8% of women. Male migration has negative impacts on the functioning of a community, and increases the care burden on women, who are left without the support of male partners.
- 25% of women were also concerned about domestic violence during climate hazards.

- **Impacts on children**

During focus group discussions, participants emphasized how severe drought disrupted the education and daily lives of adolescent boys and girls. During drought and concomitant food scarcity, adolescents are forced to stay home to help with household duties like collecting water, but also families do not have resources to pay for school fees. Key informant interviews confirmed the focus group discussion findings as indicated in the following statement:



*The drought not only impacts students' well-being but also has long-term consequences for their future opportunities. Based on my experience working with local communities, it is evident that school attendance declines significantly during severe droughts, as children are required to stay home to assist with the shortage of food and water.*

**- KII in Micheweni District, 6 November 2024**



Poverty already increases the likelihood of children dropping out of school, even without climate hazards, with 60% of out-of-school children in Tanzania being from the 20% poorest households (UNICEF, 2018). In the long term, dropping out of school will deepen poverty and entrench the dependency of the communities as climate change disrupts traditional ways of life. AA interventions should ensure families are able to keep their children in school by providing financial assistance and addressing food and water scarcity.

- **Impacts on older people**

Qualitative findings reveal that older adults (65+) face unique challenges during droughts, especially those living alone. Physical limitations related to ageing make it difficult for them to perform daily tasks such as collecting firewood and especially fetching water, as nearby sources dry up. Those living with adult children may experience increased care responsibilities while family members leave home to seek an income. Droughts exacerbate food shortages, heightening older adults' dependence on others for support. Targeted interventions are essential to address the specific needs of older adults during climate-related shocks, ensuring their well-being.

- **Impact on people with disabilities**

Focus group discussions in Meatu pointed out the unique dangers of extreme heat for people with albinism.

*“People with albinism cannot work effectively when heatwaves are intense. Likewise, children with albinism struggle to learn at school during such times.”*  
– Focus group discussion respondent in Meatu District

The needs of people with disabilities were also reported to be inadequately addressed in current disaster management systems, as this key informant highlighted:

*“Climate hazards disproportionately affect people with disabilities, irrespective of their gender, because they face additional barriers to accessing resources, information, and support during emergencies. For instance, challenges such as difficulty evacuating during floods, limited availability of accessible shelters, or challenges in receiving timely warnings compound their vulnerabilities. These challenges are exacerbated not only by the severity of the hazard but also by pre-existing systemic barriers.”*  
– Community development officer in Monduli, 29 October 2024

The findings underscore the need to respond to different disabilities.

**Table 2: Summary of impacts on different groups of people**

Impact	Description	Suggested interventions
<b>Women</b>	Increased care work, looking for water and feeding the family with limited resources	Address gender inequality in care work Access to water & food Protection from violence
<b>Infants</b>	Limited access to nutritious food Vulnerable to acute malnutrition Potential irreversible long-term impacts of food shortages	Cash transfers to parents with young children to prevent acute food insecurity
<b>Children</b>	Severe drought disrupts education and daily lives Adolescents forced to stay at home Increased domestic duties	Provide financial assistance, address food and water scarcity to keep children in schools
<b>Older people</b>	Struggle to access food and water Increased care responsibilities	Targeted interventions to address specific needs during climate-related hazards
<b>People with disabilities</b>	Exclusion of persons with hearing impairment from announcements through radio or community speaker phone Exclusion of persons with visual impairment from announcements through television, or SMS/WhatsApp	Implement inclusive communication strategies, such as sign language interpreters, Braille or tactile alerts, and accessible mobile applications with audio descriptions
<b>Men</b>	Loss of income Migration away from home	For pastoral communities, interventions to secure access to water and feed for animals during droughts Income support (cash transfers)

### 4.2.3. Differentiated coping strategies

Climate hazards trigger a range of coping strategies, with an emphasis on food security and financial resilience. 87% of women reported reducing consumption or eating less nutritious food during droughts, compared to 58.3% of men. 49.3% of men sold their assets compared to 21.9% of women. Both men and women reported borrowing money from family and friends. Despite the adoption of negative coping strategies, 53.2% believed their coping strategies were effective.

Reducing the impact of hazards on food systems and acute food insecurity is an important aspect of AA. When effective, it provides crucial protection for women and children.

Networks within the community and family are important sources of support for women during and after hazards. 52.7% of respondents reported that women would rely on community support, relatives, and friends, as opposed to 34.9% of men. AA planning should pay attention to how community networks can be strengthened and not undermined in the allocation of resources and benefits.

#### 4.2.4. Inclusivity of the current disaster response structures

AA is new in Tanzania. However, existing disaster response structures guided by the National Disaster Management Strategy (2022-2027) are coordinated by the Disaster Management Department in the Prime Minister's Office. Within this framework:

- Regional steering committees for disaster management led by regional commissioners oversee disaster management activities in their respective regions.
- Similarly, the district steering committees for disaster management are responsible for planning, coordinating and directing disaster-related matters ensuring that communities are prepared and can respond to any emergencies (The United Republic of Tanzania, 2022).
- Ward and village/mtaa committees for disaster management: These grassroots committees engage local communities in disaster preparedness and response, ensuring that disaster risk reduction measures are tailored to local needs and contexts.

The research found that an area that could be improved is meaningful participation and leadership of women and people with disabilities in community-level disaster planning structures such as disaster management committees, where it is still limited. Leadership roles such as district commissioner, ward chairperson, etc., are all still dominated by men. Inequitable religious and gender norms and stigma against persons with disabilities are barriers to participation in leadership at the community level.

#### Existing policy foundations that can support gender responsive AA in Tanzania

District councils allocate 10% of their total revenue to provide loans to vulnerable groups, recognizing the barriers faced by women, youth and people with disabilities in accessing resources.

Through the Farmer Input Support Programme, District councils offer subsidized inputs, including seeds, and fertilisers to smallholder farmers, with a particular focus on reaching women.

The Certificate of Customary Right of Occupancy (CCRO) addresses women's lack of land ownership by formally recognizing their land rights. Where customary laws have historically marginalized women, the CCRO is a crucial avenue to enhance women's access to land.

#### 4.2.5. Conclusion

Climate hazard impacts are experienced differently by different groups. Securing clean drinking water and food was a key concern for women. The temporary migration of men reported in all the communities has significant impacts on women and children left behind. Early warning information does not have wider reach, this could be because AA work is newer in Tanzania. Traditional media, local radio and TV, and community meetings were the most relied on; these, however, might not meet the needs of persons with visual and hearing impairments.



### 4.3. Malawi



Malawi is among the world's poorest countries, with 71% of its population in extreme poverty and 62% of the workforce in agriculture. These poverty levels worsen the effects of climate change as the country faces droughts and cyclones. In 2023, Malawi declared a state of emergency due to El Niño events.

Malawi has a predominantly Christian population, with a smaller percentage following Islam and other religions. There are existing gender inequalities, as well as stigma and exclusion of people with disabilities, rooted in religion and traditional beliefs, which are magnified by experiences of climate-related disasters. Systemic issues like unequal inheritance laws, patriarchal norms, and discriminatory practices further limit women's access to resources and decision-making, compounding their socioeconomic marginalisation (Gogerty, 2021).

In Malawi, the research was conducted in Nsanje and Chikwawa. The communities were selected in consultation with the WFP country office. 51% of the sample were men and 48% were women, and 6% of women and 9.4% of men were persons with disabilities. A large proportion of the sample (91%) resided in rural areas, followed by 7% in peri-urban areas and 1% in urban areas. Cyclones and floods were the hazards experienced the most in both Nsanje (87%) and Chikwawa districts (93%).

#### 4.3.1. Early warning and support information

- Information about weather, early warning and support available to communities is not equally accessed. For example, 70% of women had inadequate access to early warning information. Overall, 76.8% wanted improvements in early warning information dissemination.
- Focus group discussions in both Nsanje and Chikwawa reported that men had more access to radios, phones and community meetings where they accessed weather, early warning, and other important information. The gender gap in phone access can be as high as 40% (Messenger, 2019), with 34% of women owning phones compared to 52% of the general population (Malanga, 2021). Even when households own radios, men control the choice of programmes. Unequal access to radio and phones gives men power in the family and within the community as they are more informed.

- Reliance on radios and public meetings for early warning distribution excludes individuals with hearing impairments and those with physical disabilities who might not physically be in meetings.



*We help those who cannot hear by telling them about warnings, but sometimes they get the information too late.*

**– Focus group discussion with women**



- Women, on the other hand, tend to rely on their husbands, other community members and community meetings, when allowed to attend, for information. This puts them at a disadvantage in terms of preparedness for hazards. Information provision does not account for low literacy levels among women in particular and the needs of people with disabilities.
- Focus group discussions raised concerns about orphans and child-headed households. Where the household does not have adults, children might not have access to information on early warning or the support/aid available during a disaster.

Respondents worried that indigenous knowledge of weather patterns and practices for environmental management is not integrated with formal warning mechanisms. Integration of indigenous knowledge systems with modern early warning frameworks can enhance coverage, reliability and empowerment of local communities in the interpretation of early warning information.

#### 4.3.2. Needs during disasters

- In Malawi, communities faced displacement during flooding and were moved to temporary shelters. This came with a number of issues:
  - During Tropical Cyclone Freddy, 8,837 households from Nsanje and 4,502 from Chikwawa were evacuated to 44 camps. Overcrowded shelters increase women's vulnerability to harassment and violence. Women and adolescent girls face increased risks of GBV, including harassment and exploitation, in these insecure environments, and shelters often lack mechanisms to respond effectively (Protection Cluster, 2023).
  - Most of the shared facilities lack privacy and there is poor sanitation in camps, complicating menstrual hygiene management for women. 94% of women identified health needs as something they faced during flooding.
- Women were most concerned about food and water shortages (94%). Women face the demand for food preparation, while men experience a significant increase in stress from loss of income and the traditional roles of protectors and providers.



*As much as it is men who provide the money for food, it is still the woman who must go buy, prepare, and make the funds stretch. When the children cry for food, they do not go to their dads, they come to us.*

**– Focus group discussion with women (18-24 years) in Chikwawa District**



- Single mothers face compounded challenges, balancing caregiving responsibilities with the struggle to rebuild their lives with limited support.
- There were reports of men sustaining injuries or death during floods while rescuing family members and livestock. Low agricultural yields often lead to men migrating for work, increasing women's labour and care responsibilities.
- Elderly individuals often care for grandchildren whose parents have left to seek work or who have died due to climate disasters, raising concerns for both the well-being of the elderly as well as that of the children. AA should collaborate with child protection institutions to ensure the continuity of children's schooling and to safeguard them from exploitation and sexual violence during and after disasters.

**Table 3: Needs identified by communities**

Support	Details
Menstrual hygiene kits	In emergency shelters
Targeted support	Single mothers who face a higher burden as a caregiver and breadwinner
Accessible evacuation plans and shelters	Transportation assistance and distribution of mobility aids during climate hazards for people with disabilities  Accessible shelters, special consideration needed for accessible bathrooms/toilets
Safe spaces for children	In camps children need spaces for safe play
Tailored support for the elderly	Who often care for children in the absence of parents
Inclusion in decision-making	All vulnerable groups, such as women, youth, and people with disabilities

### 4.3.3. Worrying levels of violence

The research found a high prevalence of violence, which is exacerbated by climate change hazards. 82% of women reported being concerned about domestic violence, and 55% had experienced violence in their lifetime. Respondents shared distressing accounts of displacement, the loss of loved ones, domestic violence and sexual exploitation during the recovery process.

Climate hazards and rebuilding homes after hazards like floods cause families anguish. This raises tensions and conflict within homes. Migration by men in search of work causes significant stress on families, breaking down traditional family structures and creating insecurity for women and children.

### 4.3.4. How different groups cope with climate hazards

A significant 91% of households reported reducing their food consumption as a means of coping with climate-related hazards. Notably, 93% of women have adopted this strategy, while 88% of men have resorted to selling off assets to mitigate losses caused by these climate challenges. If interventions are not implemented to address this detrimental coping mechanism, families may find themselves trapped in a cycle of poverty, making it increasingly difficult to rebuild their wealth after experiencing such hazards.

Loss of income is felt more acutely by men. Slightly more men were concerned with finding alternative incomes during droughts and after floods (91%) compared to women (84%). Small businesses funded through informal lending groups or community savings mechanisms, as well as cooperative farming initiatives were important for women seeking alternative sources of income beyond traditional agriculture. However, access to credit, land, and training opportunities remains a challenge, limiting women's ability to adapt effectively.

Focus group discussions highlighted the increased risk of sexual exploitation and transactional sex for young women.



*When we go looking for work, some offer the jobs in exchange for sex, but sometimes it's not that it is always about sex, some are just abusive.*

**- Focus group discussion with women 25+ in Champhanda**



Transactional sex increases the risk of unwanted pregnancy, which compounds poverty for women. Transactional relationships also put women at a disadvantage where they might not be able to negotiate safe sex, increasing their risk of sexually transmitted diseases. This underscores the need for sexual and reproductive health services for girls and young women.

There were reports of increased child labour to help families cope during disasters. When parents lose assets and income, there is no money for children's school fees, books, and uniforms. Floods also damage roads and bridges, making travelling to school unsafe or impossible. For example, during Tropical Cyclone Freddy, the road between Bangula and Nsanje was cut off, and the main roads were damaged in Chikwawa. This disrupted schooling and negatively impacted children's well-being, further entrenching the cycle of poverty. AA needs to ensure minimal disruption in children's schooling by supporting families during drought and flooding with financial assistance and investing in infrastructure for water management to reduce the damage caused by floods. This will improve child outcomes.

Livelihood opportunities for people with disabilities are limited, and most people with disabilities are dependent on caregivers. Current food distribution and evacuation processes fail to consider the mobility limitations of people with disabilities and the elderly. Reports indicate that specialized services are not provided to help families with members who have disabilities.

## **Geographical isolation**

Some areas, such as Chazuka, and mountainous areas in Nsanje and Chikwawa, are geographically isolated, and services and resources for disaster recovery distributed from central locations remain inaccessible to them. This is particularly challenging for people with disabilities, the elderly, and mothers with young children. Therefore, AA interventions must consider food and service distribution to reach secluded areas.



## **The importance of family and community networks**

The findings show that people in communities rely on each other to survive and recover from disasters such as cyclones and floods. 88% of men and 82% of women reported relying on family members and other community members as primary sources of support. AA interventions need to recognize the importance of family and community cohesion in individual well-being and survival. Efforts to improve gender and inclusion in AA should work within the communal and collective framework while aiming to challenge norms and practices that exclude women and people with disabilities.

Reducing vulnerability to hazards in a sustainable way needs the support of state and external partners in infrastructure, and innovations in farming. 81% of respondents said improvements in environmental conservation training were needed in order to reduce the severe impacts of climate-related hazards, 78% called for improvements in infrastructure, and 71% in community. All efforts to reduce vulnerability need to consider the needs of women, children, and people with disabilities.

Chiefs have established authority and power within rural communities, making them crucial stakeholders in securing support for gender and inclusion initiatives. Without their buy-in, the traditional rules they enforce can undermine the effectiveness of interventions. Allegations have emerged suggesting that some chiefs and community leaders are involved in the misuse of aid resources. For example, in Makhwira, a chief is reported to have misused some aid provided. This indicates that their involvement in AA needs careful negotiation. It is therefore essential that they are actively involved in these programmes to understand and appreciate the critical importance of anticipatory support to the population.

### **4.3.5. Current AA approaches, gender and inclusion**

The Department of Disaster Management Affairs developed a national Anticipatory Action Roadmap, collaborating with a consortium of partners including UN agencies such as the UN Development Programme, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, FAO and WFP, international NGOs such as Red Cross and Save the Children, and government ministries including the Ministries of Agriculture, Gender Community Development and Social Welfare, and Water and Sanitation (WFP, 2024).

DODMA ensures the work is coordinated by 11 disaster management clusters, including shelter, search and rescue, facilitated by the Red Cross and the social protection cluster coordinated by the Ministry of Gender. At the district level, the district civil protection committees are led by the district commissioner. At the local level clusters function through the village protection committees and area civil protection committees that handle early warning, disaster preparedness and first response activities.

Malawi's AA implementation framework faces challenges in harmonizing triggers, addressing inclusivity gaps, and building community trust, partly due to its newness. The framework lacks a standardised approach to gender inclusivity, resulting in inconsistent treatment of women and marginalized groups during disaster response.

Organizations like World Vision and Red Cross have made strides by incorporating gender and disability-sensitive practices. Structural issues, including patriarchal leadership, corruption, and limited outreach, exacerbate these challenges, hindering the equitable distribution of aid and resources.

#### 4.3.6. Areas where gender responsiveness, protection and inclusion can be improved

- Involve marginalized and vulnerable groups in designing and implementing AA strategies. Engage organizations representing vulnerable groups, e.g. those representing people with disabilities, women-led groups, and other grassroots initiatives.
- Design communication tools that are accessible to everyone, including visually or hearing-impaired individuals, and provide diverse formats such as SMS, radio messages, and community outreach announcements. Partnering with local leaders and organizations can help expand the reach of these awareness campaigns, ensuring timely dissemination of warnings.
- Consider how to improve targeting people with disabilities. The Malawi Council for Disability Affairs expressed the need to revise the Unified Beneficiary Register better to map out the most vulnerable groups, including people with disabilities, to ensure relief resources are appropriately distributed, as it does not capture people's vulnerabilities.
- Investing in resilience-building efforts can empower communities to withstand future hazards. WFP and its partners should promote sustainable livelihoods in vulnerable communities. For example, supporting women-led businesses or providing training in adaptive farming techniques can diversify income sources and strengthen household resilience.
- Finally, WFP must prioritize monitoring and evaluation with disaggregated data. Feedback from diverse community groups allows for a better understanding of what works and what needs adjustment.

#### 4.3.7. Conclusion

In Malawi, if AA efforts are to be effective in addressing gender inequality, they must navigate the complex intersections of cultural beliefs, disability stigma, and gender norms, fostering dialogue that supports both gender equality and the inclusion of people with disabilities in all aspects of society. Men hold significant power in their families and communities, while family and community remain an important source of support for women and children. Therefore, efforts to strengthen gender-responsive AA should engage men as allies while aiming to transform the inequitable gender norms that deny women leadership roles and space to inform decisions in AAP. Addressing the social stigma against persons with disabilities is important as is reducing the high levels of violence during hazards.

#### Social stigma and exclusion of people with disabilities

Beliefs that disability is a punishment from God or a result of witchcraft create social stigmas and make it difficult for people with disabilities to participate in community activities. There are no proper platforms to represent people with disabilities during the planning and implementation of AA, particularly at community level, consequently, their needs are not met during or after disasters, e.g. in the design of camps for flood victims or distribution of food.

## 4.4. Madagascar



### Madagascar AA programme

Madagascar's government adopted a multi-stakeholder national AA framework, which was signed by the Bureau National pour la Gestion des Risques et des Catastrophes (BNGRC, the National Disaster and Risk Management institution) in October 2022.

The framework provides a strategic and practical framework for Malagasy institutions to deliver AA.

Madagascar is a country characterized by religious and culturally conservative values. In this context, many harmful social norms persist, significantly restricting the agency and decision-making power of women and girls, limiting their ability to accumulate human capital in education and participate in economic opportunities. While educational attainment is low for both men and women, women underperform compared to men. For example, 3.4% of men aged 15-49 complete lower secondary compared to 2.7% of women. 23.9% of women are illiterate. Lack of access to education limits women's choices and increases the likelihood of them being dependent on male partners. Maternal health outcomes also show poor results with the country's maternal mortality rate at 335 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2017 (World Bank, 2023a). Climate change and unpredictable extreme weather patterns are making agriculture unviable, pushing more families into poverty and increasing women and children's vulnerability, particularly in Madagascar's Great South region.

In Madagascar, the study was carried out in Betroka, Tsihombe, and Betioky districts. A quantitative survey was conducted with 720 rural households. Respondents had low educational attainment, with 53.5% having no formal education and only 16% reaching secondary education. Employment levels were also low; only 4% were formally employed, and 28.35% were self-employed. The dependency ratio was high, as 74% had childcare responsibilities, and more than half of the sample reported having more than three children per household.

In Madagascar, climate hazards such as droughts and cyclones worsen the precariousness of rural populations. In the three districts studied, 83.5% had experienced drought, 56% cyclones and storms, and 32% agricultural pests and diseases.

#### 4.4.1. Access to early warning information

- Men generally receive information more frequently than women. For instance, 66.3% of men receive information via radio, compared to only 47% of women.
- Similarly, community meetings show a disparity, with 14% of men and just 5% of women receiving information from such meetings.
- Women were less likely to get early warning or support information if it was distributed on the internet or in print form. Overall, print/newspaper and television are not accessible mediums for either men or women. This could be because of low literacy levels and lack of access to TVs.
- Young people were not reached by any of the traditional platforms, accessing information via word of mouth from family and friends.
- In the studied districts, men generally had better access to information and resources than women. This gave men power and influence within the family in making strategic decisions in the face of climate uncertainties, whereas women who are responsible for food supply and household management faced limitations in accessing these resources.

#### 4.4.2. Roles and responsibilities and differentiated needs

Focus group discussions identified the following needs for men and women in Madagascar:

**Table 4: Differentiated needs**

Women's needs	Men's needs
Time spent collecting water limits other activities; need for access to potable and uncontaminated water sources	Support for professional retraining and the search for new income following crop loss
Need to ensure children's nutrition in the face of shortages and rising prices; Financial assistance to compensate for crop loss	Training in business management and economic survival techniques
Access to information on early warning Training on sustainable agricultural practices, training on managing food, water	Access to training on sustainable agricultural practices and resource management
Need for psychosocial support to prevent stress and improve mental health Hygiene supply	Recognition of the need for emotional support, with an emphasis on the importance of sharing one's feelings
Increased need for care, especially for pregnant and breastfeeding women	Strengthening community networks to promote solidarity and mutual aid
Measures to prevent domestic violence exacerbated by crises	Awareness of gender equality
Access to shelters to avoid violence and abuse during storms and other hazards	



### 4.4.3. Differentiated impacts

- **Food and water:** The impacts of climate-related hazards, including loss of income, restricted access to water, and food shortages, are recognized by both men and women as significant challenges. For example, 85% of both men and women identified access to food and water as a concern. However, women experience different impacts of food shortage to men. There is an inequality in access to food resources as this focus group discussion respondent highlighted:



*Even if men and boys are affected by situations of shortage or crisis, thanks to their status as head of the family, they can receive priorities that allow them to obtain food before women and girls.*



- **Health services for women:** Women express particular concern regarding health implications, especially regarding access to sexual and reproductive health services during events such as cyclones and flooding, which can disrupt supply chains and hinder access to healthcare facilities and hygiene products. Access to maternal care is already low in Madagascar and is worsened in cases of climate hazards.
- **Expanding women's workload:** Focus groups that included Bara (Betroka), Antesaka (Betroka), Antandroy (Tsihombe), and Vezo (Betioky) populations highlighted how cultural norms and traditional roles absolve men from parental responsibilities which are given to women. This unequal distribution of parental responsibility and care work is exacerbated when men migrate.
- “Men flee the family's food problems, abandoning their responsibilities and forcing women to become heads of households, managing crisis situations alone. Many young men (Tsihombe), aged 15 to 27, leave for Toliara to work as rickshaw pullers for three to four months in response to the crisis. Some return with modest savings, while others, having found a more stable refuge, ask their families to join them. However, some completely abandon their families, leaving behind young mothers and children, while the elderly await their support.”
- **Patriarchal demands on men & violence against women:** Focus group discussions also emphasized how men experienced considerable pressure from the loss of financial resources and how this could lead to a shift in their familial roles, resulting in significant stress and tension within the household. This situation can have profound psychological effects for men and for the family, often increasing tensions and incidences of violence at home. 9% of women reported experiencing violence linked to drought periods, with a 21% lifetime prevalence of domestic violence.
- **School drop out and child labour:** Focus group discussions in Lazarivo, Betioky and Tsihombe revealed cases of adolescents leaving school to go and work because of drought. Child labour is of particular concern in Madagascar. According to UNICEF, 47% of children aged between five and 17 are working (UNICEF, 2025a). In places like Betroka, when crops fail due to drought, parents and their children are forced to work in mica mining for as little as Ariary 5 000 (\$1) a week (Randrianasolo, 2024). To prevent more children moving to the mines and other exploitative environments, AA interventions must pay special attention to the precarity of livelihoods in vulnerable communities in the country's Great South.
- **Vulnerability of adolescent girls:** Focus group discussions in Manombo raised concerns about adolescent girls' increased risk of engaging in prostitution or being forced by their parents to beg to ensure their own and their families' survival. This situation raises concerns about the risks of abuse and sexual exploitation for adolescent girls.

#### 4.4.4. Access to support

When asked what support was needed for communities to be resilient to climate hazards:

- 60% said improved early warning;
- 80% chose financial assistance; and
- 43% selected community training and preparedness programmes.
- Focus group discussants raised concerns about restrictive criteria for aid, which they viewed as disproportionately affecting women and the elderly, especially those lacking proper identity documents or possessing non-compliant ones. Restrictive requirements open opportunities for abuse of power by local implementers, mistreatment of women, family conflict, and structural corruption.
- It is crucial to develop a nuanced understanding of the affected population when formulating AA plans, enhance implementation capacities within communities or districts, and establish systems to prevent corruption.

#### 4.4.5. Influence over AA planning

In focus groups with young people, they reported having little to no influence in decisions made in communities regarding disaster planning. Adult men had the most influence in decisions made at the community level. Those from wealthy families also had more influence in community planning. Women focus groups also highlighted that although collective discussions take place in community planning meetings, women do not make decisions. This is worrying as it limits the extent to which community-identified needs and plans reflect the needs of women and children.

At the same time, focus groups acknowledge that community members tend to come together and support each other during climate-related hazards, regardless of gender and age. This suggests that a nuanced understanding of the gender roles and exclusions women experience is needed, as these might vary depending on context.

#### 4.4.6. Conclusion

Climate disasters, whether floods, cyclones or droughts, widen gender inequalities. Men, both old and young, despite the impacts they face, often find ways to recover, sometimes leaving women and other family members to manage the situation alone.

On the other hand, women in Madagascar encounter significant barriers due to lower educational attainment, lower literacy levels, and a high dependency ratio. Having young children limits women's mobility to search for employment or economic activities when crops fail.

Thus, it is important to strengthen women's influence over climate resilience and adaptation planning. Strengthening women's participation in decision making can be promoted through leadership training and initiatives aimed at ensuring their representation on local disaster management platforms, and challenging patriarchal norms that subjugate women. Important also is strengthening women's economic autonomy by training and business support for women to have alternative income generating activities.

## 5. Gender, protection and inclusion implications

This section presents the main themes emerging from the different countries and draws implications for AA work in southern Africa.

### 5.1. Exposure to climate-related hazards and preparedness

Across the four countries, respondents believed the frequency and intensity of climate hazards were increasing, i.e. 64% in Madagascar up to 78.5% in Malawi. This is supported by evidence: Malawi alone had six major hazards between 2015 and 2023 (Sparkes et al., 2023). The region is projected to experience more pronounced wet-dry seasonality with extreme dry conditions and flooding (Engelbrecht et al., 2024). Experiences of drought, heatwaves, cyclones and flooding were reported in all four countries. In addition, in Zimbabwe, there was a concern about the rise in zoonotic diseases, and Tanzania reported an outbreak of pests, such as was seen with desert locust infestation.

Sustainable access to water and food was a consistent concern across the found countries, a problem that will worsen without interventions to strengthen the resilience of water systems, as freshwater availability is already critically limited (Engelbrecht et al., 2024; Scholes and Engelbrecht, 2021). Thus, respondents regarded more accessible and better-quality infrastructure, such as water management systems, technology in agriculture, etc., as a means to build communities' resilience and reduce the acute humanitarian effects of climate hazards. Reducing the devastating impact of climate-related hazards will protect women, children, and other vulnerable groups from climate change-precipitated abuses and exploitation.

Research noted that women's and men's responses varied regarding which hazards they viewed as having more impact on them. Men tended to see cyclones, hurricanes, and storms as more devastating, while women were more likely to see heat waves and droughts as having a greater impact. This could be because of the respective impacts of the different weather patterns at the household level. While desertification and floods cause significant structural damage, which men typically tend to, droughts and heatwaves affect food production, water supply, and health, which hinders women's care responsibilities.

### 5.2. Early warning systems and access to information

Providing early warning and risk analysis is central to AA, enabling communities to plan for future disasters. WFP has been working with National Meteorological and Hydrological Services and disaster risk management institutions in Zimbabwe, Malawi, Madagascar and Tanzania to strengthen the capacity to forecast and identify trigger thresholds for climate disasters. When the trigger threshold is reached, resources are automatically released and plans are activated. This model relies on different stakeholders, including communities, accessing early warning information and the support activated when the peak threshold is reached. "Impactful AA delivers the right assistance at the right time so that people have the resources and knowledge to navigate extreme shocks on their own terms" (Chaves-Gonzalez et al., 2022). However, access to information remains limited and skewed by gender and age.

In Malawi, men were more likely to access information from the radio and community meetings than women. Women found it difficult to participate in governance structures and to access information; this was partly due to high levels of illiteracy and cultural norms around women's roles in communities. In Zimbabwe, bottom-up planning has been successful, and access to information is more widely

distributed through the work of AGRITEX and community structures. Tanzanian women seem to experience significant exclusion from information sources. Young people, children, and the elderly are often not as informed about climate risks as men and women of working age.

Persons with disabilities, those with visual and hearing impairment, and those with mobility impairment were reportedly excluded from most early warning dissemination and in AA planning. If they are excluded from information distribution or information is getting to them late, they are less likely to have their needs informed in AA plans and for them to act in time. Working with organisations that represent people with disabilities can inform the design and accessible distribution of early warning messages and communication for people with disabilities.

Enhancing early warning systems was identified as a need in Malawi, Tanzania, Madagascar and Zimbabwe. In the four countries, there was no harmonised approach to sharing information. Also, there were concerns that indigenous knowledge about weather patterns, which communities have relied on for centuries, is undermined in current disaster management approaches and in AA.

The lack of harmonisation of information and knowledge systems can lead to delays in the activation of AA interventions or misinterpretation of early warning by communities. For example, in Tanzania, there were reports of poor harmonisation between the Tanzania Meteorological Agency and local disaster management committees. This can delay the timely activation of AA interventions, such as food distribution or cash transfers, before a crisis fully unfolds. Expanding rainfall monitoring stations, especially in remote and vulnerable regions, to improve data accuracy and coverage, and leveraging satellite data and remote sensing technologies, such as weather satellites and drought indices, and integration of locally held climate Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) can provide real-time information on rainfall patterns and weather conditions. This could enable better planning and timely activation of AA.

In Zimbabwe and Tanzania, there is a clear understanding that climate-related hazards are primarily caused by human activities. For example, a significant percentage of respondents from the three surveyed districts in Zimbabwe identified factors such as deforestation and pollution as contributors to the increasing frequency of these hazards within their communities. This awareness is crucial, as it highlights that human actions—or lack thereof—can exacerbate hazards and their impacts. Consequently, to mitigate the effects and occurrence of these hazards, proactive human interventions are essential. This recognition can motivate individuals to pay attention to early warning messages, engage more actively in preparedness efforts and participate in AA planning, rather than attributing these events to divine intervention or viewing them as beyond human control.

In Madagascar, there are also efforts to improve early warning systems. The launch and implementation of the Joint Programme Early Warning Anticipatory System, a central system set up to provide early warning and information necessary for rapid decision-making in the South region, also aims to strengthen early warning systems and harmonise interventions in Madagascar (UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office, 2025). Among other objectives, the programme aims to create simple and understandable early warning system alerts and ramp up local involvement. In addition, the FAO piloted the use of a cell phone application to facilitate community-led anticipatory action. The Early Warning Anticipatory Action app provides hazard and risk information to local committees, enabling them to act ahead of a disaster. According to the FAO, in the piloted areas, improvements in access to early warning information coupled with targeted support reduced the impacts of hazards on food systems (FAO, 2022). Efforts to strengthen the dissemination of early warning information must cater to the various ways men, women, young people, people with visual and hearing impairment, and minorities (language) access information.



### 5.3. Vulnerability, gendered needs and priorities

Families with young children, particularly infants, face significant challenges when there are hazards. This is seen both in floods/cyclones and drought conditions. Lack of access to nutritious food is particularly damaging for young children, potentially resulting in long-term consequences. The plight of young children was reported as a concern in all countries. In Malawi, there were concerns about child-headed households, while in Madagascar, child labour in mines and other exploitative conditions was a real concern. It is essential that food provision, when there is drought or flooding, considers the needs of infants for a diversified diet to avoid long-term health and developmental consequences.

Girls and boys of school-going age are likely to have school attendance interrupted. It is estimated that during the 2015/16 El Niño event, over 45 000 children dropped out of school in Zimbabwe alone, which was 3 000 more pupils than annual averages (OCHA, 2024). School attendance is interrupted because parents can't afford to pay school fees and buy school supplies. Another source of interruption is related to food shortages. This was reported particularly in the context of drought when families are not able to meet their nutritional needs, and reduce food consumption. This impacts children's ability to participate in educational programmes. In Malawi, heavy rains destroyed infrastructure in Nsanje and negatively impacted children's access to school.

The withdrawal of children from schools has negative consequences both in the short and long term. In the short term, children not in school are likely to get involved in child labour and other antisocial behaviours. In the long term, children not returning to school means the poverty cycle continues. This highlights the importance of cross-sectoral AA planning and implementation (Anticipation Hub, 2023). Working with child protection systems and the education sector is important to ensure that children's participation in schooling is not interrupted in both quick- and slow-onset disasters.

All countries reported young women's vulnerability to engaging in transactional sexual relationships and to early marriage during or after climate disasters when families are struggling to meet their basic needs. Young women carry shame associated with transactional sex. However, they do not identify themselves as sex workers, viewing their actions as necessary for survival. Transactional sex and early marriage increase the risks of unwanted pregnancy, which compound poverty for women. Transactional relationships also put women at a disadvantage where they might not be able to negotiate safe sex, increasing their risk of sexually transmitted diseases. This underscores the need for sexual and reproductive health services for girls and young women in AA interventions. Sexual and reproductive health services are foundational to gender equality, controlling fertility gives women bodily autonomy and enables participation in other activities (Women Deliver, 2021). Yet, women's health needs remain absent in AA plans. For example, during Madagascar's 2023 drought, AA plans that were activated did not include health services, and particularly services for sexual and reproductive health, which came up in the research as important for women (World Food Programme, 2025b).

Young men, particularly in Zimbabwe, Malawi and Madagascar are at increased risk of experiencing exploitative labour practices and mental health issues leading to the use of substances, crime, and violence. Labour migration is a key concern in all the countries. Young men and men of working age are more likely to migrate to cities and other countries in search of work and economic opportunities. This was experienced especially in Zimbabwe, Madagascar and Malawi, where the economic outlook was already limited before climate-related hazards. In Tanzania, male migration seems to be seasonal, with men in pastoral communities moving in search of water and grazing land and those in fishing/coastal communities migrating to fishing camps. This is a great concern for the demographics of rural areas, the impact it has on family life, and the care of children, community stability and exposure of

men to exploitative labour practices and trafficking. Women become heads of households, but without full authority, since their husbands are still alive. This can make it difficult for women to plan, take advantage of opportunities and make adaptation decisions (Le Masson et al., 2019).

Discrimination against people with disabilities remains a reality in the four countries. Respondents indicated that most disaster response efforts had not effectively catered for the needs of people with disabilities. There were reports of a lack of knowledge about the different needs for different disabilities, and how to plan for those needs effectively in local committees and organizations working in communities.

Gender disparities seem to diminish with age. Elderly people, both men and women, experience similar mobility and dependency challenges. In Zimbabwe and Malawi there were reports of temporary migration, including by women, leading to older people assuming parenting responsibilities over their grandchildren. This increases the burden on older people, who are already living in dire conditions. They may need to start collecting water, cooking, supervising children, etc. This also puts children, depending on their age, at risk of other threats in the absence of parents who can actively supervise them.

## **5.4. Differentiated needs**

Climate hazards impact the entire community, but the impacts are felt differently, resulting in different priorities and needs (summarised in the table below).

In Zimbabwe, Malawi and Tanzania, women were more likely than men to rate food, water, and health services as critical after disasters, followed by financial support and information. Conversely, men were more likely to indicate financial support, followed by food and water. Only in Madagascar did both men and women select food and water as critical. This shows that the priorities of men and women are different following hazards. The findings align with the gendered division of labour in most households. Women are prescribed unpaid reproductive work, making them responsible for care, including food preparation, water collection, cleaning and washing, while men are prescribed productive paid work outside the home (Elgarte, 2008). This could explain why food and water are a top priority for women.

With men carrying the role of family providers, they identify loss of earnings and income as the most devastating impact of climate change. They also identify access to financial support as an urgent need after a disaster. Strengthening water systems is an important aspect of AA, particularly in drought conditions. Plans and decisions about water and food, be it types of food or distribution, should be made with women's involvement. At the community level, women-led or women's rights organizations can be important partners in engaging women. Attention must be paid to getting equal participation in all processes by elderly women and those with disabilities. Equally important is to challenge dominant norms, and to shift gendered divisions between productive and reproductive work.

Women also identified health services and WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene) as important, particularly in flooding situations where families have to be evacuated. Pregnant women and women and girls experiencing their monthly menstrual cycles need basic hygiene services. Access to water and privacy in shared facilities, where communities are evacuated, is essential for personal hygiene. The costs of hygiene and menstrual care products can be prohibitive. In Malawi, the average price of a sanitary pad is K700 (\$0.86), while in Zimbabwe's rural communities, pads can cost \$1 per packet. For families with more than one female, this can be unaffordable, even without the additional problems brought on by climate hazards. AA plans should account for the hygiene needs of women in terms of access to water, services provided in shelters, and financial assistance offered to households. The provision of menstrual kits could help women and girls manage their cycles with dignity.

Increased experiences and fear of GBV were reported in all countries, with Malawi reporting high levels of exposure to violence. This is not surprising since research found climate-related hazards were linked to high levels of stress and poor mental health outcomes. The breakdown of traditional family structures and safety nets associated with climate hazards also leads to instability and increased risks of GBV for women and girls, including rape, intimate partner violence, child marriage and sexual exploitation. This is particularly true for married and adolescent women. Prevention of and protection from GBV is important for the well-being of women and resilience-building at the individual, household and community levels (Le Masson et al., 2019). Working with children and women's rights organizations can ensure that AA strategies are gender-responsive, safe and inclusive.

It is important to ensure that AA plans are designed in such a way that they do not increase the risks for GBV, particularly intimate partner violence within families. Increasing women's leadership in local early warning committees and community AA planning committees is important to challenge cultural/religious norms that promote women's subjugation and uphold male domination, and to increase gender equality in decision-making. In other contexts, these interventions have been associated with shifts in attitudes and reduced GBV. However, in sub-Saharan Africa, efforts to empower women have also been associated with increased risk for intimate partner violence (Guarnieri and Rainer, 2018). WFP will need to work with GBV experts to design context-specific interventions to transform inequitable gender practices in AA planning.

Equally important is to consider how to provide coordinated, quality, accessible services for GBV survivors, particularly in cases of flooding, where communities are moved to shelters. Survivors' needs will include health services, psychosocial support, and, where possible, access to justice. WFP, together with governments and other partners providing AA, should ensure that AA plans include providing essential services to survivors of violence. There are [Standard Operating Procedures](#) for GBV Interventions in Humanitarian Settings, and a Handbook for Coordinating Gender-based Violence Interventions in Emergencies. Though not designed specifically for climate-related hazards or for AA, they could be useful references. The GBV Area of Responsibility (AoR) Helpdesk developed a tipsheet for integrating GBV into AA that includes some considerations in existing guidelines for GBV in humanitarian contexts tailored for AA, including:

- conducting service mapping and monitoring continuity of GBV services;
- assessing existing staff capacity in vulnerable areas, and identifying surge capacity needs;
- making sure GBV coordinators are included in the teams deployed when triggers are activated; and
- establishing "preliminary" standard operating procedures or guidance.

It is not desirable to plan a fixed set of activities – but the different guidelines can be used to determine what works in different contexts, and what interventions should be designed responding to the needs of women and children in different contexts. This should be informed by the type of hazard, lead time from forecasting to onset, etc.

**Table 5: Summary of needs across the four countries**

Needs	Women	Young Women	Persons with Disabilities	Men	Young Men	Children	Adolescent Girls
Access to water	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
Food and varied nutrition	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>					<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Dignity kits	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>					<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Sexual and reproductive health services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>					<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
GBV prevention	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>					<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Survivor services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>					<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Economic support/ opportunities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Safe shelter	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Safety and protection	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Pregnancy care & safe birth	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>						
Protection from exploitation			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
Accessible early warning info	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Accessible infrastructure			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
Income protection	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Psychosocial/mental health support	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
Animal protection				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
Information and skills training	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Support to remain in school						<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Prevent child labor						<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Time and space for play						<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

## 5.5. Climate hazard impacts on roles and responsibilities

In all four countries, women's roles seem to be expanding, as they take on traditionally more male roles in addition to their care responsibilities. This is from a baseline that was already unequal. The World Bank reports that in Malawi, for example, women spent about 15% of their time on unpaid care work compared to men who spent less than 2%. In Tanzania, women spent 16% of their time on care work while men spent only 4% (Bank, 2024).



The reduction in crop yields exacerbates food insecurity, forcing women to take on additional responsibilities, or increasing the time it takes them to complete tasks like foraging for food or having to cook different food from what they were used to, as was reported in Madagascar where rice becomes less accessible, and families have to eat cassava. There is no change in the share of domestic responsibility, in that men do not take up more care responsibilities. In addition, the loss of income has pushed women to productive work, such as engaging in small-scale businesses, or offering labour for hire to support their families. This shift can be transformational for women, if it is accompanied by increased involvement of men in care work (Elgarte, 2008). These findings underscore the need for gender transformative approaches in AA as much as aiming to be responsive. Without transforming existing unequal gender divisions of labour, even gender-responsive interventions can have negative unintended outcomes for women. In this example, the negative unintended outcomes for women include a significant increase in a heavy and unequal unpaid workload with immediate negative impacts on women's time, health, wellbeing on the one hand, and on the other, potential benefits of them generating their own income are partial at best since the rest of their workload is overwhelming and not shared.

## **5.6. Coping strategies and potential interventions**

Communities adopt a range of coping strategies when they experience climate-related hazards. Securing access to food and water is the main concern for most families. The research found that in all surveyed communities, households are still adopting negative coping strategies. Eating less food, reducing portions or the number of meals per day, eating less expensive foods by cutting out proteins, and selling off assets were all reported as main coping strategies in all four countries. In line with the literature, though both men and women reported eating less, this was a coping strategy more likely to be reported by women. Previous research also found that women of all ages were more likely to experience dietary deficiencies when there were hazards and resource shortages (Sorensen et al., 2018). This has serious implications for women's physical and mental health and is particularly concerning for pregnant women and women with young children. It is not surprising that women with young children sacrifice their meals for their children. The impact of malnutrition on young children can be severe with long-term consequences. Seeing one's children crying because of hunger was reported as taking a psychological toll on women that was too hard to bear. This highlights the importance of reducing the impact of climate change-related hazards on food supply and households' access to food.

Access to cash helps cushion households from the negative income effects of shocks. Together with adaptive and resilient agriculture, cash can ensure food security during and after hazards. For example, an impact evaluation led by the University of Oxford and the Centre for Disaster Protection (Pople et al., 2021) found that cash transfers received in advance of extreme flooding in Bangladesh not only provided immediate relief by protecting food security but also helped households to change their behaviours to mitigate the flood impact. After three months, recipient households had higher food consumption, well-being and earning potential compared to non-beneficiaries. The timing was important; the effects were largest for households who received the cash earlier relative to the flood trajectory (Chaves-Gonzalez et al., 2022). This highlights the importance of well-defined trigger thresholds and pre-planned finance processes. It is also important that the distribution is informed by a thorough understanding of the household demographics. That is, where men have migrated, women heads of households are not excluded; if children are orphaned, they are not missed; and households with family members with special needs or disabilities are catered for.

Temporary migration to bigger cities was widely reported in Malawi, Zimbabwe and Tanzania, and in the case of Zimbabwe, there were reports of transborder migration to South Africa. Men were more likely to migrate out of their rural communities, with the younger, married ones with children leaving their families behind. This increases women's responsibilities in the home, where they have to take on their partners' male-dominated duties in addition to their care responsibilities. It also exposes men to human trafficking risks and exploitative employment. Destabilisation of communities and migration of men have also been linked with increased incidence of HIV (Baker, 2020).

It was reported that family and community support was key in providing assistance during times of distress. This was particularly important for women. Women experience both social and physical barriers to their mobility. Young women, married women and women with children are less likely to move far from their communities in search of work and food, relying therefore, on those close to them for support. This raises the question of the importance of the location of support centres.

Households with multiple adults may better cope with hazards by sharing income generation, home repairs, and caregiving. Single caregivers often face additional challenges in balancing these responsibilities during recovery. For single parents coping is harder. This is also true in cases of the elderly who do not live with extended family members and for people with disabilities who already face marginalization and limited opportunities.

## **5.7. Barriers/challenges faced in accessing information and support**

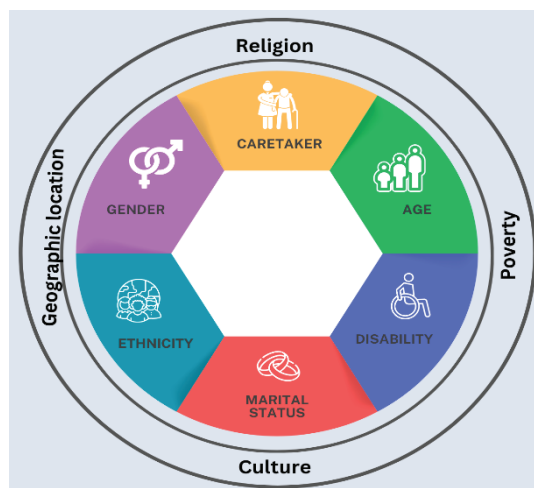
Networks are important for women because they get information from friends and family. In Tanzania, men were more likely to receive information from TV, internet, etc. Women reported receiving information from friends and family. Barriers to accessing information included low literacy levels, which was reported in Malawi and Zimbabwe, access to phones, etc. Women still report minimal understanding of climate change and the causes of climate change. This knowledge asymmetry disempowers women from being able to participate equally in decision-making.

Being geographically isolated was identified in Malawi as a barrier to accessing information and support. Individuals who live in mountainous areas far from cities or urban centres, with limited road networks, were often cut off from both information and support.

Disability and mobility limitations were also linked to limited access to information and support. Relief centres were not always accessible for people with disabilities, and in all four countries there were reports of people with disabilities not receiving information about relief available or receiving information late. Previous research found that people with intellectual disabilities experienced heightened risks and barriers and were largely excluded from information and government planning (Watfern and Carnemolla, 2024). It is important for AA interventions to recognize that due to stigma towards those with disabilities, families might hide these individuals. Thus, inclusive interventions with engagement at household level are needed.

Cultural and religious norms that limit women's place in their homes and subject them to male authority are identified as barriers to accessing information and support. This was reported in communities or families where women needed men's permission to leave their homes or to act on the information they accessed. Both in Malawi and Tanzania, this was linked to restrictive religious practices. WFP can use its institutional authority in AA and disaster management, working with women-led organizations and other regional women's rights bodies, to challenge oppressive cultural and religious norms that prevail in many southern African countries despite governments adopting gender-transformative and disability policies.

**Figure 2: Summary of barriers**



Source: Author generated

Violence and fear of violence are barriers for women to seek alternative income sources and assistance outside of the home. Women reported experiences of sexual exploitation or attempts at sexual exploitation and sexual harassment when they sought economic opportunities away from home.

## 5.8. Design of gender-responsive, safe and inclusive AA

The ability of various groups to participate in the political processes that determine procedures and influence outcomes of plans in situations of climate-related stressors is fundamental. There were reports of differing levels of participation in AA governance platforms. In Tanzania, the research found that individuals in their diversity were participating in different AA governance structures in communities. However, all leadership roles in district committees were held by men. It also found that there were still social barriers to women being in leadership. In Zimbabwe, they found that women are included in the management of district committees, but often there is still gender disparity, with women in charge of committees that respond only to issues important to women and they are not included in leadership roles. Young voices were also excluded from many of the community meetings and discussions. In Malawi, women found it difficult to participate in governance structures and to access information with some religious sects preventing them from leading and participating in community structures with men.

National policies and interventions at community level are crucial to addressing broader structural and socio-cultural vulnerabilities that adversely affect women, children, individuals with disabilities and other marginalized groups. However, it is equally important to focus on household/family conditions and to plan for these. The family's socioeconomic conditions and dynamics determine whether children will have access to food and schooling, and it is within the household that gender distribution of labour is negotiated daily. Also, the stress that families endure during climate hazards and the reduction in resources available to them increase family stress, which is linked to increasing cases of GBV.

## 5.9. Implementation of gender-responsive, safe and inclusive AA

In all the countries, there were measures to improve gender equity and better the lives of people with disabilities, although they are superficial or poorly implemented. Policies and tools may recognize the need for gender inclusivity, but practical application often fails to address the unique challenges faced by women, such as cultural barriers, limited decision-making power, and specific vulnerabilities during disasters. This gap results in interventions that do not fully account for the diverse needs of all genders, particularly in planning and resource allocation, perpetuating inequality in access to support and recovery efforts. Responsiveness needs must go beyond just providing material needs.

One of the barriers identified was an attitudinal one. Some officials seem to think that gender and gender equality is a secondary issue to building dams, boreholes etc., and do not see how gender considerations can be incorporated into decisions about infrastructure. In Zimbabwe, some government sectors view addressing the “software” aspects of gender equality – such as transforming gender roles and empowering women as leaders – as politically sensitive, with a preference for more tangible “hardware” interventions like boreholes and dams. WFP needs to work with national partners to raise awareness and build competencies for those working in AA planning and implementation to understand the value of gender, protection and inclusive approaches to AA. This needs to be done in a way that does not play into the politicization of gender.

To make AA strategies more inclusive, there must be a concerted effort to bridge the implementation gap. Efforts need to be made to overcome the cultural barriers and stigma associated with disability. Gender responsiveness, safety and inclusion should be integrated into AA action plans, as well as other programmes that might intervene at the same time. Coordinating efforts is a challenge in AA because WFP is not the only actor. For example, in Zimbabwe, the Red Cross has been a key actor in AA and disaster response. Ensuring safe and inclusive AA requires coordination with other agencies for a harmonized response at the community level.





## 6. Recommendations

### Integrate GBV prevention and response in AA plans

Climate hazards expose women and girls, particularly adolescent girls, to GBV. AA plans currently do not include guidelines or procedures for preventing and responding to it. There are existing standard operating procedures for GBV prevention in humanitarian conditions and the GBV AoR has developed tips for its inclusion in AA. This can involve establishing or expanding GBV hotlines or telephone counselling services where such infrastructure exists, distribution of information on how GBV services can be accessed and increasing women's leadership and participation in AA planning.

Mobile clinics that provide health and psychosocial support services to survivors have also been found to be effective during climate hazards. For example, in 2021, during a cyclone and floods in Mozambique, Spotlight Initiative installed mobile clinics to provide healthcare and psychosocial support to those affected (Spotlight Initiative, 2022). This does not have to be delivered by WFP and should ideally be provided through partnerships with organizations that specialise in GBV prevention and response. However, WFP can use its institutional authority to raise resources to support such interventions.

WFP should consider developing guidelines for integrating GBV service planning and financing in AA to ensure the availability of services. The guidelines should consider the needs of women and children with disabilities and the special vulnerabilities of adolescent girls. There are examples of integration of GBV in AA in sub-Saharan Africa, like the case in Zimbabwe (World Food Programme, 2023b), which can be used to develop relevant regional guidance. In addition, the guidelines should guide AA practitioners on how to design AA interventions in ways that do not increase women and girls' risks to GBV.

### Plan for health services for women and girls

Another important consideration is planning for health services for women and girls. This is true for slow-onset hazards, but is especially needed in flooding, where women might lose access to their personal hygiene items. WFP should consider including provision of sexual and reproductive health services as part of AA plans. This could include:

- Planning for needs of pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers. In Zimbabwe, WFP trialled topping up the cash transfer with \$5 for pregnant and breastfeeding mothers. However, a comprehensive plan for the wider needs of pregnant and breastfeeding mothers is needed, for example, for antenatal care during hazards, safe delivery, etc. to ensure maternal health.
- Distribution of dignity kits to women and girls needed both in flooding and droughts; and
- Access to family planning services and safe sex to reduce exposure to unwanted pregnancies, HIV and other sexually transmitted infections.

### Improve women leadership and active participation in local AA planning

WFP should consider working with women-led organizations to improve women's participation and leadership in climate governance local committees. This should include promoting gender dialogue sessions as a way of addressing informally existing gender inequalities and challenging the acceptance of male dominance.

## **Invest in women, persons with disabilities and young people's resilience**

An important aspect of AA is building communities' resilience to climate hazards to reduce the impact on food systems and human lives. To transform inequitable gender conditions and inequitable impacts of climate hazards, AA interventions need to improve women's productivity in agriculture and strengthen access to alternative income sources for women and persons with disabilities. This can be achieved through promoting climate-smart and inclusive agriculture practices and supporting small businesses for women and young people (men and women) and persons with disabilities.

## **Build skills to integrate the needs of people with disabilities**

The needs of people with disabilities are not met in early warning dissemination, resource distribution, and when evacuation is needed. Communication of early warning should be accessible for people with visual and hearing impairment, and those with physical disabilities who cannot physically be at community meetings. Evacuation plans must consider the different forms of disability, and the shelters and toilets at shelters should be designed for accessibility. WFP should ensure that it is standard procedure for AA plans to include assessment of the needs of people with disabilities in the community.

Skills building is needed in some of the local committees and structures to raise awareness about disability (there is still stigma about disability), understanding the needs of people with disabilities, and how to plan for those needs.

## **Strengthen child protection elements in AA**

Limiting the impact of climate hazards on children both short and long term should be an important consideration in AA. Working with child protection systems in the respective countries, and other UN agencies such as the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and UNICEF, WFP should ensure that children's rights are protected during climate disasters to reduce child labour and school dropout. Targeted cash transfers to families with young children and school feeding schemes help keep children at school. Particular attention should be paid to children in child-headed households and those left with grandparents who might be at increased risk of exploitation. Keeping children in schools protects children in the short term, and access to education is transformational, particularly for girls, ultimately improving community resilience.

## **Reduce implementation bottlenecks**

Implementation capacities are still limited in most communities and districts. Logistical bottlenecks can delay the supply of much-needed food to households with limited mobility, i.e., those with small children, the elderly, and those with disabilities. This must be addressed. Timing is important in AA; delays in the supply of preplanned cash transfers or food to households after trigger activation can undermine the objective of AA and lead to acute food insecurity and all the negative coping strategies. Barriers to accessing cash or food – e.g. due to inaccessibility of distribution modalities – will further compound undermined objectives and unintended consequences.

Implementation planning must consider how to prevent corruption and misuse of power by local authorities and chiefs. Where chiefs still have authority in local communities, they need to be brought in as allies to have responsive AA. Their buy-in is important to ensure that principles of inclusivity and equality are not undone in implementation.



## Conclusions

The impacts of climate hazards are experienced differently by different groups. Securing clean drinking water and food is a key concern for women, so is access to health services including sexual and reproductive health services. The temporary migration of men reported in all the communities has significant impacts on men, and on women and children left behind. Early warning information is still not reaching everyone; women, persons with disabilities and young people experience the most exclusion from early warning information. In all countries, violence within relationships is a key concern during hazards. For AA to be gender-responsive and inclusive, interventions must be much more centrally informed by the experiences and voices of the marginalized. Though it may not be in the mandate for WFP to address all of the findings found throughout the report, WFP can play a pivotal role in encouraging and ensuring that others – from cooperating partners to key stakeholders in civil society and government – cover the gaps in this field that WFP cannot.



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