



After-Action Review of the Early Warning Messaging Activity under the Scaling up Early Warning and Anticipatory Action for Agriculture and Food Security Project (EWAA) in Zimbabwe



MSD Provincial head and project participants at Fumukwe, Gwanda ©FAO/Tsitsi

Background

The Scaling up Early Warning and Anticipatory Action for Agriculture and Food Security Project (EWAA) has collaborated with the Enhanced Resilience for Vulnerable Households in Zimbabwe Project (ERVHIZ) in Gwanda and Matobo districts of Matabeleland South in Zimbabwe to integrate an early warning system into the longer-term resilience project.

One aspect of this collaboration has been the **broadcast of early warning and short-range forecasting information** to farmers in Gwanda, parts of Matobo and parts of Beitbridge. During the 2021-22 agricultural season, farmers and households in the target wards received early warning and weather forecast messages twice a week to coincide with the Meteorological Services Department's 3-day forecasting period.

The Meteorological Services department ensured that **updated forecasts for the targeted areas are available on a regular basis**, and Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) facilitated the broadcast of these messages through various formats managed by the Ntepe-Manama Community Radio station.

The **early warning messages were transmitted through the four local languages that are indigenous** to the district; Sotho, Babirwa, Venda and Ndebele. This ensured that weather messages were simple enough for better understanding by the recipients.

The messages disseminated provided **information on the weather conditions for the following three days**. When extreme weather conditions were predicted, early warning information and corresponding advisories were broadcast to enable farmers to activate their coping strategies, and implement other pre-emptive actions to protect crops, livestock and assets.

At the end of the season an **After-Action Review** process was conducted to assess the impact of the messaging on the targeted farmers and derive recommendations for further improvement of the activity.

Achievements



Timely and regular messages

Farmers and households receive early warning and regular weather messages



Crops and livestock protected

The messages influenced their short-term farming choices



Messages in local language

13 790 farmers received weather information through SMS bulk services and other formats



Planning the days ahead

Extreme weather conditions were predicted, early warning and corresponding advisories were broadcast



Farmers in a session on Risk Awareness, Early Warning and Anticipatory Action. ©FAO/Tsitsi

Methodology

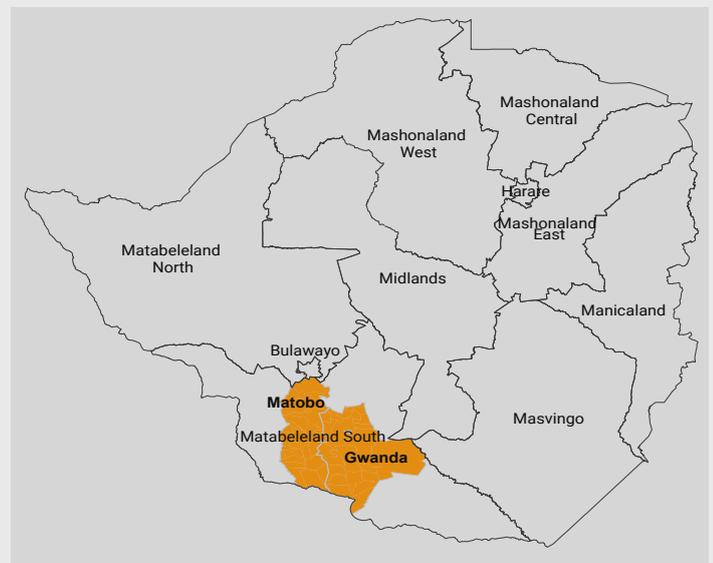
The format of the After-Action Review was focus group discussions with some of the **early warning message recipients**. Participants for the group discussion were organized in Nhwali (Ward 24) and Fumukwe (Ward 17) of Gwanda.

Key findings

Participants were mobilized through the Ntepe-Manama community radio station and comprised of farmers, local leaders and other community members. The **main objectives of the discussion were to find out if farmers received the messages, if they received them consistently and whether the messages influenced their short-term farming choices**. The following are the findings.

Language - The participants noted that, for the first time, they were able to receive weather information in their preferred languages, especially Sotho, Venda and Babirwa. It enabled them to understand better the conditions being described. Before this intervention, they had relied on South African and Botswana radio services for weather information as they had no local broadcast services in their preferred language.

Anticipatory actions - Farmers were able to plan for the days ahead, and protect crops and livestock based on the advisories issued. Thulani Maposa from Ward 17, indicated that when she received the SMS alert in the last week of April indicating that there was going to be some rain in the following three days, she was able to speed up the harvesting of her sorghum crop before it got moisture damaged.



Sources: UN. 2020.
Districts where the project was implemented.

Another farmer from ward 24 noted that they made a decision to postpone fertilizer application on their crop when they were notified through SMS that there was going to be high temperatures and no rain for the following days. It appears that the SMS alerting system was able, to some degree, to influence the short-term farming practices of the targeted group.

Accuracy - Participants noted that, generally, their experiences of daily weather conditions matched the SMS alerts that had been sent. This helped to improve trust in the early warning messaging services.

Total reach - In total, in the 2021-22 season, the early warning messages were sent to 13 790 recipients through SMS bulk services and other formats.

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