Save the Children

CHILD-CENTERED AND LOCALLY-LED ANTICIPATORY ACTION:

A LEARNING AND EVALUATION SYNTHESIS

2025

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It is hoped that the findings, good practices, and recommendations presented in this synthesis reflect and honour the inspiring work carried out to empower children and communities to become proactive agents of change in the face of climate-related shocks.

On the cover: *Children and youth who participated in the climate vulnerability and risk assessment and anticipatory action planning workshop in Diffa, Niger, July 2025. Moumouni Hakilou/Save the Children*

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Acronyms

AA	Anticipatory Action
AAP	Anticipatory Action Plan
ACMAD	African Center for Meteorological Applications for Development
BMD	Bangladesh Meteorological Department
CCA	Climate Change Adaptation
CEWAAC	Community Early Warning and Anticipatory Action committees (Nigeria)
CVA	Cash and Voucher Assistance
CVCA	Climate Vulnerability and Capacity Analysis
CO	Country office
DCCMS	Department of Climate Change and Meteorological Services of Malawi
DMC	Disaster Management Committees
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
EAP	Early Action Plan
EiE	Education in emergencies
EW/EWS	Early Warning/Early Warning Systems
FGD	Focus Group Discussions
FSL	Food Security and Livelihoods
HEA	Household Economy Analysis
HVCA	Hazard, Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment
INGD	National Institute for Disaster Management (Mozambique)
ICPAC	IGAD Climate Prediction and Applications Centre
IPC	Integrated Phase Classification
KI/KII	Key Informant / Key Informant Interviews
MEAL	Monitoring Evaluation Accountability and Learning
NFCS	National framework for climate services
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NMHS	National Meteorological and Hydrological Services
NiHSA	Nigeria Hydrological Services Agency
NiMET	Nigeria Meteorological Agency
SC	Save the Children
SoDMA	Somalia Disaster Management Agency
TLS	Temporary Learning Spaces
TWG	Technical Working Group
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme
WMO	World Meteorological Organisation

Executive Summary

Children are uniquely vulnerable and disproportionately impacted by the climate crisis. Nearly one billion children—almost half of all children globally— are at extremely high risk of experiencing the impacts of climate-related weather extremes[1]. According to Save the Children's *Born into the Climate Crisis 2 report*, *children born in 2020 are at least twice as likely to live a life marked by heatwaves, river floods, droughts, crop failures, wildfires and tropical cyclones comparted to their grandparents born in 1960.*

These events are already undermining children's rights to education, health and protection with cascading impacts including school disruption, malnutrition, displacement and increased exposure to violence and exploitation. Each year, an estimated 40 million children experience education disruptions due to climate-exacerbated emergencies[2]. As climate change intensifies the severity, frequency and impacts of extreme weather events, the need to safeguard the rights of children to survive, thrive and be protected-- now and in the future--has never been greater.

Yet, over half of humanitarian crises are predictable, presenting a major opportunity to act ahead of crisis[3].

Anticipatory action (AA)—the use of forecasts and early warning to trigger interventions ahead of shocks—has the well-documented potential to save lives, preserve livelihoods and protect schools and health services when they are most needed.

Anticipatory action addresses what is often a missing link between humanitarian, preparedness, disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation (CCA) efforts. **Anticipatory action shifts the focus from reactive crisis management to proactive risk reduction and resilience strengthening – key adaptive capacities in in the face of escalating climate threats.**

Yet, to be effective and sustainable, **anticipatory action must be locally led, building on community knowledge and capacities for dignified, and context-appropriate outcomes.**

Crucially, children should be placed at the heart of these efforts — not only as beneficiaries, but as active participants in shaping anticipatory approaches that safeguard their futures. Likewise, anticipatory action must account for the gendered and intersectional nature of climate risks. This means deliberately enabling women, girls, boys, persons with disabilities and other marginalised groups to meaningfully engage in the design of solutions that address the specific risks they face.

[1]Save the Children (2021): *Born into the Climate Crisis: Why we must act now to secure children's rights*
[2]UNICEF (2023): *Children in a displaced climate*
[3]ODI, Start Network (2019): *Financial flows mapping: the potential for a risk finance facility for civil society*

When the focus is shifted to communities and children's priorities and capacities, anticipatory action can address local challenges holistically, becoming a powerful tool for reducing risk and building resilience.

Recognising this, **Save the Children has been at the forefront of advancing a distinctly child-centred and locally led approach to AA.** Building from initial pilots in 2014, the organisation has progressively integrated AA into its humanitarian and development programs. This includes sectoral innovations in education and child protection, the development of quality benchmarks and guidance, and the implementation of large-scale initiatives such as the 2023–2024 El Niño response across 25 countries.

This synthesis consolidates learning from 26 projects across 12 countries, drawing on evaluations, case studies, and key informant interviews. The synthesis highlights a wide range of learning to date around the added value of engaging children and communities in anticipatory action. It presents good practice examples to promote and sustain child-centered, gender-sensitive, and community-based anticipatory approaches.

Main findings

Across all studied countries, anticipatory household-level cash transfers and complementary livelihoods support played a critical role in helping families meet immediate needs and maintain wellbeing during climate-related crises. In Ethiopia's Somali region, anticipatory interventions such as seed distribution, cash-for-work, and water infrastructure helped 82% of supported households to protect assets, sustain livelihoods, and reduce displacement risks ahead of droughts and floods.

Community and child-led anticipatory action reduced the impact of predicable climate hazards on children by preventing interruptions to education, and in some cases, lowering child protection risks. In Nigeria's Benue State, 95% of households used AA cash assistance to pay school fees during the 2024 floods, while local committees in flood-prone communities pre-positioned Temporary Learning Spaces in evacuation sites, enabling children to complete the school year despite displacement.

Locally-led anticipatory action contributed to resilience building for communities living in areas prone to climate hazards, as local actors communicated actionable early warning messages and implemented life-saving and protective early actions. In all contexts where DRR committees received group cash transfers (Ethiopia, Sudan, South Sudan, Nigeria, Bangladesh, Somalia) they implemented timely risk reduction initiatives – such as early warning dissemination, dike construction, drainage clearance and repair, waterway excavation, latrine and temporary learning space construction, and the organization of community evacuations - which helped communities minimise the impacts of predictable hazards.

Child and youth participation in anticipatory action increased their confidence and ability to cope with predictable climate-related impacts, as Save the Children projects gave them – often for the first time – an opportunity to voice out how disasters affect them, and propose solutions to better anticipate, prepare for, and manage risks. In Ethiopia, Madagascar, Bangladesh, South Sudan, Mozambique and Niger, children participated in local anticipatory action planning processes alongside community actors, and their proposed solutions were incorporated into the resulting local and/or school-based plans. In South Sudan, Niger, Bangladesh, Malawi and Somalia, children engaged in risk communication and preparedness ahead of forecasted shocks.

Save the Children's rights-based approach has enabled children's needs to inform National Anticipatory Action frameworks and co-develop child-centred climate services, and highlighted the urgent need for climate service frameworks that meet the needs of children, youth and the education sector - Following feedback from SAFE project participants in Gaibandha district, Bangladesh, the national cyclone early action protocol (EAP) now includes provisions for adequate shelter for women and children. Most evacuation centers also promote child-friendly spaces and measures to reduce gender-based violence, as adopted by the AA Technical Working Group.

Recommendations

To reduce specific risks for children, actively involve children in all phases of anticipatory action —from risk analysis to monitoring—based on their unique vulnerabilities, capacities, and perspectives

Empower communities to decide when and how to act ahead of predicted hazards by co-developing localised, child-sensitive triggers and impact-based forecasts which integrate scientific data with traditional and community knowledge

Embed gender-responsive approaches in anticipatory action by addressing unequal access to resources and decision-making, and ensuring safe, equitable participation of women, girls, and marginalised groups throughout AA processes

Secure flexible, pre-arranged funding for timely, child-focused anticipatory interventions, while investing in long-term systems strengthening to empower local actors and reduce fragmentation in climate risk financing

Develop inclusive, child-centred monitoring, evaluations and learning systems for anticipatory action that track evolving vulnerabilities as well as the added value of anticipatory action on at-risk populations, using gender-sensitive indicators and safe feedback mechanisms

1 Introduction

1.1 Study objectives

With funding from SC Denmark and the Hau'oli Mau Loa (HML) foundation, Save the Children commissioned this study to **assess the added value of child-centered, community-based, gender-sensitive AA, and explore good practice examples for scaling up.**

It specifically aims to:

1. Consolidate findings from evaluations and case studies on SC's anticipatory action initiatives to inform future project design and strategic decision-making
2. Identify achievements and enabling factors in reducing predictable crisis impacts and strengthening community resilience through child-centered, locally-led approaches
3. Illustrate how children and local community groups contributed to AA efforts, and provide practical examples on how to amplify their leadership role
4. Identify implementation challenges and recommend improvements to embed child-centered AA within broader adaptation, humanitarian, development, disaster risk management programming and financing systems.

1.2 Analytical framework

The central question guiding this synthesis is: **How have Save the Children's anticipatory investments and activities supported community- based AA and prevented or minimised predictable crisis impacts for children and contributed to strengthen community-based resilience?**

To provide a comprehensive analysis, the study explores the following aspects:

- Key achievements in enhancing children's and communities' coping capacities in the face of predictable climate-related risks
- Enabling factors that allowed communities and children to reduce the impacts of predictable crises impacts
- The nature and depth of engagement of community structures, children, and young adults in AA
- Good practice examples and recommendations to strengthen child and community engagement across all phases of AA

The synthesis process also served as a reflective space for Save the Children staff to consider appropriate MEAL framings to better capture child participation, community leadership, and the impacts of AA on resilience to predictable climate shocks in both the short and medium term[4].

[4]See Annex II

1.3 Scoping

The study encompassed evaluations from anticipatory action, preparedness and DRR initiatives implemented between 2021-25 across 12 countries. The table below summarises the key scoping elements of the study:

Type of interventions undertaken within AA projects	• Hazard, capacity, vulnerability and risk assessments • Awareness raising on disaster risks • Strengthening knowledge and capacities of programme participants and local structures through trainings and technical support on AA and DRR, including how to develop community based, child-centred plans • Support to national and local AA planning and implementation • Support to local risk monitoring • Forecast and EW message training, design and communication • Strengthening of local infrastructure such as schools, roads, bridges including minor repairs • Pre-hazard cash, food, agriculture and livestock –inputs and services, and NFI distribution
Focus countries	Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Peru, Somalia/ Somaliland, Sudan, South Sudan (12)
Country selection criteria	• Available project documentation • Strong contributions to Save the Children's AA learning agenda
# projects reviewed	26 (See 'List of reviewed projects' Annex VI)
Number of project documents reviewed	Impact evaluations: 11 Research reports: 6 Project and donor reports: 6 Case studies, learning reports and briefs: 6 Total: 29 (See 'Compilation of reviewed reports' Annex V)
Number of KII	28 (See 'KII list' Annex IV)

1.4 Methodology

The study lead carried out an initial desk review of existing project learning and evaluation materials, complemented by global reports such as the mid-term and endline reviews of the El Niño Initiative. Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and semi-structured interviews were then conducted with experts in DRR, AA, Education, Food Security and Livelihoods (FSL), and Child Protection across each of the focus countries between June and August 2025.

KIIs employed a core interview guide based on the study's analytical framework and adapted for each interview to reflect country-specific approaches, achievements, and contextual nuance. The list of interviewees is available in Annex IV, and transcripts are stored in a secure internal folder.

Interview responses were coded thematically using a matrix aligned with the analytical framework, enabling cross-country comparison across key themes. Follow-up interviews or clarification meetings were conducted as needed to address information gaps and validate emerging findings.

1.5 Limitations

The study's timeframe limited primary data collection to Save the Children staff and therefore does not directly capture the perspectives of local partners, government stakeholders, or community members including children.

However, some of the evaluations reviewed for this synthesis did include children's views, which are reflected where available.

Despite recommendations from the study advisory group, there was insufficient time to assess the methodological quality of all evaluation and learning reports, which may affect the consistency of evidence across sources.

Finally, the synthesis focused primarily on AA interventions addressing climate-related hazards in rural settings and did not explore anticipatory action for other predictable shocks—such as conflict, displacement, or market-related risks—or in urban contexts, where AA remains underexplored.

2 Findings

2.1 Save the Children's evolving approach to Anticipatory Action

Save the Children's Framework for Anticipatory Action articulates a distinctly child-centered and community-based approach[5], rooted in child rights, commitment to localisation and inclusive risk reduction.

Since initial pilots in 2014[6], the organisation has progressively expanded the scope of AA across its programming and operational approaches. Drawing on its expertise in addressing slow onset food crises as well as community-led and school-based DRR and institutional models for risk informed preparedness, Save the Children has integrated AA into sectoral strategies and operational approaches to address the immediate and near-term risks children face due to climate-related hazards. For example, internal guidance[7;8] and capacity strengthening have supported country teams in designing and piloting child protection and education programmes that anticipate climate risks in Nigeria, Somalia, Malawi, and Ethiopia.

Despite these advancements, the 2024 El Niño initiative (see box 1) endline review highlighted limited evidence of truly child-centered AA, underscoring the need to empower children, youth, and communities in AA design and monitoring, and to document differentiated impacts on girls and boys.

Box 1 -
Save the Children's El Nino Initiative
In June 2023, in anticipation of the devasting impact of El Niño on children worldwide, SC launched an initiative across global, regional, country teams, and partners to prepare for and act in advance of El Niño related impacts. SC used this moment to test tools, guidance and support systems for anticipatory action. Based on analysis of expected impacts, capacity to respond, and readiness for early action, 15 countries were selected to receive internal humanitarian funds for preparedness and AA. In total, 25 countries developed plans for El Niño. Key progress and challenges were captured in a *Learning Brief*.

[5]Save the Children (2024): *Anticipatory Action: A Child-Centered Guide*
[6]Save the Children UK (2017): *Achieving true Early Action: A summary of Save the Children's learning from 3 pilot projects to mitigate slow onset food and nutrition crises (2014-2017)*
[7]Save the Children (2024): *Child Protection in Anticipatory Action: Briefing Note, Matrix of Actions and Relevant Resources*
[8]Save the Children (2023): *Anticipatory Action in Education*

Since then, Save the Children has strengthened its child-centered and locally led AA approach by developing guidance, quality benchmarks (see box 2), designing and rolling out trainings for staff and partners, reviewing AA programmes with a child protection perspective, proposing a MEAL framework for AA[9], developing tools and guidance for Early Action Protocols (EAPs) development and monitoring and improving reporting to enhance transparency and unlock pooled and flexible funding.

Recognising AA as part of the broader disaster and climate risk management continuums, Save the Children aims to embed anticipatory capacities and systems within longer term and systemic approaches to address disaster and climate-related risks in ways that put children and communities at the centre, as outlined in Annex I.

Box 2 – Save the Children's Quality Benchmarks for anticipatory action

Strategy, Approach and Coordination	✓ Actions and plans are aligned with existing National Disaster Risk Management Framework and in coordination with National Disaster Management Authorities at sub-national and national levels ✓ Actions and plans are coordinated with existing Anticipatory Action and Early Warning or Early Action initiatives and working groups (govt and others)
Risk Information, Forecasting and Early Warning	✓ Actions are based on assessment of risk and probable impacts on children and communities ✓ Use of triggers validated at the national level and adapted to local level- window of opportunity ✓ Use of credible forecasts
Planning, Operations and Delivery	✓ Intent of actions is to reduce the impact of predictable hazards and preidentified impacts on children and communities within the window of opportunity ✓ Risk communication and or early warning part of plans ✓ Plans follow relevant sector-specific guidance and standards
Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning	✓ Monitoring and reporting on actions ✓ Tracking and documentation of actions ✓ Use of AA core indicators
Funding	✓ Leverage available flexible funding as possible (crisis modifiers, program flexibility, Humanitarian Fund, Country-Based Pooled Funds)

2.2 Scope of SC's AA programming

According to Save the Children's latest annual Anticipatory Action report[10], at the end of 2024, 23 Early Action Protocols and/or Anticipatory Action Plans[11] were in place in 15 countries for hazards including drought, flood, heat wave, cold wave, landslides, fire, crop pest infestation and disease outbreak. In 2024 15 plans were activated in 11 countries as a result of preagreed triggers being reached, resulting in **798,492 people including more than 504,143 children being supported to better anticipate, prepare for and respond to multiple hazards.**[12]

[9]See Annex II
[10]Save the Children (2024): *Save the Children's report on Anticipatory Action in 2024: Acting early to ensure children survive, learn and are protected*
[11]Both EAP (Early Action Protocol) and AAP (Anticipatory Action Plan) outline triggers and plans for action ahead of a crisis with the intent to mitigate impacts on children and communities. An EAP is a detailed and step-by-step outline describing specific operational guidelines to implement AA, where the AAP serves as a light touch framework to activate AA and guide implementation at a more local level.
[12]These figures do not include instances where SC participated as a part of collective AA with Start Network partners (i.e Zimbabwe and Nicaragua activations). Plus, the report only mapped formalised AAP and EAP activations.

The below map illustrates the geographical coverage of formally documented EAP and Anticipatory Action Plans (AAPs) and trigger-based activations, which were developed and implemented in collaboration with communities and children, government, non-governmental organisations, national/local organisations, and meteorological agencies to address the risk to lives, livelihoods, protection, education and health. Annex IV the key sectors of interventions per country.

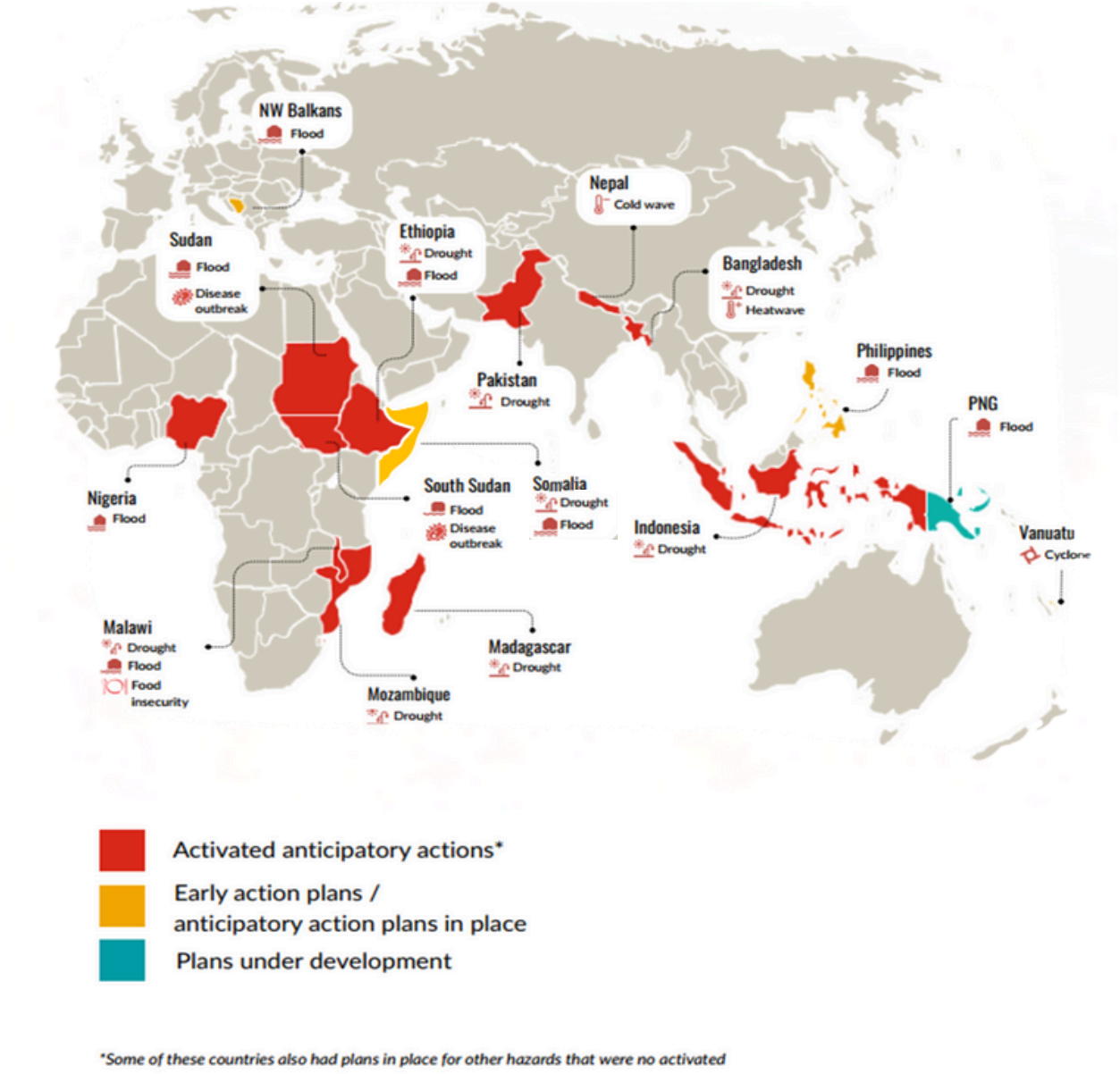


Figure 1: Geographical coverage of EAPs and AAPs which were under development, in place or activated with SC's support in 2024

This study complements these findings by delving deeper into the processes that accompanied the development, activation and implementation of the multisectoral EAPs or community-based and/or area specific AAPs[13] and providing evidence of the changes that happened as a result in the lives of children, their families and communities.

[13]Despite having activated EAPs, Nepal, Indonesia and Pakistan are not part of the studied countries

2.3 Achievements in reducing climate-related risks for children and communities

Anticipatory action is most effective when children and their communities are empowered to take timely, preventive measures that reduce the impact of predictable hazards. This section highlights some of the tangible outcomes of AA-related interventions, both in protecting the lives and wellbeing of affected populations.

2.3.1 Facilitating physical safety and timely evacuations

Evaluations conducted in communities affected by floods, landslides, and cyclones show that **locally-led anticipatory action interventions played a critical role in protecting lives and reducing harm.**

In 2023, the town of Beletweyne, Somalia, experienced predicted flooding of unprecedented magnitude exacerbated by El Niño conditions. As part of an anticipatory action pilot targeting the locality, timely cash transfers and child-led early warning dissemination enabled at-risk households to evacuate from flood-prone zones, helping to prevent loss of life.

In Bangladesh, where Save the Children has been piloting anticipatory action for landslides since 2024, with funding from ECHO, early interventions enabled the **safe evacuation of 550 people**—including pregnant women—thanks to trained local volunteers and service providers (*see photo*). These actors played a critical role in communicating alerts from the Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD) and facilitating timely, protective actions at the community level.

Volunteers in Chattogram district helping vulnerable households evacuating their home ahead of landslide alert. Sultana Jahan Shompa/Save the Children

However, across many countries, communities were often hesitant to leave in advance of visible signs of danger, fearing loss of livelihoods. Poor shelter conditions and delayed access to water in evacuation sites also exposed people to secondary health and protection risks—highlighting the need for multi-hazard planning and flexible timelines in AA design.

Encouragingly, KIIs revealed that community-led communication of warnings increased trust and uptake of life-saving actions.

2.3.2 Supporting food security, livelihoods and income protection

Across all studied countries, anticipatory household-level cash transfers and complementary livelihoods support played a critical role in **helping families meet immediate needs and maintain wellbeing during climate-related crises.**

In the Somali region of Ethiopia, evidence from the Enhancing Localized Early Warning and Early Action (EWEA) project demonstrates that anticipatory interventions—such as the distribution of Sudan grass seed (see photo), cash-for-work initiatives, and the installation of water harvesting infrastructure—played a critical role in strengthening food and water security, safeguarding livelihoods, and mitigating displacement risks. As a result, 82% of surveyed households (336 respondents) reported that these anticipatory actions enabled them to protect household assets, preserve livelihoods, and save lives.

Halima, a 45 year old farmer in the Somali region of Ethiopia, holds freshly cut fodder grass. Thanks to timely seed distribution, the 2024 harvest was sufficient to feed her livestock and maintain a reserve for the extended dry season, ensuring the well-being of her animals throughout the year. Seifu Asseged/Save the Children

In Nigeria and Kenya, **pre-flood cash assistance enabled proactive spending on food, health and education, contributing to household stability and reducing reliance on negative coping strategies.**

However, post-shock assessments revealed that AA alone was not sufficient for households to maintain their food security status after the shock[14;15]. Indeed, in protracted crisis settings like Somaliland and Kenya, anticipatory action—particularly short-term cash transfers—helped households meet immediate needs but tended to have only temporary effects on food security and limited impact on livelihoods.

Similarly in Nigeria, while AA CVA alone led to measurable improvements—including a 16 percentage point increase in 'acceptable' food consumption and a 19 percentage point decrease in 'poor' consumption from project baseline to endline—its protective effect diminished immediately after the floods.

These findings suggest that to be effective in food insecure contexts and increasingly frequent and intense extreme weather events, AA to protect lives and livelihoods from predictable crisis impacts must be complemented by humanitarian support to address immediate needs. Moreover, where feasible, AA should be aligned with long term development and adaptation investments. This involves embedding AA into broader resilience-building strategies that address chronic vulnerabilities and consumption needs beyond the forecasted shock.

> *"The cash was used to buy food, start a business, pay school fees and also rented a place to stay. This helped my household in preparing for the flood"*
>
> Female KII, Benue, Nigeria

While the extent and duration of livelihood protection varied across countries and contexts, some households could invest in income diversification. This was the case in South Sudan, where pre-crisis cash disbursed ahead of the flood peak allowed households to purchase goats and chickens[16]. Similarly, in Sudan, adults and children from the study group reported reduced flood-related livelihood losses over two years, attributed to a combination of seed distribution, crop protection measures, and veterinary support[17]. While direct income increases were not always measured, households in both countries reported improved economic resilience and a greater capacity to mitigate the impact of floods on their livelihoods.

[14]Save the Children UK (2024) *Lessons in Anticipatory Action: An operational pilot for flooding in Kenya*
[15]Save the Children (2025): *A Journey to Resilience: Cash for anticipatory action in Nigeria*
[16]Save the Children (2023) *Stepping Back Going Forward: Learnings form locally led anticipatory action in Maban South Sudan*
[17]Save the Children (2024) *Flood Disaster Risk Reduction & Anticipatory Action Activties in Blue Nile, Sudan*

2.3.3 Ensuring Learning Continuity for Children

An important finding from this study is that **communities supported with anticipatory action prioritised children's education during shock periods.**

As children in South Sudan, Nigeria, Sudan, Bangladesh shared their concerns about the interruption of school during floods, community structures in charge of DRR prioritised **repairs of roads leading to schools as well as of school buildings.**

In Bangladesh, members of Uria Upizala disaster management committee constructed a drum raft allowing 100 students to travel to schools. In Maban county, South Sudan, DRR committees worked together with school committees ahead of forecasted floods in 2024 to renovate school premises, clear ditches, dig water ways around school (*see photo*), and construct temporary learning spaces leading to '*markable increase in school enrolments, doubled class attendance, and ensured continuity throughout the flooding season*'.

> *'In previous years, children reported that education was disrupted 4-5 months a year due to floods and IDPs settling in the schools – now they could access education the whole year'*
>
> Maban County Education Director, South Sudan

Water drainage challenge excavated by Bankuman Primary school community to form a dyke around the school to protect it from flooding, in June 2024. Zechariah Michael/Save the Children

More recently in Blue Nile region, Sudan, DRR committees set up infrastructure so that children can pass the river and continue to school during the 2025 rainy season.

Families also used direct household cash assistance to **pay for children's school fees.** This was the case in Malawi, where 55.3% of beneficiaries chose to use drought-anticipatory cash to support children's education and Madagascar, where children's education was the biggest source of expense for households that received cash and in-kind asset transfer to minimise the impact of drought (Education was 34% of household expenditure, while food was 31%).

Similarly, in Benue State in Nigeria, *nearly all the households (95%) in Benue and about half in Kogi (54%) also reported using the cash assistance to cover children's school fees*[18] during the 2024 floods. As 2025 May-September seasonal forecasts announced above normal rainfall in Adamawa and Benue state, Nigeria, Community Early Warning and Anticipatory Action Committees (CEWAACs) in Dagiyo and Utugologwu community constructed Temporary Learning Spaces (TLS) in pre-identified evacuation sites so that children were able to finish their school year.

Investments in child-focused anticipatory action were crucial in upholding children's right to education during the 2023 El Niño-induced drought and heatwave in Kurigram district, Bangladesh. 600 students received umbrellas, caps and water bottles, and benefited from rescheduled school times and awareness raising sessions on heat impacts. As a result of this, 97.5% of project impact evaluation participants observed improved access to education compared to years with similar levels of drought. This marked a significant improvement for these localities who used to experience high school absentee rates in previous extreme weather events.[19]

[18]Save the Children (2025): *A Journey to Resilience: Cash for anticipatory action in Nigeria*
[19]Save the Children (2025): *Post-Impact Assessment on the Impact of Early Action for Drought and Heatwave*

2.3.4 Reducing child protection risks

Anticipatory action can support efforts to **protect children from physical and psychological harm during and after a crisis.**

The Tiyende Pamodzi project in Zomba district, Malawi, exemplifies how formal and informal child protection systems can be strengthened by integrating AA into community structures, schools, and local governance. As part of multicounty children protection in AA initiative (see box 3), the project established school-based DRM clubs, built the capacity of child protection actors, and operationalised EWS, enabling communities to identify and mitigate protection risks—such as child labor, early marriage, and abuse—before crises occurred.

Notably, the project fostered child-led risk mapping and advocacy, improved psychosocial support systems, and enhanced mobility for frontline responders, **resulting in faster, more coordinated protection responses and increased reporting of protection concerns.**

Box 3 – Integrating anticipatory action into child protection programming

In March 2024, Save the Children launched an internal initiative to consolidate learning and strengthen CO's capacity on how to integrate AA within child protection (CP). A key takeaway from participants was *that existing child protection risks will almost always increase during and after crises. Therefore, anticipatory actions that mitigate protection risks to children should be implemented as priority and no-regrets actions and do not necessarily require stand-alone monitoring or triggers.*

As a result, locally-led projects were piloted in Ethiopia, Malawi, Nigeria and Somalia, bringing important learning on how to protect children from harm during climate-related shock periods.

Child-focused risk communication is another important way for reducing harm to children—not only by raising awareness of how crises can affect them, but also by offering clear, actionable guidance to help prevent avoidable risks.

In Bangladesh, the SAFE project engaged child rights experts as well as children to codevelop and communicate messages about appropriate psychosocial behaviours during floods, and direct both adults and children to a government toll-free helpline for reporting protection concerns. Notably, 79.41% of surveyed participants confirmed receiving child protection messages—communicated via leaflets and audio formats—prior to or during the flood. **All respondents reported that these messages directly contributed to safeguarding their children during the crisis.**

2.3.5 Strengthening health services before and during shock periods

Anticipatory Action in the health sector is an emerging area for Save the Children, offering limited impact data as of now.

Nevertheless, country teams have been increasingly engaging with health ministries – especially in Somalia, Malawi and Sudan - in reducing the impacts of predictable disease outbreaks resulting from climate-related hazards, widening the reach and impact of health focused anticipatory actions.

Since 2021, Save the Children and the Sudanese Ministry of Health (MoH) at national and federal levels have been pioneering AA for flood-induced disease outbreaks since 2021. During the September 2023 flooding episode in Blue Nile, a DRR and AA flood project funded by ECHO and the Start Network successfully maintained health services during the flood season and ensured access to basic health services in the supported communities, with 85% of KIs and surveyed households confirming improvements compared to previous flooding years.[20]

The project evaluation also found notable reductions in disease prevalence. For example, malaria rates decreased in 8% of study group participants compared to only 1% in the control group who did not receive anticipatory action or flood disaster risk reduction support. This suggests the effectiveness of anticipatory health interventions, while underscoring the need for large scale and longer-term interventions to contain the spread of vector borne diseases during the wet season.

Finally, health specific advisories communicated as part of the project were also appreciated, with 99% of the 47% participants who received them reporting that the messages helped them adopt prevention measures for flood risk mitigation.

[20]Save the Children (2024) *Flood Disaster Risk Reduction & Anticipatory Action Activities in Blue Nile, Sudan*

Vector control and environmental department team from the Sudan Ministry of Health during the inauguration of a cleaning and spraying campaign for malaria, dengue fever and cholera outbreak prevention in Blue Nile State in December 2024. Abdelmahmoud Abdelkreem/Save the Children

Building on these learnings, the country team used GFFO funds to develop EAPs and community-based AA plans for flood-related diseases including malaria, cholera, and dengue in Blue Nile State. In 2024, triggers for cholera outbreaks developed together with communities were reached, activating MoH-led child-centred risk communication, vector control campaigns, and street cleaning operations, contributing to a reduction of outbreak risks in the targeted communities (*see photo*).

Main conclusions:

- Anticipatory household-level cash transfers and complementary livelihoods support helped families meet immediate needs and maintain wellbeing during climate-related crises, though in protracted contexts with overlapping shocks, AA has primarily addressed urgent needs rather than protecting assets or strengthen capacities to prepare for shocks
- Community and child-led anticipatory action reduced the impact of predicable climate hazards on children by preventing interruptions to education, and in some cases, lowering child protection risks, thanks to timely and adequate cash assistance to households, DRR committees and school clubs
- Locally-led anticipatory action contributed to resilience building for communities living in areas prone to climate hazards, as local actors communicated actionable early warning messages and implemented life-saving and protective early actions.

2.4 What works? Enabling processes for anticipatory action to effectively respond to the needs of children and communities

2.4.1 Building Community leadership in AA

Supporting individuals and community groups to recognize and leverage their capacity to drive local anticipatory action efforts often led to visible improvements in risk reduction outcomes, including tangible benefits for children

Anticipatory action projectscatalysed the potential of local actors to come together and provide lifesaving preparation support to their communities. *Table 2* illustrates the wide range of preparedness and AAs undertaken by local structures.

In all contexts where DRR committees received **group cash transfers** (Ethiopia, Sudan, South Sudan, Nigeria, Bangladesh, Somalia) they successfully implemented timely risk reduction initiatives – such as early warning dissemination, dike construction to reduce both flood- and drought-related risks, drainage clearance and repair, waterway excavation, latrine and temporary learning space construction, and the organization of community evacuations -which helped communities minimise the impacts of predictable hazards.

For example, group cash in South Sudan and Nigeria, is released as a one-off payment for AA preparedness at seasonal timescale to the DRR committees who are responsible for implementing AA plans, and reporting on how funds were used.

In South Sudan, members from DRR committees developed a sense of ownership and agency, which in turn, resulted in the community members respecting and trusting them. They demanded accountability on how DRR committees are using funds and making decisions – with one instance of members from a DRR committee deciding to dissolve it after finding out that funds were mismanaged.

According to the South Sudan Maban project evaluation, surveyed community members recognised the instrumental role of DRR committee members in strengthening the resilience of their communities in the face of floods.

> *"There was open sharing of information on key disaster risks in our community. This was through continuous meeting with community flood committee. " Female KII, Maban, South Sudan*
>
> *Source: Stepping Back Going Forward: Learnings form locally led anticipatory action in Maban South Sudan, Save the Children*

In Nigeria – CEWAACs – who Save the Children set up with members from trusted community-based organisations – are recognised by local government emergency management council who supports their efforts to increase community flood resilience. Members meet when NiMet and NiHSA forecasts indicate that preparedness thresholds have been reached and initiate AA as a result, such as the construction of latrines and temporary learning spaces on higher grounds for school children.

> *'CEWAAGs share their ideas with us rather than asking for financial or technical support. Even if Save the Children is not there, they won't let the flood takeover their community',*
>
> KII, Save the Children Nigeria

Community based anticipatory action committees in in Damazine province, Blue Nile, Sudan, are now leading and supervising cash-for-work activities alongside government and service providers and saving funds to organise road rehabilitation ahead of the 2025 wet season (*see photo*).

In Gaibandha district Bangladesh, DRM committees operate as a unified team that enthusiastically involves youth volunteers and school committees to ensure children are consistently engaged in solutions to reduce climate-related risk.

DRR committee members preparing for road diking ahead of the 2025 flood season in Damazine Province, Blue Nile State. Abdelmahmoud Abdelkreem/Save the Children

> *'Communities realised that they can come together and support themselves'*
>
> KII, Save the Children Sudan

Table 2: Examples of community engagement in anticipatory action across study focus countries

	Examples of community participation	**Challenges**
Risk informed planning	• Mapping hazards, exposed areas and identifying risks • Co-facilitating Hazard Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (HVCA) workshops and validating findings • Codesigning AAPs and EAPs • Proposing members for the DRR committees	• Update of hazard risk maps is not systematic • It is difficult to assess the depth of community leadership and decision-making during consultations. • Limited ownership of early action plans beyond DRR committees • Involvement of child rights experts in HVCA is not clearly documented
Risk monitoring	• Sharing local forecasting indicators for triggering AA and for monitoring the impacts of disasters • Agree on risk thresholds and how to monitor them • Track river levels with visual markers • Communicate how risks are evolving through social media and community channels	• More reliance on observed local indicators than on scientific forecasts to trigger AA, which reduces the window of opportunity for AA
Risk communication	• Simplifying forecasts • Sharing forecast information and weather alerts with their peers	• Limited availability of information regarding forecast accuracy and capacity to communicate it to communities
AA preparedness and implementation	• Constructing and rehabilitating infrastructure, clearing drainages, prepositioning and delivering supplies • Supporting evacuation of flood-affected people • Organising cattle vaccination campaigns • Undertaking vector control campaigns ahead of rainy seasons	• Vulnerability of community structures during large-scale hazards affecting the potential for collective action

What works?

Timely and adequate cash assistance to households, DRR committees and school clubs where seasonal forecasts indicate high likelihood of crisis impacts, and cash assistance has been assessed as an appropriate modality

Supporting **existing community structures to collectively plan and undertake preparedness measures and AA** ahead of forecasted shocks

2.4.2 Ground anticipatory action in local perceptions of risks

SC' anticipatory action work is increasingly grounded in inclusive, child-focused risk analysis, leveraging both participatory assessments and predictive tools like Household Economy Analysis (HEA) to inform timely, child-sensitive, locally relevant interventions

Save the Children grounds its climate resilience building projects on a strong understanding of the multiple hazards and risks that children and communities are exposed to in disaster-prone areas.

Although time and resource constraints can limit ability to carry out multi hazard, inclusive assessments, t**his review highlights the potential impact of increased engagement of communities to produce vulnerability maps and assess risks across hazards and population groups, including children.**

Where participatory Hazard, Vulnerability and Capacity Assessments (HVCA) weren't feasible, teams used secondary data (e.g., food security and health reports) to identify vulnerable groups. In Beletweyne, Somalia, Save the Children used historical data and coordinated with OCHA to design the El Niño flood AA project.

Box 4 - Household Economy Analysis (HEA) for Anticipatory Action

Since Save the Children developed HEA in the 1990s, it has been used in over 70 countries around the globe.

HEA is a livelihoods framework that details and quantifies households' livelihoods patterns and coping capacities. Its modelling ability predicts how families' livelihoods will be impacted by a shock, providing critical information for the design of impactful anticipatory actions.

More information on Save the Children's use of HEA for AA is *here*.

Providing a well-established, credible model for forecasting predictable crisis impacts, Household Economy Analysis (*see box 4*) Outcome Analysis informed AA design and activation in Somalia, Sudan, Malawi, and Kenya. In Burao, Somalia, HEA justified cash interventions to minimize the impacts of predicted below normal rains in March-May 2025 rains, despite lacking formal early action protocols.

In Malawi, AA was triggered when HEA outcome analysis assessing the potential impacts of El Niño 2023/4 predicted when food insecurity would reach IPC Phase 3 in Neno and Zomba districts. The analysis highlighted the windows of opportunity to smooth consumption throughout the forecasted drought and recommended appropriate livelihoods interventions such as cash transfers to allow households to buy and stockpile food, invest in livelihoods, and pay off debt ahead of the lean season.

> *"The HEA outcome analysis gave us a very clear outlook and recommendations on El Niño expectations, which helped us act early."*
> KII, Save the Children Malawi

Additionally, a Cost-of-the-Diet analysis[21] spelled out recommendations on protecting children's and mothers' nutrition.

HVCA proved to be an important approach to reach child-specific findings and raise awareness of adults on children's exposure to hazards. **In Bangladesh, 94.5% of participants in the El Niño project impact assessment noted the impacts of heatwaves on children's health and nutrition as well as child labor and exploitation risks, therefore emphasizing the need for child-specific anticipatory actions.**

Young girls and boys attending a HVCA in Kelafo district, Somali region, Ethiopia. The findings informed the development of local AAPs. Wasihun Masresha/Save the Children

In countries where Anticipatory Action Technical Working Groups (TWGs) are active—such as Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Madagascar, Mozambique, and Nigeria—Save the Children brought evidence from child-focused vulnerability and risk assessment and programming experiences into the design of national early action protocols and the operational delivery of anticipatory action, leading to the breakthrough mentioned in the above section. For example, Ethiopia's AA TWG used findings from the HVCA to inform the country's flood EAP, aligning interagency efforts with local priorities.

[21]Save the Children (2024): *Cost and affordability of nutritious diets in Malawi: an update*

A child-centred Climate Vulnerability Capacity Analysis (CVCA) methodologyis currently being piloted in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, with the intention to strengthen SC CO's capacity to engage children in analysing the risks they're exposed to in the face of multiple hazards, and codesign anticipatory actions to reduce those.

What works?
Inclusive, child-centred hazard, vulnerability and risk assessments—combining participatory methods and predictive tools – to ensure anticipatory action is timely, locally relevant, and responsive to the specific risks faced by children and communities

2.4.3 Strengthen focus on gender equity and inclusion

While gender analysis remains limited across AA projects, emerging practices show that intentional inclusion of women and girls can strengthen preparedness outcomes—highlighting the need for more systematic, intersectional approaches to enable more equitable impacts.

While most reviewed project documentation didn't include gender analysis, several initiatives demonstrated intentional efforts to address structural gender inequalities. Country teams increasingly ensured the participation of women and girls – and to a lesser extent, people with disabilities - in risk assessments and consultations, with some projects, like the 2024 drought AA in Somali region, Ethiopia, conducting gender assessments to inform gender-sensitive design and accountability mechanisms.

Women-headed households, pregnant and breastfeeding women were prioritized in beneficiary targeting, and gender quotas were applied in DRR committees.

In Bangladesh, the GFFO-funded project piloted cash transfers for women entrepreneurs, enabling them to sustain livelihoods during extreme events. In Bangladesh and Nigeria, women also played active roles in early warning communication and cash-for-work activities tailored to their capacities (*see photo*).

Bithun Begum shares weather forecast information to the women in her community in Gaibandha district. As part of her role as community 'transmitter', she translates weather warnings, forecast information and advisories into local languages and shares them widely. ©Save the Children

Modest yet encouraging changes were observed as a result of women being involved in AA. In Somalia and Nigeria, women became more vocal and confident to speak out during DRR committee meetings. In Bangladesh, women's leadership in household-level and community preparedness planning was recognized, with some shifts in traditional gender roles. In Peru, AA contributed to the visibility of women leaders and opened new spaces for participation.

Yet, few project evaluations studied the impact of women's engagement on women, girls and their communities, highlighting the need for more systemic and harmonised MEAL protocols in the field of gender and AA. In parallel, the limited inclusion of people with disabilities and the lack of gender-, age- and disability-disaggregated data across projects point to a broader gap in understanding and addressing intersectional vulnerabilities. While Save the Children Spain has developed practical guidance on strengthening integration of gender across the AA process, report findings underscore the need for more concerted efforts and tailored guidance to ensure anticipatory action is truly inclusive.

What works?
Deliberate investments and strategies to strengthen women and girls's engagement in AA planning, decision making and implementation, and guarantee their safe and equitable participation

2.4.4 Develop and monitor localised anticipatory action plans

Integrating traditional and local knowledge with scientific forecasting has proved essential for designing locally grounded anticipatory action plans, enhancing community ownership and enabling timely activation of local AAPs based on context-specific thresholds.

Hazard, risks and vulnerability assessments were a key entry point to sensitise communities and children about what anticipatory action can do to minimise the impacts of predictable crisis, but also to develop community-based AA plans.

To ensure these actually build on community systems and capacities, KI consistently highlighted the importance of investing time in understanding traditional and local knowledge. This involves recognising how different social groups interpret local forecasting indicators (when a hazard is likely to occur, and what decisions these indicators are informing), local knowledge about hazard impacts and local monitoring thresholds (when they perceive the impacts of climate-related hazards in their environment).

> *'Communities are the ones living the disaster. They act based on their own triggers'*
>
> KII, Save the Children Bangladesh

Maban county, South Sudan is one example where AA plans are explicitly based on traditional forecasting methods. These include indicators such as extreme heat in March–April, the condition of baobab tree leaves, and the shape of anthills. As part of a well-established risk monitoring protocol, field teams triangulate these local knowledge indicators with scientific forecasts from ICPAC, the South Sudan Meteorological Authority, and ACMAD to assess when to activate local AAPs. The 2024 flood AA was ultimately triggered based on water levels reaching a specific point in a known flood hotspot - suggesting a need to complement local risk monitoring with scientific forecast information to extend the window of opportunity for anticipatory actions.

> *"The river starts to swell, and there's a noticeable increase in rain. We've learned to watch these signs closely."* - Community Flood Preparedness Committee Member
>
> Source: Somalia El Nino project evaluation

Reversely, following failure to trigger based on global forecasting sources, Ethiopia revised EAPs to integrate both local forecast indicators and local monitoring.[22] Nigeria (*see photo*) and Bangladesh likewise have identified and use local, community-based thresholds for triggering AA.

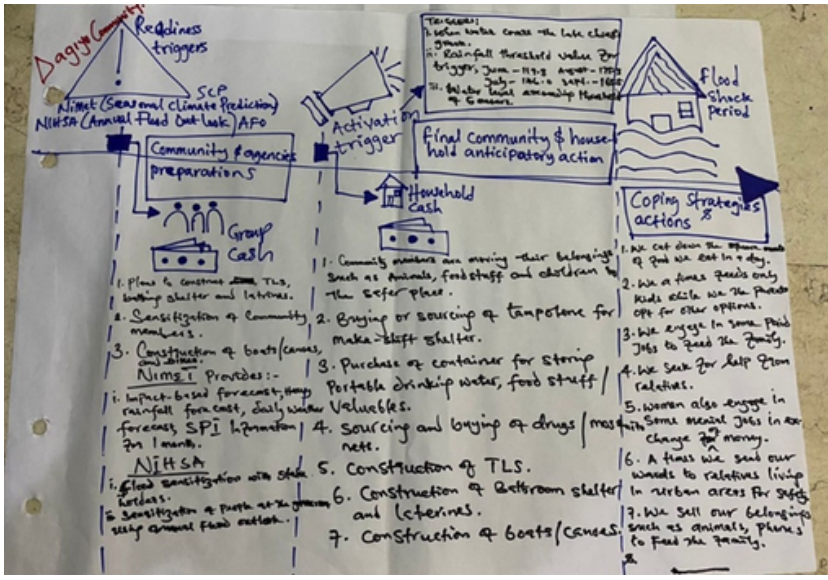


Photo: AAP from Dagiyo community, Adamawa state, Nigeria indicating local river levels reaching 6 meters as a local activation trigger. Osebi Adams/Save the Children

In a bid to strengthen CO's capacity to use forecasts for decision making, **Save the Children is strengthening systems and capacities for risk monitoring at CO and global levels, as well as with communities of focus, to enable activation based on localised thresholds and triggers within community AAPs and country EAPs.** In parallel, SC COs have strengthened their engagement with NMHS, participation in national and regional climate outlook forum and monitoring of key national, regional and global forecasts, including attending monthly forecast updates provided by the *WMO Coordination Mechanism* and organising monitoring systems to assess whether preagreed thresholds are being reached across focus countries and communities.

[22]Save the Children (2023): *Lessons Learned from Community Consultation and Fail to Act Scenario (Flood Anticipatory Action Failed) in Somali Region, Shebelle Zone*

What works?

Co-production of localized, impact-based forecasts with advisories tailored with and for children and representatives of key sectors for children, including education and child protection.

To do so, formalise or strengthen partnerships with NMHS to put in place sustainable planning and decision-making processes – including roles and responsibilities - for bringing scientific forecasts together with local and traditional knowledge about climate.

2.4.5 Use localised, impact-based forecasts for decision making

By strengthening partnerships with national meteorological agencies and investing in child-centred forecast communication, SC bridged the gap between scientific forecasting and local understanding—making anticipatory action more accessible, trusted, and actionable for vulnerable communities.

As climate change disrupts traditional early warning signs, scientific forecasts offer a vital complement to anticipate hazards. Yet, many remote communities lack access to sufficiently localised and relevant weather and climate services, and those receiving forecasts for the first time often struggle to understand or trust them.

To bridge this gap, Save the Children consolidated and formalised strategic relationships with national meteorology agencies to improve access **to downscaled, impact-based forecasts and strengthen foundational understanding of climate concepts.**

In Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, Bangladesh, Malawi, Peru, and Mozambique, Save the Children co-facilitated participatory scenario planning workshops with community representatives and local actors to present seasonal forecasts and develop child-friendly, sector-specific advisories. In Somalia, 117 DRR committee members and officials reviewed the 2025 MAM forecast from ICPAC and translated it into actionable messages shared in community meetings. (*see photo*)

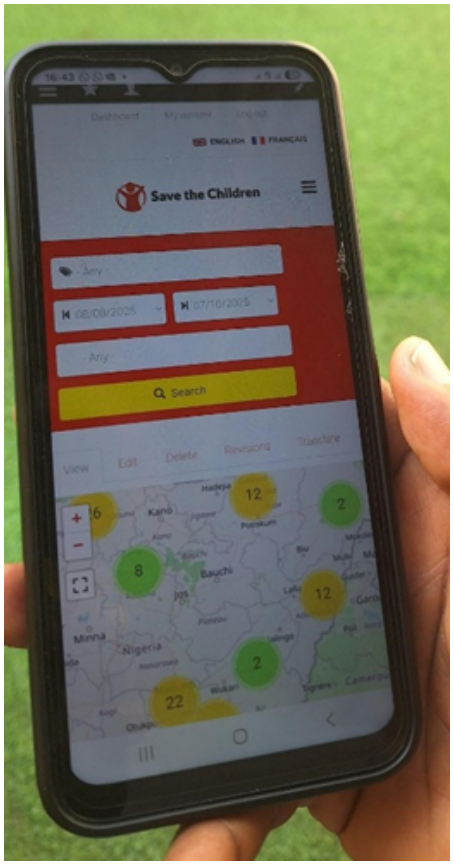
Participants from the Participatory Scenario Planning workshop (PSP) in Puntland, February 2025, who developed advisories based on the March April May 2025 ICPAC forecast and communicated those in their respective locations. Mohamud Yusuf Isse/Save the Children

Niger and Mali spearheaded the first child-focused coproduction workshop for the May-October 2025 rainy season. With support from staff from Save the Children, local partners organisation and national MET, children assessed the impacts of above normal rains forecasted in the Seasonal Forecasts in the Sudano-Sahelian Region (PRESASS) bulletin on their communities, and co-developed advisories including for key sectors for children, which they shared through local radios and community awareness sessions.[23]

Left: Niger MET representative presenting key climate concepts to children, youth and representatives from local structures. Right: Mounira, 15 years old, present risk reduction actions based for floods, following PRESASS forecast presentation. Abdul Majidi Moutari/Save the Children

While access to localised forecast remains an issue across many countries, Sudan and Ethiopia harnessed partnerships with the national MET agencies to receive localised forecast for their area of intervention, which they then share and discuss with local communities.

Technology has also helped translate forecasts into concrete messaging for at risk communities. In Nigeria, Save the Children is developing the country's first flood early warning app, combining seasonal forecasts from NiMET with real-time local monitoring to generate alerts with population-at-risk estimates (see photo). The Nigeria office is supporting neighbouring countries to adapt the tool. In Peru, Save the Children and SENAMHI co-developed the Agroclimatic Information System (SIA), an early warning system that monitors drought risks and issues alerts when thresholds are reached.



SC Nigeria's EWS app showing incident reports in the country. Osebi Adams/Save the Children

[23]See '*Fostering child-centred climate services through coproduction workshops in Niger*' case study

However, the inherent uncertainty of weather forecasts poses challenges, with communities having to decide whether to act on probabilistic forecasts which may not materialise. To address risks of communities losing trust with scientific forecasts, Save the Children is building the capacity of country teams and local partners to understand key forecasting concepts—such as hazard predictability, forecast skill, and probability, and clearly communicate those to communities.

What works?

Scenario planning workshops with adults and children, to support communities interpret forecasts and translate them into actionable messages, increasing relevance and uptake.

Investments in forecast literacy and technology, such as early warning apps to support communities in understanding probabilistic forecasts and making informed decisions despite inherent uncertainties.

2.4.6 Strengthen local Early Warning Systems

Strengthening local early warning systems and engaging children in disaster risk education and communication has proven critical to increasing timely preparedness and anticipatory action uptake in vulnerable communities.

Nearly all studied countries focused on strengthening local early warning systems as a critical component of anticipatory action, enabling timely, context-specific alerts to reach communities before a hazard strikes.

Recognising disaster risk knowledge as an essential pillar of early warning systems, projects educated community members and especially school children on climate-related disaster risks, and key preparedness measures. For example, SC Malawi developed leaflets on lightning, flooding, and dry spells, which were shared during sensitisation sessions with children and DRR clubs leads with support from DCCMS.[24]

Outreach activities in Bangladesh reached over 4,700 school children through awareness sessions and child-friendly materials such as voice messages and posters for landslide prevention. With GFFO funding, COPE comic books were translated into Bengali to scale up children's understanding of climate and non-climate related disaster risks.

[24]See '*Youth and children at the centre of disaster preparedness in Malawi*' case study

In countries with national or federal early warning systems—such as Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Sudan and Somalia—Save the Children enhanced coordination between disaster risk management authorities, sectoral experts and national meteorological services, resulting in strengthened **flow of information between national and district-level agencies,** and expanded reach of alerts and advisories to broader population groups.

> *"The DRR committees understand their role on AA. They alert the neighbouring areas using social media."*
>
> *KII, Save the Children Sudan*

Through training and ongoing technical support, district officers are now better equipped to access, interpret, and cascade national weather alerts to lower administrative levels, increasing the likelihood that households receive timely early warning information. For example, Save the Children's collaboration with local disaster risk management committees and the Somalia Disaster Management Agency (SODMA) during the 2023 El Niño episode enabled the communication of flood risk alerts to **34,550 households in Beletweyne,** following ICPAC's forecast of above-average rainfall. Respondents widely acknowledged the system's effectiveness, **with many reporting timely evacuation to safer areas.**

To ensure early warning systems are culturally appropriate, child-friendly and locally actionable, Save the Children engaged children and local community structures to **co-design simple messages and communicate this information through a wide range of channels.**

For example, Bangladesh supported a network of volunteers to share actionable messages based on meteorological forecasts during courtyard sessions, door-to-door campaigns and through SMS, and radio.[25] During the 2023 monsoon in Gaibandha, 100% of households reached by EWS engaged in anticipatory actions. In 2024, 99.5% of 1,500 beneficiaries in Kurigram took early action to mitigate heat and drought impacts, with 84.79% responding immediately upon receiving alerts. (*see photos*)

Volunteers disseminating landslide warning messages through awareness raising campaigns in at risk schools and localities in Bandarban district, Bangladesh. Ali Ahosan Imtiyaz/Save the Children

[25]See *'Bridging forecasts and action through inclusive learning in Bangladesh'* case study

Despite encouraging evidence that local EWS can go a long way in strengthening community preparedness, KI consistently highlighted the need to develop more child-friendly early warning materials to ensure uptake by the most vulnerable.

The following section highlights how Save the Children team have engaged with communities, children and young adults to bridge this gap, but also to strengthen their leadership across all the steps of anticipatory action more broadly.

What works?

Child and community engagement in risk education and co-design of early warning messages to ensure alerts are locally actionable, child-friendly, and widely understood

Strengthened coordination between national and district-level agencies to improve the flow of forecast information and equip local actors to cascade timely alerts to households

Diverse communication channels and community networks, such as radio, SMS, and door-to-door campaigns to enhance the reach and effectiveness of early warning systems

2.4.7 Foster children and youth's agency to address predictable climate-related impacts

Child and youth participation in anticipatory action increased their confidence and ability to cope with predictable climate-related impacts, as Save the Children projects gave them – often for the first time – an opportunity to voice out how disasters affect them, and propose solutions to better anticipate and prepare for risks.

Across all focus countries, children demonstrated meaningful agency in shaping anticipatory action planning and implementation, thanks to participatory, child-centred, and age-sensitive methodologies.

Their involvement in HVCA[26] consistently led to the integration of child-identified priorities into AAPs, resulting in improved access to essential services during and after climate-related shocks. For example, in Sudan, children's input led to the rehabilitation of a bridge to maintain school access during floods. In Bangladesh, their feedback influenced the **redefinition of danger levels** for schools, challenging national thresholds that overlooked school-specific vulnerabilities.

[26]Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, South Sudan, Sudan

Save the Children teams also increased efforts to support **child-centred early warning communication**. Across multiple contexts, children contributed to the design and delivery of early warning messages tailored to the risks they face and adapted to reach the most marginalized groups in their communities.

In Bangladesh's Kurigram, Gaibandha, Patuakhali, and Chattogram districts, children and youth developed advisories based on Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BDM) forecasts and actively communicated them through school and community campaigns, loudspeaker announcements, door-to-door visits, and audio messages shared widely during the El Niño-induced drought and heatwave in 2023 and more recently, before forecasted landslides and floods in May 2025. Through MET clubs (*see box 5*), children in Gaibandha, Patuakhali, and Chattogram districts are learning to become weather ambassadors and play a key role in communicating disaster risks in their school communities.

Box 5 - MET clubs in Bangladesh
Officially launched on 19th August 2025 by Bangladesh Meteorological Department and the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief - MET clubs teach children and youth about weather forecasting. For students living in one of the most flood-prone countries in the world, acquiring practical knowledge on meteorology, early warning systems, and hazard interpretation can go a long way in building a safer and more informed society. Composed of 11-members, students meet on a weekly basis to learn about weather and climate science by observing weather parameters and trying fun experiments. Plans are underway to develop child friendly website and communication materials and institutionalize MET clubs across the country.

In SC's El Niño AA pilot in Beletweyne, Somalia, DRR school club members updated their peers on forecast information and river levels during assemblies, collaborated with flood committees on risk communication, and led school cleaning campaigns to reduce disease outbreaks. In four communities, adults confirmed that youth volunteers played a key role in helping vulnerable households evacuate before river levels rose.

In Niger, children who participated in the May–October 2025 forecast co-production workshop have successfully begun to challenge long-held local beliefs about the causes of climate hazards by promoting scientific forecasting as a reliable tool for anticipating and preparing for climate-related risks.

Importantly, DRR trainings in South Sudan, Malawi, Madagascar, and Bangladesh further strengthened children's preparedness capacities, equipping them with knowledge on how to protect themselves during hazards such as strong winds, floods, and cyclones.

While outcomes were not systematically measured, key informants consistently reported increased confidence among children who led climate-hazards awareness efforts and sensitized their peers, families, and communities to take weather alerts seriously and act accordingly.

Youth volunteers attending a DRR and landslide preparedness training in Chandgaon, Chattogram district, Bangladesh, October 2023. Javed Meandad/Save the Children

> *"At first, I didn't know anything about weather forecasts, now I'm the one who tells my family when the heavy rains are coming."*
> 15-year-old club member in Chikowi, Malawi

See *BOX 6* for more inspiring examples of how children across the 12 focus countries engaged in the 5 steps of anticipatory action, as well as specific case studies from Malawi, South Sudan, Niger and Bangladesh. Good practice on how to plan meaningful children engagement across the five steps of AA is also available *here*.

What works?

Participatory, age-sensitive methodologies to empower children to shape anticipatory action plans, ensuring their priorities—such as school access and safety—are reflected in interventions.

Building children's leadership and preparedness capacities by facilitating child-led forecast and early warning communication

2.4.8 Strengthen child-centered formal planning processes for anticipatory action

Save the Children's rights-based approach has enabled children's needs to inform National Anticipatory Action frameworks and co-develop child-centred climate services, and, more broadly, highlighted the urgent need for climate service frameworks that meet the needs of children, youth and the education sector

Integrating children's concerns in anticipatory action systems and policies

The study revealed important advancements in the recognition of children's specific needs in plans related to anticipatory action.

In Malawi, Save the Children contributed to shaping the national AA framework in May 2025, which now recognizes people-centered and child-sensitive AA as a core principle. The framework includes anticipatory actions in child protection, education, health, and nutrition for floods, cyclones, and droughts.

Save the Children's policy engagement has also led to tangible results in Bangladesh. Following feedback from beneficiaries of the SAFE project in Gaibandha district, the national cyclone EAP now includes provisions for adequate shelter for women and children. Most cyclone evacuation centers now uphold children's right to play and reduce risks of gender-based violence, as these measures have been adopted by members of the Technical Working Group. Finally, in South Sudan, children involved in the AA project in Maban engaged with decision-makers in Juba through child parliaments. Since September 2023, the use of schools as shelters has been prohibited, safeguarding children's right to education during emergencies.

Strengthening child-centred climate services

The El Niño initiative (see box 1) catalysed regional and national alliances, including with the IGAD Climate Prediction and Applications Centre (ICPAC) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), as well as initiating and/or strengthening existing engagements with NMHS across the 12 focus countries for this study. In May 2025, ICPAC invited Save the Children to contribute to the East Africa regional framework for climate services, the first of its kind. Similarly in Malawi, the Department of Climate Change and Meteorological Services (DCCMs) engaged SC to finalise the National Framework for Water and Climate Services and assigned specific actions to SC in its workplan.

Save the Children and WMO are now jointly documenting good practices in child-centred WCIS, seeking to ensure that children, youth and the education sectors are included in global and national frameworks for climate services. Climate and anticipatory action experts from Save the Children also contributed to WMO's 2024 state of climate services report, highlighting the lack of inclusion of children, youth and education in the Global Framework for Climate Services.

At the Global Platform for DRR in June 2025 (GP2025) WMO hosted a joint session with SCsharing case studies on child-centred climate services, with ACMAD, DCCMS and SC Bangladesh as key presenters (*see photo*). The African Climate Summit in September 2025 was another opportunity for SC, together with ACMAD, to highlight concrete examples of child engagement in climate services in Niger and Malawi.

Panellists from WMO, ACMAD, DCCMS and SC during the 'Children, Youth and Climate Action: Empowering Young Minds' session during the Global Platform for DRR in June 2025. Jorge Sanz/Save the Children

Finally, SC Denmark commissioned a review of the child-centredness of climate services in the Sahel in 2025, a key entry point for addressing gaps in consideration and inclusion of children and youth.

What works?

Engaging children in policy dialogue and decision-making spaces, such as child parliaments, to enable them to advocate for their needs and influence policies that safeguard their rights in the face of climate related hazards

Partnering with climate service institutions to co-develop child-centred WCIS and strengthen the inclusion of children, youth, and education sectors in national and global climate service frameworks

Box 6 - Children and youth adult engagement in anticipatory action (AA)

Risk Assessment

Risk Monitoring

Risk Communication

Risk Preparedness and AA Implementation

MEAL

HOW WERE CHILDREN AND YOUTH ENGAGED?

- Assess their own school environments and communities to map hazards, risks and vulnerabilities
- Explain how climate hazards affect them
- Identify solutions to protect themselves from hazards

- Monitor heavy rainfall with rain gages todetermine when AAs should be triggered
- Update their communities and SC staff on how climate related risks are evolving around them using pictures, sms, and verbal testimonies

- Interpret weather forecasts and develop advisories and early warning messages
- Disseminate those through school and community level campaigning, pre-recorded audio messaging, door to door visits to vulnerable groups

- Identify local triggers relevant for their age, gender, vulnerabilities and capacities
- Propose concrete, local, simple, life saving AA
- Implement those in their schools and localities

- Evaluate the extent to which AA projectgoals were achieved
- Assess their participation in projects
- Formulate suggestions for improvements

EXAMPLES

As part of a DRR training curriculum that runs throughout the year, children in Maban, South Sudan complete comprehensive HVCA ahead of every rainy season, which involves assessing and ranking hazard and risks, drawing hazards maps, discussing school vulnerabilities and capacities (see photo).

In Bangladesh, the MET club initiative (see box 5 and photo) engages youth volunteers in AA through school-based rain gauges and river flood markers. With these low cost, manual instruments, youth compare real-time observations with forecasts and share rainfall and river level data with SC and BDM via WhatsApp, including photos and videos.

In Diffa and Zinder regions, Niger, youth and children identified advisories based on the May-October 2025 forecast. After mapping potential risks for children in the upcoming season, they express their views through slam and poems to express what children can do to reduce climate related risks. They shared advisories for forecasted flood risks in their community through weekly shows on the local radios.

In Maban, South Sudan, DRR club members identified flood preparedness priorities and received small grants and technical support to implement activities like school gardens, dykes, and fencing. Their involvement fostered a sense of ownership and encouraged school management to give more space for climate risk discussions. However, in some cases, head teachers controlled how grants were used, limiting children's agency

In Madagascar, school children outlined the strengths and weaknesses of the ECHO-funded DRR project 'Miahy' (see photo) using the H methodology (see photo)

In Bangladesh, youth provided constructive and practical feedback on the emergency kits distributed to landslide-affected households, leading to SC readapting its aid kits in preparation for the next landslide activation.

LESSONS LEARNT

Risk assessment facilitation methodologies need to be adapted to children's cognitive and communication abilities, so that they understand technical teams and fully participate

Child-friendly exercises such as body mapping (see quote), head mapping (see photo) and drawing contests have successfully harnessed children's creative expression about how they experience disasters.

Handling weather related data on a daily basis has helped children and youth understanding the uncertainty around weather forecasting and explain this concept with confidence to adults and elderly people

Child-led data collection supports forecast downscaling and can inform activation of school and community AA plans

Children demonstrated their potential to develop simple, concrete, actionable risk reduction messages that can be understood by everyone in the community

By leading flood awareness efforts and sensitising their peers, families, and communities to take weather alerts seriously and act accordingly, they increased their self-confidence and knowledge about disaster risks

In turn, adults reported trusting early warning information developed and shared by children and youth

Ongoing support, such as refresher trainings, financial resources, and stronger coordination between school and community-level AA structures, are key to sustain and consolidate children and youth's leadership skills on AA

More efforts are needed to actively enable children and youth's participation in AA planning or implementation, whether in schools or within the broader community

Child-centred MEAL is essential to uncover the unique impacts of AA on children, especially when considering gender, age, and disability.

MEAL approaches must be tailored to the sector and age group, recognizing that some interventions (e.g., nutrition) involve non-verbal children, while others (e.g., livelihoods) affect children indirectly.

Contextual adaptation of tools is key to ensuring inclusive and actionable learning that reflects children's diverse realities and experiences.

2.5 Challenges

Learning and evaluation reports reviewed provided limited insights into the specific impacts of anticipatory action on boys and girls, limiting evidence generation to advocate for child-centered programming. Furthermore, without systematic use of sex- and age-disaggregated data and gender-sensitive MEAL processes, it remains difficult to fully assess how impacts differ for girls, boys, and vulnerable sub-groups such as children with disabilities.

Child-led and child-centered anticipatory action has primarily been implemented through schools and school-based settings, resulting in the exclusion of already vulnerable out-of-school children (e.g. a large proportion of adolescent girls in some contexts, child laborers, displaced children and the extremely poor) from these efforts.

More targeted strategies are needed to foster inclusive leadership and decision-making, ensuring plans and actions reflect the specific needs of marginalised groups. Although anticipatory action initiatives have promoted gender-balanced representation and inclusion of marginalized and disabled individuals in community structures, equal presence hasn't always resulted in equitable influence, especially in contexts with discriminatory social norms.

In protracted crises where communities face overlapping and chronic climate and non-climate shocks, anticipatory action has mostly helped households to meet their immediate needs rather than protect their assets and strengthen capacities to prepare for shocks.

Where feasible AA needs to be aligned with longer-term development and adaptation investments as well as efforts to address humanitarian needs. Where possible, AA can be embedded in both humanitarian and longer-term programming to lessen the impacts of predictable crises, maintain development gains, and support recovery.

Weather and climate services often remain inaccessible and insufficiently tailored to local contexts and to the specific needs of children, particularly in rural and underserved areas. This gap contributes to ongoing reluctance among communities to act on forecast-based information. Addressing this challenge requires sustained efforts to raise awareness about the value of scientific forecasts, their complementarity with traditional and local knowledge systems and practical ways for bringing together local and scientific knowledge to co-develop localised impact-based forecasting.

The geographic coverage of anticipatory action projects remains limited compared to the scale of climate hazards, leaving many vulnerable communities underserved and unprepared. As extreme weather events grow more frequent and intense, there is an urgent need to move beyond pilot initiatives and ensure investments prioritise efforts that are sustainable, community-led, and systematically integrated into national and local DRM/DRR, adaptation, preparedness, EW/ climate services and AA strategies, systems and processes.

2.6 Recommendations

For Save the Children, local partners and organisations working on AA

Promote a risk-informed, child-centered approach to anticipatory action, to prevent and minimise climate-related impacts for children. This includes supporting interventions that are informed by boys' and girls' unique vulnerabilities, capacities, and perspectives, and that promote their active participation across all steps in the process of AA, from risk analysis to monitoring and learning

Strengthen policies, capacities and systems– including EW information, risk monitoring, inclusive communication and effective planning for predictable crisis – for AA to effectively address immediate, near and longer-term climate-related risks

Strengthen inclusion of gender into anticipatory action approaches, ensuring that programmes address unequal access to resources, information, and decision-making power, while guaranteeing the safe and equitable participation of women, girls, and marginalised groups in AA planning, implementation and review.

Strengthen the capacity of National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHS) providers to co-produce localized, impact-based forecasts with advisories tailored with and for children and key sectors for children, including education and child protection. This entails agreeing sustainable processes and respective responsibilities for localising impacts and bringing scientific forecasts together with local and traditional knowledge about climate.

Invest time and resources to support the development of localised, child-sensitive triggers and thresholds. In doing so, empower communities to define and monitor their own thresholds and triggers —taking into account the specific vulnerabilities of boys and girls—and decide when to act based on their capacities and trusted sources of information, drawing from both scientific and traditional knowledge

Support timely and adequate cash assistance to households, DRR committees and school clubs where seasonal forecasts indicate high likelihood of crisis impacts, and cash assistance has been assessed as an appropriate modality. Ensure the amount and duration are appropriate and that cash assistance is layered with other forms of support (e.g., livelihoods inputs, psychosocial services) depending on the intended outcomes of the activities.

Develop sustainable, inclusive AA MEAL systems linked to existing national and organisational channels to track how children's and communities' vulnerabilities and capacities evolve in response to climate-related risks, using gender-sensitive indicators and safe feedback mechanisms to inform adaptive programming. These systems must be appropriately resourced, child-centered, and community-based, enabling real-time learning and inclusive decision-making across key anticipatory action components such as Weather and Climate Information Services (WCIS), Early Warning Systems (EWS), and preparedness planning.

For policymakers

Invest in and co-design anticipatory action plans, systems and policies which are informed by community and children's knowledge of hazards, risks, capacities, and evolving vulnerabilities, using gender and age disaggregated data, and addressing gender, age-specific risks and vulnerabilities. Conversely, ensure national AA frameworks are embedded into local governance systems to promote sustainable, community-led disaster risk reduction and adaptation planning

Embed child-centred, community-based AA systems and plans as key foundations for addressing current and increasing climate-related risks, ensuring they inform NAPs, NDCs, as well as policies for key sectors for children and young people

Ensure that education, child protection, and mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) are systematically integrated into anticipatory action and climate risk management strategies, policies and frameworks such as National Frameworks for Climate Services (NFCS), National Anticipatory Action frameworks, Disaster Risk Management Plans, Disaster Risk Financing Frameworks and National Adaptation Plans of Action (NAPA), National Determined Contributions. At the same time, develop more risk informed national education policies to strengthen the resilience of school systems and child protection services to climate-related shocks in both the short and long term

For donors

Allocate flexible, pre-arranged, easily accessible funding to activate anticipatory actions ahead of predictable climate-related hazards, including via crisis modifier or other systems that support shock-responsive reliable funding. This aligns with the *Getting Ahead of Disaster Charter*'s call to "ensure that funds arrive as early as needed" and supports timely, child-focused interventions that protect lives, learning, and well-being

Pair flexible activation funding ("fuel funding") with sustained investments in systems strengthening ("build funding") to empower local organisations and communities to develop their own risk monitoring capacities, strengthen EWS and at the same time maximise their capacities to anticipate and prepare for forecasted shocks.

Prioritise funding for programmes that empower children but also women-led, youth-led and gender-focused organisations to participate in decision-making and implementation relating to AA, EWS and WCIS. This supports the Charter's emphasis on "people-centered approaches" and ensures that AA is responsive to children's rights and realities

Encourage funding models that embed child-centered AA within broader resilience-building efforts, supporting multisectoral, layered programming addressing education, food security, health and protection needs in the face of rapid and slow onset climate shocks. This reflects the Charter's ambition to "align efforts over the long term" and reduce fragmentation in climate risk financing

Resource the activation of AA through sustainable, diversified and adapted disaster risk financing mechanisms and by scaling AA within existing social protection systems. This aligns with the Charter's emphasis on predictable, layered financing and ensures that anticipatory interventions reach the most vulnerable children and families and complement existing community capacities

Ensure that climate change adaptation funding streams include targeted investments in child-sensitive WCIS and EWS, as well as in broader anticipatory systems and capacities, to enable timely and effective actions ahead of predictable climate-related risks in both the short and long term

2.7 Conclusions

Save the Children's anticipatory action approach is becoming increasingly child-sensitive and child-centered. All of the 12 focus countries are creating more opportunities for children to be at the heart of decision-making processes—through active involvement in child-centered vulnerability and risk assessments, seasonal forecast and advisories co-production workshops, and communication of resulting child-friendly advisories within at-risk populations.

Yet, further efforts are needed to ensure that children and young adults and individuals with diverse needs are not only targeted but actively involved in shaping AA programmes and policies. In this sense, **child-led participation remains an area for future improvement, so that children's views *influence, shape, and inform decisions/plans in a timely manner***[27]

Save the Children's country-level experience offers multiple examples of good practice for meaningfully and ethically engaging children throughout all stages of anticipatory action. These include strengthening children and young adults' DRR capacities and knowledge, creating safe, gender-sensitive spaces for participation, ensuring that girls, children with disabilities, and other marginalized groups can contribute to AA planning without fear of exclusion or harm.

Locally-led anticipatory action planning has enabled communities to identify longer-term risk reduction and climate adaptation priorities, as well as actions to be implemented within a short anticipatory window. This suggests the potential for AA to be integrated in broader resilience building and adaptation strategies in a context of increasingly frequent and intense climate-related hazards.

[27]Save the Children (2021): *The Nine Basic Requirements for Meaningful and Ethical Children's Participation*