



El Niño Task Force: Strategic Review

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Cover photograph:

Mileat Kiros, 12, has to wait for hours to fill her jerry can at a distribution point in Tigray, Ethiopia

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Responding to the new normal

The 2015-16 El Niño crisis affected 60 million people – putting it on the same level as the global refugee and displacement crisis – but with nowhere near the same visibility. This kind of drought crisis is likely to worsen as climate change intersects with the increasing frequency of El Niño-La Niña weather cycles, presenting the development and humanitarian sectors with new challenges.

In response to early signs of a hard-hitting El Niño – for which warnings were issued as early as May 2015 – World Vision (WV) opted to pilot a new mechanism to empower the Partnership to respond early to a multi-region crisis.

This was in part a response to the failure of the international community to intervene early in the 2011 Horn of Africa famine, in which some 260,000 people died. That crisis proved the importance of early action, disaster risk reduction and resilience interventions if livelihoods and lives were to be saved.

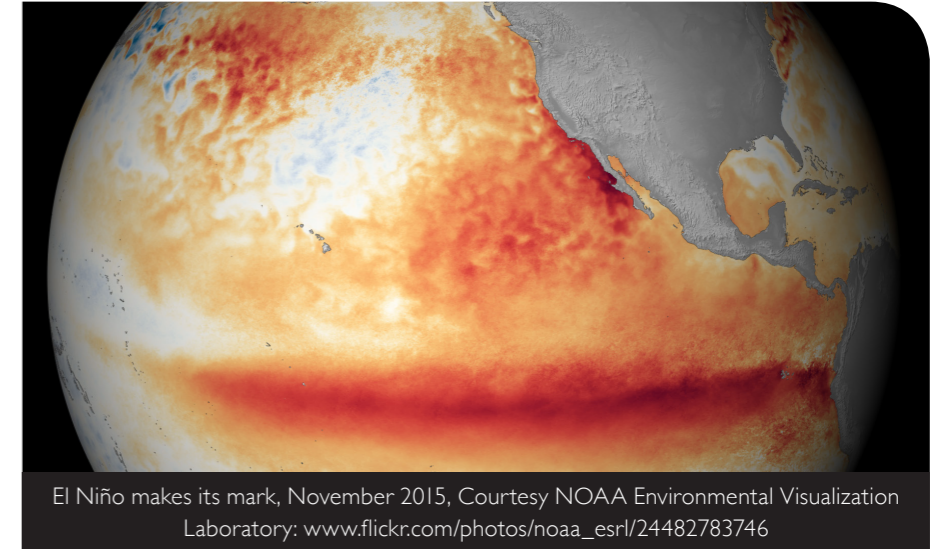
Towards the latter part of 2015 WV established an El Niño Task Force, overseen by a Steering Committee of WV sector representatives. Its aim was to track the potential and actual income pipeline of private (non-sponsorship and re-targeted sponsorship) and institutional grant funding across regions, National Offices (NO), and sectors. It was to provide information to facilitate strategic decision making; to influence donors and partners; to recognise global income; and to demonstrate impact. And it was to guide communications messaging and positioning.

By the end of 2016 the Task Force was able to show WV had committed US\$264 million to El Niño programming and assisted almost six million people – over half of whom were children. The response spanned eight WV declared emergencies, of which the one for the Southern Africa region comprised eight countries (SAENER), with seven other WV declared emergency responses. At least eight WV other countries did El Niño programming.

The range of emergency declarations and response models meant responsibility for leadership, the tracking of funding and funding opportunities, and capture of impact rested with different entities making information management, message harmonisation and approaches very challenging.

Nevertheless, outcomes included:

- Monthly snapshots sent to key WV Humanitarian and Emergency Affairs (HEA) audiences that included analysis of El Niño funding, including grant pipeline and secured funding at NO, global and sector levels.
- Support for WV engagement at the International Climate Change COP22 Conference, and with the UN, bilateral donors and with the UN special envoy for El Niño, Mary Robinson, as well as with the UN/ INGO process for developing El Niño early action triggers and procedures (the Blueprint for Action and Standard Operating Procedures).



El Niño makes its mark, November 2015, Courtesy NOAA Environmental Visualization Laboratory: www.flickr.com/photos/noaa_esrl/24482783746

- The creation of communications messaging and content primarily targeted at supporting income and influence goals with institutional donors.

The Task Force outcomes have given us a tantalising glimpse of the potential for WV to collect, analyse and use information to drive early action, donor engagement and increase influence. Despite the challenge of collecting information the Task Force proved that high quality data can be sourced. However, this now needs to be systematised with entities accountable for providing key sets of data. That needs to come from WV sectors that include the disaster risk reduction, resilience, humanitarian, food and VisionFund sectors.

It also needs to be analysed, so that early warning trends can be monitored and strategic decisions on interventions and budgeting informed.

Impact data can also potentially show if early warning information is being converted into action. This has been difficult to demonstrate.

With the right combination of early warning-action, budget and impact data WV could proactively position the agency for grants, advocate for the international community to scale up early action funding, and influence affected governments to act early.

Early action remains woeful across the board. The international community appealed for US\$5 billion for the El Niño response. But only US\$1.9 billion was raised.

WV is sitting on a gold mine of information that must be mobilised for income and influence. This is more important than ever as WV seeks to expand its work into fragile contexts, many of which are plagued by drought, slow-onset crises and climate change. Our work crosses the humanitarian-development spectrum. We are ideally placed to externally position crises like these and to prepare, act early and assist recovery. If we do not development gains will be lost.

Francois Batalingaya
Senior Director Humanitarian Operations
World Vision

The El Niño Disaster

The 2015-16 El Niño event was one of the worst in decades, affecting 60 million people at its peak – from Papua New Guinea to Haiti and large parts of the African continent. In August 2015, the United States National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) announced the 2015 El Niño “could be among the strongest in the historical record dating back to 1950¹.” A total of 23² countries appealed for international humanitarian assistance and WV issued emergency declarations across 15 countries³.

El Niño confronted World Vision and the entire humanitarian community with several key challenges – the most important of which was how to respond early enough to protect children, communities and livelihoods. A child protection assessment⁴ of six countries in Southern Africa, led by World Vision and conducted with Plan and UNICEF, found that children were being pulled out of school to work or find food,

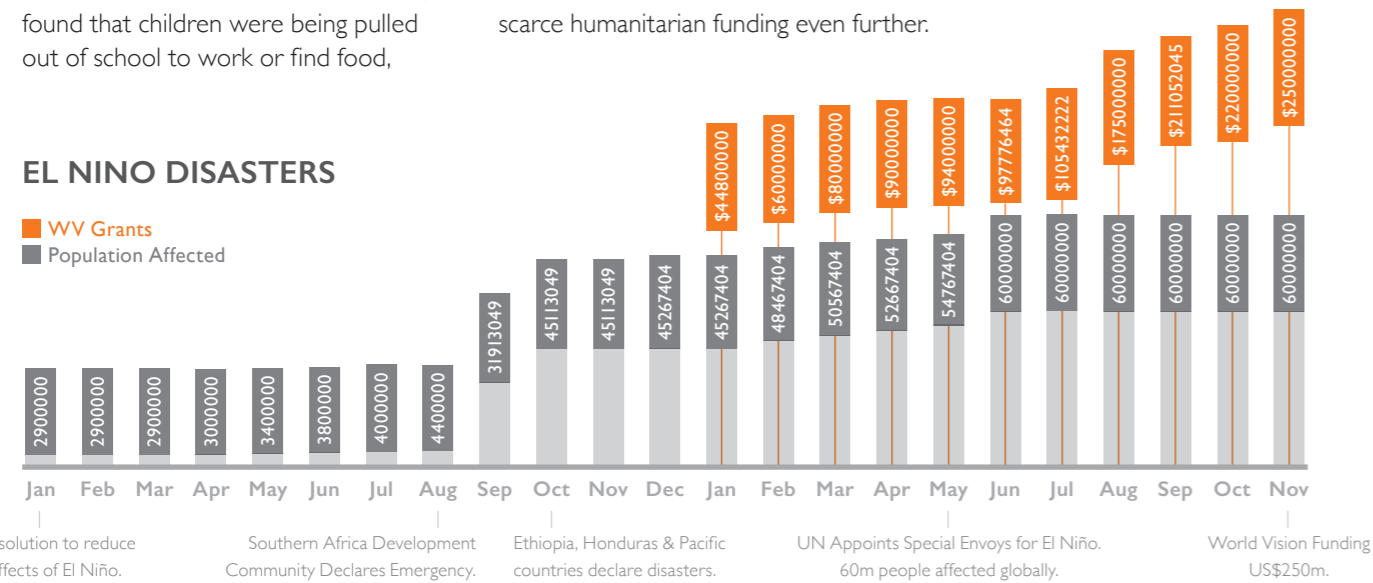
many were at risk of being separated from parents, girls were at increased risk from sexual violence and families were migrating in search of food and water. The impact of El Niño was leading to serious child protection issues.

Past El Niño events, such as the Horn of Africa famine in 2011, have impressed upon the international community the need to act on early warning data. El Niño and La Niña cycles are well understood and occur on average every three to seven years⁵. Late humanitarian responses to severe El Niño Southern Oscillations (ENSO) and the resulting climatic events have disastrous results. They lead to widespread hunger, ill-health and death – disproportionately impacting children⁶ – and destroy livelihoods, pushing more people into long-term poverty while reversing development gains. They are costly for humans and for economies and stretch scarce humanitarian funding even further.

El Niño broadly leads to higher temperatures and increased risks of severe drought while La Niña has a cooling impact leading to more storms and above average rains.

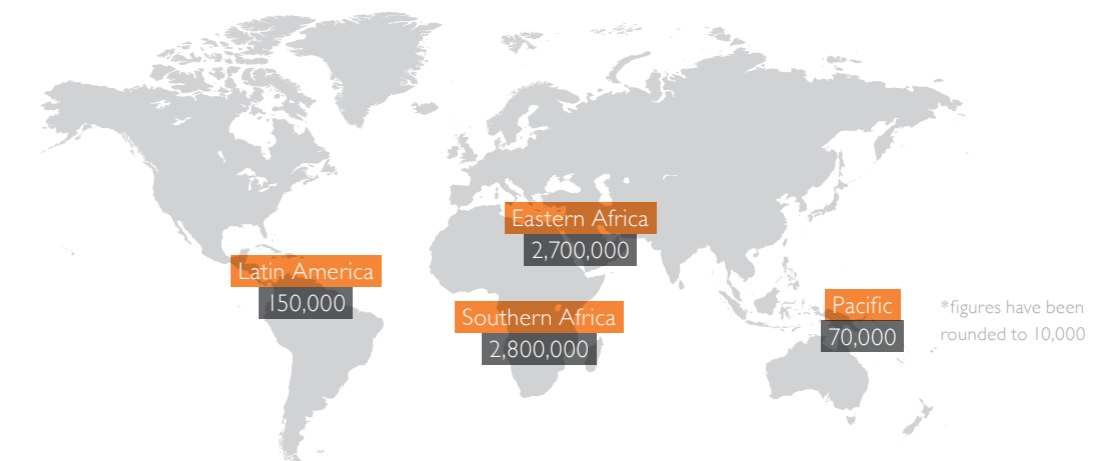
EL NINO DISASTERS

■ WV Grants
■ Population Affected



¹ "ENSO Blog: November El Niño update: It's a small world". Climate.Gov. United States National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
² Countries that were most affected by the 2015/16 El Niño and requested international assistance were: Angola, DRC, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Marshall Islands, Mongolia, Mozambique, Namibia, Palau, PNG, Somalia, Sudan, Swaziland, Timor-Leste, Vietnam, Zambia, Zimbabwe.
³ CAT 3 Global: SARO (Angola, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, S Africa, Swaziland, Zambia, Zimbabwe); CAT 3 National: Ethiopia, Haiti, China, Somalia, Pacific-Timor Leste, Indonesia, (Note: WV India responded to drought although it did not consider this part of El Niño); CAT 2 National: Honduras
⁴ Regional Early-Stage Child Protection Rapid Assessment Southern Africa El Niño Emergency Response March 2016 Child Protection Working Group: <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/WV%20SAENER%20Report%20FINAL.pdf>
⁵ www.nasa.gov/topics/earth/features/el_nino20100825.html
⁶ Somalia famine impact / El Impact on children

PEOPLE ASSISTED



Ethiopia
 Over 10 million people were affected by El Niño in Ethiopia – World Vision assisted 1 in 4. WV provided clean water and sanitation to the largest number of people (740,000). This helped curb the spread of disease.



Malawi
 World Vision conducted the largest ever aid operation launched in Malawi. In a country where around 40 percent of the population was in need, WV helped over 1 million people.



Haiti
 Almost 40,000 children in Haiti were severely malnourished and World Vision established mobile clinics to help some of these children. Another 64,000 children were fed through World Vision's school feeding programmes.



Food Assistance
 as food aid and cash transfers



Food Security
 programmes including seed distribution and irrigation



Nutrition clinics
 targeting children under five and pregnant and lactating mothers



Protection programmes
 recovery loans and savings groups



Clean water
 sanitation and health assistance to combat the threat of disease

Funding by Sector	%
Multi Sectors	7%
Food	54%
Food Security	27%
WASH	6%
Health & Nutrition	5%
Other	1%
TOTAL	256,678,515

Funding By Source	WV Declared Emergency
WV Funding	10%
UN Agencies	41%
Intl Govt Grants	47%
National Government	2%
TOTAL	256,678,516

The Task Force

On the basis of forecasts of a severe El Niño, in October 2015 World Vision's global Humanitarian and Emergency Affairs unit approved a new temporary response coordination mechanism – a Global Task Force.⁷ Overseen by a Steering Committee,⁸ it was designed to address specific gaps within the organisation including:

- The absence of intra-organisation coordination to bring together key response actors, including resilience, disaster risk reduction, Vision Fund, Grant Asset Management and the Food Programming and Management Group.
- The lack of a global trend analysis process or system to collate and apply early warning information and advice.
- A lack of streamlined information from existing sources upon which early action decisions could be taken.
- Poor understanding of how early warning info was being converted into action.

- The potential to miss evidence of innovative approaches or partnerships or to take advantage of funding opportunities.
- An inability to provide clear leadership to the Partnership on how WV should respond, due to the above.

Addressing these would hopefully lead to improved preparedness, mitigation, response, recovery and resilience building – and enable each function to play its part. The provision of strategic advice (monthly Snapshots) and coordinated information and messaging should also lead to increased income, influence and impact. A major undertaking of the Task Force was to create a system of monthly Snapshots to capture and aggregate critical El Niño related funding and beneficiary information, conduct basic analysis, provide information on advocacy and funding opportunities, and flag early action programming, grant wins or innovative interventions.⁹

⁷ Task Force made up of the following positions: Executive lead (25 %): accountable to Sr. Dir Humanitarian Operations; Programmes (50%); Communications (50%); Information Management (100%) EW/EA focal point (100%); Advocacy/ Policy (50 %); Funding for the Task Force came from the WV's Emergency Preparedness Resource Fund. An initial four-month run time was extended until Dec 2016 due to the strength of the El Niño, albeit with reduced staffing.

⁸ The committee included representatives from GC Resilience and Livelihoods; GC HEA; Vision Fund Int; VFI; GC GAM; AJ&C; Communications

⁹ Distributed to Disaster Risk Reduction, Advocacy, communications, Humanitarian and Emergency Affairs, Resilience and Livelihoods, International Programmes, Marketplaces communities (leaders, managers and officers)



It took three days for Kevin, 10, from Los Querques, Honduras, to find water after a patch of damp sand provided a clue on where to dig for water.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- Monthly snapshots that included aggregated global, country and sector funding data, impact data, analysis, an Early Warning Early Action (EWEA) inventory and updates on El Niño climate impacts, external engagement opportunities, communications content and media engagement.
- Supported WV representation at COP22, the UN General Assembly El Niño side meeting; OCHA, regional, UN and bilateral donor engagement; the signing of joint statements; regional and NO engagement with the UN special envoy Mary Robinson and engagement in the UN/INGO process for developing of El Niño Blueprint and Standard Operating Procedures.
- Created El Niño messaging and an external communications engagement strategy, supported NO content creation for online use, supported SO media engagement, positioned online content aimed at target audiences, supported key events and engagements with content and advice, supported policy, early warning and assessment report production.
- A Cash Based Programming by sector analysis report.

Lessons and Recommendations

The experience of the Task Force garnered a number of important lessons that need to be institutionalised in order for World Vision and other organisations to better respond to slow-onset disasters in the future.

LESSONS

Early Action remains a challenge despite improved information and data sharing. There was inadequate insight into whether WV's responses were early, innovative, built resilience, strengthened livelihoods or if child well-being was impacted at scale.¹⁰ For actions to be deemed early they would need to take place before emergency declarations were made and current information systems do not gather this information. Although the Task Force drew together information from across different sectors, this was more challenging at the Regional or National level.

Communications around slow-onsets must be produced in ways that meet the requirements of the sectors involved in multiple-country slow onsets, especially for engaging institutional donors at all levels.

Information Management was essential to understanding the rapid growth of WV's El Niño response portfolio to US\$264 million and 5.8 million beneficiaries during 2016. High quality data for multi-country responses is available if we build the capacity to deliver it.

Stakeholder Engagement brought together groups, organisations and individuals from across the development and humanitarian relief spectrum who might not typically be involved in rapid-onset emergencies. Slow onset emergencies involve both development and humanitarian stakeholders, including the resilience, livelihoods, agriculture, disaster risk reduction, VisionFund and other communities, presenting the organisation with new complexities of coordination as each has different content and information requirements.

¹⁰ Livelihood spend which would typically go on resilience building accounted for a minimal 0.39% of budget and protection (under which education would fall) just 0.4%. This was in spite of consistent messaging about the value of building resilience, supporting livelihoods and preventing school dropouts. (Without more sophisticated data capture it is difficult to evaluate if food assistance / food security programming boosted resilience or child protection.)



Providing food aid is often the last resort for children like Eliya, 12. Early action to early warning signs of drought could help ensure things never get this bad.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Slow-onset unit – HEA leadership should consider the merits of setting up a more centralised unit to gather, aggregate and share content and information and foster coordination. This could potentially be a permanent unit or one that launches on an emergency trigger to compile data in order to analyse and form a proper view of WV's global humanitarian response portfolio. There are opportunities to take forward the work by GC HEA's

Innovative Financing Team and GC GAM to capture and potentially present this in the dashboard format.

Grant Communications – Communications skills and outputs need to be re-tooled to support sector needs. Complex multi-country emergencies are likely to need dedicated and centralised communications support in ways that sit outside the current Disaster Management Structure.

Communications & El Niño

All INGO and UN agencies struggled to position the emerging El Niño disaster as one requiring urgent and proactive action. This was especially true when the world was confronted by Syria, Iraq, South Sudan and other conflict crises. It is one reason why the international funding (the total amount needed by governments, aid agencies and partners to address urgent humanitarian needs) for the El Niño response was so inadequate.¹¹

As a slow onset crisis El Niño did not present the imagery nor urgency typically required to attract media interest. The 2011 Horn of Africa drought had clearly demonstrated that media attention was unlikely until famine was declared and images of emaciated children widely distributed. Yet agencies had focused on encouraging early action to prevent that very scenario from happening.

In recognition of this, from the outset, Task Force communications resources and messaging focused on positioning World Vision for grants rather than for private donations and to influence governments to do more, such as fund food assistance and resilience

programmes. The focus on grant communication was aligned with World Vision's strategy to increase the percentage of grant income by 20 percent annually and to be seen as a thought leader.¹²

The importance of this income stream and audience base was subsequently demonstrated by the fact that of the US\$250 million raised for WV's El Niño declared responses, 88 percent came from grant income – from UN agencies and governments. The initial Public Engagement strategy (late 2015/early 2016) was therefore designed to:

- Position the organisation as an expert in life-saving aid and resilience and sustainability programmes that focus on child-wellbeing
- Increase the level of institutional funding (bi-lateral and multilateral) and contributions from corporations and national governments, particularly disaster management bodies by showcasing programming options and best practices in: resilience; disaster risk reduction through early action; and food assistance.

(see Appendix 1 for Key Messages)

¹¹ Although World Vision exceeded its own collective funding target of \$177m this may indicate that income targets were not ambitious enough

¹² GAM NexGen Strategy Map (FY16 – FY20)



Leonard, from Malawi, is back at school because his mother now receives monthly family food packages that allow her the little she needs to pay for exercise books.

Key communications activities were:

- The issuing of press releases (seven)
- Support for the release of a WV-led inter-agency Child Protection Assessment in Southern Africa¹³
- Support for the release of When There is No Food Assistance¹⁴ policy report
- Communications support for those engaging in the UN's Blueprint and Standard Operating Procedures process
- Support for COP22 climate change conference engagement
- Launch and population of a wvi.org El Niño response website
- Internal comms supported via monthly Snapshot and set up and population of El Niño single site on wvrelief
- Engagement with SO¹⁵, Vision Fund,¹⁶ region, national¹⁷ and response comms re content, blogs¹⁸, media work
- Products designed to engage institutional donors included a themed microsite (www.climatedisasters.org) to present key data and content in a format that was easily viewable on a mobile device or downloadable as individual sector documents.¹⁹

¹³ <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/WV%20SAENER%20Report%20FINAL.pdf>

¹⁴ www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/When%20There%20Is%20No%20Food%20Assistance%202015.pdf

¹⁵ www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/mar/16/drought-high-temperatures-el-nino-36m-people-africa-hunger and www.usnews.com/news/best-countries/articles/2016-07-25/climate-change-sheds-new-light-on-lesothos-water-deal-with-south-africa and www.theguardian.com/global-development/2016/apr/21/drought-southern-africa-heavy-toll-students-fainting-malawi-zimbabwe

¹⁶ VisionFund release focused on DFID grant for El Niño loans scheme: www.prweb.com/releases/2016/01/prweb13157092.htm

¹⁷ www.dailynews.co.zw/articles/2016/07/23/6-000-children-drop-out-of-school-in-mat-north

¹⁸ <http://news.trust.org/item/20151127101311-2sti9/>

¹⁹ The International Red Cross does something similar with the www.climatecentre.org and Oxfam with www.elninooxfam.org

MEDIA

Media was primarily used to raise the profile of the El Niño crisis and to help position WV with donors. Press releases, as follows, were designed to warn, demonstrate key partnerships, target donors and highlight report releases. A total of 45 media articles mentioning WV were published, reaching an audience of millions, including:

- Jan 2016: Aid agencies warn of inadequate response. Joint release with Oxfam (Reuters)²⁰
- Feb 2016: EU urged to prioritise food assistance and nutrition programmes to avert a crisis as WV launches food assistance report. (EuroActive)²¹
- February 2016: Severe water shortages putting millions of lives at risk
- April 2016: As UN donors meet WV warns funding is inadequate
- July 2016: Warning that El Niño is forcing children in Southern Africa into early marriage, child labour and out of school, as WV releases report Released to coincide with a high-level regional government meeting in S Africa on El Niño (Reuters)²² WV mention in the UN El Niño bulletin
- July 2016: WV-WFP launch largest ever food aid programme in Malawi
- November 2016: El Niño leaves millions facing hunger in Malawi

Analysis showed WV key messages appeared in over 70 percent of English language hits (see *Media Messages*). Of the 30 percent of articles published in non-English speaking media (especially German and Spanish), 60 percent articulated the key messages (see *Appendix II*).

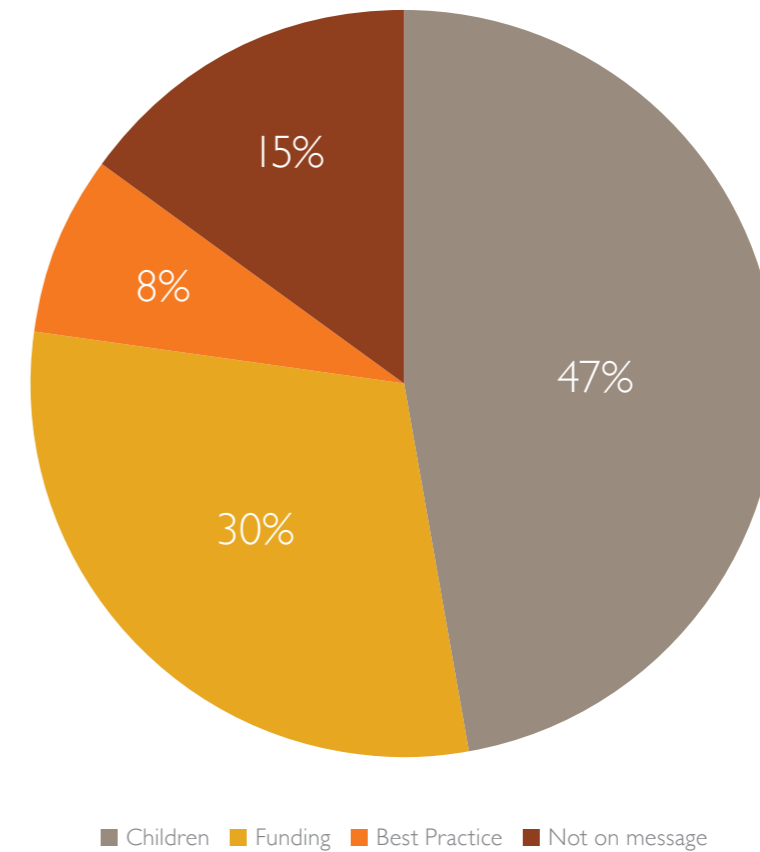
MESSAGES

Children – Over the coming months millions of children will suffer the devastating effects of El Niño;

Funding – Donors should fund ongoing resilience programmes and social safety nets so communities are better prepared for climate change;

Best practice – WV has best-practice projects and partnerships with proven impact that could be expanded to help more people;

MEDIA MESSAGES:
Percentage of World Vision English language media hits for El Niño featuring key WV key messages



²⁰ www.reuters.com/article/us-aid-elnino-idUSKBN0UM2CL20160108

²¹ www.euractiv.com/section/sustainable-dev/interview/expert-somalia-niger-congo-victims-of-humanitarian-aid-gap/

²² Reuters article: <http://news.trust.org/item/20160726173509-5mkm4> and <http://news.trust.org/item/20160720153333-mrf0v/>

CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Communications capacity and staffing

At the field level, communications are under pressure to support multiple stakeholder needs, particularly sponsorship and internal communications. There is under-investment in communications staffing and expertise to support the sophisticated public engagement strategy and outputs required by key sectors. Work is being undertaken to explore how communications can deliver this but solutions could include:

1. Ensure communications is included in grant proposals, with clear deliverables built in that position WV and the grantee.
2. Employ communicators on short-term contracts to build case studies, develop specific quality communications outputs (brochures, factsheets, videos etc.) and sector public engagement plans.
3. A process of identifying communications expertise gaps and addressing them by either rigorously skilling up²⁴ or employing consultant or new staff communicators.

Evidence based content

Capturing best-practice early warning, resilience and disaster risk reduction interventions and their impacts remains very challenging. Yet doing so is essential if WV is to be seen as a leading agency in this area. This remains challenging for the following reasons:

- Although child-wellbeing data is well captured in development programmes, this is lacking in emergency programmes as the information gathering processes do not currently exist.
- Communicators at the field level are not sufficiently skilled in sourcing and packaging the right kinds of information, nor in supporting donor engagement strategies.
- WV does not have the data to demonstrate and compare the effectiveness of its programmes to areas where interventions did not take place. It is noticeable that WV continually turns to Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration programmes in Ethiopia as one place where resilience building impact can be reasonably demonstrated.



The construction of a water-fed collection system allows the community's children to make the most of what little water there is.

Thought-leadership

There are a large number of sectors engaged in slow-onset emergencies, including water, sanitation & hygiene, food assistance, health and nutrition, disaster risk reduction, resilience, livelihoods, agriculture, child protection, education and VisionFund. Response and field communications should only provide communications support to the highest value sectors. At the global level, the food assistance sector was the most engaged in the El Niño response,

providing thought leadership expertise, engaging on policy positioning and providing social media staffing and content support. Best practice early-warning-early-action and resilience programmes were hard to identify, with information being more anecdotal than evidence based at the beginning of the response. Communications could help strengthen thought leadership by supporting the production of case studies and other content that supports grant communications. (see Appendix II for list)

²⁴ Training materials: Communications for Grant and Acquisition Management: www.wvcentral.org/Communications/Documents/Practical_Guide_GAM_Communications.pdf; ProVision Program Team: <https://teams.wvcentral.org/sites/provision/Pages/Home.aspx>

Information Management & El Niño

Effective information management (IM) for disasters is a vital component of emergency response. WV has struggled with satisfactory IM in emergencies for a number of years and it continues to be an institutional challenge. However, it is necessary in order to give the Partnership and leaders clear context and evidence that enables timely strategic and operational decision-making.

Donors rely on high quality data to make decisions. As the Somalia Resilience Program (SOMREP) has demonstrated, accurate situational information can lead to grant-making that gives communities what they need, rather than reactively applying for grants that donors call for. This is particularly important with regard to child-wellbeing. Although WV has well developed information gathering processes and structures within our development programmes, we are lacking these when it comes to responses.

The main IM goal within the El Niño response was to provide reliable information for strategic decision making to demonstrate and drive programme impact and income.

- **Impact:** Information was collated and triangulated with external secondary data sources and with internal information on impact of the disaster and WV's response.
- **Income:** WV raised US\$250 million within 12 months. IM demonstrated the scale of the response and of the disaster and this is when key stakeholders started to see this as a valuable undertaking.

The El Niño Task Force (TF) identified some key challenges in WV's current approach, processes and capacity in providing coherent and validated information for response and recovery.

Information Management

Consolidates, processes and analyses relevant data from multiple sources to create meaning based on objectives, and to present a variety of products that are disseminated to decision-makers.



Response partnerships are key. Christos Stylianides, European Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management, visits a WV Malawi project site where backyard gardening is improving resilience

“ I get the latest overview on sector programming particularly on food security, and ongoing resilience projects. The Global Programme Response Report & Analysis is also helpful as I know what sector is funded by whom. ”

~ NO-PO

LESSONS

Building trust increases cooperation

Reporting to the Partnership seems to be of little priority as staff do not perceive the information as valuable. A lack of trust and transparency as to how the information requested would add value inhibited the process and the information flow was not managed effectively by National Offices (NO). Furthermore, an uncoordinated system, a lack of capacity in data gathering and the lack of guidance to field staff on data collection contributed to this issue.

Leadership is needed so that the value of IM is understood by offices, ministries and functional groups, and therefore can be prioritised and managed effectively. Stakeholders will then put more effort into providing usable data. During the course of the El Niño response, trust in the value of data sharing increased as its purpose was explained and as it was presented in ways that benefitted them and allowed stakeholders to leverage it advantageously. This contributed to a 'culture of openness'.

Usable and consistent data are required

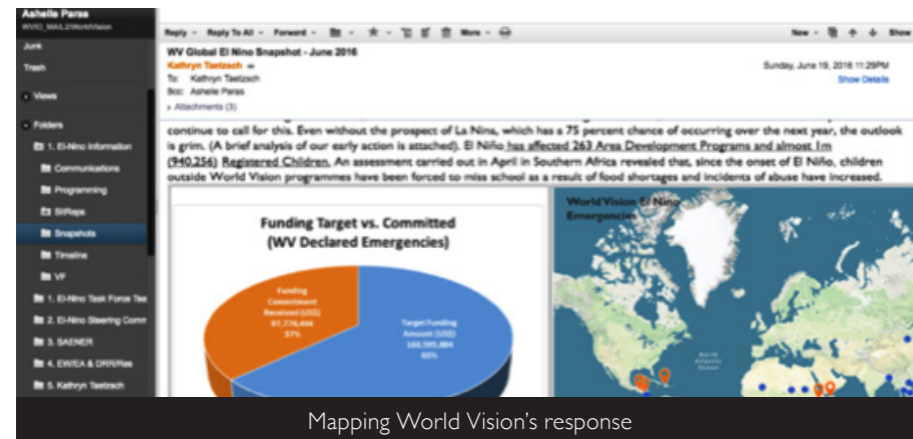
NO field staff collect and report data, but often the information is incomplete or inconsistent to provide solid evidence.²⁵ By setting programme datasets and the reporting protocols from the outset, data was easier to collect, filter and compare. Standardising words (e.g. External Private Funds means PNS) and reporting processes helped clarify the meaning of data and resulted in consistent information. In addition, providing a standard template with agreed datasets and methods of data collection made the data and analysis useful. This resolved the different data collection methodologies used by NOs/ROs. Setting a regular reporting schedule also increased the reliability of the data, making it easier to collect, compare and analyse.

Quality over quantity was key to IM in order to deliver reliable information. Too much reporting can be detrimental to operations on the ground. Finding the best method to capture and manage information, which acted as a single source, improved information flow. The quality of the data collected was more important than the technology used.

²⁵ For example, no data was collected on the rates of malnutrition for children under 5 in Southern Africa when food shortages were widespread.

“ I use the El Niño Snapshot to update our internal stakeholders on El-Niño as well as pull information from it to update Country Global Affairs. I find it helpful.”

~ SO Lead



Mapping World Vision's response

TECHNOLOGY VS CULTURE

IM challenges often stem from culture, not technology. Prevailing culture and local priorities lessen the importance of IM in disaster response. The complex nature of the El Niño multi-country, multi-sector response created an environment for the sometimes chaotic generation and submission of unreliable data, resulting in conflicting information and confusion.

Data is never perfect, yet NOs still find it challenging to provide quick and timely information for fear of being 'scored' by SOs which can affect future support received. While the problem is sometimes the IM tool, the more recurrent factor is a behaviour issue. Perhaps there is a 'culture of fear' as SOs tend to invest more in NOs that provide 'good' data when there is potentially much excellent work being done that is hidden behind poor data collection processes.

It was helpful to build on the resources and tools that were already available. For El-Niño, some reporting tools were tweaked and automated for faster collection and analysis, while some monitoring and reporting was developed based on needs such as the funding matrix, beneficiary data, Area Development Programme (ADP) monitoring tool and the impact action matrix.

DON'T ASSUME STAKEHOLDERS KNOW WHAT INFORMATION THEY NEED

At the outset, management had a limited understanding of what information they needed and what it was for. Discussions with IM staff helped leaders and other decision-makers understand what might be helpful. Initial data capture was presented to senior management (and key leaders at RO and NO level). This led to a greater appreciation for the value of IM as a function and identified further information requirements.

“ If we'd had the El-Niño impact data – including on our registered children – much earlier in the disaster cycle, we surely could have advocated within the organisation to be responding faster.”

~ GC-HEA

High-level analysis of this data helped leaders define both response challenges and opportunities, and understand the importance of cross-unit collaboration and coordination. Lengthy emails with many attachments did not draw much attention. The information overload created unnecessary 'noise'. Multiple group Skype chats also generated distraction and required considerable effort to process, often yielding little benefit.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There is an increasing demand for evidence-based data by humanitarian partners, donors and other actors in humanitarian responses. This will only increase as the number of disaster responses grow and demands to demonstrate effectiveness and efficiency increase. WV can improve IM during emergencies in the following ways:

Prioritise Information Management as a key function

While recognising the need to allocate funding according to a large number of competing priorities, the El-Niño response showed that the resourcing of IM did not reflect the importance, size, and complexity of IM. Information is the foundation for good decision-making and coordination. For WV to remain relevant and provide greater and broader impact, IM needs to become a core function and not an ad hoc one, especially in emergency responses.

Build core sector capacity

The El-Niño response showed that the challenge in obtaining relevant field data was due to poor understanding of what field data was required, and low capacity to deliver it. Information management raises expectations from all actors, including information sources.

Malnutrition data was a good example. Malnutrition levels often increase as a result of food insecurity but there was no data available for children under five. Sector specialists often had limited capacity, or the funding required, to conduct vulnerability assessments, or track and monitor nutrition data, an important indicator of child health. Similarly, WASH specialists required needs data in order to increase programming in this area.

When data was not provided, evidence could not be presented to communicators, donors and operations in order to position for funding and increase the effectiveness and impact of programmes. Regular monitoring against baselines would enable IM to provide quality data which could help identify projects that are innovative, impactful or sustainable and in turn help secure the funding they need.

Grow people's appreciation for the value of IM first, then build on the resources and tools already available. Any IM tool should be simple, easy to understand and use, replicable, and sustainable, for short or long-term use. Data should be accessible and stored securely.

Find and develop IM Experts and Champion

While tools and systems are important, WV must invest in long-term IM organisational capacity. Local staff performing IM functions need to be resourced and skilled enough to anticipate information needs. The organisation needs new skill sets that can compile and maintain baseline and operational datasets, conduct high-level data analysis, and produce and present products for strategic and operational decision-making.

WV would benefit from having an IM champion who can facilitate change in the organisational culture and lead the development of IM institutional capacity so that it becomes “business as usual”.

Strategic vs Tactical Information

Currently, in the Emergency Management System, the IM role is located within the Programme function. Often, the information produced is ‘plain’ data and is not analysed. Data repeatedly requires cross-validation which adds another layer in the process. This needs to be reviewed to reflect the current context and complexity of disasters.

In contrast to the Design, Monitoring and Evaluation function which focuses on primary data, the IM function looks at secondary data which is particularly helpful for generating new insights and helps the organisation to be more internally focused.

Moreover, IM can help dismantle silos within emergency responses. By viewing IM as a strategic rather than a tactical

function, it becomes an effective way to coordinate information within, across and outside the organisation. The best way to achieve this is to remove IM from programming.

It is critical for IM to know who the stakeholders are, what information they need, and why they need the information – both at the outset and on an ongoing basis. Data sets and metrics that demonstrate impact in programming, advocacy, funding and agreement over reporting timelines need to be agreed at the beginning of a response. IM needs to be constantly thinking ahead, and forecasting future data needs.

Make information useful

One of the biggest achievements of IM was when those providing the information could see how the data were being used, such as in strategic level discussions. Its primary role, though, is to serve operational decision making and in demonstrating impact. WV must find a balance where the effort of data capture and sharing goes beyond being viewed as a valueless burden and IM is actively engaged with to inform, improve and increase WV response impact, income and influence.

Understand what information is needed, for what purpose and how it adds value by engaging with all key stakeholders throughout the data collection process. Define what products meet the needs of different audiences (e.g. presentations with graphs, charts and tabulated comparative analysis highlighting best practices, narrative reports and matrices).

Early Warning & Early Action: past and present

The failure of the international community to respond effectively to the 2011 Horn of Africa famine left an estimated 260,000 people dead – half of them children²⁶.

Retrospective analysis²⁷ found that climate information, such as forecasts for below average rainfall and measurements of vegetation, coupled with analyses of socioeconomic conditions, could have been used to catalyse early action²⁸. Donors, governments and the international aid community did not do enough to prepare and acted too late. The international community said this must not happen again.

Unfortunately, the broad response to El Niño has proved that the international community still has a long way to go to improve early action. Responses to the early warnings have been too late and inadequate.

In WV’s case the establishment of the Task Force in October 2015 was a proactive early action to raise the profile of the emergency internally and to mobilise and coordinate responses.

For its part the UN, in May 2016, appointed two Special Envoys for El Niño – Mary Robinson and Macharia Kamau. They were tasked with alerting the world to its impact, and asked to

mobilise an integrated response and strengthen preparedness responses to future climate events. That preparedness work is now engaging INGOs, among others, to establish the commitments, partnerships and operating plans required to respond early to climate warning data at all levels. This is an attempt to formulate a more practical approach to responding early and is urgently needed in spite of a raft of international climate, disaster risk reduction and resilience building agreements and frameworks.

The UN is leading on the development of a ‘Blueprint for Action’ aimed at delivering a more concerted approach and helping vulnerable countries to respond proactively to future El Niño/ La Niña events and other slow-onset climate disasters. Alongside this, UNOCHA with the support of UN and development agencies, including WV, are developing a set of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) that detail the agreed collective time-lined actions that need to be taken before the next El Niño event to avert a disaster. The SOPs address the need for risk analysis and early warning; coordination and information management; programming; and early action financing.

(For more information on the Blueprint and SOPs see Appendix III)

²⁶ www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=44811#.WGY3fbaLV4

²⁷ Hillier and Dempsey, 2012: www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/bp-dangerous-delay-horn-africa-drought-180112-en.pdf

²⁸ Hillbruner & Moloney 2012: www.researchgate.net/publication/257743318_Famine_in_Somalia_Evidence_for_a_declaration

BUILDING AN EFFECTIVE EARLY WARNING SYSTEM

An effective early warning system is one that catalyses action early. The main challenge in building an effective early warning system is the lack of strong evidence as to what information leads to action and quantifying the exact return on investment. This is difficult due to the high number of variables and the difficulty with measuring the hypothetical impact of an averted disaster.

WV recognised the value of strengthening disaster risk reduction following the Asian Tsunami of 2004. Two years later it began developing early warning systems. However, the approach since then has been ad hoc, piecemeal and globally uncoordinated.

In Ethiopia, food security information is used to inform programming decisions. In Eastern and Southern African regions, a multi-hazard Early Warning System (EWS) tool – the BUSTER – has been used to collate a range of data and then suggest possible programmatic responses. In East Africa, a new tool is now being developed to gather key indicators for a more streamlined EWS.

While humanitarian agencies and other organisations have access to massive and ever more detailed climate, environmental, agricultural, geographical and other data, using it to drive early action remains something of a holy

grail. So in spite of developments and improvements to EWS across different agencies and organisations, there remains a lack of support for it at national and regional levels, as well as a lack of clarity and agreement as to what is needed from an effective EWS and how it should trigger early action.

A recent WV report – Learning From Experience: A Review of Early Warning Systems / Moving Towards Early Action 2016²⁹ – explores in more depth existing early warning systems in order to inform improvements to early action.

Put simply, any effective early action system by WV requires the following:

- The collection and analysis of Early Warning data at the local, national, regional and global levels, gathered from primary and secondary sources.
- The translation of that data into early contextual actions through effective information management, clarity of roles over who does and decides what, and clear systems and procedures at every level.
- A set of agreed actions by stakeholders across the organisation and externally, based on a regular review of EW reports/triggers. Actors include programme (development and HEA), advocacy, marketing and communications staff.
- Earmarked funding available to resource early actions based upon pre-agreed Early Action Plans.

Early Warning System –

The set of capacities needed to generate and disseminate timely and meaningful warning information to enable individuals, communities and organisations threatened by a hazard to prepare and to act appropriately and in sufficient time to reduce the possibility of harm or loss.

UNISDR (2009)



As water sources dry up the community in Hela Province, Papua New Guinea receive jerry cans, purification tablets and learn how to make water safe to drink.

New and innovative partnerships will be required to source, aggregate and analyse information, access funding and to potentially implement early action programmes. Funding options potentially available to WV include: the triggered release of national and global Emergency Preparedness Funds; the refocusing of Area Development Programme budgets; the use of private funding triggered when agreed 'warnings' are issued; the release of national, bi or multi-lateral safety net funding for early actions; partnering in consortia for EW financing (e.g. Start Network; SOMREP), and tapping into pro-poor and climate insurance and early response loans (VisionFund).

Advocacy is crucial in order to ensure more funding is being made available and to change the existing culture of responding late and only to disasters that are happening. Evidence on the cost benefit of preparedness and early action is increasing and can be used for advocacy.

Early action funding remains in short supply. This is largely due to the scale of humanitarian need currently facing donors and the risk averseness donors generally have to investing in disasters that have not yet happened and where it may be difficult to demonstrate its cost effectiveness, or to prove that a disaster has been averted and that money has not been wasted.

²⁹ www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/EWEA%20SummaryV2.pdf Report by: Maggie Ibrahim, Resilience Manager, WorldVision UK and Andrew Kruczkiewicz, International Research Institute for Climate and Society, Columbia University

Appendices

Appendix I

Key messages

Key Messages at the beginning of the response included:

- El Niño is one of the worst on record and its impact will increase causing extreme weather droughts and floods and impacting hundreds of millions of people worldwide. Funding is needed now in order to reduce the amount of funding needed for a full-scale response in the event of a catastrophic disaster.
- Children are particularly vulnerable and will suffer from hunger, malnutrition and other illnesses, including cholera, typhoid, malaria, dengue and diarrhoea.
- WV has demonstrated impact and innovation and financial inclusion for resilience.
- Give, pray, act NOW to help children and their communities prepare for El Niño rather than waiting until they have been devastated by its impact.

By June 2016 the Task Force messaging was updated to reflect growing urgency and included:

- The El Niño crisis is of the same scale as the migrant crisis – 60m people need food assistance now. By December 2016, even without La Niña, approximately 30 million more people could be in desperate need.
- (Institutional) funding must be urgently scaled up to finance

emergency assistance, long-term resilience, early warning systems and disaster preparedness.

- (Institutional) funding needs to be long term and flexible enough to address the causes of vulnerability and to fund early action.
- Millions of children's lives and futures are being devastated by El Niño. They are particularly vulnerable and incidents of abuse have increased during the crisis.
- Weather-related disasters have increased in recent decades and this reverses successful poverty reduction, making it harder to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.
- The private sector is increasingly engaging in disaster preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery and there are opportunities to increasingly collaborate.

Appendix II

Potential Case Studies

1. Zimbabwe's USAID-funded ENSURE programme: Is working in consortia a model approach?; Are resilience building interventions effective in producing sustainable change?
2. Use of 20% of ADP budgets: Is this being spent on early action or resilience interventions that help communities do better when facing drought?; Is it a model that demonstrates the value of building linkages between development and humanitarian work?



3. Early Warning-Early Action: How is this applied by WV in Ethiopia and what are the outcomes and learnings for other WV offices?
4. Cash and cash vouchers: Did WV's El Niño engagement with WFP build sustainable outcomes? Are there learnings?

Appendix III

ENSO events: Preparing for the next one

The interplay between climate change and the El Niño / La Niña oscillations is not well understood but they are thought to be dynamically interacting. Climate change is leading to what is becoming year-on-year record global temperatures, with 2011-15 the hottest five-year period ever recorded. 2015's warming of 0.9°C above the average for the 20th century was the "largest margin by which the annual global temperature record has been broken" and was due to the presence of a strong El Niño.³⁰

In response, UN Special Envoy for El Niño, Mary Robinson, asked a number of UN agencies (FAO, WFP

and OCHA) to convene with leading INGOs to develop Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) – a collective agreement to implement early sector-specific actions based upon agreed graduated triggers (or emergency thresholds) and timelines, once early warning systems indicate a medium to high risk of an El Niño or La Niña event. Those SOPs and triggers are currently in draft.

The UN Envoys are also leading on the development of a Blueprint for Action. The Blueprint is intended as a tool for countries to rapidly improve the human security of climate-vulnerable communities, climate-proof national development and provide guidance on the partnerships needed to get the job done – at grassroots, national and international levels.

It will also help countries meet the challenge of implementing a raft of existing international agreements that if adopted would boost preparedness and response to ENSO events. The Blueprint aims to help countries most vulnerable to ENSO events. It is set

³⁰ The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration: <http://blogs.ei.columbia.edu/2016/02/02/el-nino-and-global-warming-whats-the-connection/>

to roll out from early 2017 among committed 'early mover' countries that want to quickly strengthen their readiness and response capacity.

At risk nations would build integrated multi-hazard plans to fast-track the implementation of critical building blocks, listed below. Strong national leadership and monitoring of implementation would be required.³¹

The Blueprint's guiding principles are that transformational change must be nationally led – and paid for equitably, including by those most responsible for climate change; that early action saves lives and is less costly than late responses; and that responses – which most often affect the poorest and most vulnerable – must be built on human rights and equality.

The Blueprint sets out the key 'building blocks' to be reflected in national multi-hazard plans. These are grouped into three themes – Anticipate, Absorb, Reshape – each containing a small number of core 'building blocks' that should form the basis of a transformational shift in approach:

A. Turning early warning into early action (Anticipate)

1. Collective risk analysis and early sharing of information, including early requests for support

2. Harmonised early action planning including agreed thresholds for action
 3. Allocation of resources for preparedness and early action.
- B. Managing risk to protect people and assets (Absorb)**
1. Establish or scale up adaptive social protection schemes.
 2. Expand use of insurance solutions whenever appropriate.
 3. Resilient services to protect the most vulnerable: including healthcare, justice and education
- C. Climate-proofing development (Reshape)**
1. Risk-informed national development planning which allocates resources for disaster and climate resilience.
 2. Climate-proof strategies in key affected sectors: Food security and agriculture; Water, sanitation and hygiene; Health; and Resilient livelihoods.

In each affected country a broad 'coalition for change' was needed, bringing together a range of stakeholders at the local, national, regional and international levels. The Blueprint will set out the key elements for partnering in 1) Innovation; 2) Financing; 3) Capacity Development and Learning; 4) Public-Private in order to support the transformation required.

³¹ For more information on the Human Security Approach: www.un.org/humansecurity/human-security-unit/human-security-approach and for the Blueprint: <https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/Mary%20Robinson%20Remarks%20Member%20State%20Consultation%206%20December%202016.pdf>

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES (SOP) FOR EARLY ACTION ON PREDICTABLE SLOW-ONSET WEATHER EVENTS

While the Blueprint is focused on supporting at-risk countries with the building blocks approach, the SOPs provide a clear set of response triggers to changing early warning data. The SOPs acknowledge the fact that slow-onset crises cut across the traditional humanitarian-development divide. Droughts, for example, gradually turn a development context into one traditionally considered humanitarian. They therefore necessitate holistic collective early action and responses as

well as constructive engagement with the private sector.

Responsibility for facilitating the implementation of the SOPs will sit with OCHA. The SOPs contain 4 key areas where a phased set of graduated actions in response to changing impact climate data will be carried out. These relate to:

1. Risk analysis and Early Warning
2. Coordination and Information Management
3. Programming (food security, health, nutrition, WASH, education)
4. Financing.

The following tables outline some of the key phased actions as the context changes:

