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Gender, Protection and Inclusion in Anticipatory Action - Zimbabwe Analysis

Country Report

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Contents

Tables	4
Figures.....	4
Acronyms.....	5
Foreword.....	7
Executive Summary.....	8
1. Introduction	10
1.1 Introduction and Background to Gender, Protection, Inclusion and Anticipatory Action Planning in Zimbabwe.....	10
1.2 Background and Purpose of the Study	10
1.3 Research Questions	11
1.4 Drought Anticipatory Action Planning and Gender Situation in Zimbabwe	13
2. Methodology	14
2.1 Participants and sample selection.....	14
2.2 Data Collection	15
2.3 Data Analysis	16
2.4 Study Limitations	16
3. Findings.....	16
3.1 Knowledge/Awareness of Climate-Related Exposure	17
3.2 Source of Information on Climate Hazards and Community Perceptions on Preparedness.....	18
3.3 Perceptions on Community Preparedness to Handle Climate-Related Hazards.....	20
3.4 Perceptions on the Community's Ability to Recover from Climate-induced Hazards.....	21
3.5 Perceptions on Measures to Improve Community Preparedness to Climate-Related Hazards.....	23
3.6 Gender and Impacts of Climate-Related Hazards.....	25
3.7 How Climate Hazards Impact Roles and Responsibilities	28
3.8 Vulnerability, Gender-Specific Needs and Priorities	30
3.9 Effects on the Most Recent Climate-Induced Hazards	32
3.10 Barriers/Challenges Faced in Accessing Support After Climate-Induced Hazards	35
3.11 Coping Strategies and Potential interventions.....	38
3.12 Integration of Gender into Anticipatory Action Planning	41
3.13 Opportunities for Gender, Protection, Equity and Inclusive Practices	42
4. Discussion.....	43
5. Conclusion	45
6. Recommendations.....	46
References	50
Photo Credits.....	50

Tables

Table 1: Research Questions

Figures

Figure 1: Sampled anticipatory action districts and wards, zimbabwe	15
Figure 2: Gender disaggregated data on awareness of climate-related hazards	17
Figure 3: Access to early warning information by gender	19
Figure 4: Perceptions on community preparedness to handle climate hazards.....	21
Figure 5: The community's ability to recover from the impact of climate-induced hazards.....	22
Figure 6: Perceptions on measures to improve community preparedness to climate-related hazards	23
Figure 7: Perceptions on how climate-induced hazards affect men and women	25
Figure 8: Vulnerabilities of gender and other demographic groups	30
Figure 9: Effects of the most recent climate-induced hazards.....	32
Figure 10: Immediate needs for community respondents after climate-induced hazards by gender	33
Figure 11: The extent to which needs were addressed.	34
Figure 12: The level at which needs were addressed.	34
Figure 13: Level of respondents' satisfaction with the provided support after the occurrence of climate hazards.....	35
Figure 14: Men and women access to resources and support during climate hazards	36
Figure 15: Barriers to equal access to resources and support during climate hazards	37
Figure 16: Main challenges in accessing support after climate-induced hazards.....	38
Figure 17: Coping strategies during climate shocks.....	39
Figure 18: Household and community coping strategies to climate-induced disasters	40
Figure 19: Efficacy of coping strategies during climate-induced hazards	41

Acronyms

AGRITEX	Agricultural Extension
ADRA	Adventist Relief Agency
IBC	Biodiversity Conservation
CARITAS	Charity International
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CSA	Climate-smart agriculture
CTDO	Community Technology Development Organisation
CPC	Civil Protection Committee
DVS	Department of Veterinary Services
EMA	Environmental Management Agency
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
DRM	Disaster Risk Management
GALS	Gender Action Learning Systems
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GEF	Global Environmental Facility
HCTs	Harmonised Cash Transfers
IKS	Indigenous Knowledge Systems
IPV	Intimate Partner Violence
MSD	Meteorological Services Department
MODA	Mobile Data Acquisition
MoHCC	Ministry of Health and Childcare
NASCOH	National Association of the Care for the Handicapped
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
PFIM	People First Impact Method
RDC	Rural Development Councils
RIDA	Rural Infrastructure Development Agency
SADC	Southern African Development community
SNV	Netherlands Development Agency
UN	United Nations
WFP	World Food Program
WHH	Welthungerhilfe
WVZ	World Vision Zimbabwe
ZRP	Zimbabwe Republic Police



Foreword

As Zimbabwe continues to face the escalating impacts of climate change, the urgency to act before crises unfold has never been greater. Anticipatory Action offers a transformative opportunity to safeguard lives and livelihoods through proactive, inclusive, and community-driven approaches. This report, *Anticipatory Action: Gender Protection and Inclusion in Zimbabwe*, is a testament to our commitment to ensuring that early action is timely, equitable and responsive to the diverse realities of those most affected.

The findings presented here reflect the voices of communities in Binga, Chiredzi Rural, and Rushinga; districts on the frontline of climate-induced hazards. They reveal the disproportionate burdens borne by women, persons with disabilities, older adults, and minority groups, and highlight the resilience, knowledge, and aspirations that exist within these communities. Importantly, the report underscores the need to move beyond gender-neutral interventions and embrace strategies that are sensitive to the evolving roles, vulnerabilities, and strengths of all demographic groups.

As the World Food Programme Zimbabwe Country Office, we recognise that inclusive anticipatory action is not just a technical imperative, it is a moral one. We must co-create solutions with communities, integrate indigenous knowledge systems, and challenge the cultural and structural barriers that hinder participation and access. This report provides a roadmap for doing just that.

I extend my gratitude to our partners, including the Government of Zimbabwe and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD), for their unwavering support. I also commend the communities that shared their experiences and insights, which form the backbone of this study.

Let this report serve as a call to action for bold, inclusive, and locally grounded anticipatory planning that protects lives and promotes dignity, resilience, and social justice.

Barbara Clemens
Country Representative and Director
World Food Programme
Zimbabwe

Executive Summary

Introduction and Background

This report explores community perceptions, preparedness, and coping mechanisms in response to climate hazards in Zimbabwe, focusing on Binga, Chiredzi Rural, and Rushinga districts. In addition to offering suggestions for creating gender-responsive, inclusive, and protective Anticipatory Action (AA) plans, its objectives include identifying community needs, dangers, and obstacles. As droughts and floods increasingly threaten livelihoods, vulnerable groups—particularly women, persons with disabilities, older adults, and minority communities—face heightened risks due to systemic exclusion and limited access to resources. Integrating gender, protection, and inclusion into AA planning is essential for delivering timely, equitable, and effective responses. Anticipatory Action (AA) presents a valuable opportunity to protect lives and livelihoods by acting before crises fully unfold. However, to be effective and equitable, AA planning must integrate gender, protection, and inclusion considerations that reflect the realities and aspirations of local communities.

Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection. A structured survey was conducted with 223 respondents (168 females and 55 males) from across Chiredzi Rural, Binga, and Rushinga districts. In addition a comprehensive literature review,¹¹ Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), and 24 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) provided contextual depth. The 24 KIIs included six conducted with women. Eleven Focus Group Discussions were conducted with separate groups for older males 25 years and older (2 groups) and females 26 years and older (3

groups), male and female youths 18-24 years (3 groups each), purposively selected from the sampled wards.

Key Findings

- The most common coping strategy in response to climate shocks was reduced food consumption, reported by 82% of women and 78% of men.
- Asset sales (reported by 55% of men and 48% of women) and reliance on community networks (54% of women, 42% of men) were also widespread strategies.
- Temporary migration (19% women vs. 7% men) and borrowing money (31% men vs. 17% women) revealed gendered preferences influenced by social norms and economic status.
- Barriers to accessing recovery support included lack of information (65% women, 49% men), long distances to support centres (23% women and 25% men), and bureaucratic hurdles (20% men and 27% women).
- Cultural and religious norms, including gatekeeping by traditional leaders—as seen in Ward 19, Binga, where a chief rejected drought-resistant crops—continue to obstruct inclusive decision-making.
- Persons with disabilities, older persons, and minority populations face compounded vulnerabilities, with limited mobility and restricted access to services exacerbated during crises.
- A significant portion of respondents (37%) were indifferent to the efficacy of current coping strategies, while 27% found them ineffective—indicating gaps in design, trust, and community relevance.
- Gender roles are shifting due to climate induced challenges, with women assuming more agricultural and household responsibilities and men struggling with changing provider roles.

Key Conclusions

Zimbabwe's experience with anticipatory action highlights both the urgency and the opportunity to embed equity, participation, and local ownership into disaster risk planning. The persistent gaps in timely, accessible climate information and exclusion of key vulnerable groups particularly women, youth, and persons with disabilities undermine the potential impact of early action. Addressing these gaps requires a shift toward community-led planning, integration of indigenous knowledge systems, and institutional investment in disaggregated data systems. Future anticipatory action in Zimbabwe must expand participatory, inclusive preparedness that is rooted in local contexts and responsive to intersecting vulnerabilities. This will ensure that early action not only prevents harm, but also empowers communities to adapt with dignity, agency, and resilience.

Recommendations

IMPROVE GENDER-SENSITIVE TARGETING IN RECOVERY ASSISTANCE

WFP Zimbabwe CO should implement gender-sensitive targeting mechanisms, prioritise vulnerable female-headed households, and build the capacity of implementing partners to mainstream gender equality in anticipatory action planning.

ADDRESS HARMFUL COPING STRATEGIES THROUGH TAILORED SUPPORT

Interventions must be tailored to address gender-specific coping strategies in the surveyed districts of Binga, Chiredzi rural and Rushinga by supporting climate-resilient livelihoods for women, providing psychosocial and economic assistance for men, and fostering inclusive community support groups.

ENHANCE COMMUNITY TRUST THROUGH PARTICIPATORY DESIGN

To build trust and improve uptake, WFP Zimbabwe CO should co-design anticipatory action plans with community members (traditional and religious leaders, persons with disabilities, women's and men's groups), establish inclusive planning committees, and use participatory monitoring tools such as scorecards and feedback loops.

ENGAGE TRADITIONAL AND RELIGIOUS LEADERS TO SHIFT HARMFUL NORMS

WFP Zimbabwe CO should collaborate with traditional and religious leaders to champion gender-inclusive community climate responses, facilitate culturally sensitive dialogues, and promote the adoption of resilient practices like drought-resistant agriculture.

INTEGRATE INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE INTO FORMAL EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS

Indigenous knowledge systems such as the blooming of Cicada tree and migration of specific birds as indicators of the onset of rain season in Binga are examples of IKS that should be formally recognised and integrated into climate early warning frameworks through documentation, collaboration with local experts, and the development of hybrid tools that combine traditional and scientific forecasting.

PROMOTE INCLUSIVE INNOVATION FOR LIVELIHOODS AND CARE ROLES

WFP Zimbabwe CO should support inclusive innovations such as motorised digging, ploughing and weeding tools to eliminate manual labour, support financial literacy programs for women and youth, and mental health services for men to alleviate gendered burdens and strengthen household resilience.

PRIORITISE PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES, OLDER ADULTS AND MARGINALISED GROUPS

In line with the Zimbabwe Climate Change Policy and the National Disability Policy, anticipatory actions must ensure accessibility in communication and infrastructure, adapt assistance to meet the specific needs of persons with disabilities and older adults, and establish protection focal points to address access gaps and risks.

RECOGNISE AND SUPPORT EVOLVING GENDER ROLES

WFP Zimbabwe CO should acknowledge changing gender dynamics by investing in women's leadership and economic empowerment,

promoting men's caregiving roles, and enabling inclusive decision-making that reflects shared household and community responsibilities.

CALL TO ACTION

WFP Zimbabwe CO and its partners are urged to co-develop and expand gender, protection, and inclusion-sensitive Anticipatory Action Plans that are participatory, context-specific, and grounded in local realities. Doing so will ensure that anticipatory action saves lives and promotes dignity, resilience, and social equity. This moment calls for bold, community-centred approaches that challenge exclusion and unlock the full potential of AA as a transformative tool for climate resilience.

1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction and Background to Gender, Protection, Inclusion and Anticipatory Action Planning in Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe, a country frequently impacted by climate-related hazards such as droughts, floods, and disease outbreaks, is a key focus for the World Food Programme (WFP) in its efforts to enhance anticipatory action (AA) programming. As part of the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) gender, protection, and inclusion analysis study for West and Southern Africa, this research aims to inform WFP's AA programming by understanding the diverse needs and vulnerabilities of affected populations. The particular emphasis was on gender, protection, and inclusion. By investigating

the intersectionality of gender, age, socio-economic status, disability, and other factors, the study sought to develop strategies for ensuring that AA interventions addressed the challenges faced by marginalised groups, particularly women and girls, men and boys in the selected districts. The findings will be used to enhance WFP's AA programmes in the sampled districts of Binga, Chiredzi Rural and Rushinga which are all highly vulnerable to climate-induced shocks.

1.2 Background and Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to support the WFP Zimbabwe Country Office (CO) in designing and implementing more effective gender, protection and inclusion interventions under the AA programme. These interventions aim to address the unique challenges faced by women, girls, and other vulnerable groups, including older persons, persons with disabilities, and local minority groups in disaster-prone areas. In particular,

the study focused on gender, protection and inclusion in anticipatory action planning, with a special focus on climate-induced shocks such as droughts, a recurring problem in the mentioned districts. Zimbabwe's AA planning for droughts involves several interventions, including the distribution of drought-tolerant crops, cash-based transfers (CBT), climate information dissemination, and the provision of safe water. While these measures aim to reduce the impacts of drought, the specific needs of community demographic groups like women and girls are not always adequately addressed. While women in rural areas often face disproportionate drought-induced challenges such as limited access to household and community resources, increased caregiving responsibilities, and heightened vulnerability to gender-based violence (GBV), the increased competition for limited resources during climate-induced shocks exacerbates these challenges.

Furthermore, the study sought to highlight key challenges in integrating gender, protection

and inclusion considerations into Zimbabwe's current consolidated AA plans. To address these gaps, a consortium-wide integrated gender strategy and plans to guide all partners towards a coordinated and stronger focus on gender-responsive strategies within AA program planning and implementation phases are necessary. The plan will ensure a more equitable and effective response to climate hazards. Integrating gender-sensitive interventions, such as improving women's access to drought-tolerant seeds and water resources, ensures empowerment of women through active involvement in decision-making at all levels.

1.3 Research Questions

The study pursued the following research questions in Table 1. Although this study has several research questions to answer, it is important to note that the questions intersect and interlink.

Table 1: Research Questions

KEY QUESTIONS	SUB QUESTIONS
1. What are the gendered dynamics of the hazards and risks anticipatory action aims to cover in target locations (exposure, impact, vulnerability)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do these differ for boys, girls, men, and women – and across other intersecting identities (e.g. gender-based violence)? • How do existing protection mechanisms address the specific vulnerabilities and needs of women, children, and other marginalized groups during climate shocks? • What gaps exist in ensuring their safety and well-being?
2. What are the implications of different hazards for various socio-demographic groups (e.g., based on gender, age, disability) in target locations?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do these differ within the country? • What are the implications for people with disabilities, chronic illnesses, and others in situations of vulnerability?
3. What are the needs and priorities of women, men, boys, girls and persons with disabilities when disasters strike or in case of fast onset of disaster in target locations (based on past experiences, and current perspectives) that AA should address?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do other factors including social norms, power dynamics or identity factors (e.g. age, disability, ethnicity, religion) influence these? • What are the different needs of women, men, and persons with disabilities in case of fast onset of disaster or hazards? • What would women, men and persons with disabilities do or prioritize differently if they received the AA support?

KEY QUESTIONS	SUB QUESTIONS
4. What are the barriers faced by women, men, boys, girls, and others facing vulnerability in accessing support when exposed to a shock or hazard?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do these differ and intersect/overlap? (consider land tenure, resources, access to information, collective action/social capital, social norms, structural barriers, preferences) • How do social and cultural norms restrict certain groups, particularly women and girls, from accessing physical spaces or interacting with service providers during disasters? • How can these barriers be overcome to ensure the sustainability of gender equality in the long term?
5. What positive and negative coping strategies linked to climate shocks do women and men utilize?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do these differ and what are the implications for their resilience/recovery? • What are the risks associated with these differing coping strategies? • Who is affected by these coping strategies?
6. What roles and responsibilities do women, men, boys, and girls play and have in individual, household, and 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 are these driven by social and gender norms?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do the roles and responsibilities differ across the country? (time use, household decision-making, community leadership/gatekeepers, economic activity, care work, etc.)? • What other intersecting identity considerations influence roles in these locations (e.g. age, disability, ethnicity)? • How do prevailing social and gender norms shape the expectations and responsibilities assigned to women, men, boys, and girls in disaster contexts?
7. Who is consulted and makes decisions in households/communities/local/regional and national government in community planning, such as the design of AA plans?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who is missing and why? • To what extent are AA plans developed on community, regional and national level? • What mechanisms or practices are in place to ensure that the voices of typically underrepresented groups are included in community planning discussions?
8. To what extent do the structures used to co-design/implement AAPs account for diversity, particularly in terms of involving more local organizations, women-led, etc?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the structures in place? Who is represented and who is not?
9. 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?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the roles of structures such as specific women's organizations, organizations of persons with disabilities, and community-based organizations in facilitating inclusive and gender-responsive participation? • What approaches are acceptable to facilitate inclusive gender-responsive participation in national disaster risk agencies/relevant ministries?

KEY QUESTIONS	SUB QUESTIONS
10. What early warning trends do women, men, boys, and girls identify?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is the access to and control over current early warning messaging perceived (taking into consideration intersectionality) and what are the context-specific gendered and vulnerability dynamics that need tracking? • How are the usability, accessibility, and trust in the current early warning messaging perceived by women men, and other groups (consider accessibility, usability constraints)? • How can the dissemination of early warning messages be improved to support certain groups overcome these constraints?

1.4 Drought Anticipatory Action Planning and Gender Situation in Zimbabwe

Droughts have been a recurring challenge in Zimbabwe, especially in districts like Mudzi, Mbire, Chiredzi, Mwenezi, Hwange, Beitbridge, Gwanda, Bikita, Matobo, Rushinga and Binga. These are districts prone to food insecurity. The 2023 World Food Programme's Anticipatory Action plan, a collaborative effort with its partners, aims to mitigate the impacts of forecasted droughts by providing drought-resistant inputs, cash-based transfers, climate information dissemination, and safe water for human and livestock consumption. However, while the AA plan elaborates on interventions that target key drought-related issues like crop failure, water shortages, and food insecurity, it lacks clarity on crucial aspects like gender mainstreaming. Women, especially those in rural areas, often face disproportionate burdens during droughts, including increased workloads, unpaid caregiving duties, and heightened exposure to GBV. However, their specific needs were not systematically integrated into the WFP 2023 AA plans.

The intention to address the identified gender gaps in AA planning is apparent. For example, WFP subsequently incorporated transformative gender issues in its Country Strategic Plan (CSP), expanding from its National Gender Policy 2022 and its improved national gender strategy finalised in 2024. However, these efforts remain fragmented at the AA consortium level as each partner relies on its policies and plans. The AA plans are internally focused, with limited coordination with the wider national AA consortium partners. As a result, efforts to implement gender transformative programmes in AA programmes in Zimbabwe remain insufficient. The AA programme could benefit more through implementing a deliberate, integrated, and shared plan with clear responsibilities for each AA partner and activities driven by the communities. This calls for a shared gender programme and strategy beyond statistical reporting on women's activities as evidence of gender transformation. To this end, AA partners should develop a shared programme of action that addresses deep-rooted patriarchal, cultural and social beliefs and practices that hinder gender transformation. To achieve these objectives, the AA cluster leader should take initiatives to rally all partners towards a consolidated gender, protection and inclusion plan that addresses gender and age-specific needs for women, men, youths, people with disabilities, older persons, children and promotes their active participation in decision-making.

2. Methodology

The study used a convergent parallel mixed methods design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative research approaches to collect and analyse data. Quantitative and qualitative data were gathered simultaneously, though from different households. On the other hand, the qualitative findings helped capture the local perceptions of the gendered nature of climate change, allowing for a deeper exploration of the specific contexts and experiences of the respondents.

In general, this was a participatory and community-led study. The research process and data collection were informed by the lived experiences of communities affected by climate hazards. The research was collaborative instead of extractive, aimed at understanding gender, protection, and inclusion issues as understood and experienced by community members. This was considered essential because genders, as well as vulnerabilities associated with gender and gender identity, are context-dependent, with different communities holding varying perspectives and resources to address these vulnerabilities.

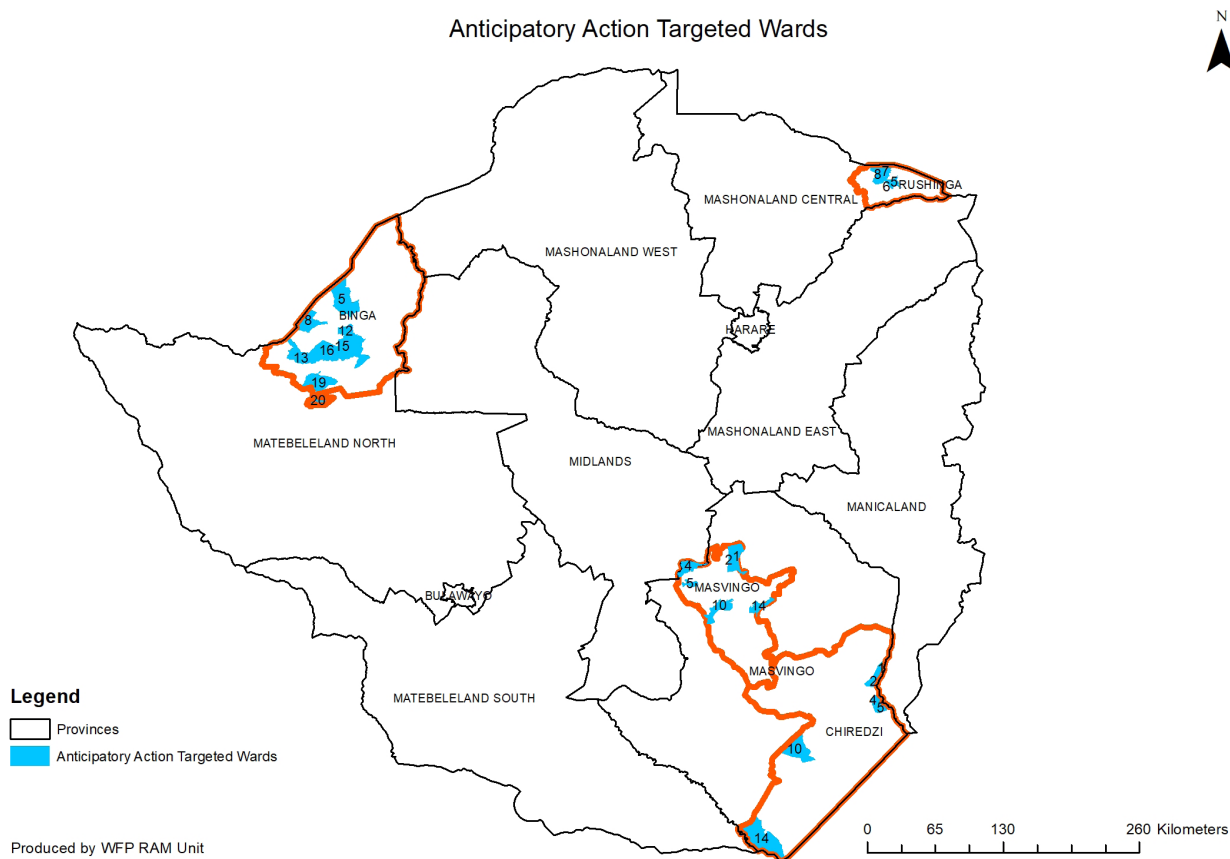
2.1 Participants and Sample Selection

The study is based on a sample of 223 household representatives recruited from sampled demographic groups across three climate-vulnerable districts of Binga (Pastoral), Chiredzi and Rushinga (agrarian) districts in Zimbabwe.

The sample was based on AA implementation districts and wards targeting the general population benefiting from or reached by the Zimbabwe AA programme. A cluster sampling approach was used to recruit participants. Districts and communities served by the AA programme were grouped into clusters of four. Within each cluster, participants were stratified according to demographics such as gender, age, geography (urban versus rural), socioeconomic status, and vulnerability. Finally participants were randomly selected to participate from each stratum in the survey. The selected three districts have high climate change risks, including droughts, floods, and disease outbreaks.

Participants included 9% females and 2% males aged 18-24, 11% males and 37% females aged 25-44, and 12% adult males and 30% adult females 45 years and older. These encompassed married, single, widowed, divorced, and unemployed individuals randomly selected from the sampled wards. The selected wards were 5, 11, 12, 13, and 19 in Binga; 1, 2, 4, 13, and 14 in Chiredzi; and 16, 17, 18, and 19 in Rushinga. The ward numbers are shown in Figure 1. The sample selection was based on the vulnerability of the districts, and the general population benefiting from or reached by the gender, protection and inclusion interventions under the AA programme in Zimbabwe.

The districts and wards sampled for the study are shown in Figure 1.



professionals from government departments, including the Meteorological Services Department, Ministry of Women Affairs, Community, Small and Medium Enterprises Development, Department of Veterinary Services, Agricultural Extension Services (AGRITEX), local and international NGOs, like Welthungerhilfe (WHH) and the International Red Cross. Of the 24 KIIs, six were conducted with women. Eleven Focus Group Discussions were conducted involving separate groups for older males 25 years and older (2 groups) and females 26 years and older (3 groups), male and female youths 18-24 years (3 groups each), purposively selected from the sampled wards.

2.3 Data Analysis

The study used the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and advanced Microsoft Excel to analyse quantitative data. These tools allowed the data to be examined in descriptive summaries of the participants' key demographic and socio-economic characteristics, such as age, gender, income levels, education, and occupation. Descriptive statistics helped identify key trends and patterns across the dataset, providing valuable insights into how different socio-economic groups experience and respond to the impacts of climate change. These analyses were crucial for understanding the broader socio-economic impacts of climate change at both the individual and community levels,

highlighting significant disparities in vulnerability and adaptive capacity across different population subgroups.

In addition to descriptive statistics, the study used thematic analysis to analyse the qualitative data collected through key informant interviews and focus group discussions. This approach facilitated deeper exploration of the intersections of climate change and gender, age, and disability. The thematic analysis also helped understand how other factors, like ethnic identity, interact to shape vulnerability. To this extent, thematic analysis of participants' lived experiences helped bring out a detailed understanding of how gender, age and disability amplify the risks associated with climate change, both within households and across broader communities.

2.4 Study Limitations

LIMITED REPRESENTATION OF VULNERABLE GROUPS AND SAMPLE SIZE

Despite efforts to include diverse perspectives, some vulnerable groups, such as people with severe disabilities or extremely remote communities, were underrepresented in the study due to access challenges or logistical constraints and the small sample size. Only 54 (24%) households with persons with disabilities

3. Findings

This section presents the key findings on gender, protection, and inclusion in the context of climate-related hazards, vulnerabilities, and impacts on communities. The study reveals the complex relationships between climate change, social challenges, and community resilience. The findings underscore the importance of adopting a holistic, intersectional approach to climate governance, recognising that climate vulnerability

is not homogenous and that marginalised groups require targeted, inclusive policies and support systems to enhance their resilience. As a result, more inclusive, context-sensitive climate interventions are needed to address disparities at both local and national levels, ensuring equitable climate adaptation strategies for all societal groups.

3.1 Knowledge/ Awareness of Climate-Related Exposure

Findings from Binga, Chiredzi, and Rushinga show that men (98%) and women (99%) have nearly equal awareness of frequently occurring 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%). These similarities in awareness can be attributed to the visible, recurring nature of these hazards and the shared responsibilities in subsistence farming, perhaps reinforced by community-based awareness campaigns in the AA programme in Zimbabwe.

For less frequent hazards, such as flooding (men 22%, women 33%) and storms/cyclones (men 20%, women 23%), awareness remains relatively balanced, though women show slightly higher

awareness of flooding. This may reflect their gendered domestic roles and water-related responsibilities, which make them more attentive to water-based hazards. In contrast, awareness of wildfires is notably uneven, with 35% of men and only 14% of women reporting familiarity. This gap likely stems from gender-specific roles, such as men's involvement in land clearing and cattle herding, which increases their exposure to fire-related risks and fire related hazards to grazing pasturelands.

Lastly, very low awareness of livestock deaths (women 2%, men 0%) and strong winds (women 1%, men 4%) suggests these hazards are either not widely discussed in communities or not perceived as major threats due to minimal direct impact particularly among women who lay limited claim to large livestock like cattle. The key takeaway from these findings is the need to incorporate gender-sensitive approaches in anticipatory action planning. Similarly communication and outreach strategies must be tailored to reflect the distinct roles, responsibilities, and levels of exposure experienced by men and women within rural communities.

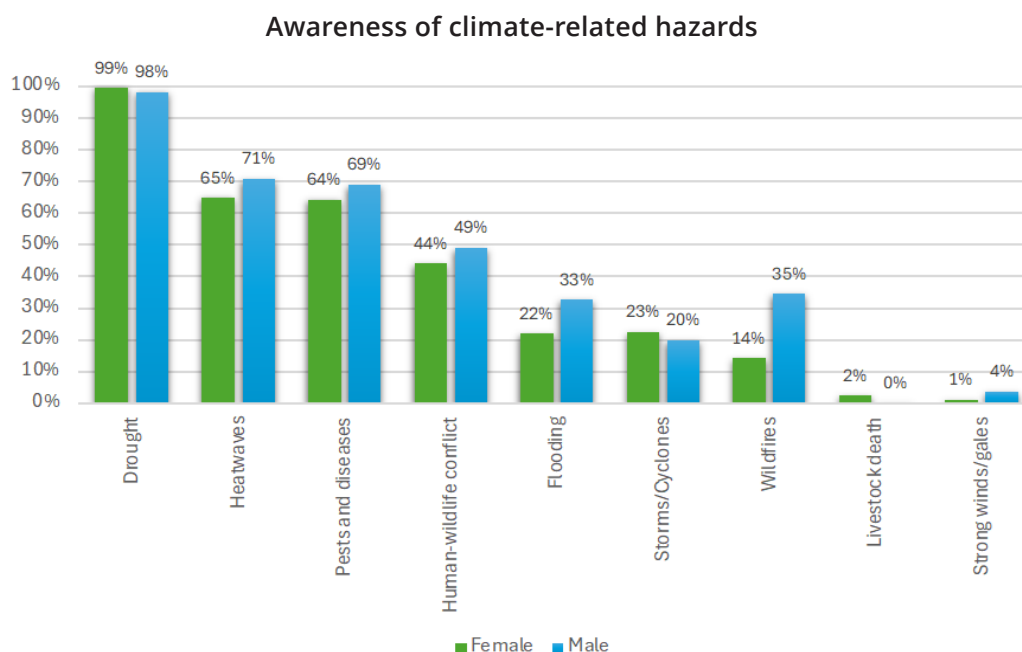


Figure 2: Gender disaggregated data on awareness of climate-related hazards

Further age and gender analysis shows that the 25–44 age group across all three targeted districts identified several climate-related hazards as major concerns. These include flooding 30% males and 70% females reporting it as a threat, followed by drought 23% males, 77% females—and heatwaves 24% of males and 76% of females. Additionally, 27% males and 63% females cited pests and diseases as key hazards. This high perception of risk likely reflects this age group’s active engagement in crop and livestock farming, which is highly sensitive to climate impacts in rural Zimbabwe.

The 45+ age group also demonstrated a strong awareness of specific hazards, particularly wildfires 25% males and 75% females and human-wildlife conflicts 23% males and 77% females identifying the latter as a serious issue. These risks are perhaps closely linked to women’s reliance on natural resources for household food supplies due to dwindling agricultural based food production supplies. In contrast, the 18–24 age group reported the lowest awareness to climate hazards, with only 29% of males and 71% of females indicating awareness of human wildlife conflicts. This likely reflects young men’s reduced involvement in farming and resource-based livelihoods, leading to less direct exposure to climate-induced risks.

Figure 2 corroborates qualitative insights regarding the frequency of climate-induced hazards like heat waves. In Chiredzi, young women complained about excessive heat waves, signalling emerging climate threats.

“We have experienced an increase in high temperatures in this area over the past years. It looks like every year the rains are

delayed, and we have extended periods of high temperatures. As young women, we are exposed to this heat as we look for food or water for the family.”

Similarly, men in Binga and Chiredzi reported increasing human-wildlife conflicts resulting in livestock loss, crop destruction, and injuries among men involved in livestock farming. Likewise, disease outbreaks linked to floods and wildlife interactions were also reported as widespread, posing health risks and straining women’s caregiving roles and local healthcare systems.

3.2 Source of Information on Climate Hazards and Community Perceptions on Preparedness

Regarding how communities access information about climate hazards in Binga, Chiredzi, and Rushinga, this study revealed notable gender differences in information sources. Overall, males (76%) and females (60%) rely heavily on government Agricultural Extension (Agritex) officers, highlighting the importance of local agricultural extension services in disseminating early warning information. Radio is also a common source, with 63% of females and 65%

of males tuning in. Interestingly, females (44%) rely more on word of mouth than males (20%), suggesting that informal, community-based networks are vital for women receiving climate-related updates. Mobile applications like Eco-Farmer² are used more by females (36%) than by males (27%), which is attributed to community agricultural AA activities biased towards women's empowerment rather than women's familiarity with technology. Both genders have similar access to community meetings (females 27%, males 29%), indicating that these forums are equally

accessible to both groups. These results suggest that while both genders rely more on community networks than formal dissemination methods, the auditory nature of the information (e.g., radio community meetings) could exclude individuals with hearing disabilities. Additionally, in districts like Binga and Chiredzi, social media is emerging as a significant source of information, particularly among younger populations, and could replace older, less efficient methods like newspapers in the coming years.,

2 Eco-Farmer is an initiative by Econet Wireless Zimbabwe that provides farmers with informational, financial, and value chain services through mobile technology.

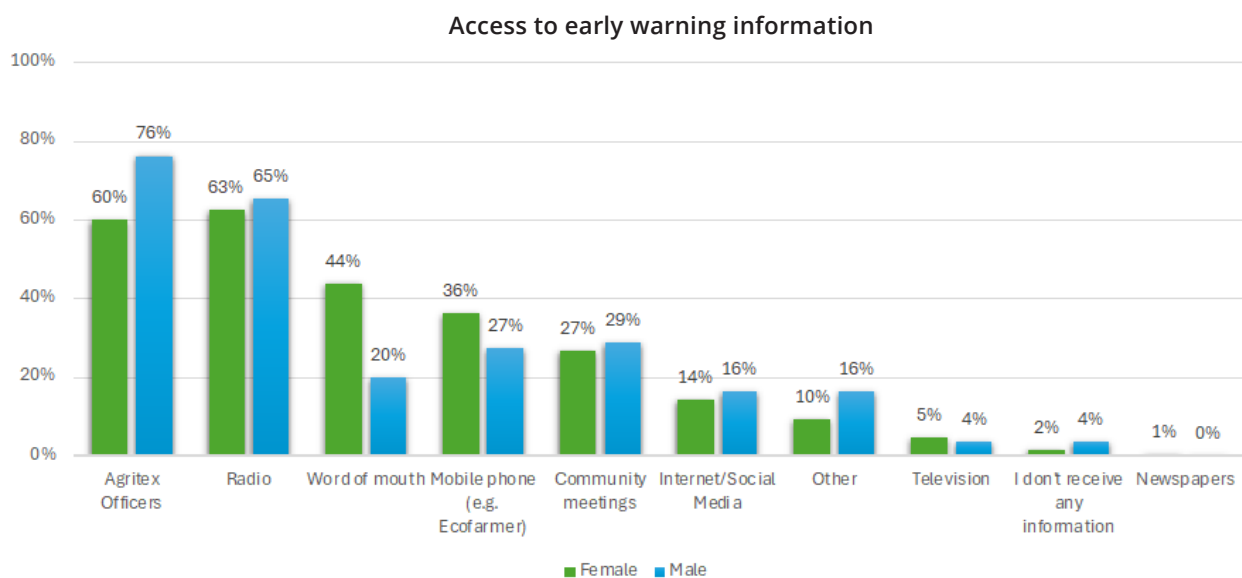


Figure 3: Access to early warning information by gender

Among the 18–24 age group, a significant 33% of respondents reported no access to information on climate-induced hazards. The use of traditional media such as radio was minimal with 15% males and 85% females within this age category reporting its use as a source of information. Further data disaggregation within this age category shows that community meetings were used by 43% males and 57% females, and mobile phones were used by 17% males and 83% females. These figures suggest that conventional channels are not effectively reaching youth, and tailored outreach approaches are needed.

In contrast, the 25–44 age group demonstrated broader access and engagement with a wide array of communication platforms. Further

data disaggregation by age group category and gender shows that 26% males and 73% females within this age group had access to radio as a source of climate hazards information. Similarly, social media engagement was high, especially among females (72%) compared to males (28%), perhaps reflecting the intervention effects of mobile digital technology platforms such as the Eco-farmer with 27% males and 73% females within this age category. Likewise, community meetings (26% males, 74% females) and Agritex officers (30% males, 70% females) were also important sources. This perhaps reflects the influence of deliberate farmer programmes that target women into empowerment and leadership programmes such as the community gardens and waterpoint committees.

The 45+ age group showed moderate use of traditional and interpersonal channels. Community meetings were used by 22% of males and 78% of females within this age category, while word of mouth was a key source for 23% of males and 73% of females. Likewise, 29% and 71% of males and females in this age category cited Agritex officers as sources of climate hazard information. This also indicates continued reliance on face-to-face communication and trusted local farming and community networks among older adults.

While the overall data reveals a mixed feedback on the sources of climate hazard information for male and female respondents, further gender and age data disaggregation reveals potential biases that reveals more access to climate hazard information for female respondents. As noted in the limitations, the observed shift in the disaggregated data where females appear to have more access to climate hazard information could be directly linked to the higher proportion of female respondents in the overall participant population sample. Additionally, women are more engaged with targeted empowerment programs like Eco-Farmer, Community Gardens and Waterpoint Committees increasing their access to mobile applications and digital platforms.

Other factors include the reliance on informal communication channels like word of mouth and community meetings, which are more accessible to elderly women due to their roles in household and community activities. As a result, more women in the 25-44 and 45 years and above age categories relied on these information channels. Conversely, young males and youth in general

showed lower engagement with traditional and digital media perhaps contributing to the reduced proportion of males compared to females with access to climate hazard information.

Overall, these findings highlight communication gaps among youth and underscore the importance of developing targeted, age-appropriate strategies. For younger populations, especially youths and women, digital approaches such as social media campaigns, SMS alerts, and youth-focused mobile applications could be more effective. For older age groups, a mix of traditional (radio, community meetings) and interpersonal methods (word of mouth, Agritex, Eco-farmer) remains essential to ensure broad information dissemination. To improve anticipatory action planning in Zimbabwe, communication strategies must be age- and gender-sensitive, using innovative channels for youth and trusted community platforms for older adults to close access gaps and enhance climate resilience at all levels.

3.3 Perceptions on Community Preparedness to Handle Climate-Related Hazards

Even though awareness of hazards was frequently cited, it is concerning that survey participants expressed a lack of readiness to deal with them.

Do you think your community is well-prepared to handle climate-related hazards when they occur?

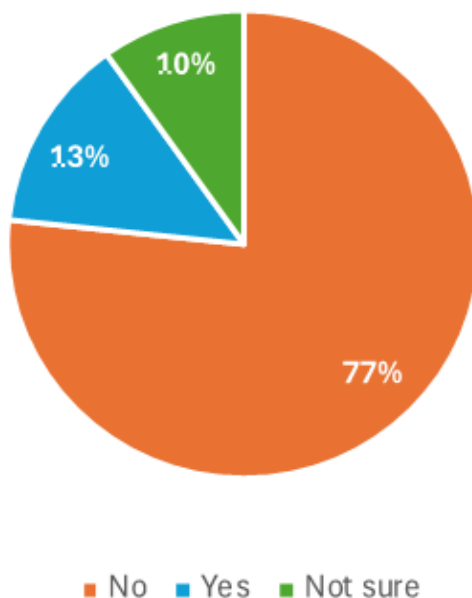


Figure 4: Perceptions on community preparedness to handle climate hazards

Figure 4 illustrates the community's overall perception of limited preparedness to manage climate-induced hazards across Binga, Chiredzi, and Rushinga, with 77% indicating the community's lack of preparedness, compared to 13% who stated preparedness and 10% being indifferent.

Age-specific analysis reveals a high perception of unpreparedness among those aged 45 and above (53%), followed by 25–44-year-olds (36%) and the 18–24 age group (11%). This indicates two possibilities. First, that coping with climate-induced hazards diminish with age, potentially due to declining physical resilience and reduced access to climate-related information and adaptive resources. The second possibility is that the responses indicate a more realistic understanding of the extent of the climate hazards due to lived experiences by elderly respondents.

3.4 Perceptions on the Community's Ability to Recover from Climate-Induced Hazards

Building on the preceding section, which highlighted the community's limited preparedness and uneven access to early warning information, the study further assessed respondents' confidence in their ability to recover from climate-induced hazards. By recovery, the study looked at the processes of restoring, rebuilding, and improving communities after a disaster.

How confident are you in your community's ability to recover from the impact of climate-related hazards?

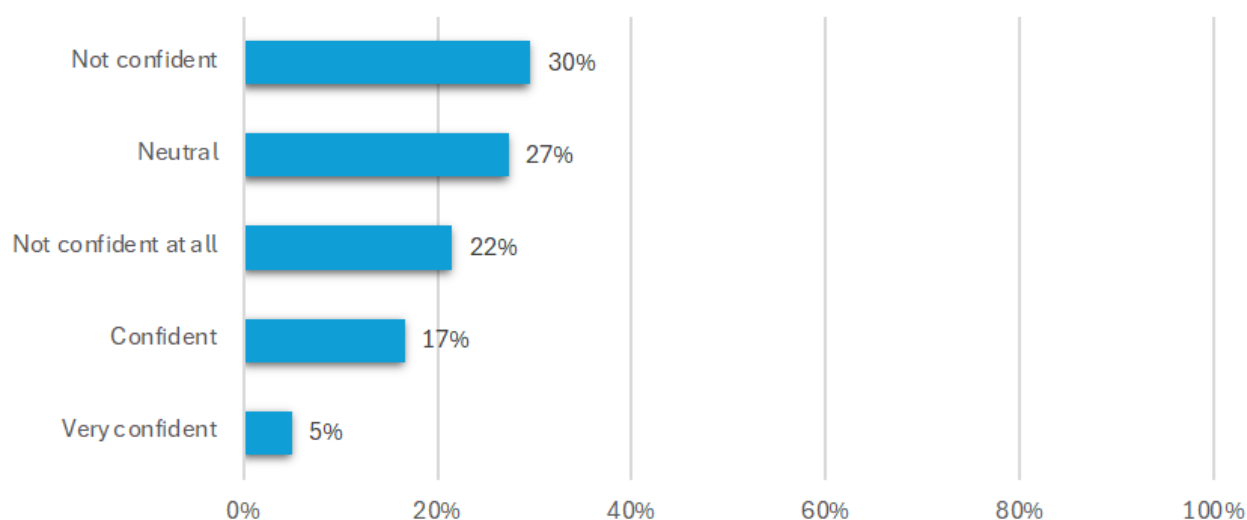


Figure 5: The community's ability to recover from the impact of climate-induced hazards

Figure 5 reflects a consistent pattern of vulnerability and low coping capacity, with 30% of respondents indicating they were "Not Confident," 22% stating they were "Not Confident at All," and 27% remaining "Neutral." Only a small fraction expressed positive confidence, with 17% reporting they were "Confident" and just 5% stating they were "Very Confident." These results suggest the pervasive lack of preparedness to restore and rebuild compounded by low self-efficacy and limited adaptive capacity across communities after disasters strike. As noted elsewhere in this report, this lack of confidence is attributed to gender disparities in access to resources, information, and decision-making spaces, which further erode confidence, particularly among women. Disaggregation of the data by age and gender reveals notable differences in confidence levels. Among the 18-24 age group, 25% of males and 75% of females reported feeling "Not Confident at All." Similarly, in the 25-44 age group, 22% of males and 78% of females felt "Not Confident at All," while in the 45+ age group, 17% of males and 83% of females expressed the same sentiment. For those who were neutral, 17% of males and 83% of females were in the 18-24 age category, while 25% of males and 75% of females were in the 25-44 age

group. Among those aged 45+, 35% of males and 65% of females were neutral.

In terms of positive confidence, 20% of males and 80% of females aged 18-24 were confident, while in the 25-44 group, 13% of males and 87% of females reported feeling confident. Among those aged 45+, 33% of males and 67% of females expressed confidence. Finally, in the "Very Confident" category, 25% of males and 75% of females in the 18-24 age group were very confident. In the 25-44 age group, 22% of males and 78% of females reported being very confident, while in the 45+ group, 17% of males and 83% of females were very confident.

Across all age groups, females consistently report lower confidence compared to males, particularly in the 18-24 age group, where 75% of females feel "Not Confident at All," compared to 25% of males. This pattern continues across the 25-44 and 45+ age groups, with females consistently expressing lower levels of confidence in their ability to cope with climate hazards. One possible explanation for this disparity is that women face cultural and structural barriers, including limited access to decision-making roles and formal resources, which may undermine their confidence.

In contrast, males tend to be more involved in formal community structures, which could explain their higher levels of confidence, especially in older age groups. The higher number of neutral responses among females in the younger age groups (18-24) further suggests that while women are often engaged in informal support networks, they may still lack access to the formal systems that could help them feel more prepared. While community interventions focused on empowering women, such as agricultural extension programs, appear to boost the confidence of females, especially in the 25-44 age group, they are project-based and less formal compared to permanent community structures like Village Development Committees largely led by men.

These findings call for targeted capacity-building initiatives, inclusive climate risk communication strategies, and investment in community-led disaster preparedness plans that build confidence through practice and localised knowledge.

3.5 Perceptions on Measures to Improve Community Preparedness to Climate-Related Hazards

Figure 6 highlights the community's perceptions of the most effective measures to improve preparedness for climate-related hazards, with financial support (80%), community education and training (50%), more accessible community centres (36%), improved early warning systems (32%), better infrastructure (23%), and other interventions (17%) identified as key. The responses from the three age groups reveal notable differences in the types of support perceived as most helpful after climate-induced disasters.

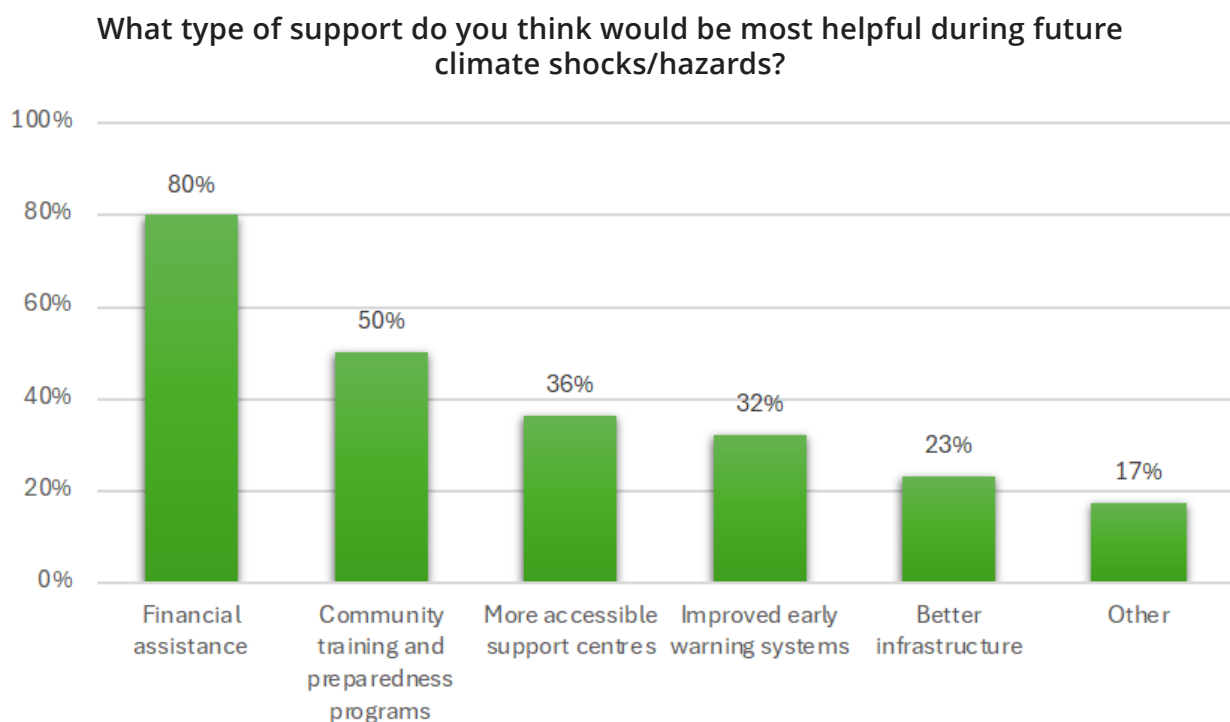


Figure 6: Perceptions on measures to improve community preparedness to climate-related hazards

The survey highlights notable age and gender differences in prioritising support services and infrastructure. In the 18–24 age group, both males (25%) and females (75%) favoured accessible support centres, a preference that grew stronger in older age brackets for males. In the 25–44 group, 34% of males and 66% of females supported accessible centres, and in the 45+ group, it was 27% males and 73% females. This increasing preference for accessible support centres with age may reflect the greater life experience and awareness of older individuals, who are likely to value services that address long-term needs. Females, in particular, may prioritise these services due to increasing caregiving and community roles.

In terms of financial assistance, females consistently placed higher importance on it across all age groups. For example, in the 18–24 age group, 89% of females and 11% of males viewed financial aid as crucial, a trend that continued in the 25–44 (78% females vs. 22% males) and 45+ groups (77% females vs. 23% males). This difference may reflect the socioeconomic challenges faced by women, who often experience higher rates of financial insecurity. Women's greater prioritisation of financial support might also stem from their increased responsibility for household finances.

For improved infrastructure, females consistently ranked it as more important than males across all age groups, with the gap widening as age increased. Among 18–24-year-olds, 60% of males and 40% of females prioritised infrastructure, but by the 45+ group, 75% of females and only 25% of males did so. This shift could be due to older women's increased involvement in community development, taking over some responsibilities usually done by men in addition to the caregiving and domestic responsibilities. Women may perceive infrastructure as more integral to their quality of life, including access to healthcare, education, and transportation.

The trend was similar for community training, where females again expressed stronger support. In the 18–24 group, 64% of females and 36% of males ranked community training higher, with the gap widening in the 25–44 group (81% females vs. 19% males) and 45+ group (72% females vs. 28% males). This could reflect women's greater engagement in social networks and community-based activities, as well as their higher likelihood of seeking skill development for family and community livelihoods.

Finally, early climate warning systems were less of a priority for males across all age groups, with only 17% of males and 83% of females across all age categories selecting it as important. This could reflect the informal arrangements that women use to access climate hazard information hence the need to participate and be recognised in formal community structures like the permanent Village Development Committees. Men who benefit through these community structures perhaps take climate information for granted as reflected in the lower perceived urgency of climate change among. Females, however, are increasingly being sensitised to climate issues through partner driven project-based education and advocacy programmes, leading them to recognise the value of early warning systems at a younger age.

These age and gender variations reflect underlying societal trends, such as gendered roles in caregiving, financial responsibility, and community involvement, as well as differing perspectives on immediate versus long-term needs. Overall, the analysis shows that older individuals, particularly females, tend to prioritise a broader range of support mechanisms, including accessible support centres, financial assistance, infrastructure, training, and early warning systems.

3.6 Gender and Impacts of Climate-Related Hazards

This section provides more perceptions on how different genders view the impacts of climate-induced hazards in the three districts of Binga, Chiredzi, and Rushinga.

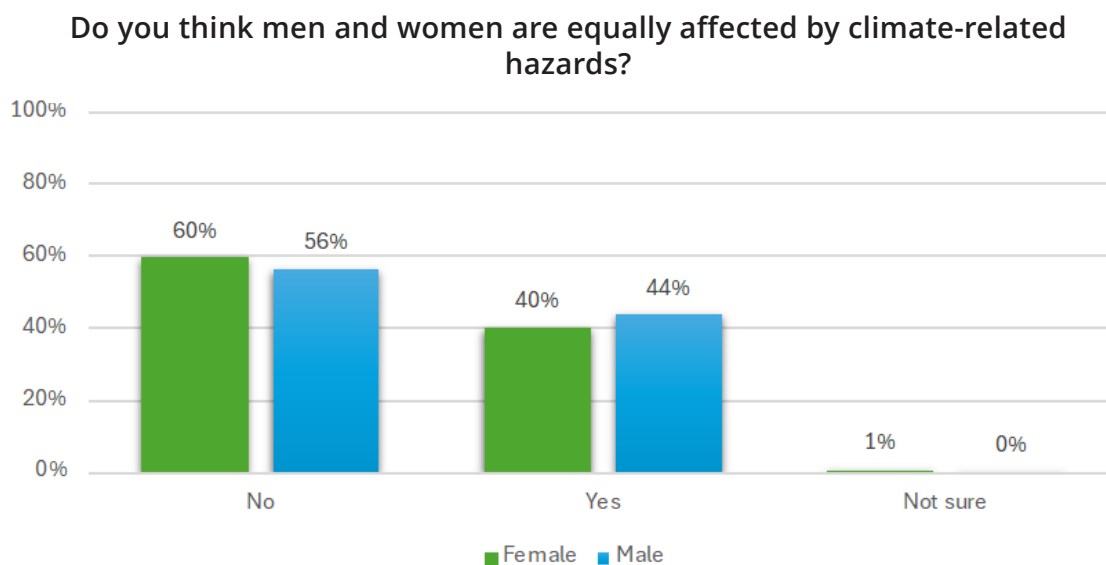


Figure 7: Perceptions on how climate-induced hazards affect men and women

The perceptions of how climate-induced hazards affect men and women reveal nuanced variations across genders and age groups, underscoring the need for inclusive and targeted anticipatory action planning in the three surveyed districts. Interestingly, a slightly higher proportion of women (60%) than men (56%) believed there is no difference in how climate hazards impact genders. In comparison, 40% of women and 44% of men acknowledged differential impacts, yet the majority across both groups ultimately agreed that women tend to be more affected. Among youth aged 18–24, 23% believed that men and women are equally affected by climate-induced hazards, while 77% recognised differing impacts. Within this age category 29% males and 71% females acknowledged gender-specific vulnerabilities. This points to a significant awareness gap, particularly among young women, and emphasises the need for targeted gender education and sensitisation for youth.

In the 25–44 age group, perceptions were different with 27% males and 73% females

indicating that men and women are affected differently. This suggests that gender awareness is increasing, particularly among women, likely influenced by their active socio-economic roles. However, the low percentage of male respondents recognising gender differences highlights the ongoing need to engage men in gender equity efforts. Among respondents aged 45 and above, 35% males and 65% females indicated that men and women are affected differently by climate hazards when they occur. This likely reflects accumulated life experience and the influence of traditional gender roles.

To make anticipatory action planning more effective in Zimbabwe, strategies must be both gender-sensitive and age-responsive. For youth, awareness campaigns using peer-led or digital platforms are critical. Middle-aged adults, especially men, should be engaged through community initiatives to bridge the gender perception gap. Older adults should be actively involved in decision-making processes, as they provide valuable lived insights. These findings

confirm that climate resilience programming must incorporate segmented, inclusive approaches to adequately address the differentiated vulnerabilities across age and gender lines, ensuring equitable and context-specific responses to climate risks.

OLDER WOMEN

The research further noted that climate change significantly affects older women compared to older men. For example, a representative in Binga remarked:

“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.”

Focus group discussions across Rushinga, Binga, and Chiredzi districts confirmed that older women are disproportionately affected by climate-induced hazards due to a combination of mobility limitations, social neglect, and intensified caregiving burdens. In Rushinga, older women

noted that, unlike younger women and men who are often able to migrate for work, they remain behind with limited support, facing isolation and greater exposure to climate risks. Their reduced mobility hinders access to critical resources such as water, food, and health services, amplifying their vulnerability. In Binga, older women highlighted the dual pressures of reproductive and productive responsibilities, exacerbated by the absence of men who migrate for employment. This leaves them solely responsible for managing households and caring for children during times of crisis. When food is scarce, older women frequently prioritise feeding children over themselves, increasing their risk of malnutrition and psychological distress. The emotional toll is further compounded by heightened family tensions and unmet basic needs during disasters. Across these districts, the cumulative impacts of age, gender, and caregiving roles expose older women to chronic physical, emotional, and social stressors, underscoring the urgent need for targeted support and recognition in climate resilience planning and anticipatory action strategies.

YOUNG WOMEN

Young women in Binga, Chiredzi, and Rushinga—particularly those married with children—face unique and heightened vulnerabilities to climate hazards due to the dual burden of caregiving and breadwinning in the context of absent or economically inactive male partners. Unlike older women who may have established community networks, or single women with fewer dependents, young married women often lack familial support and access to critical resources such as land, large livestock, or financial savings, leaving them highly exposed to climate-sensitive livelihoods like small-scale livestock and subsistence farming. Their domestic roles and mobility constraints further limit their engagement in wage labour, reducing their ability to build resilience or diversify income. These challenges extend to their children, who suffer the consequences of food insecurity, poor

housing, and limited access to education. Additionally, the compounded stress of economic hardship and social instability increases the likelihood of early marriage among young girls as a coping strategy. Although efforts by organisations such as WFP and the Ministry of Women Affairs have begun to address these issues, there remains a critical need for targeted interventions that build young women's adaptive capacity through vocational training, financial inclusion, land access, and strengthened community support systems. A gender specialist working with Agritex at national level provided insights into specific ways young women are affected:

"Gender issues are not yet fully integrated into disaster preparedness. Sometimes the focus is on food availability at the expense of other factors, particularly during disasters. For example, tent distributions are sometimes by family and not by gender needs. As a result, teenage girls are vulnerable to abuse from close family members. Thus our interventions sometimes lead to more complicated secondary challenges."

The study underscores the limitations of a gender-neutral approach to disaster response, as many respondents fail to recognise gendered differences in climate disaster situations. As a result, young women face unique risks that require targeted interventions.

OLDER MEN

Older men in Binga, Chiredzi, and Rushinga face unique challenges in coping with climate hazards due to physical vulnerabilities, declining productivity, and traditional household roles. Unlike younger men, they rely on subsistence farming and limited social safety nets, making them highly susceptible to climate shocks like droughts, floods, and wildfires that deplete agricultural resources. As heads of multigenerational households, they struggle to provide for their extended families as recurrent climate events erode resources. The lack of tailored support services leaves them isolated and vulnerable to health risks, such as cholera and zoonotic disease outbreaks, due to the scarcity of clean water. Targeted interventions, such as community safety nets, solar boreholes, financial assistance, and involving older men in disaster management, are crucial to building resilience and strengthening their communities' adaptive capacities.

YOUNG MEN

Interviews and focus group discussions with young men in Binga, Chiredzi, and Rushinga revealed that they face distinct vulnerabilities to climate hazards due to their roles as providers and labourers, often without stable access to land, employment, or financial resources. Recurrent climate shocks such as droughts and floods disrupt farming and local labour markets, pushing them into low-paying or precarious jobs, migration, or physically demanding roles that expose them to health risks and fatigue. These pressures, combined with societal expectations to lead during crises, heighten psychosocial stress and contribute to risky coping mechanisms like substance abuse. Limited access to climate-

resilient tools and training further impedes their adaptive capacity. While the Anticipatory Action (AA) program in Zimbabwe has made strides in addressing these challenges through job creation and sustainable agriculture training, including young men in disaster preparedness and recovery planning is crucial to empower them and strengthen community resilience.

MEN AND WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES

In Binga, Chiredzi, and Rushinga, it was revealed that men and women with disabilities face intensified vulnerabilities to climate-induced hazards due to physical, social, and economic barriers that limit mobility, access to resources, and participation in emergency responses. In Chiredzi, it was explicitly noted that there are increased cases of public begging, especially among the blind community, also affecting children who accompany blind adults in this exercise. These individuals are disproportionately affected during disasters. In Binga, a lack of accessible information and preparedness tools leaves them unable to take proactive measures. In Rushinga, the physical demands of navigating crises are overwhelming without targeted support, especially for women with disabilities who also face caregiving burdens and stigma, and men who experience stress from unfulfilled provider roles. These challenges underscore the urgent need for inclusive disaster preparedness systems that offer accessible early warnings, disability-friendly infrastructure, specialised evacuation services, and livelihood support to build resilience and ensure equitable participation in disaster risk reduction.

3.7 How Climate Hazards Impact Roles and Responsibilities

Climate-induced hazards have dramatically

reshaped gender roles and responsibilities at both the household and community levels in Zimbabwe's drought-prone districts of Binga, Chiredzi, and Rushinga. This section outlines how these shifting dynamics are influencing gender roles, protection and social inclusion, with women and children, including women with disabilities, taking on new responsibilities traditionally held by able-bodied men.

EFFECTS OF EXPANDED HOUSEHOLD ROLES ON MOTHERHOOD AND FEMININITY

In response to climate hazards, women in Binga, Chiredzi, and Rushinga have reported expanded household roles and responsibilities beyond their socially apportioned motherhood and feminine functions such as cooking and fetching water for the family. This is due to the prolonged absence of men forced to seek jobs outside the local areas as a result of climate shocks. For instance, in Binga, the introduction of green agricultural practices like the Pfumvudza² program (a government climate-smart approach to crop production that encourages less disturbance to topsoil), though beneficial for improving yields and good for the environment, has unintentionally placed additional burdensome roles on women. It involves manual digging of planting holes for crops like maize. Likewise, changing to smart agricultural practices such as mulch-based conservation agriculture and contour ridging aims to improve land preservation. However, these methods often require additional labour, which women have increasingly taken on in the absence of men who seek work outside the local community. In Binga and Chiredzi, women reported that they step into roles such as preparing land, searching for animal feed, and even creating fireguards to prevent veld fires—activities once performed by men. These expanded roles have further entrenched the gendered division of labour, increased women's workloads and limited their participation in other community activities.

² Pfumvudza Programme- is a climate-smart, conservation agriculture initiative in Zimbabwe that promotes minimum soil disturbance, mulching, and efficient water use to enhance household food security and nutrition.

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES, PERSONS WITH CHRONIC ILLNESS, AND NEW ROLES

The effects of climate change have also worsened the vulnerability of persons with disabilities forced to engage in family roles that compound their physical and mental health. In Binga, participants shared stories of persons with disabilities and persons in situations of poor health engaging in negative coping mechanisms. For example, in Binga, participants reported that persons with disabilities, particularly those with visual disabilities, are increasingly turning to negative coping mechanisms such as begging in public spaces as a way to contribute to family survival. Study participants shared an example of a person with a disability and poor health who started selling fruits to help support his family. An FGD participant elaborated on this climate-induced desperate example of the shift in roles:

“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.”

The shifts outlined above, born out of necessity, highlight the desperate roles and survival conditions created by food insecurity. While engaging persons with disabilities in economic activities is generally a positive thing, the situations above reflect the broader strain that climate-induced hazards place on family roles and survival strategies. Similar sentiments were shared in Chiredzi, where people with visual impairments are reportedly intensifying their begging activities in buses and at local shopping centres.

SHIFTING RESPONSIBILITIES FOR BOYS

In Chiredzi and Binga, participants reported that climate-induced water shortages in wards without solar boreholes have compelled boys to take on roles traditionally associated with girls, such as fetching water. While water collection is typically considered a woman's role, respondents noted that drought-related water scarcity has led boys to travel longer distances using bicycles or scotch-carts to fetch water. This shift in responsibilities reflects a positive trend toward shared duties under climate stress. It also marks a departure from traditional gender norms, as boys step in to meet their families' needs amidst challenging circumstances. The findings are also a reflection of the increasingly blurred lines between gender roles in climate-impacted communities.

IMPACT ON FATHERHOOD AND MASCULINITY

The rising scarcity of employment opportunities stresses men's traditional roles as providers and protectors. In Binga, discussions revealed that men lose status and self-worth due to their inability to meet their families' needs. This crisis in masculinity has been linked to rising levels of domestic violence, as men struggle to manage the psychological toll of their perceived failure. Thus, the inability to fulfil traditional provider roles is affecting men's mental health, contributing to frustrations that often manifest in harmful ways. This shift in family dynamics underscores the profound impact of climate-induced stress on both men and women and calls for a reconsideration of how masculinity and fatherhood are supported in the context of climate change. This study's findings affirm the possibility that while gender, protection and inclusion have been synonymous with women's support for many decades, perhaps men are equally or are the most affected demographic group during climate-induced disasters. Hence, future AA programmes should pay attention to the specific needs of demographic groups, including men's needs, given changing gender roles.

3.8 Vulnerability, Gender-Specific Needs and Priorities

The study findings highlight varying vulnerability to climate-induced hazards across different population and gender categories. Female children (72%) and male children (71%) emerged as the most vulnerable groups, mainly due to their dependency and limited capacity to protect themselves during crises. Women were identified as the next most at-risk group, with 69% of female and 56% of male respondents acknowledging their heightened exposure, likely due to caregiving responsibilities, limited mobility, and unequal access to resources. Older adults were also perceived as highly vulnerable, with 62% of male and 61% of female respondents indicating their susceptibility, stemming from mobility challenges, health conditions, and social isolation. Low-income families (58% males and 49% females) and farmers (55% males and 43% females) were also seen as significantly vulnerable due to their reliance on climate-sensitive livelihoods and limited adaptive capacities in the face of recurrent droughts and extreme heat.

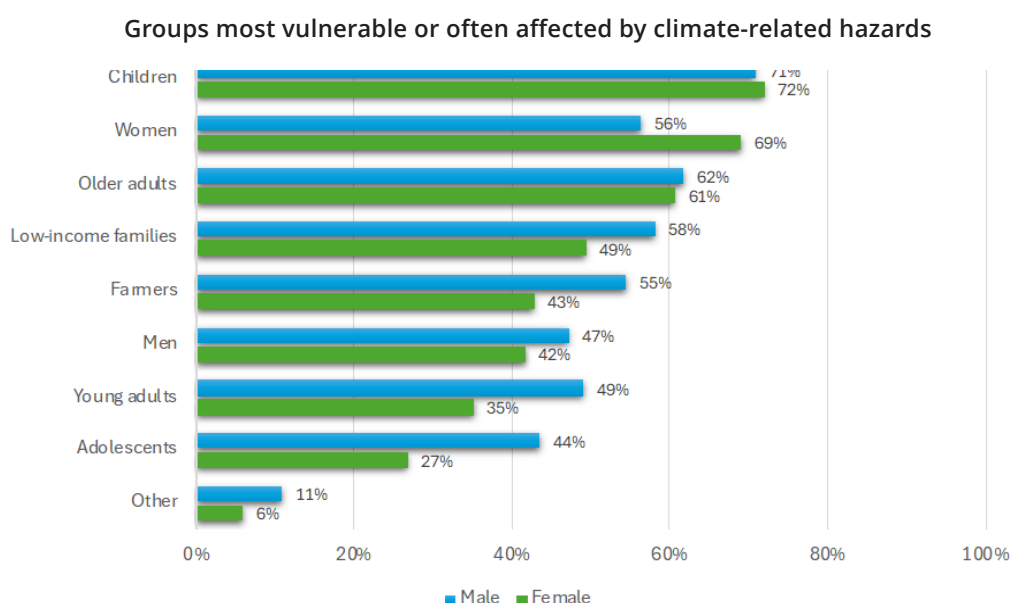


Figure 8: Vulnerabilities of gender and other demographic groups

Men were perceived as less vulnerable, though still at risk, with 47% of male and 42% of female respondents acknowledging their exposure, likely linked to economic pressures and mental health stressors related to provider roles. Younger adults (49% males and 35% females) and adolescents (44% males and 27% females) were considered comparatively less vulnerable, possibly due to their greater mobility and adaptability. The 'other' category, which includes persons with disabilities and ethnic minorities, was also recognised—albeit by fewer respondents (11% males and 6% females)—as facing considerable risks due to exclusion and barriers to accessing information and services. These marginal yet important differences between male and female respondents reveal an overarching gender-neutral perception at the community level, underscoring a critical gap in gender and vulnerability profiling. This calls for anticipatory action programs that promote gender, protection, and inclusion strategies tailored to the distinct needs of each group, ensuring equity, efficiency, and effectiveness in climate resilience planning, implementation, and evaluation.

These findings align with qualitative insights that reveal gender and age-based disease vulnerabilities. In Binga district, a key informant from the Department of Veterinary Services highlighted that youths, especially boys, are increasingly vulnerable to climate-induced diseases like rabies, African trypanosomiasis, and malaria, as they spend long hours outdoors herding livestock.

“Youths are more affected... they spend time in the fields or herding cattle.”

This exposure is worsened by a reported coping strategy where the Zimbabwe National Parks

allows farmers to graze cattle in game parks, unintentionally putting boys and men at risk of human-wildlife conflict. Similarly, women face heightened vulnerability when searching for firewood and wild fruits in wildlife zones, making them prone to zoonotic diseases and wild animal attacks.

Young women in Binga were reportedly facing growing health and protection risks through engagement in sex work and transactional sex driven by food insecurity. One participant noted, “Young women pretend to be single to hook up with men who can pay them \$10 so they can buy mealie meal,” illustrating how extreme economic vulnerability leads to precarious coping strategies. The participant clarified that though they do not identify as sex workers, these women view transactional sex as a short-term solution to climate-induced hardship, aiming to return to “normal” relationships once their basic needs are met. This underscores the urgent need for interventions that address the root causes of economic instability.

In both Chiredzi and Binga, economic exploitation was cited as a direct impact of drought. One woman in Binga sold a cow for just \$20 due to desperation. This forced liquidation of livestock reflects the growing vulnerability of smallholder farmers and the broader erosion of rural resilience. Participants across the districts strongly emphasised the need for anticipatory action and inclusive planning that protects against such exploitation.

Education disruptions due to climate-induced economic shocks were also reported as recurring concerns. Girls, in particular, were described as the “first casualties” when school fees could not be paid during the climate crisis. While both girls and boys are affected, participants across the surveyed districts consistently reported higher dropout rates among girls, indicating gendered vulnerabilities in access to education during times of environmental and financial stress.

The rise in food insecurity has fuelled increased social instability in rural communities. In areas once considered peaceful, young boys and men are reportedly creating havoc, turning to drug abuse and petty theft, while young girls and women are pushed into sex work and transactional sex. These shifts reflect a breakdown of traditional safety nets and highlight how climate stress deepens socioeconomic and cultural vulnerabilities among youth, requiring coordinated social protection and rehabilitation measures.

In Chiredzi and Rushinga, youth, children, and ethnic minorities like the Hlengwe and Tonga communities are frequently excluded from decision-making in disaster contexts. One key finding was that “ethnic minorities face additional marginalisation through threats to ancestral land.”

In Chiredzi, competition for grazing land is linked to the expansion plans of a private dairy project, which threatens traditional grazing areas. In Binga, a government key informant reported that the Tonga tribe suffers from poor government service provision, relying heavily on NGOs for infrastructure. These patterns reflect how intersecting identities—geography, age, gender, and ethnicity—compound climate vulnerabilities and call for inclusive protection and rights-based approaches to disaster response.

3.9 Effects on the Most Recent Climate-Induced Hazards

The study further explored the impacts of recent climate-induced hazards across the surveyed districts, particularly droughts and heatwaves, revealing significant disruptions to essential community resources and livelihoods. The data shows that food and water availability were the most critically affected areas, with 93% of female respondents and 89% of male respondents identifying this as the top community concern. These figures underscore the acute vulnerability of households, especially those led by women, to food insecurity and water scarcity during prolonged dry spells and extreme heat.

Loss of income emerged as the second most impacted variable, with 62% of male respondents and 54% of female respondents reporting significant financial strain due to reduced agricultural productivity, livestock deaths, and informal job losses triggered by the climate shocks. This economic disruption highlights gendered livelihood vulnerabilities, particularly for men who dominate specific agricultural and wage-labour roles, and women whose income sources are also tied to informal or subsistence-based activities.

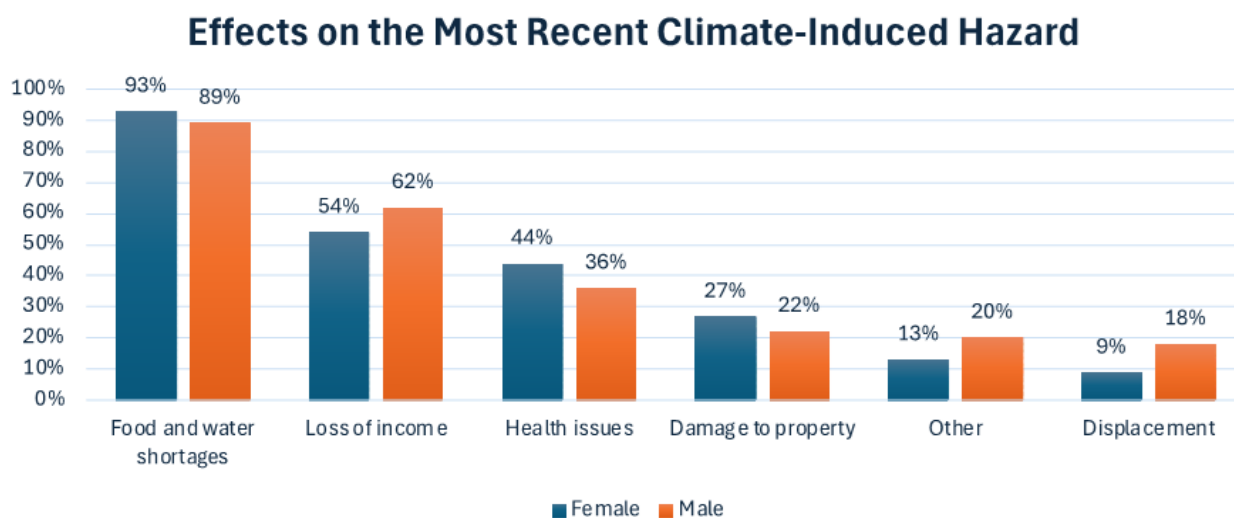


Figure 9: Effects of the most recent climate-induced hazards

Health-related issues were reported as the third most affected area, with 44% of females and 36% of males noting a rise in illnesses and health complications linked to the heat and deteriorating living conditions. Women, especially caregivers and elderly female-headed households, bear the brunt of caring for sick family members, increasing their emotional and physical stress during such crises.

Property damage was considered less severe in comparison but still notable, with 27% of female respondents and 22% of males citing it as an impact. The relatively lower percentages may reflect the type of housing and assets in rural areas, which may be more resilient to heatwaves but still vulnerable to cumulative degradation over time.

Displacement ranked lowest among the listed effects, although it still affected a notable portion of the population. Interestingly, more males (18%) than females (9%) identified displacement as a concern, possibly due to migration in search of work or grazing land, a common adaptive strategy among men in the surveyed districts.

Overall, the findings highlight that while food and water insecurity remain the most pressing concerns during climate-induced hazards, the

cascading effects on income, health, and housing further compound the vulnerabilities of both men and women. These insights call for gender-responsive disaster preparedness and recovery strategies addressing differentiated impacts across population groups.

The study assessed the immediate needs of communities following climate-induced hazards such as drought and heat waves. The most urgent needs identified were food (95% of females, 91% of males), water (71% of females, 87% of males), and financial support (72% of females, 65% of males). These priorities reflect the critical impact of climate events on food security, water access, and household income. Women reported slightly higher needs for food and financial assistance, possibly due to their caregiving roles and economic vulnerabilities. Less frequently mentioned needs included health services (28% females, 33% males), information updates (20% for both), shelter (13% females, 15% males), and other needs like hygiene or psychosocial support (11% females, 15% males). These results underscore the importance of multi-sectoral, gender-sensitive response planning that prioritises food, water, and livelihoods, while ensuring that less visible but essential needs are not overlooked.

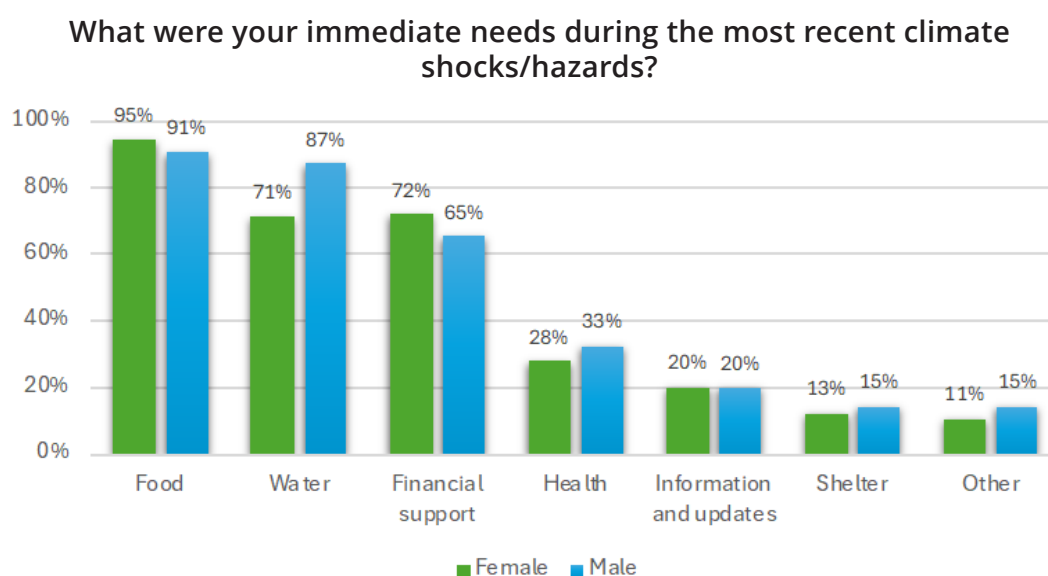


Figure 10: Immediate needs for community respondents after climate-induced hazards by gender

Further assessments explored whether respondents’ needs were addressed following climate-induced hazards. The findings reveal widespread dissatisfaction, with 38% of female respondents and 51% of males indicating their needs were not met. Only a small portion—15% of females and 13% of males—

expressed satisfaction, while 46% of females and 36% of males reported being only partially satisfied. These variations reflect nuanced gendered perceptions and highlight gaps in the effectiveness and inclusivity of current disaster response efforts across the surveyed districts.

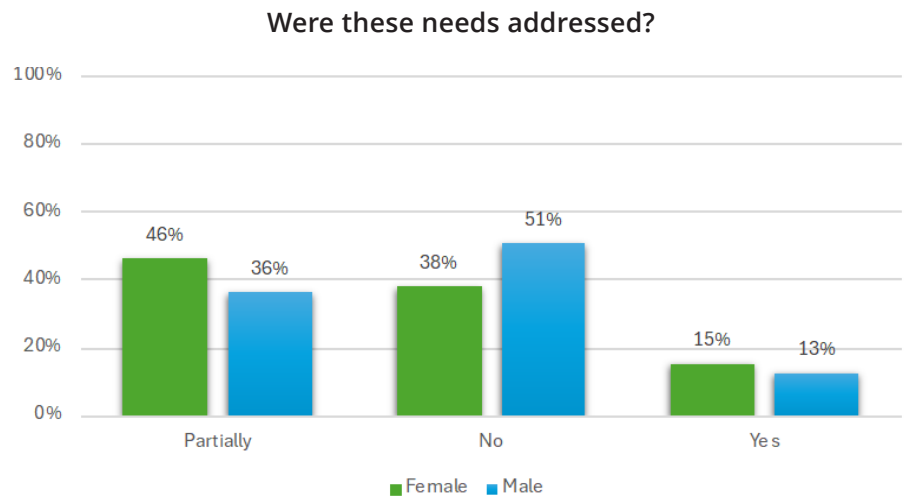


Figure 11: The extent to which needs were addressed

The data further reveals that most climate response interventions occurred at the community level, as reported by 59% of female and 47% of male respondents, followed by family-centred interventions, with 18% of females and 36% of males indicating this approach. Individual-level interventions were the least reported, with only 16% of males and 23% of females acknowledging receiving such targeted support. These gendered preferences may stem from social roles and expectations; for example, women, often more engaged in community and

group-based support networks, may perceive or benefit more from community-wide initiatives, while men, traditionally viewed as household heads or economic providers, may place more value on family-centred or individualised assistance. The limited reach of individual-level interventions across both genders suggests a need to strengthen personalised and context-sensitive support mechanisms considering specific vulnerabilities and priorities at the household and individual levels.

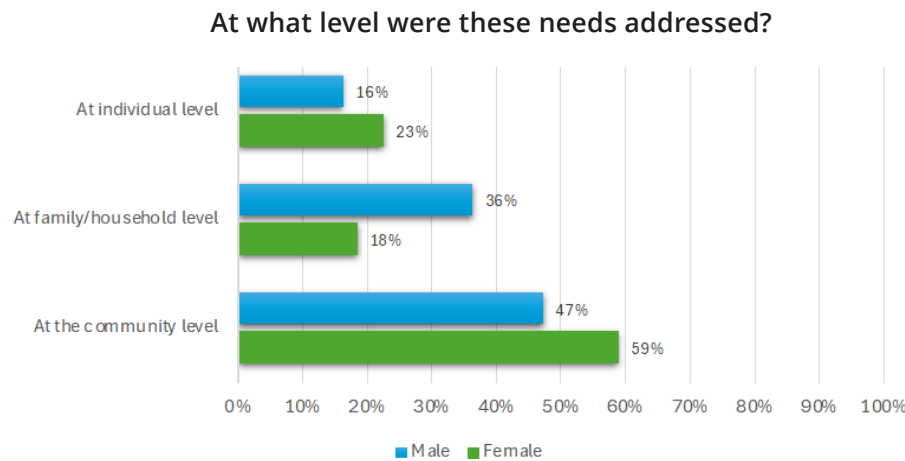


Figure 12: The level at which needs were addressed

Further gender analysis reveals limited satisfaction with the type of support received during droughts and heatwaves, with only 18% of female respondents and 14% of males reporting satisfaction, and an even smaller proportion, 5% of females and 2% of males, indicating they were very satisfied. Many respondents expressed dissatisfaction or held neutral views, including 36% of females and 40% of males, while 31% of females and 35% of males reported being neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. Additionally, 9% of both males and females expressed being very dissatisfied. These gender variations may reflect differences in access, expectations, and

roles during climate-induced emergencies. For instance, women, who often bear the burden of securing household food and water, may find community or household-level interventions inadequate or misaligned with their needs. Men, on the other hand, may feel dissatisfied if interventions fail to address income loss or livelihood restoration, particularly where traditional roles as providers are compromised. The data points to the need for more inclusive and gender-responsive climate interventions that reflect the differentiated needs and expectations of men and women in times of crisis.

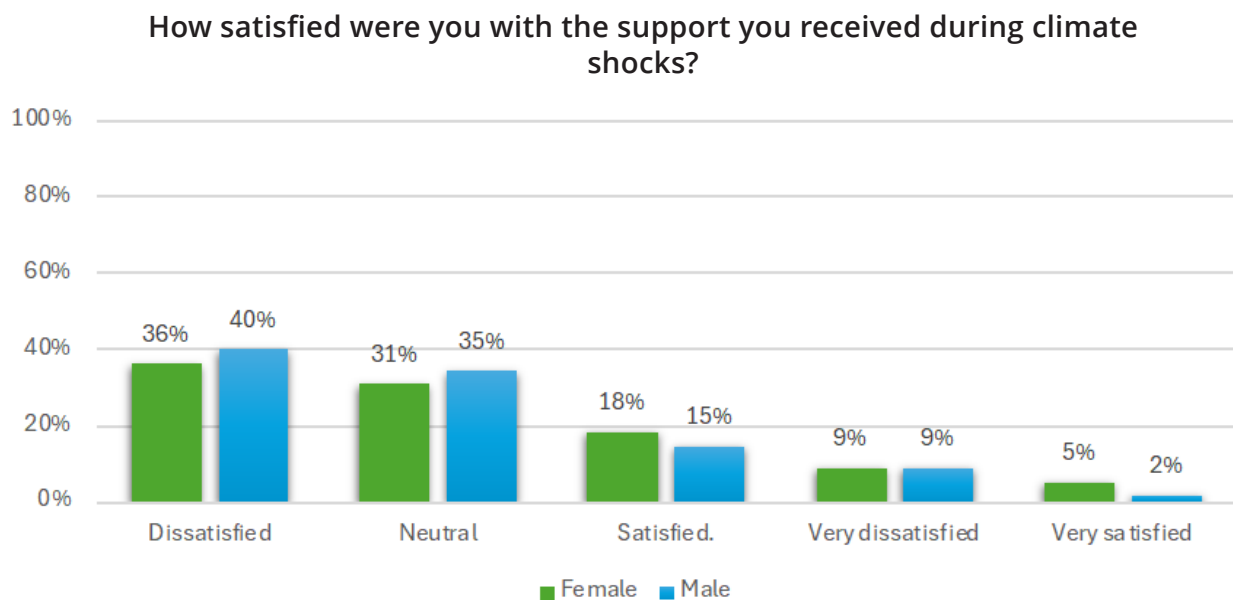


Figure 13: Level of respondents' satisfaction with the provided support after the occurrence of climate hazards

3.10 Barriers/ challenges faced in accessing support After Climate-Induced Hazards

The study assessed perceptions of men's and women's access to recovery resources following climate-induced hazards, revealing mixed views across gender lines. A near parity was observed, with 54% females and 45% males indicating

no significant differences in access to recovery resources. However, gender-based disparities were acknowledged by 53% of males and 45% of females, suggesting that while some communities perceive equal access, others recognise subtle inequalities influenced by gender roles, power dynamics, or socio-cultural norms. Only a small fraction, 1% of females and 2% of males, expressed uncertainty or indifference. These findings highlight the importance of context-specific, gender-sensitive programming in post-disaster recovery to ensure equitable access to resources and support services.

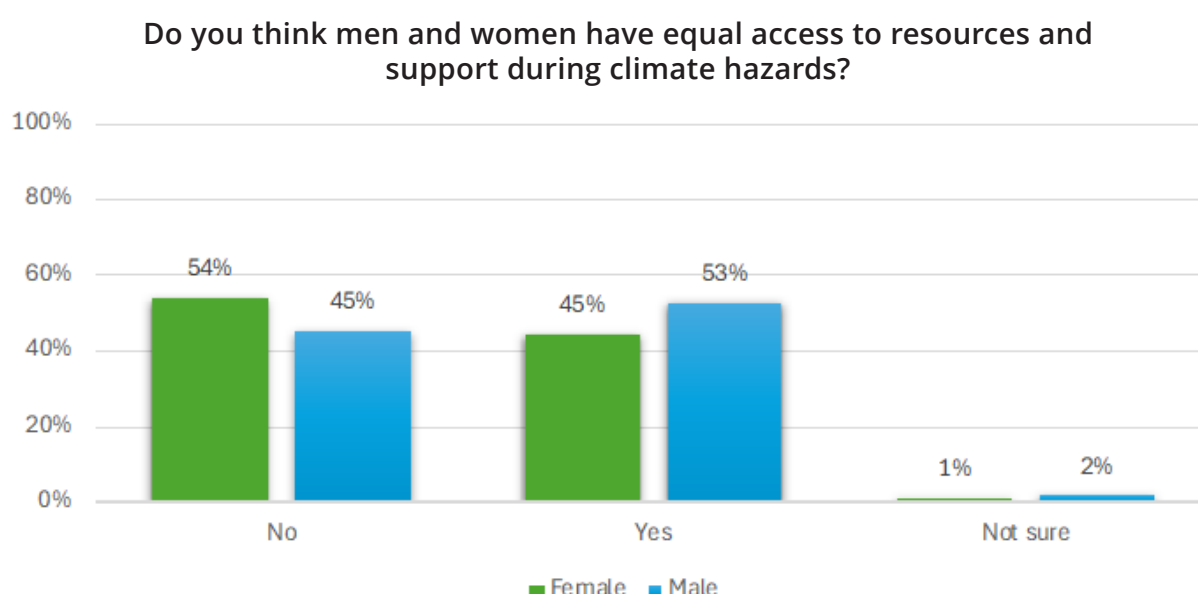


Figure 14: Men and Women access to resources and support during climate hazards

Building on the earlier discussion about perceptions of access to recovery resources after climate-induced hazards, respondents were further asked who they believe lacks access to such resources. The responses mirrored previous trends, with 31% of females and 26% of males indicating that some groups lack access, while 43% of all respondents felt no difference. These patterns reinforce the earlier observation that although some community members perceive equality in access, a notable proportion acknowledges disparities. Importantly, these findings suggest a gap in gender profiling skills and knowledge at the community level, an essential component for designing evidence-based, inclusive, and protection-sensitive responses in post-disaster recovery. Without a clear understanding of how gender, age, and other social factors affect access, interventions risk reinforcing existing inequalities or overlooking vulnerable groups altogether.

Further inquiries were made to establish the barriers to equal access to recovery resources post climate-induced hazards. Cultural norms topped the list with 33% males and 28% females, highlighting this issue. Cultural and religious norms continue to shape and sometimes hinder women's access to resources and leadership

in post-disaster recovery. In rural communities like Binga, traditional beliefs discourage women from taking up leadership roles, with both local leaders and religious institutions reinforcing gender norms that prioritise male authority. This internalised patriarchy leads many women to doubt their leadership abilities or to support male candidates even when capable women are available, reflecting a persistent "sisterhood gap." One national key respondent with WHH, a WFP anticipatory action partner, indicated that expressions like "zvava kuda varume izvi" ("this is meant for men") illustrate how societal conditioning reinforces exclusion. Additionally, resistance to change rooted in cultural norms extends to agricultural practices. For instance, in Binga, a local chief reportedly rejected drought-tolerant cowpeas in favour of traditional crops, demonstrating a culturally driven resistance to innovation. This example highlights the importance of engaging communities in meaningful dialogue to address underlying beliefs, whether based on indigenous wisdom or misconceptions. Moreover, top-down decisions, such as those regarding planting dates, often ignore local knowledge systems, undermining the effectiveness of anticipatory action and reducing agricultural productivity.

What are the barriers to equal access?

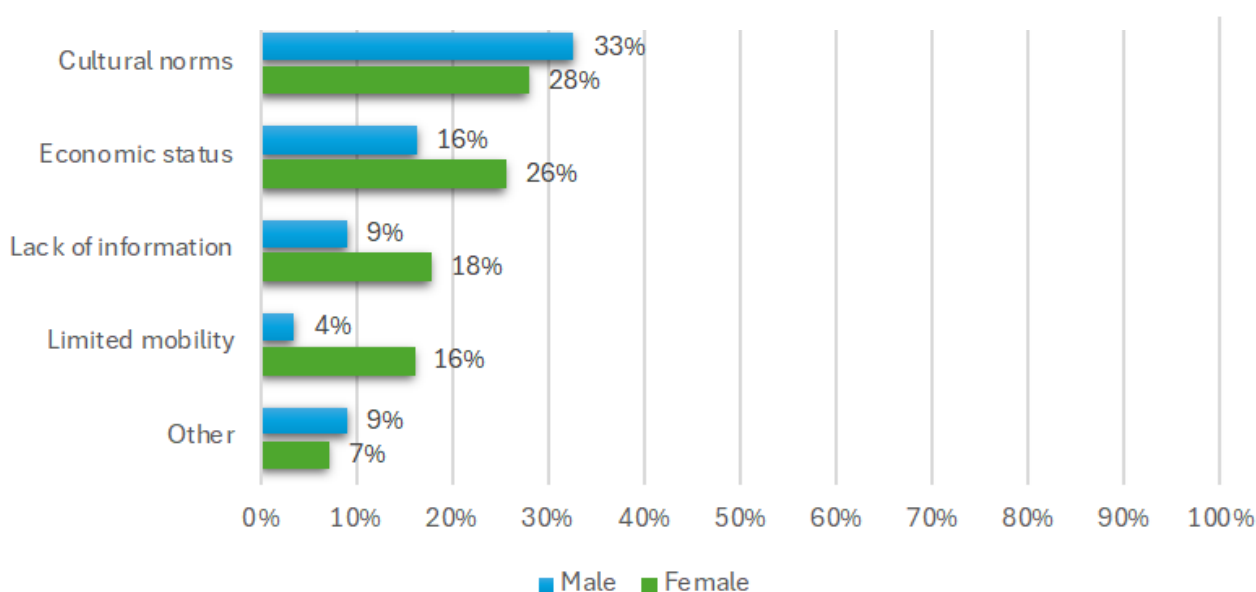


Figure 15: Barriers to equal access to resources and support during climate hazards

Economic status is another barrier that was highlighted with 16% males and 26% females, coming second on the list, reflecting issues discussed earlier about increases in community vulnerabilities as shown through sex work, transactional sex and desperate disposal of livestock. Lack of information and limited mobility for the elderly are other barriers noted in this research. This shows the need for gender-specific protection and inclusive interventions. Further age-gender analysis reveals nuanced barriers to accessing humanitarian support. For individuals aged 18–24, lack of information (20%) is the primary obstacle, with cultural norms (11%) and economic status (15%) playing lesser roles. The 25–44 group faces pronounced challenges from cultural norms (59%) and limited mobility (40%), reflecting their active roles in family responsibilities. In contrast, individuals aged 45+ struggle most with economic barriers (90%), lack of information (80%), and limited mobility (60%), tied to reduced physical capacity and financial independence. Women are disproportionately affected by limited mobility (87%), compounded by cultural norms (73%) and economic constraints (54%). These findings underscore the need for

targeted, age- and gender-sensitive interventions to address deeply ingrained inequalities and improve inclusive disaster response strategies.

The study also identified several factors that hinder access to recovery support following climate-induced hazards. Key among these were a lack of information, reported by 65% of female respondents and 49% of males, and inadequate resources at support centres, cited by 59% of females and 55% of males. Additional barriers included transportation challenges, long distances to support centres, and bureaucratic hurdles, all disproportionately affecting already vulnerable populations and delaying timely access to essential recovery assistance.

What were the main barriers to accessing support?

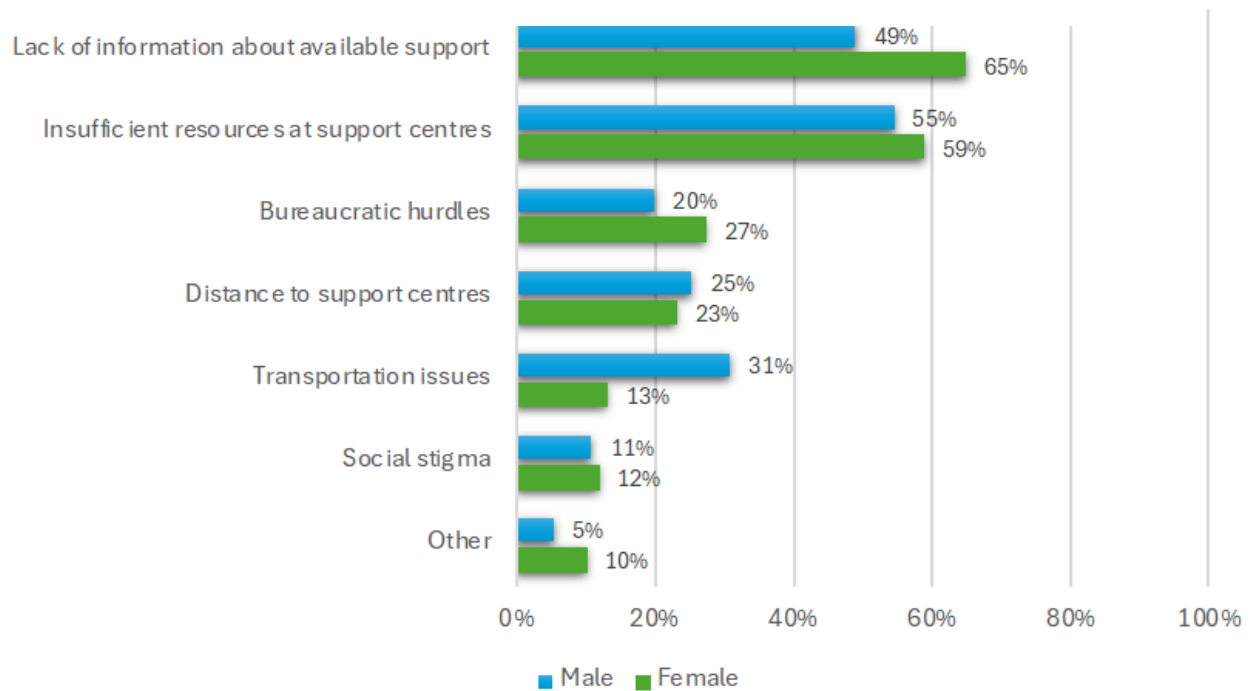


Figure 16: Main challenges in accessing support after climate-induced hazards

3.11 Coping Strategies and Potential Interventions

The research highlights notable gendered differences in individual coping strategies adopted in response to climate-induced hazards, reflecting social norms and economic inequalities. The most common strategy for both genders was reducing food consumption, with 77% of women and 69% of men reporting this approach. This variation may stem from traditional caregiving roles assigned to women, who often prioritise the food needs of children and other household members over their own. Seeking support from relatives or friends was also more common among women (54%) than men (42%), possibly due to women's more substantial involvement

in informal social networks and reciprocal caregiving systems. Conversely, 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.

Temporary migration emerged more frequently among women (19%) than men (7%), which may be driven by women's search for short-term employment or assistance from extended family during crises. Unlike men who migrate for extended periods away from home in search of employment opportunities, temporary migration involves searching for short term relief from relatives and friends or looking for short term paid wages to meet immediate family needs.

What coping strategies did/would you use during climate shocks/hazards?

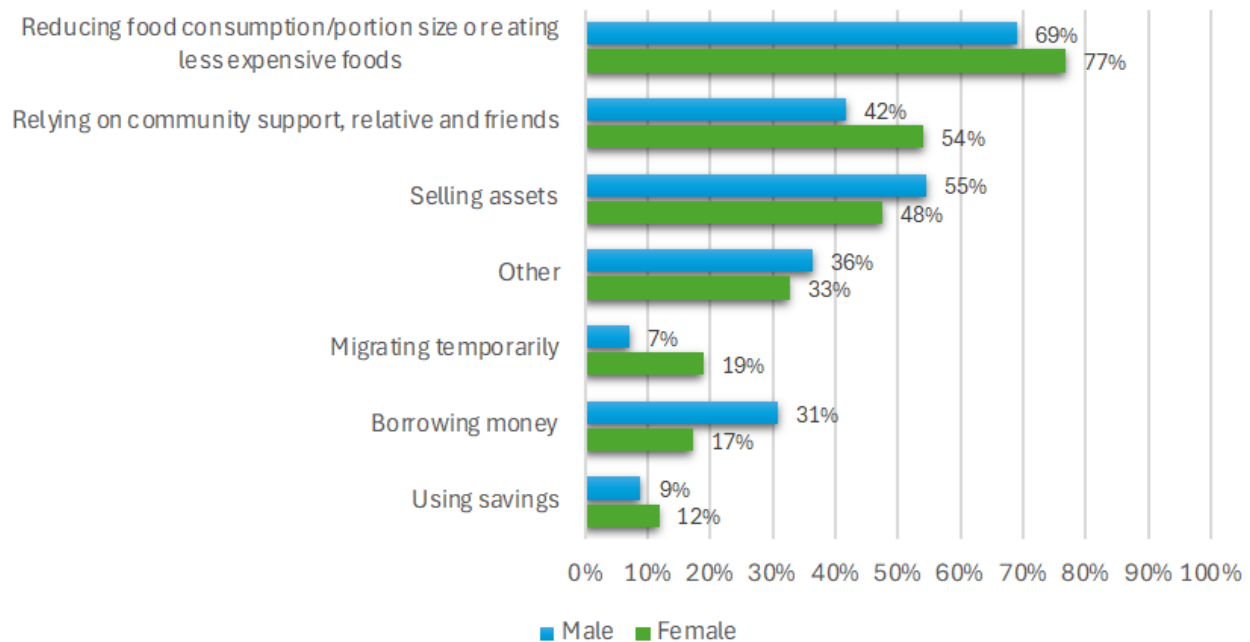


Figure 17: Coping strategies during climate shocks

On the other hand, men (31%) more commonly reported borrowing money than women (17%), likely due to men's greater access to credit systems or financial decision-making roles within households. The use of savings was relatively low for both genders but slightly higher among women (12%) than men (9%), possibly reflecting women's participation in informal saving schemes like village savings and loan associations. These coping mechanisms underscore how gendered power dynamics, access to resources, and societal roles influence the choices available to men and women when facing climate-induced shocks.

The expanded analysis of household and community-level coping strategies reveals patterns that closely mirror those observed at the individual level, yet also highlights subtle gendered differences shaped by social roles,

responsibilities, and access to resources. As with personal strategies, reducing food intake remains the most common coping mechanism, with slightly higher proportions of females (82%) and males (78%) adopting this method, reflecting women's traditional role in managing household food distribution, often sacrificing their intake to protect dependents. Community support through relatives and friends also featured prominently, with more women (54%) than men (42%) relying on social networks—an extension of women's traditionally stronger community ties and caregiving roles.

Coping strategies most likely to be used by your household or community to mitigate impact of climate shocks/hazards

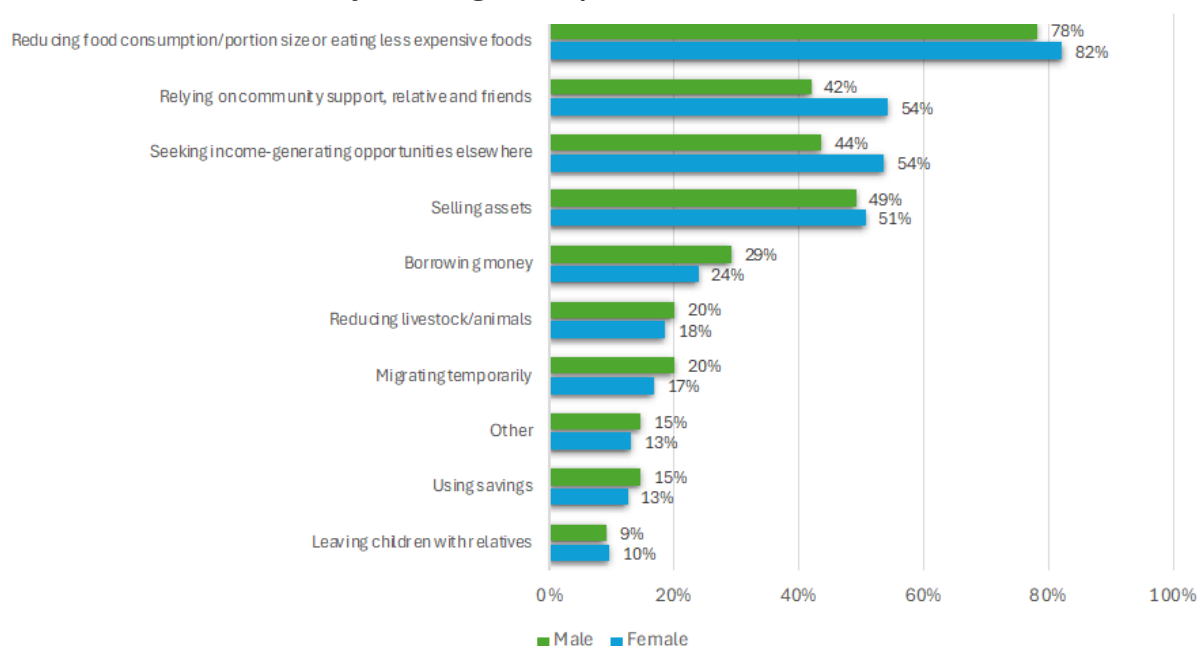


Figure 18: Household and community coping strategies to climate-induced disasters

Seeking income-generating opportunities away from home was more prevalent among men (54%) than women (44%), likely due to greater mobility, fewer domestic responsibilities, and cultural expectations that place economic provision on men. Similarly, more men (51%) than women (49%) reported selling household assets, consistent with male-dominated control over major family property. Borrowing money was slightly more common among females (29%) than males (24%), possibly reflecting women's participation in informal lending circles or rotating savings groups. Reducing livestock—a key household asset—was reported by 20% of men and 18% of women, suggesting a shared, male-led decision in agricultural communities.

The use of savings (15% males and 13% females) remained low, reinforcing earlier findings that both genders have limited financial cushions. Notably, leaving children with relatives, though least common, was slightly more frequent among women (10%) than men (9%), reinforcing the emotional and social burdens women carry in crises.

It perhaps indicates the perceived caring responsibility placed on women. Overall, these

trends underscore how gender roles and responsibilities influence access to, and the choice of, coping strategies during climate-induced shocks at both individual and communal levels.

The efficacy of coping strategies employed during climate-induced hazards elicited mixed responses from the study participants. As illustrated in Figure 19, a significant proportion—37% of respondents—expressed indifference or uncertainty about the effectiveness of these strategies, possibly indicating a lack of consistent results or inadequate knowledge to evaluate long-term outcomes. Meanwhile, 31% of respondents considered the strategies to be effective, suggesting that while some households and communities have found value in their current coping mechanisms, this confidence is not widespread. Only a small percentage (5%) viewed these strategies as very effective, highlighting that few people believe their coping approaches fully address the challenges they face.

How effective were these coping strategies?

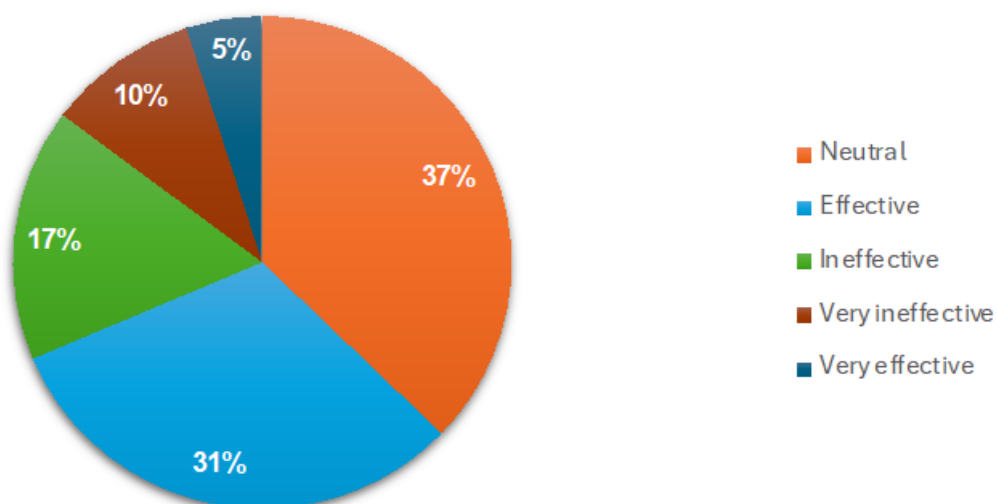


Figure 19: Efficacy of coping strategies during climate-induced hazards

On the other hand, a notable portion of respondents, comprising a combined 27% (17% saying ineffective and 10% saying very ineffective), view the current coping mechanisms as falling short of their needs. This sentiment could be driven by persistent food insecurity, asset depletion, or unsustainable solutions such as migration and borrowing, which often provide only short-term relief while deepening vulnerability. The data overall shows that community respondents generally view the current interventions as reactive or temporal hence does not fully meet their long-term gender-specific needs. This means expanding long term anticipatory community programmes like the borehole and solar powered irrigation systems that addresses current and future community food and water needs.

3.12 Integration of Gender into Anticipatory Action Planning

The World Food Programme and its partners have made significant strides in integrating

gender, protection, and inclusion into anticipatory action planning in Zimbabwe. For example, the WFP Gender Strategy 2023-2026, its National Strategy Plan (NSP), and gender-disaggregated data reporting demonstrate a commitment to incorporating gender considerations in programming. WFP Zimbabwe also has a Disability Policy and a Disability Road Map (2020) to guide data collection, raise awareness, and ensure people with disabilities can access programmes. Additionally, WFP's Protection and Accountability Policy helps guide community engagement during food and cash transfers to communities affected by seasonal food insecurity, economic shocks, and climate extremes, including in rural areas and the Tongogara Refugee Settlement.

Despite these progressive internal policies, gaps remain at the consortium or cluster level with potential for AA partners to proactively engage the Ministry of Women Affairs for improved policy and implementation coordination for standardised gender activities in the AA programme. The AA programme could benefit more though the Ministry and WFP's leadership to introduce an integrated gender, protection and

inclusion strategy for guiding AA planning and implementation across partners. The current arrangement with each partner' relying on its own gender, protection, and inclusion policies may be unsustainable for the effective coordination of AA programmes. Due to its presence at national, provincial and district levels provides continuity and expansion opportunities for AA planning and implementation beyond development partner implementation cycles.

3.13 Opportunities for Gender, Protection, Equity and Inclusive Practices

Based on the research findings, several key opportunities emerge that can inform the development of more effective and inclusive responses to climate-induced hazards in the three surveyed districts. First, there is a critical need to harness and integrate Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) into anticipatory action planning. For example, in Binga, participants reported several community-based knowledge systems such as the blooming of the Cicada tree or migration of specific birds as indicating the onset of the rain season. Local communities—especially elders and traditional leaders—possess deep-rooted knowledge on climate patterns, optimal planting periods, and natural coping mechanisms. Leveraging this knowledge not only enhances the relevance and timing of interventions but also addresses the issue of gatekeeping by building trust and mutual respect between government agencies and local actors. Engaging traditional leaders meaningfully in co-designing interventions could also reduce resistance to change. The reported case of the Binga chief who rejected drought-tolerant cowpeas could indicate the need for further community engagements to introduce new agricultural crops or programmes.

Secondly, the findings show that climate

hazards intensify gendered roles, with women disproportionately bearing the burden of coping through strategies such as food reduction, caregiving, and asset depletion. This presents an opportunity to introduce mechanised facilities like solar powered boreholes and mechanised agricultural tools to reduce dependence on manual labour for household and community activities. This could include providing motorised digging and weeding tools for women. Such tools can alleviate the excessive labour pressure on women and girls while promoting shared household responsibilities.

Additionally, the findings reveal a significant reliance on community networks for coping, suggesting that strengthening local support systems, cooperatives, and savings groups could enhance resilience. By formalising and supporting community-based safety nets, like village savings clubs and gardens ensures a structured and systematic approach ideal for development partners to support in ways that promotes inclusive and better tailored responses to local needs. Finally, the high proportion of respondents (37% neutral, 17% dissatisfied and 10% extremely dissatisfied) expressing dissatisfaction or indifference to existing interventions indicates a gap in communication, follow-up, and local ownership. This underscores the importance of participatory planning processes that involve communities, particularly women and youth, in every stage of disaster risk management. These inclusive approaches can help move responses from reactive and hardware-based to proactive, socially embedded, and gender-responsive systems that address immediate needs and build long-term adaptive capacity.

4. Discussion

The research findings highlight the evolving dynamics of climate-induced vulnerabilities and the importance of inclusive anticipatory action planning for the WFP and its partners in Zimbabwe. There has been notable progress in anticipatory action strategies and planning in WFP-supported districts, with growing awareness of the need to integrate gender and vulnerability considerations. This section discusses the implications of the study findings for AA planning and implementation in Zimbabwe.

4.1 Gender and Age Specific Challenges to Access Recovery Resources

The study highlights gender and age disparities in protection and inclusive access to resources during disaster risk recovery, with 54% of women and 45% of men reporting having equal access. While this indicates progress, a significant proportion remains excluded, pointing to structural barriers that hinder equitable recovery. The findings underline how post-disaster responses can unintentionally reinforce existing gender disparities if not designed inclusively. For example similar studies in Zimbabwe noted that climate change impacts are not gender-neutral with a disproportionate effect on women's agricultural-based livelihoods and food security due to unequal access to resources and power structures (Muchacha & Mushunje, 2019). Thus, gender and age-blind humanitarian interventions often result in inadequate support for demographic groups like women and girls as noted in this study are largely affected due to limited access to financial capital, land, and decision-making forums. This calls for deliberate targeting of recovery programs that consider gendered vulnerabilities and ensure equitable access to aid and livelihoods.

4.2 Negative Coping Strategies and Gendered Responses

Coping mechanisms in response to climate-induced shocks vary significantly along gender lines. Women are more likely to reduce food intake, rely on informal social networks, or engage in small-scale income-generating activities. At the same time, men tend to migrate or sell assets such as livestock. These patterns reflect more profound structural inequalities—women's responses are constrained by limited access to resources, restricted mobility, and overwhelming household care responsibilities. The personal coping sacrifices like reduced food intake by mothers to benefit children are findings consistent with comparable research on children and mitigation safeguards in disaster situations by Nhapi (2021) which notes that women prioritise children's food security and psychosocial needs during emergencies, often to the detriment of their well-being. The prevalence of these gendered coping strategies reveals the need for anticipatory action interventions that not only address food security and income generation but are also designed with a gender lens to reduce harmful trade-offs.

4.3 Perceptions of the Effectiveness of Coping Strategies

The findings reveal mixed perceptions regarding the effectiveness of current coping strategies. Only 5% of respondents consider them very effective, while 31% find them moderately effective. Notably, a combined 27% view them as ineffective. These perceptions highlight a growing disillusionment with existing adaptive responses,

often reactive and short-term. Ngwenya (2021), Nyahunda, Nemakonde, and Khoza (2024) asserts that enhancing the impact and sustainability of anticipatory actions requires community involvement, knowledge development, and stakeholder commitment to co-design coping strategies. Low levels of community trust in resilience programming reduce the impact and sustainability of anticipatory actions. Effective response strategies require local participation in co-planning and implementation to ensure that interventions are contextually relevant and perceived as credible and valuable by the affected communities.

4.4 Cultural and Religious Barriers to Adaptation

Cultural resistance to adaptation strategies—particularly in districts like Binga—poses a significant barrier to effective climate resilience. Community reluctance to adopt drought-resistant seeds or new agricultural practices stems from deep-rooted beliefs and mistrust of external interventions. Religious leaders also act as gatekeepers, sometimes restricting women's participation in public life and climate action. These challenges underscore the need for culturally sensitive programming. Related studies have reiterated that traditional authorities play a vital role in mobilising rural communities to adopt climate change adaptation practices (Musarandega, Chingombe, & Pillay, 2018). Likewise Nyahunda et al. (2024) concurs that natural and human resources, collective efficacy, indigenous knowledge systems, and livelihood diversification are determinants of resilience building in rural Zimbabwe. Thus, effective climate resilience requires engagement with community norms and institutions, particularly traditional and religious authorities, to foster ownership and reduce resistance. Participatory models that respect and include local belief systems can enable more effective adaptation and inclusive outcomes.

4.5 Role of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS)

Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) remain vital in predicting and responding to climate variability, yet they are increasingly undervalued in formal planning frameworks. Communities continue to rely on signs such as bird migrations, the flowering of specific trees, and animal behaviour to anticipate rainfall patterns or drought. However, the dominance of scientific, top-down approaches in climate interventions often sidelines this valuable knowledge. As a result recommendations are made to complement traditional approaches with modern strategies, improve traditional leaders' knowledge base, and revitalise traditional councils to address environmental issues (Musarandega et al., 2018). There is an increasing consensus and strong advocacy to integrate IKS with modern climate forecasting to enhance local relevance and trust in anticipatory action systems in Zimbabwe. Bridging this gap through the co-production of knowledge can improve early warning systems and increase community ownership of resilience measures.

4.6 Opportunities for Inclusive Innovation

The study identifies several emerging opportunities to improve climate resilience, particularly through inclusive innovation in Zimbabwe. Mechanisation of agricultural work can relieve women from labour-intensive tasks, while financial literacy and access to mobile banking can support diversified income sources. Additionally, mental health support is essential for men whose traditional provider roles are challenged by climate shocks. There are increasing calls advocating for interventions that challenge rigid gender norms, support psychosocial well-being, and empower both

men and women with new skills and roles in adaptation. Thus researchers caution against viewing women solely as victims, emphasising the importance of empowering both men and women with new skills and roles in adaptation in Zimbabwe (Mubaya, Mafongoya, & Obert, 2017). Introducing solar-powered infrastructure, drought-resistant crops, and accessible communication tools can all play a role in inclusive resilience-building.

4.7 Disability, Older Persons and Minority Population Vulnerabilities and Priorities

Climate-induced hazards disproportionately affect persons with disabilities, older adults, and minority populations, exacerbating their already marginalised status in Zimbabwe. Limited mobility, inaccessible infrastructure, and social exclusion restrict their access to critical water, shelter, and healthcare during climate emergencies. In some cases, older persons and those with disabilities are compelled to engage in strenuous or risky income-generating activities due to inadequate support systems, which further compromises their health and well-being. Studies show that disaster risk reduction initiatives often overlook people with disabilities in planning and decision-making processes (Bongo, Lungu, Van Niekerk, & Musarurwa, 2019).

This exclusion highlights the need for more inclusive policies and practices in Zimbabwe's civil protection efforts. Overlooking these vulnerable groups in climate policies and programme implementation creates a gap in anticipatory planning. Inclusive interventions—such as solar-powered mobility aids, age-friendly shelter design, and targeted financial literacy programs—are crucial for ensuring that resilience efforts do not leave anyone behind. It is key for government and development partners to reinforce and highlight the importance of disability and age-sensitive protection measures to promote equity and reduce systemic vulnerabilities in disaster response.

4.8 Changing Gender Roles and Responsibilities

The pressures of climate change are transforming traditional gender roles in surveyed communities. Women are increasingly responsible for agricultural labour, fetching water, and caring for children and the elderly, often without appropriate support or tools. This added burden strains their physical and emotional resilience. Meanwhile, men, facing shrinking employment opportunities and disrupted livelihood systems, often struggle with identity and psychological well-being. These shifts necessitate inclusive and gender-responsive planning. There is need for labour-saving technologies, mental health services, and inclusive economic empowerment

5. Conclusion

This study concludes that effective Anticipatory Action (AA) planning in Zimbabwe must be gender-responsive, inclusive, and grounded in local realities. The evidence shows that coping strategies to climate-induced hazards, such as reduced food consumption, asset sales, and temporary migration, are widely used but place

unequal burdens on different groups, especially women, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. For example, 82% of women compared to 78% of men reported reducing food intake, while 55% of men and 48% of women resorted to selling assets. These gendered differences are not only

due to economic disparities but are reinforced by cultural norms and systemic inequalities that limit access to resources and leadership opportunities for marginalised groups.

The study also highlights that cultural and religious practices hinder inclusive AA planning, particularly in districts like Binga, where traditional leaders resist adopting drought-tolerant crops and exclude women from key decision-making processes. Moreover, the limited perceived efficacy of current coping strategies—only 5% of respondents rated them as very effective, while 27% deemed them ineffective—points to a need for better-designed, more trusted AA mechanisms that reflect community priorities and capacities.

Changing gender roles in response to climate stressors further complicate household dynamics. Women are taking on more labour-intensive agricultural tasks without adequate support, while men face identity challenges linked to their inability to fulfil provider roles. This calls

for interventions that support both genders in adapting to their evolving responsibilities, including mental health support and labour-saving technologies.

Based on these findings, the study concludes that inclusive and participatory approaches that centre on the needs of vulnerable groups are critical. Mechanisms that incorporate indigenous knowledge systems (IKS), promote solidarity among women, and build trust through engagement with local leaders can strengthen the relevance and uptake of AA programming. WFP Zimbabwe and partners must adopt a dual approach—balancing tangible “hardware” interventions like infrastructure with transformative “software” strategies that promote equity, empowerment, and inclusive governance. This will ensure that anticipatory action not only protects lives but also drives long-term resilience and social justice in climate-affected communities.

6. Recommendations

Based on the findings and thematic discussions, practical and implementable recommendations are proposed for strengthening gender, protection, and inclusive Anticipatory Action (AA) Planning for WFP Zimbabwe.

6.1 Facilitate Age, disability and gender Inclusive Access to Climate-Appropriate Information Hubs for Anticipatory Action

Establish inclusive, community-based climate information hubs and accessible early warning

systems tailored to the diverse needs of women, men, youth, marginalised groups, and persons with disabilities. These hubs should integrate local languages, visual and audio formats, and mobile technology platforms (e.g., SMS, WhatsApp, and radio broadcasts), co-designed with community members and disability advocacy groups to ensure usability, cultural relevance, and timely dissemination of anticipatory action alerts and adaptation guidance. This could be done in partnerships with community radio initiatives that the Government of Zimbabwe initiated for access to a wider audience. The government pledged support for community radio stations, recognising their role in providing early warning systems and disseminating vital information, especially in rural areas.

6.2 Improve Gender-Sensitive Targeting in Recovery Assistance

WFP Zimbabwe CO should develop and implement robust gender-sensitive targeting frameworks that ensure equitable access to anticipatory action resources for both women and men. This includes conducting gender audits of early warning systems and response mechanisms to identify barriers to access. Cash and food assistance programs must prioritise women-headed households, widows, and other vulnerable female populations who often face exclusion from formal recovery channels. Capacity-building initiatives should also train local implementing partners to integrate gender equality principles into AA programming.

6.3 Address Harmful Coping Strategies Through Tailored Support

To mitigate reliance on negative coping strategies, WFP Zimbabwe CO should design interventions that directly address the distinct survival mechanisms women and men adopt. For women, this could include continued support for climate-resilient income-generating activities (e.g., poultry, kitchen gardens), access to safe spaces, and nutritional assistance. For men, economic empowerment initiatives coupled with mental health and psychosocial support could reduce the pressure to migrate or resort to asset stripping. Partnerships with men-focused organisations like Padare Men's Forum, which are grounded in local communities, could go a long way to achieve this proposed plan. Similarly, establishing community-based support groups that include both genders will help foster shared learning and collective resilience.

6.4 Enhance Community Trust Through Participatory Design

Given the varied perceived effectiveness of existing coping strategies, AA interventions must be co-designed with communities to align with local realities and build trust. WFP Zimbabwe CO should establish inclusive planning committees that engage women, men, youth, and marginalised groups from the outset. Feedback loops—such as community scorecards and participatory monitoring systems—can ensure accountability, strengthen credibility, and allow real-time course correction of anticipatory actions. This participatory approach will also enhance buy-in and uptake of early response measures.

6.5 Engage Traditional and Religious Leaders to Shift Harmful Norms

Cultural and religious resistance to climate innovations should be addressed through strategic engagement with local leaders. WFP Zimbabwe CO can support dialogue platforms where community influencers, including chiefs, elders, and faith leaders, are sensitised on the importance of gender-inclusive adaptation strategies. These leaders can serve as powerful allies in encouraging the adoption of drought-tolerant seeds, water conservation technologies, and women's leadership in community disaster risk management structures. Tailoring messaging to resonate with cultural values and beliefs will enhance the acceptance of new practices.

6.6 Integrate Indigenous Knowledge into Formal Early Warning Systems

To strengthen the relevance and credibility of AA initiatives, WFP Zimbabwe CO should institutionalise the integration of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) into formal early warning systems. This could be achieved by documenting traditional signs and practices for weather prediction and involving local experts in risk forecasting processes. WFP can facilitate community workshops that bring together meteorologists and indigenous knowledge holders to co-produce hybrid early warning tools. This approach enhances local ownership and improves the timeliness and accuracy of alerts.

6.7 Promote Inclusive Innovation for Livelihoods and Care Roles

Inclusive innovation must be central to the WFP Zimbabwe CO's anticipatory action plans. Support should be directed toward the adoption of labour-saving technologies, such as solar-powered irrigation, mobile payment platforms, and low-cost mechanised farming equipment, to ease women's work burdens. Financial literacy training, particularly for women and youth, will help diversify income streams and enhance financial resilience. Concurrently, WFP should explore partnerships with organisations like Padare to expand mental health services that target men and boys, helping to address the psychological impacts of shifting roles due to climate stressors.

6.8 Prioritise Persons with Disabilities, Older Adults and Marginalised Groups

WFP Zimbabwe CO must ensure that anticipatory interventions are designed to meet the needs of persons with disabilities, older persons, and marginalized communities. This includes ensuring physical accessibility of food distribution points, developing disability-sensitive early warning communication formats (e.g., braille, sign language, pictorial warnings), and providing age-friendly shelters. Partnerships with organisations like the National Association of Societies for the Care of the Handicapped (NASCOH) will provide a comparative advantage to fully implement this plan since it has community presence and expertise in disability issues. Targeted cash transfers and in-kind assistance should be adapted to these groups' specific needs and capacities. Establishing protection focal points within communities can help identify and respond to abuse or exploitation risks during crises.

6.9 Recognise and Support Evolving Gender Roles

WFP Zimbabwe CO should proactively recognise and support the evolving roles of women and men in the face of climate change. Programme designs should move beyond traditional gender assumptions and invest in skills training, leadership development, and asset ownership for women while also creating space for men to participate in caregiving and alternative livelihoods. Promoting inclusive decision-making platforms where both genders contribute equally can facilitate more balanced responsibilities and improve overall household and community resilience.

6.10 Integrate One Health into Anticipatory Action Interventions

Finally, WFP Zimbabwe CO and its AA partners should jointly develop gender, protection and inclusive plans with other UN agencies like WHO and UN Women to integrate zoonotic and related disease outbreaks through a One Health programme framework. Collaborative, integrated plans to roll out public health education awareness programmes on zoonotic disease pandemic preparedness will have a lasting impact on climate-induced diseases.

The One Health framework, which recognises the interconnectedness of human, animal, and environmental health, provides a holistic lens for addressing climate-related risks. Incorporating One Health into anticipatory action, interventions can proactively mitigate the impacts of climate change on health, ecosystems, and livelihoods before these risks escalate into crises. This approach is particularly relevant considering the human-wildlife contacts noted in the surveyed three districts. The AA partners must also work closely with the Zimbabwe National Parks and the Department of Veterinary Services to achieve this objective. capacities. Establishing protection focal points within communities can help identify and respond to abuse or exploitation risks during crises.

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