Save the Children

GOOD PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNT:

How to Engage Children in Anticipatory Action

Save the Children's approach to Anticipatory Action is child-centred, meaning that children's voices are at the heart of every decision and that children are included in the decisions and plans that impact them.

This guide builds on programmatic evidence and lessons learnt from a wide range of countries to illustrate how children can engage throughout the planning and implementation of anticipatory action, to drive a truly child-centred approach. It also complements the **quick guidance and tools for facilitating child participation in anticipatory action** (not published).

Child-centered risk informed planning

Child-centered risk monitoring

Child-centered risk communication

Child-centered preparedness and anticipatory action

Child-centered MEAL for AA

Child-centred risk informed planning

In child-centred risk informed planning processes, child and young adults:

- Understand the process of Hazard, Vulnerability and Climate Assessment (HVCA), why it is relevant for them, how they can contribute in practice and what the added value of their engagement
- Decide how they want to be involved in the HVCA (time in the day and in the week, location, how long should the exercise last, should boys and girls be separated)
- Suggest who should participate in the process, how results might be shared, where and by whom
- Propose tools and methodologies to run the HVCA
- Run HVCA sessions in their own way
- Participate actively during the process: mapping and ranking hazards and risks specific to them and their rights and wellbeing, identifying vulnerable groups and areas, coming up with anticipatory actions
- Give their feedback on how the HVCA was for them and what they learnt
- Can make use of the findings of the HVCA for their own learning purposes and to increase their resilience in the face of climate related shocks

Lessons learnt

- Children can provide valuable insights in terms of how disasters are affecting their lives and their rights, and come up with unique and simple solutions for them and other children to stay safe before, during and after climate-related shocks.

- Yet, to best align with their vision of the world, facilitators should explain climate change, weather, risks, hazard and vulnerabilities and anticipatory action concepts with words, language that they can relate to. Progressive and interactive approaches such as drawings, games, quizzes, theatre plays have proved successful in capturing children's unique perspectives.

- DRR clubs offer great opportunities for peer-to-peer learning, allowing children to discuss – sometimes for the first time - how they experience disasters and learn how they can put anticipatory action into practice.

- HVCA methodologies should be co-created with children, youth, and experts in child participation and protection. This process takes time and multiple sessions to ensure tools are adapted, roles are clear, and equity principles are upheld. When well facilitated, it not only brings out children's unique perspectives but also builds their skills and knowledge to protect themselves and their families.

- Engaging local authorities and technical services on child-centred HVCA is a powerful way to advocate for child participation into AA, as adults can see by themselves the potential that children have in solving the problems the climate crisis brings.

Recommendations

- Form a diverse facilitation team including children, youth, teachers, local authorities, and service providers to co-design the HVCA methodology and take on specific roles.
- Engage children and caregivers early, with support from child protection experts, to explain the HVCA's purpose and ensure informed consent—especially when discussing potentially traumatic past events.
- Contextualize key concepts (hazards, risks, vulnerabilities, capacities) using real examples from local schools, supported by tools like SC Norway's guide and Safe Schools resources.
- Allocate two days for preparation to review child participation guidelines, adapt tools (such as body mapping, head mapping – *see photo*), create visual facilitation materials, and test exercises with children and youth.
- Debrief with children post- HVCA to gather feedback on their experience and the methodology, and identify actions they feel motivated to take.
- Ensure that HVCA findings are differentiated by age, gender and highlight child-specific vulnerabilities in terms of access to shelter, education, and health in shock periods.
- Support follow-up actions by children, such as sharing learnings in schools or participating in risk communication activities.
- Make HVCA results visible by working with communities to display hazard maps and AA plans in accessible locations.
- Institutionalize the approach by discussing with local authorities how child-centred HVCAs can become standard practice.
- Share findings nationally, using platforms like outlook forums and AA technical meetings, and where possible, include child representatives in presentations.

Children presenting the head mapping exercise during the May-October 2025 seasonal forecast coproduction workshop in Zinder, Niger. Abdul Majidi Moutari/Save the Children.

Good practice examples

- In Mozambique, Save the Children – after co-conducting child-focused HVCA with INGD - developed a guide for how to consult with children during HVCA. This guide is now in use by provincial DRR authorities who are advocating for its use by other actors
- Mirana, 16 and Roddy, 12, two child campaigners from Madagascar, led consultations with children about the impacts of climate change in their lives across 2 different regions.As part of the Generation hope campaign, they presented the findings to the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, and in front of the parliament of Madagascar, contributing to raising the voice of children affected by climate change
- In Bangladesh, youth groups and political leaders collected community risk and vulnerability information, which was combined with risk indices and remote sensing imagery to produce digital risk maps. These maps are being digitised and made publicly available on the national disaster management website to support coordination and reduce duplication among development actors. In May 2025, the country office – through the Eye on earth initiatives – launched a competition between youth from 6 Universities to assess 2 problems: 1) Flood risk and impact assessment in refugee camp setting and 2) Landslide susceptibility assessment in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. It is hoped that the outcomes will advance scientific, youth-led approaches to HVCA and increase the capacity of students to undertake these exercises in their communities.[1]
- In Maban, South Sudan, children in DRR clubs complete comprehensive HVCA ahead of every rainy season, which involves assessing and ranking hazard and risks, drawing hazards maps (see photo), discussing school vulnerabilities and capacities. Seasonal calendars are also developed and checked on a daily basis based on the forecast information received so that climate risks in the immediate and medium terms are identified in a timely manner. Performance assessment is done after every year where children share their feedback on how effective the planning and implementation process was.[2]

Primary school resource and risk map, Maban, South Sudan. Zechariah Michael/ Save the Children.

[1]See *'Bridging forecasts and action through inclusive learning in Bangladesh'* case study
[2]See *'Driving Child-centred Anticipatory Action through DRR Clubs in South Sudan'* case study

Child-centred risk monitoring

In child-centred risk monitoring processes, child and young adults:

- Understand why risk monitoring is important for them, how they can do it in practice in their day to day, and how it could help others to understand and know about the possibility of upcoming hazards occurring in the community
- Decide which hazards and risks it is important for them to monitor
- Propose monitoring protocols including child-focused thresholds, sources of forecast information and impacts to monitor, responsible persons, frequency
- Receive appropriate training and instruments to undertake risk monitoring
- Contribute to risk monitoring by sharing their observations of how weather and climate parameters are evolving in their environments (at home, on the way to school, in the playing areas) and communicate those to their peers and decision makers by sending pictures or SMS.
- Generate localised weather information by using manual instruments rain gauges, thermometers, river markers.
- Can make use of the recorded historical rainfall, temperature and river levels to monitor when community and school levels thresholds have been reached and when local plans should be activated.

Lessons learnt

- To respond to the specific needs of children, risk monitoring protocols should be based on triggers that are specific to the physiological and cognitive characteristics of children in different age groups. For example, the thresholds at which extreme heat impacts newborns and infants are lower than for adults, highlighting the need to activate preventative measures such as access to drinking water for lactating mothers.

- Children's health and nutritional status, behaviours and attitudes (such as the number of school drop outs, migrating children, attention deficit at school) in and out of school are essential child-focused parameters that should inform risk monitoring protocols.

- MET agencies, with support from school management, have a key role to play to ensure students accurately record rainfall and temperature data, and to provide them with motivational incentives such as educational training on weather and climate and field visits to weather stations or national meteorological offices.

Recommendations

- Identify danger thresholds with children based on their lived experiences at home, school, and in the community. Use guiding questions to help them reflect on early signs of hazards and how they respond to extreme weather from a physical and behavioural perspective.
- Clarify the purpose of monitoring and assess children's interest in participating by asking how they would share observed information and what support they'd need.
- Co-develop a simple monitoring protocol with children and youth, including volunteer roles and rotation systems for consistent data collection. Document the process to ensure continuity.
- Organize school or community-based workshops to introduce children to weather and climate concepts and seasonal forecasts, creating space to co-produce monitoring steps and deepen understanding.

Good practice examples

- During the rainy season (from October to March) in Malawi, school children supported by the RED project collect rainfall data on a daily basis using manual rain gauges. Before starting the process, representatives from DCCMS came to the school to educate children on essential weather and climate concepts, share and decipher seasonal weather forecasts, and explain how to use manual rain gauges and collect data so that it can form useful historical rainfall records for the school.
- In Bangladesh, Save the Children engaged children in MET (*see Box on Page 7*) clubs in risk monitoring (*see photo*), as a way to build the trust of communities in scientific forecasts for anticipatory action. Youth use school-based rain gauges and river markers to record daily rainfall, compare it with forecast data, and discuss discrepancies during club meetings. They also use social media to document and share visual evidence of hazard risks, which is then integrated into Save the Children's flood and landslide monitoring protocols. This approach helps bridge scientific data with community observations, making early warning systems more locally relevant and trusted.

MET club students measuring rainfall using a rain gauge to record local weather data in Bangladesh. Javed Meandad/Save the Children

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.

Child-centred risk communication

In child-centred risk communication processes, child and young adults:

- Receive foundational training in core climate concepts, how to interpret forecasts and how to appropriately use them
- Decide what climate information it is important for them to receive, as well as formats, languages, timings and channels
- Elaborate early warning messages and weather advisories that are relevant for them but also for other population groups
- Communicate risk information to their peers, their families and other vulnerable population groups
- Share EW messages in spaces that are relevant for children such as schools, health centres, temporary learning centres, playing areas

Importantly:

- Child-focused early warning messages should contain messages that help adults and children understand climate-related risks that are specific to children, such as school drop outs, child labour, migration and practical advice on how children and their families can reduce those risks

Lessons learnt

- Children and young adults have a role to play to change the belief system in communities who accept disasters as a sign of fate outside of their control. To achieve this, projects should invest in educational programmes on DRR, combined with child-led awareness campaigns on how to prevent climate-related risks
- Adult support is essential for child-centred risk communication. WCIS coproduction workshops and HVCA can help build understanding among DRR committees and caregivers about the value of children's roles in early warning systems.
- Children are effective communicators of early warning messages when they translate technical information into simple, locally relevant language. Youth-led messaging was found to be trusted and acted upon by peers and vulnerable groups
- Schools are strategic platforms for early warning dissemination. Messages shared by children and youth in school settings reached more children and were more likely to be taken seriously and acted upon.

Recommendations

- Strengthen children's climate and disaster education over time to build their practical understanding of early warning systems (EWS), their life-saving potential, and their role in protecting children's rights.
- Activate and connect DRR structures by facilitating collaboration between DRR clubs and DRR community committees to prepare for seasonal hazards, assign roles, and establish communication protocols. Where appropriate, support meaningful child participation in DRR committee meetings and use tools like *SC Norway Climate focused risk assessment and planning tool for schools* to map school and community-based EWS
- Engage national meteorological and disaster management authorities to harmonize the early warning messages developed by children and young adults, and disseminate them through national AA and DRM platforms for broader uptake and consistency.
- Support children in formalizing EWS protocols, including developing and testing standard messages for different hazards, selecting communication channels, and designing clear information flows from DRR committees to schools and communities.
- Ensure message consistency across settings by involving parents, teachers, and local authorities to reinforce early warning messages at home and in the community, expanding their reach and impact.
- Motivate and equip children for EWS dissemination by providing tools like megaphones or phones, and involving them in monitoring the effectiveness of their communication efforts to identify lessons for future seasons.

Good practice examples

- In the landslide-prone districts of Chattogram and Bandarban, Bangladesh, a network of 450 local actors—including fire services, law enforcement, village police, and youth volunteers—actively disseminated warnings and evacuation protocols. Common communication channels included SMS, community meetings, loudspeaker announcements (miking), local radio, door-to-door messaging, and social media.
- In Bangladesh, children and youth in Kurigram district were trained to simplify and contextualise forecasts from BMD. They co-developed heatwave advisories for schools and households, which included simple guidance on hydration, shaded learning spaces, and timing of outdoor activities. They communicated them through posters, school-based campaigns, door-to-door visits, public miking, and audio broadcasts, significantly enhancing community awareness during the El Niño drought and heatwave. By integrating their local observations and knowledge of children's routines, the advisories became contextually appropriate, easy to understand, and actionable, demonstrating the value of child- and youth-led approaches in anticipatory action.
- In South Sudan, school-based DRR clubs led mobile flood awareness campaigns using megaphones and drums to reach schools and public spaces with timely messages. Children also hosted weekly radio shows on local stations, sharing preparedness information with approximately 5,472 listeners and reinforcing their role as trusted communicators in early warning systems.
- 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 PRESASS bulletin on their communities, and co-developed advisories including for key sectors for children. Budget was allocated to support children sharing those through local radios (*see photo*) and community awareness sessions.[3]

Mounira, 15 years old, sharing a summary of ACMAD weekly multihazard continental forecasts on the local radio in Diffa region, Niger, July 2025. Abdul Majidi Moutari/Save the Children

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

Child-centred preparedness and anticipatory action

In child-centred preparedness and AA processes, children and young adults:

- Are appropriately trained on DRR and AA, together with their teachers
- Decide how they can support AA efforts during the readiness, preparedness, activation phases of local AAPs and EAPs
- Co- facilitate DRR trainings in schools with support from their teachers
- Receive specific materials to be able to participate in AA efforts
- Participate in age-appropriate lifesaving preparedness and AA alongside other community members

Lessons Learnt

- School based DRR clubs are critical spaces for children and youth to exchange ideas and build skills and confidence to take part in AA. Yet, regular refresher trainings are needed to maintain preparedness skills and capacities in the school
- Project based AA limits the sustainability of child and community-led AA preparedness and implementation once funding sources are no longer available.
- Investment in child-friendly training materials and accessories is crucial for children to practice preparedness activities and make DRR trainings fun and interactive
- Child-led AA is more efficient when done in coordination with community led structures. In this regard, it is relevant to bring adults and children together during community preparedness meetings so they can discuss how best to coordinate AA activities in the window of opportunity

Recommendations

- Train all relevant stakeholders—SCI staff, local partners, DRR and child protection committees, teachers, parents, and school-based structures—on child-centred anticipatory action (AA). Engage teachers and community leaders early so they understand the AA concepts children need to learn. Support schools and child volunteers to develop AA preparedness plans and resource mobilisation strategies.
- Where DRR clubs don't exist, enable DRR committees to deliver basic preparedness training to children in and out of school when hazards are forecasted. Equip schools with essential materials—first aid kits, safety gear, training resources, and digital tools—to support practical preparedness activities throughout the year.
- Organise regular simulations and exercises so children can internalise key preparedness steps. Involve community members to support teachers in delivering ongoing DRR and AA training.
- Advocate for integrating DRR and AA into school curricula to make preparedness part of regular learning. Pilot child-led AA programmes so children and youth can lead peer training in schools.
- Engage national child-led structures (e.g. children's boards and parliaments) to formalise their role in AA. Encourage school DRR committee members to join broader governance platforms like child welfare and education committees to strengthen coordination.
- Provide seasonal grants and technical support to schools and committees to sustain preparedness activities and embed AA into routine practice.

Good practice examples

- In Nigeria, SC used the 'ready set go method' to simulate a case of AA for flood with school children. This helped them identifying thresholds and key actions once each thresholds have been reached. Country and field office teams are also currently exploring how children can be supported to observe cash for work activities as a mean to showcase how AA preparedness looks like in practice and create future engagement
- In Beletweyne, Somalia, youth volunteers previously trained by SC engaged in school cleaning campaigns to reduce disease outbreaks and were also mobilised to evacuate vulnerable people from the community. In four communities, adults confirmed youth volunteers played a key role in helping vulnerable households evacuate before river levels rose.
- In Bangladesh, around 60 youth and community volunteers in Bandarban and Chattogram districts supported shelter readiness and distributed preparedness materials as landslide risks increased.
- DRR club members helped identify 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.
- A similar approach is used in Ethiopia and South Sudan (see photos), where AA and DRR school clubs, after mapping risks in their surroundings and developing contingency plans, received small fund to implement early actions both at schools and community level.

DRR club students taking care of their school garden in Bunj Basic School, Maban county, South Sudan. Named Bebe/Save the Children

Child-centred MEAL for AA

In child centred MEAL process for AA, children and young adults:

- Determine the goal of both AA, and their involvement in designing and implementing AA
- Monitor, evaluate and document the extent to which these goals are being achieved to ensure it reflects their specific needs
- Codesign evaluation methodologies using approaches that have supported child engagement in other thematic areas eg H methodology in SSD evaluation and questionnaire, select evaluation participants and propose evaluation protocols
- Undertake FGDs with their peers, collect, analyse and share the information

Importantly:

- Evaluation and learning questions are child-specific and focus on AA impacts in children's access to education, child protection services, their wellbeing, confidence levels etc

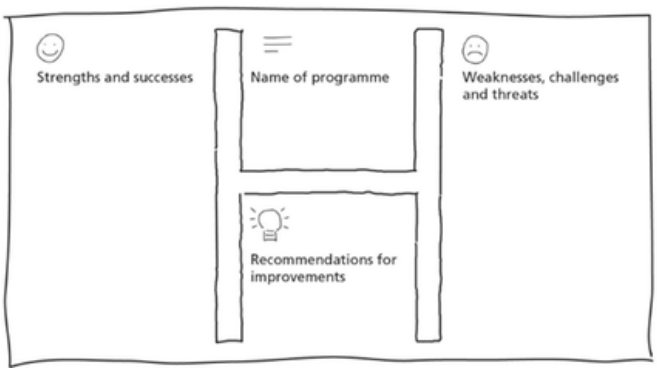
Lessons learnt

- Empowering children and young adults to monitor and evaluate AA interventions will ensure that outcomes reflect their specific needs and priorities.

- Approaches like the H-methodology – where children write strengths and weaknesses of a project and give an overall score – (*see photo*) and child-friendly questionnaires can capture children's specific insights on how AA initiatives should be improved to better meet their specific needs

- When children lead peer-to-peer FGDs, collect and analyse data, they generate insights that adults may overlook

- Children and young adults need support and capacity-building to engage meaningfully and safely in MEAL processes.



H assessement methodology

Recommendations

- Budget, plan and implement MEAL processes and activities to capture:
  - The **specific impacts of anticipatory action on children and young adults**, including their access to education, child protection services, psychosocial wellbeing, confidence, and decision-making capacity.
  - The **effects of child participation** in anticipatory action on both children and adults (e.g. shifts in decision-making dynamics, empowerment, or intergenerational collaboration);
  - The **extent and quality of children and youth's engagement** in the design, implementation, and evaluation of anticipatory action interventions.
- Co-design MEAL tools with children and youth including specific indicators which they can track, while providing feedback on whether AA activities are meeting their expectations and improving their coping capacities
- Support children and youth evaluating the impact of their specific contributions to AA on programme decisions but also in the lives of the communities they live in, such as the communication of weather advisories through various channels; Communicate the findings back to children and youth so as to maintain trust and motivation

Good practice examples

- The Sudan's flood AA and DRR project evaluation in 2024 assessed the inclusivity of planning processes with adults and children, highlighting significant gaps in ensuring that children's voices are consistently heard and utilized to inform strategic decisions during flood anticipation activities
- In 2024, Madagascar conducted a child-focused evaluation of the ECHO-funded DRR project 'Miahy'. The process included separate focus group discussions (FGDs) with girls and boys, as well as mixed-group FGDs, enabling the collection of clearly disaggregated data that reflected gender-specific perspectives on the project (*see photo*)
- Bangladesh involved youth in post AA landslide assessment who gave practicable advice on how to make landslide emergency kits more adequate for use in landside evacuation shelters

Girls showing the results of the H assessment of the ECHO-funded DRR project 'Miahy' in Iaborano community, Vatovavy region, Madagascar. Noalisoa Rakotomalala /Save the Children.