



Anticipatory Action in Humanitarian Response: Redefining Disaster Preparedness Amid Climate Threats

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In a significant shift from reactive to proactive disaster management, the humanitarian landscape is witnessing the adoption of anticipatory action. This approach, aimed at mitigating the impacts of disasters through early intervention, marks a crucial evolution in addressing the threats posed by climate change and extreme weather events. The recent forecast by the World Meteorological Organisation, predicting heavy rains and floods in Somalia due to El Niño, underscored the urgent need for such anticipatory measures.

Climate-induced disasters

Somalia's vulnerability to climate-induced disasters has been exacerbated by the recent El Niño, with the World Meteorological Organisation raising alarms about potential heavy rains and floods. This dire prediction brought significant concerns over the risks of flooding along -

Somalia's main rivers, posing threats of loss of lives, displacement, and destruction of critical infrastructure. The scenario was further complicated by ongoing conflicts, reducing community resilience and exacerbating the humanitarian crisis. Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), totaling 1.6 million, emerged as the most vulnerable, facing protracted displacement caused by floods, conflict, and drought.

Riverine communities were particularly at risk, facing the potential loss of property, livestock, and significant agricultural damage. On October 21, 2023, Beledweyne, located in central Somalia was hit by unexpected heavy rainfall, leading to severe flash floods that impacted more than 250,000 people, or 90% of Beledweyne's population, out of their homes. This event highlighted the urgent needs in water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), shelter, food security, and livelihoods for persons displaced in the aftermath.

The shift towards Anticipatory Action

The move towards anticipatory action in disaster management is a response to the lessons learned from past disasters, such as the 2011 famine in the Horn of Africa. This proactive approach focuses on implementing measures based on forecasts of hazards, initiated before the full impact is felt. The successful implementation of anticipatory approaches owes much to collaborative efforts among humanitarian actors, government bodies, and global experts, facilitated by organizations like the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Under the guidance of Humanitarian Coordinators and with the support of various stakeholders, these initiatives underscore the transformative potential of anticipatory action in reshaping the humanitarian landscape towards proactive, risk-informed interventions.

A vivid illustration of this approach is seen in how Action Against Disasters Somalia (AADSOM) responded to the forecast of El Niño in Somalia in 2023.

Impact and importance

Anticipatory action has proven crucial in building resilience against climate change and extreme weather events. By preparing communities in advance, it ensures a more efficient and dignified delivery of aid, safeguarding developmental gains in vulnerable communities. The collaboration among humanitarian actors, government agencies, and global experts is vital for the successful implementation of these measures.

AADSOM's Response to El Niño

In 2023, as El Niño loomed over Somalia, AADSOM proactively implemented anticipatory measures to support vulnerable communities from its forecasted effects. AADSOM devised a comprehensive strategy aimed at mitigating immediate risks as well as addressing long-term vulnerabilities.

With foresight and determination, AADSOM has initiated two significant initiatives. The first, supported by the Somalia Humanitarian Fund (SHF),

involves critical emergency response and sustainable WASH initiatives, benefiting 20,400 individuals in the flood-stricken Beletweyne district of the Hiran Region.

This initiative provides temporary access to safe water through vouchers for 3,400 households, restores 18 flood-damaged shallow wells, implements chlorination and regular water quality checks, and erects 192 flood-resistant latrines, sensitive to gender needs. Furthermore, the project includes the distribution of sanitation equipment, training sessions for Community Hygiene Promoters, and efforts to mitigate AWD/Cholera outbreaks through educational campaigns and the dispersal of 1,000 hygiene promotion kits.

The second intervention, supported by Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe through the ToGETHER program, centers on immediate food security and shelter for households affected by El Niño in Beletweyne. It provides unconditional food vouchers to 467 flood-affected households, benefiting roughly 2,802 individuals over three months.

These multifaceted actions by AADSOM were designed to address both the pressing needs and the -

underlying challenges confronted by at-risk communities.

Paving the way for a resilient future

The adoption of anticipatory action offers a blueprint for disaster preparedness that can be adapted and scaled across different regions. As we continue to witness the intensifying effects of the climate crisis, the proactive measures taken by AADSOM in response to El Niño in Somalia underscores the importance of acting on early warnings and adopting holistic disaster preparedness strategies. This proactive approach not only enables communities to withstand the challenges posed by climate-induced disasters but also paves the way for a more resilient future, where anticipatory action is integral to humanitarian efforts.

In essence, the anticipatory action framework, as exemplified by AADSOM's response, presents a viable pathway towards minimizing disaster risks. By acting on early warnings and adopting a holistic approach to disaster preparedness, communities can not only survive but thrive in the face of climate adversities.

