Safeguarding agricultural livelihoods and food security by scaling up Anticipatory Actions

Programme title:
Scaling up Early Warning Early Action for agriculture and food security

Resource partner:
the Government of Germany through the German Federal Foreign Office (GFFO)

People reached:
1 million farmers and agro/pastoralists

Implementation period:
1 March 2020–31 December 2022

Budget:
USD 4.26 million (EUR 3.69 million)

Figure 1. Recipient countries

The final boundary between the Sudan and South Sudan has not yet been determined. Final status of the Abyei area is not yet determined. The dotted line represents, approximately, the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the parties.
Context

The intensity and frequency of natural hazards and conflicts is increasing, leaving unprecedented levels of humanitarian needs. Natural hazards alone occur nearly five times as often today as 40 years ago. The number of people displaced by conflict, meanwhile, is the highest ever recorded. The current humanitarian system, designed to respond to humanitarian impacts which have already occurred, struggles to keep pace with the growing needs.

At the same time, we are living in an era of exponential technological development. Gains in technology and data coverage mean that there is an increasing availability of data, early warning systems, analysis and forecasting skills. Albeit still beset with limitations, they offer an unprecedented opportunity to have a fuller picture of a crisis, its drivers and potential evolution.

We cannot continue to wait for hazards to impact communities before we act. Anticipation must become an integral part of the way we address food crises. Globally, expanding needs, competing priorities and limited resources call for new approaches to make humanitarian interventions as wise and effective as possible. This ensures that the impacts of hazards are limited before they can grow into even more devastating and costly disasters and that people strengthen their resilience so they can better respond to threats and recover from shocks more quickly.

Most people facing acute hunger live in rural areas relying on agriculture for their survival. Protecting agricultural livelihoods ahead of disasters can mitigate and prevent food crises and reduce humanitarian needs. When their productive assets and livelihoods are safeguarded on time, people can avoid resorting to negative coping mechanisms that erode their capacity to sustain themselves, resulting in the need for food and other types of humanitarian assistance. As such, Anticipatory Action is fundamentally different from – and complements – emergency response which is based on an assessment of occurred losses and needs.

Strategic partnership

For this reason, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has been a strong advocate of forward-looking interventions and works closely with governments and partners in the humanitarian and scientific community to link early warning to Anticipatory Action.

FAO’s partnership with GFFO is a critical contribution to this agenda, helping to ensure capacities are in place in selected high-risk countries and regions to effectively monitor key risks to agriculture and food security, and act head of shocks.

Objective

To safeguard the agricultural livelihoods and food security of the most vulnerable people ahead of disasters and reduce humanitarian needs by systematically linking risk analysis to Anticipatory Action in high-risk countries.
Country selection criteria

- **Vulnerability and exposure.** Countries particularly prone to disasters and with large rural populations dependent on agriculture, and high prevalence of acute food insecurity.

- **Partnerships.** Countries were selected based on the need to ensure that the programme creates convergence with key partners and initiatives in Anticipatory Action.

- **FAO strategy.** Countries where FAO has a track record in emergency and resilience programming as well as operational capacities to support such programming.

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**Key achievements**

- Safeguarded the agricultural livelihoods of 1 million vulnerable farmers and agro/pastoralists ahead of forecast shocks.

- Trained 900 people at country, regional and global levels in early warning and Anticipatory Action programming.

- Set up Anticipatory Action protocols in 11 selected high-risk countries across Africa, Asia and Central America.

- Advanced Anticipatory Action as a corporate and global priority for food security.

- Contributed to reduced humanitarian needs by enhancing systematic risk analysis and links to Anticipatory Action.

- Streamlined Anticipatory Action by developing normative guidance and tools, including two e-learning courses.

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**Advanced Anticipatory Action**

The three-year programme was fundamental to mainstreaming Anticipatory Action within disaster risk management in FAO, particularly as a critical approach to address rising food insecurity globally. Anticipatory Action has increasingly become a corporate priority, integrated into FAO’s Strategic Framework 2022–2031. FAO has set a target of allocating 20 percent of emergency and resilience investments to Anticipatory Action by 2025.

The area of work has also seen impressive growth globally, gaining prominence on the international agenda, due in no small part to the work and advocacy of FAO. Throughout the programme, FAO has continued to strengthen collaboration and coordination with other key actors, such as the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the World Food Programme (WFP), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and Start Network, among others. FAO has also played a key role in partnerships and initiatives on Anticipatory Action, such as the Anticipation Hub, the Risk-informed Early Action Partnership, the Anticipatory Action Task Force, and the regional and national technical working groups on Anticipatory Action.
Scaled up Anticipatory Action on the ground

In addition to three projects, the contribution of GFFO to the Anticipatory Action window of the Special Fund for Emergency and Rehabilitation Activities between 2020 and 2022, enabled FAO to activate the following six Anticipatory Actions in five countries: Afghanistan (consequences of COVID-19 pandemic on agriculture and food security), Myanmar (displacement), the Syrian Arab Republic (drought), Tajikistan (locust) and twice in Madagascar (locust and drought). The interventions protected the agricultural livelihoods and food security of more than 1 million vulnerable farmers and pastoralists.

Support from GFFO enabled FAO to further expand partnerships and increase geographical coverage. Anticipatory Action interagency frameworks funded by the Central Emergency Response Fund were established in five countries prioritized by the GFFO programme, with substantial advice from FAO. Chad and the Niger now have an Anticipatory Action framework for drought, Malawi for dry spells and the Philippines for typhoons.

A three-year pilot programmatic partnership with the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO) was launched in 2021, aimed at scaling up Anticipatory Action including through social protection in Bangladesh, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Pakistan, the Philippines and Viet Nam. New initiatives with DG ECHO in 2022 focused on southern Africa (Mozambique and Zimbabwe), the Dry Corridor of Central America (El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua) and Cameroon, among others.
Streamlined Anticipatory Action

FAO developed normative guidance and tools to help align key definitions and guide the adoption of the anticipatory approach across different contexts and by different actors. This included the e-learning courses entitled Developing an Anticipatory Action system and Building a crisis timeline. A comprehensive review of drought trigger mechanisms informed FAO’s position paper on Anticipatory Action for slow-onset hazards, and the development of guidelines for setting drought Anticipatory Action triggers.

FAO facilitated trainings on developing Anticipatory Action systems for FAO staff, government officials and partners. A web-based Anticipatory Action trigger tool is being developed, with the aim of assisting country offices and other stakeholders in creating and fine-tuning these triggers.

Advocacy and integration

FAO published advocacy and communication materials including booklets, technical papers, social media campaigns, posters and briefs, and promoted Anticipatory Action at high-level fora and conferences, including the Global and Regional Dialogue Platforms on Anticipatory Humanitarian Action.

Working across continents, FAO supported the adoption of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Framework on Anticipatory Action in Disaster Management, the Maputo Declaration on the Commitment by the Southern African Development Community to Enhance Early Warning Early Action in the Region, as well as the Anticipatory Action-focused Strategy for Food Crises Prevention and Management 2021–2025, adopted by the Government of the Niger. FAO also supported the integration of Anticipatory Action within the strategic plan of the global Food Security Cluster.
FAO, WFP and the Global Network Against Food Crises convened an Anticipating food crises workshop in 2022, which generated the publication *Anticipating food crises – Common principles to address challenges relating to Anticipatory Action*, with principles and criteria considered key to scaling up Anticipatory Action in food crises.

**Looking ahead**

The three-year GFFO-funded programme has significantly contributed to the adoption and upscaling of Anticipatory Action as a key approach to curb the alarming global food insecurity trends. The second phase of the GFFO-FAO strategic partnership will go further to promote a system-wide shift towards Anticipatory Action, expanding the geographic scope and further consolidating the achievements of the programme. With deteriorating global food insecurity, increasing humanitarian needs and limited resources, it is crucial to continue to invest in cost-effective, impactful actions that sustain local food production in the face of predictable hazards.