

ANTICIPATORY ACTION

 **Aktion
Deutschland Hilft**
Bündnis der Hilfsorganisationen

 **World Vision**
EAST AFRICA REGION

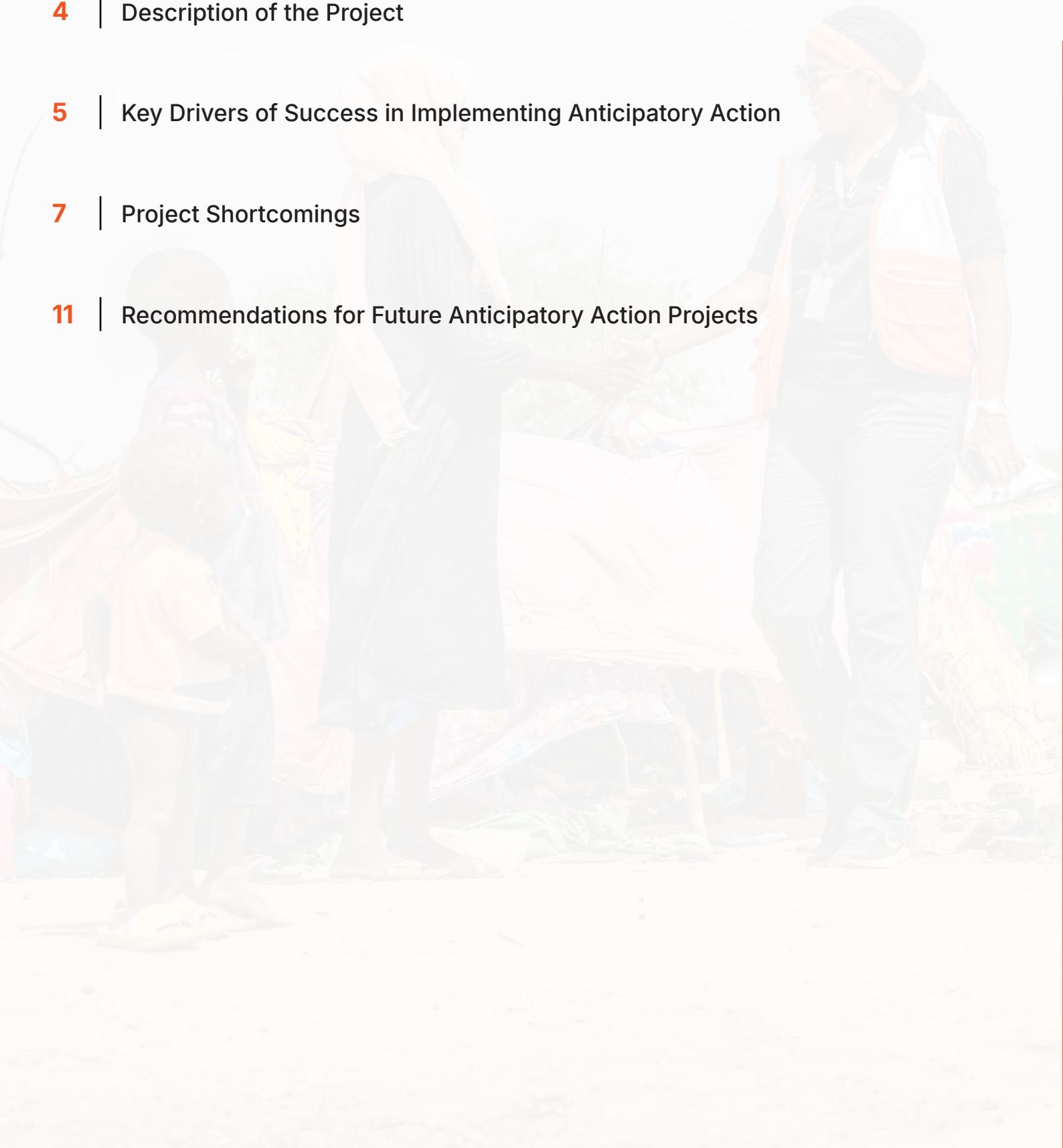
Lessons
Learned
Report

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Strengthening Community Capacity to Mitigate Impact of Recurrent Disasters

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Strengthening Community
Capacity to Mitigate Impact of
Recurrent Disasters in East Africa &
the Middle East through Anticipatory
Action: Lessons Learned and Best
Practices

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Description of the Context

The Aktion Deutschland Hilft, ADH project addressed the escalating impacts of climate change across five diverse East African and Middle Eastern countries—Kenya, Iraq, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Syria, and Lebanon—where each faced unique challenges exacerbated by climate change: Kenya grappled with intensified droughts threatening water security and livelihoods; Iraq suffered from severe water scarcity and desertification impacting vulnerable, conflict-affected families; Ethiopia endured increasingly severe droughts leading to food insecurity and displacement; South Sudan experienced compounded vulnerabilities from climate-induced droughts and floods disrupting agriculture; Lebanon faced heightened flood risks due to fragile infrastructure and erratic rainfall; and Syria's agriculture-dependent regions struggled with drought, desertification, and flood risks, necessitating urgent anticipatory action to build resilience.



Description of the Project

World Vision received funding from ADH to pilot a project on Anticipatory Action that ran from October 2023 to December 2024. The ADH funded pilot project was implemented across six countries—Kenya, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon—each facing unique but interconnected challenges related to climate change. In Kenya, droughts and changing weather patterns impact agriculture and water security, especially in arid regions, affecting livelihoods and health. Iraq struggles with severe water scarcity, exacerbated by both climate change and conflict, threatening food security and increasing socio-economic instability. Ethiopia faces prolonged droughts, affecting food production and water resources, leading to widespread hunger and displacement. South Sudan's reliance on rain-fed agriculture makes it highly vulnerable to both droughts

and floods, further complicated by ongoing conflict. Lebanon experiences extreme weather events, particularly flooding, which damage infrastructure, displace communities, and worsen public health. Lastly, Syria's rural areas, dependent on agriculture and livestock, suffer from drought, desertification, and flooding, with limited resources to adapt.

The Project Goal was to reduce the disaster risks and vulnerabilities of communities and populations at risk by taking preventive measures and early interventions in World Vision partner communities through; Establishment of Anticipatory Action Protocols in collaboration with Anticipation Platforms Actors; Stakeholders preparedness for action in case Anticipatory Action Protocols are activated; Exploring pre-financing mechanism with donors.



Key Drivers of Success in Implementing Anticipatory Action

Integration of AA into Field Office Strategies

FOs successfully integrated AA into their strategies, recognising its cost-effectiveness and proactive approach. This integration enhanced preparedness, resource allocation, and coordination, demonstrated by securing new funding (e.g., WFP grant in Lebanon) and incorporating AA indicators into organisational frameworks. Support Offices like WV Germany and WV Canada also increased AA funding and technical support, showcasing its growing traction.

Dissemination of Early Warning Messaging to Reach the Last Mile

The project bridged gaps in Early Warning Systems (EWS) by translating technical information into accessible formats. Community facilitators, trusted local figures, and mobile networks were leveraged to disseminate vital EWS information, achieving high awareness. Social media and community DRR committees were also utilised to ensure real-time updates and engagement.

Integration of Indigenous Knowledge with Scientific Forecasting

In Kenya and Ethiopia, Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) were successfully integrated with scientific forecasting, improving forecast accuracy. Local observations of animal behaviour and plant growth were validated and incorporated into forecasting models, enhancing predictions. Trusted local channels, like rainmakers and diviners, were used to communicate forecasts.

Stakeholder Engagement

Multi-stakeholder approaches were used to develop and trigger EWS protocols, with government-led approvals for sustainability. Collaborative frameworks, like County Steering Committees and Disaster Management Committees, ensured coordinated efforts. Continuous dialogue, transparency, and collaboration with diverse stakeholders fostered ownership and shared responsibility.



Increased Local Engagement

Local communities were actively involved in AA planning and implementation through participatory workshops and forums. The project ensured meaningful participation of vulnerable groups, especially women and children, incorporating GEDSI and tailored activities. Women's groups played key implementation roles in livelihood activities.

Project Ownership

World Vision acted as a facilitator, empowering local communities and authorities to lead AA initiatives. Local authorities were involved from the start, with capacity-building and training is envisioned to provide for long-term sustainability. A clear handover process ensured local authorities would continue managing AA protocols.

Increased Advocacy

The project strengthened local organisations and communities to understand and implement AA. The AA technical working group in Kenya served as a platform to collect and disseminate data on AA benefits. Evidence-based narratives were used to influence policymakers and donors.

Capacity Building

Training was conducted for staff, implementers, and government staff on AA elements, protocol development, and trigger mechanisms. Workshops,

simulations, and practical exercises reinforced training, with diverse literacy levels and local languages considered. Government employees were equipped to support communities in protocol implementation.

Cross-Sectoral Collaboration

Partnerships between government agencies, NGOs, and community organisations enhanced resource sharing and collaborative efforts. Appreciation of different sectoral contribution in the preparation of AA Protocols ensured more elaborate Anticipatory Actions are identified, make the AAP broad and pulling in greater support and collaboration of sectors like Livestock, Water, Health etc. These collaborations brought additional resources, expertise, and support to local efforts, enhancing the overall effectiveness of community engagement initiatives in AA implementation. Participation in regional forums, like the AA MENA forum, East Africa Dialogue Platform fostered knowledge sharing and opportunity to improve AA deliverables. Collaboration with peer agencies enhanced the efficacy of interventions.

Increased AA Visibility in Government Frameworks

The project increased AA visibility within government frameworks, with potent for endorsement and alignment. The AA TWG was vital to creating the AA strategy and roadmaps.



Project Shortcomings

Trigger Mechanisms and Simulation Processes

Simulation exercises provided an opportunity for project implementers to practice and refine the different phases of anticipatory actions. However, these exercises faced challenges, especially in the realms of trigger mechanisms and simulation processes. The lead time between a hazard being forecast and its occurrence can be very short, leaving a limited window for actions to be implemented. It is crucial for all stakeholders to know exactly what they need to do and how. Both internal and external challenges were experienced in different country offices. For example, in Iraq, the simulation was mistimed and conducted in the wrong scenario setting, indicating a capacity gap. Kenya's diverse climatic regions demand localised triggers, requiring more investment in understanding local scenarios and streamlining data.

Complexity and Accessibility of Information

The complexity and accessibility of information associated with AA methodologies often present significant challenges, impeding broader understanding and effective dissemination among stakeholders and communities. Many of these methodologies involve intricate frameworks, technical jargon, and multifaceted processes that can be daunting for non-experts, creating barriers to engagement and participation. Furthermore, the reliance on experiential learning generally slowed the progress of projects, as teams took longer to identify effective strategies and approaches. Ultimately, these challenges can undermine the overall effectiveness of anticipatory action initiatives, limiting their potential to foster resilience and proactive responses to emerging risks. To enhance the impact of AA methodologies, it is essential to simplify information dissemination, encourage robust sharing of experiences, and develop clear frameworks that integrate diverse knowledge systems, ensuring that both scientific insights and local practices inform anticipatory action strategies.

Technical Complexity

There is constant tension in the understanding regarding the differences between AA and early response, with unclear definitions and insufficient examples of AA application complicating planning and execution. The differences in understanding surrounding AA and its distinction from early response, preparedness, and disaster risk reduction (DRR) posed significant challenges for planning and execution. Confusion arose due to vague definitions and insufficient contextual explanations of what constitutes AA versus traditional early response mechanisms. Early response typically refers to actions taken after a risk has materialised, whereas AA focuses on proactive measures aimed at forecasting and preventing potential crises before they escalate. The potent lack of clarity can lead to misinterpretations among stakeholders,

ranging from community members to policymakers, who may conflate the two concepts. The absence of clear definitions and comprehensive examples further challenged the different team's ability to conceptualise and apply AA methodologies effectively. This ambiguity can result in resorting to conventional early response strategies, missing out on the proactive benefits of AA.

AA Resource Utilisation versus Burn Rate

A characteristic feature of the AA approach is a naturally low burn rate, which reflects the core principle of AA: financial resources dedicated to interventions are only deployed when pre-defined trigger thresholds are activated. This inherent characteristic sometimes led to confusion in comparison to standard project implementation models. This mixed understanding resulted in constant budget reviews, often fuelled by concerns about potential under-expenditure, despite adherence to the AA operational framework.

Short-Term Nature of AA Pilot Projects

A significant challenge lies in the inherently short-term nature of AA pilot projects. The current project durations are often insufficient for adequate activation and testing, necessitating timelines of two years or more. This longer timeframe would align better with the unpredictable timing of hazard onset, allowing for comprehensive data collection, protocol refinement, and robust evaluation of the AA approach's effectiveness.

Early Warning Systems

Despite the existence of early warning systems (EWS) in some regions, including well-established agro-meteorological services, certain gaps persisted. In Ethiopia, real-time updating of these systems was challenging, and information dissemination was often inconsistent, leading communities to perceive the information as insufficient. The disjointed nature of government structures responsible for EWS mechanisms, with departments like water and agriculture maintaining independent systems, further complicated coordination. In Kenya, while the Drought Management Authority was utilised, a more systematic approach across all government entities would have been beneficial. The multiplicity of actors and parallel systems resulted in confusion and data overload for communities. In Lebanon and Syria, the absence of pre-existing government EWS necessitated project investments in developing such systems, despite limited resources. The lack of climate information from government authorities in Syria, coupled with a lack of experience in AA, compounded the challenges.

Cross-Border Effects

In Kenya, the Marsabit Early Warning System (EWS) faced limitations in accommodating cross-border events. Transboundary hazards from Ethiopia, not anticipated by the EWS, posed significant challenges.



Differences in hazard priorities between neighbouring countries led to situations where one country prepared for a specific hazard, like drought, while being impacted by another, such as heavy rainfall from Ethiopia. Addressing these impacts requires cooperation and coordination at a cross-border or bilateral level to mitigate the effects of unexpected hazards.

Communities Relying on Indigenous Knowledge

Communities often rely more on indigenous knowledge, such as animal behaviour and celestial observations, for early warning. In Ethiopia, while indigenous knowledge systems are invaluable, their predominant reliance over scientific data can pose disadvantages for anticipatory action projects. Indigenous knowledge may lack the rigorous methodologies and wide-ranging data analysis found in scientific approaches, potentially leading to gaps in understanding complex climate patterns. The lack of integration between indigenous knowledge and scientific data can hinder accurate risk anticipation and mitigation, delaying necessary interventions and resource allocation. Not fully incorporating scientific insights alongside indigenous knowledge may compromise the success and sustainability of anticipatory action initiatives.

Siloed Approach and Lack of Coordination

A siloed approach and lack of coordination at the field level with other peer agencies and partners reduced the project's effectiveness. The protocol development process should be well-coordinated among agencies and the government to ensure concerted efforts and resources are assigned to a common protocol. A siloed approach led to duplication of efforts, missed opportunities to leverage technical expertise, and inconsistent messaging, causing confusion among communities.

Challenges in Data, Trigger, and Monitoring System Alignment

The implementation of AA initiatives faced significant challenges related to data, triggers, and monitoring systems, crucial for effective disaster response. Inconsistencies in these areas impacted timely triggering processes and led to a fragmented approach to early warning signals, complicating integration and slowing decision-making. There is a need to broaden the definition of triggers beyond traditional environmental indicators to include socio-economic data and market conditions. Recognizing differences between fast-onset and slow-onset events is essential for developing adaptable response strategies. Documenting and mapping existing triggers can enhance decision-making by providing a clearer understanding of potential risks.

Staff Turnover

Staff turnover significantly impacted the project, leading to disruptions in continuity and institutional knowledge essential for effective implementation. Frequent personnel changes resulted in the loss of experienced team members with critical insights into local contexts and established relationships with community stakeholders. This turnover created challenges in maintaining momentum, as new staff required time to acclimate to the project's goals and processes. The inconsistency in staffing affected training initiatives and capacity-building efforts, hindering the full realisation of anticipatory actions. Consequently, the project faced delays in achieving expected outcomes, as frequent reshuffling of roles and responsibilities made it difficult to meet project timelines for key activities, such as baselines and endlines, and affected sustaining effective coordination, communication, and trust among stakeholders.





Recommendations for Future Anticipatory Action Projects

Enhance Local Partnerships

Strengthening collaborations with local organisations and communities will enrich contextual understanding and foster local capacity. Ongoing partnerships can facilitate the sharing of resources and knowledge, allowing for more effective anticipatory actions.

Improve Access to Early Warning Information

Improving access to, communication of, and trust in early warning information is crucial for disaster risk management. Given that some community members do not systematically receive or always believe early warning information, improved, simplified, and locally relevant messaging is critical. Dissemination should encourage multiple means of communication, considering how different groups access and act on information. Donors should invest in local early warning and preparedness capacities, ensuring anticipatory action is locally led and integrated into a comprehensive disaster risk management approach.

Integrate Anticipatory Action with Resilience-Building & Development

Anticipatory action plays a crucial role in protracted crises but must be integrated with broader resilience-building efforts. Implementing anticipatory action during ongoing food crises can safeguard individuals with productive assets, such as livestock, by providing interventions like supplementary fodder, cash transfers, veterinary support, and improved water access. These actions can prevent families from sinking deeper into poverty. However, anticipatory actions must be scaled and systematised within functional, effective, and inclusive systems to be effective. Weak systems during non-crisis periods will struggle to adapt to forecasted shocks.

Develop Multi-Hazard Risk Monitoring Systems

To support crisis-affected communities, it is essential to develop multi-hazard risk monitoring and response systems that account for various shocks, including those driven by conflict. These systems must handle the complex and overlapping nature of crises, ensuring swift and targeted responses to a wide range of potential shocks. Incorporating flexible and responsive design principles can better support communities in coping with multiple and overlapping shocks.

Foster Adaptive Learning

Establish mechanisms for regular feedback and learning, enabling projects to adapt dynamically to changing conditions. Learning from each project phase

can inform future designs and improve responses, refining anticipatory actions to better suit evolving community needs.

Promote Gender-Responsive and Child-Friendly Approaches

Future programmes should explicitly factor in gender dynamics and child protection concerns. Tailoring interventions to be inclusive and consider the unique vulnerabilities of women and children will enhance the overall effectiveness of anticipatory actions.

Document Best Practices

Collecting and documenting lessons learned and best practices from various contexts can provide valuable insights for future programmes. A repository of experiences can serve as a learning tool for practitioners, offering guidance on effective strategies in different scenarios.

Ensure Sustainable Funding for AA


Exploring sustainable financing mechanisms is paramount for the long-term viability of Anticipatory Action (AA) initiatives. Beyond integrating AA into existing funding streams, a dedicated pooled fund specifically for AA could enhance its effectiveness. Establishing an internal AA pooled fund, supported by contributions from national offices, corporate sponsorships, and innovative financing models like parametric insurance, would provide a readily accessible source of funds for rapid response to emerging crises. This approach would bolster financial resilience and provide greater flexibility in responding to potential disasters, strengthening the ability to protect vulnerable communities and build resilience against frequent and severe hazards. Donors interested in funding AA should be approached and included in future business plans.

Invest in Training & Capacity Building

Continuous training for field implementers should focus on both technical skills and community engagement strategies. This dual focus enhances the team's ability to respond appropriately and engage effectively with diverse community stakeholders.

Leverage Technology

Utilising modern technology, such as mobile applications or remote sensing tools, for data collection and dissemination can improve the efficiency and accuracy of early warning systems. Technology should enhance connectivity between stakeholders and streamline communication during crises.



The project, has yielded valuable insights despite the challenges and differences in context. Key achievements include the successful implementation of the AA protocols as per the AA Framework guidance, integration of anticipatory action into field office strategies, enhanced community preparedness, and improved stakeholder engagement. Significant progress was made in fostering local ownership and improving the technical capacity of staff in a new concept area, anticipatory measures, ongoing attention to funding, capacity building, coordination, pre-positioning, and knowledge sharing will be vital for sustaining impact and enhancing resilience within vulnerable communities.

Securing sustainable funding remains a critical challenge. Future initiatives should incorporate anticipatory action strategies into annual budgets, particularly within the National Emergency Preparedness and Response Funding (NEPRF), to ensure ongoing financial support and programme viability beyond the project's life span. There is an ongoing need for an internal training programme in AA that enhance the technical capacity of field teams for implementing anticipatory action protocols. Continuous capacity-building efforts should include simulations and cross-training with other organisations eg WHH, WFP to name a few.

To facilitate knowledge sharing and collaboration among stakeholders, the Community of Practice (CoP) focused on anticipatory action should be a highly interactive space for cross learning and sharing of information This CoP would enable members to exchange best practices, consolidate efforts, and actively engage in learning from both successes and challenges experienced in the field.



World Vision

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