

TOGO

Early Warning Early Action

CASE STUDY



Context

The republic of Togo is a coastal country located in West Africa. It shares borders with Ghana to the west, Benin to the east, and Burkina Faso to the north. Togo is subdivided into five zones, Savanes, Kara, Centrale, Plateaux, and Maritime, which correspond approximately to the following ecological zones: (i) the Northern plains, covered with dry forests, dry savannahs; (ii) the Northern branch of the Togo Mountains, mainly covered with open forests, various savannahs, gallery forests, islands of dense forests; (iii) the Central plain covered with dry Guinean savannah forests, differentiated by trees and shrubs; (iv) the Southern branch of the Togo Mountains covered by authentic evergreen forests; (v) the coast, which resembles zone III from the physiognomic point of view but enjoys a sub-equatorial climate.

Togo's vulnerability to Climate Change has exposed the coastal West-African nation to weather and climate-related hazards with increasingly harmful impacts on the country's population. According to Togo's National Contingency Plan (PNC) for 2020-2021 and 2021-2022, the primary hazards facing the country are (i) Epidemics/Epizootics; (ii) Floods; (iii) Strong/Extreme winds. Findings from key informant interviews show that coastal erosion, wildfires, and droughts are additional hazards for the country. In light of these climate risks, Togo was proposed to participate in the IFRC Alert Hub Initiative which aims to increase the use of the Common Alerting Protocol (CAP) together with actionable messages to strengthen end-to-end Early Warning Systems and enable Early Action in the face of disasters, by the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre (Climate Centre, RCCC). The RCCC is a specialized reference centre of the IFRC that works to promote climate resilience and reduce the risks associated with climate change through innovative and evidence-based approaches.

The Common Alerting Protocol (CAP) to support Early Action: The CRT's journey from early warning to impact-based forecasting (IbF) in Togo

To combat growing threats of the global climate crisis, the UN Early Warning for All Initiative (EW4All) aims to ensure that everyone on Earth is protected by early warnings by 2027. People centered early warning systems are critical preparedness and adaptation approaches to save lives and empower communities to navigate intensifying weather challenges globally.

The World Meteorological Organization (WMO), International Telecommunications Union and the International Federation of Red Cross Red Crescent (IFRC) societies are working to strengthen the use of the Common Alerting Protocol (CAP) for reliable, fast and actionable early warnings at national level. These efforts are designed to significantly expand the reach and impact of early warnings for at-risk populations and are a direct contribution to Pillar 3 'Dissemination and Communication' of the EW4All initiative.



Status of Early Warning Systems in Togo

The key policy instruments designed to respond to the risks of the hazards facing Togo are: the *Plan Organisation des Secours et de la Sécurité Civile* (ORSEC), under the direction of the National Agency for Civil Protection (ANPC); the *Plan National de Contingence* (PNC); Togo's law on decentralization and local liberties; the Operational Plan of the Early Warning System on Flooding in Togo; the National Development Plan and the Strategic Framework of Investments for Environment and Natural Resource Management. An assessment conducted on CAP use in the country by the Climate Centre showed that Togo does not have a unified and standardized Early Warning System that diffuses alerts on all hazards across all platforms to reach the public. Key gaps include lack of capacity among technical services to develop impact-based forecasts, absence of a Standard Operating Protocols (SOP) for the development and diffusion of alerts, language barriers, lack of access to communication tools e.g. radio, telephones as well as network coverage.

The Togolese Red Cross (*Croix-Rouge Togolais*, CRT) has a long-standing engagement in preparedness and response within the country. CRT was formed in 1959 when the country was still under a colonial regime, whereas the Civil Protection directorate was created in 1984. In 2017, CRT was heavily involved in the creation of the National Agency for Civil Protection (ANPC), a main actor responsible for implementing the government's policy of civil protection and coordinating all the actors relevant to disaster management and to early warning systems. ANPC coordinates the Plan of Organisation of Civil Security Response in case of Disasters in

Togo (Plan ORSEC), a Disaster Management and Early Warning System tool that details the public alerting process linked to an Action Plan for relief assistance.

In 2017, CRT, with financial support from the [German Red Cross](#) and [World Bank](#), and technical guidance of RCCC, piloted Forecast-based Financing (FbF) in Togo using the [FUNES system](#), a self-learning algorithm for flood forecasting which is embedded into operations by the Nangbéto hydropower dam and the Togo Red Cross to manage flood risks in vulnerable downstream communities on the Mono river. FUNES has helped to regulate water release from the Nangbéto dam. The FUNES system involves informing communities on the water levels, and some forecasted information from the Meteorological Services. Through the FUNES project, a Community-Based Early Warning Systems (CBEWS) was created to pass and share information with vulnerable communities and the national technical services to enable better disaster management. Because of the strong CBEWSs that have been established, the approach to develop community based early warning systems is being expanded countrywide.

At community level, there are several WhatsApp groups where community leaders and local emergency management receive daily updates throughout the season. Forecasts are then used by the PC (*Préparation aux Catastrophes/Disaster Preparedness*) teams which are the coordination teams for the hazards. These are a network of Red Cross volunteers within the communities which report on all the hazards including rainfall, and strong winds that are impacting communities and to inform the national headquarter to make decisions. The national headquarter uses the hydrometeorological information provided by the national agencies as input and communicates with the ANPC as the mandated national institution for disaster management.

Implementing the Alert Hub Initiative in the context of the CREWS project

As part of its engagement in the IFRC Alert Hub Initiative, the CRT held a CAP workshop which was based on a preliminary diagnostic work of the Community Flood Response System (SAP) in Togo, conducted by the Climate Centre on 'The State of Early Warning Systems'. The National Meteorological Agency of Togo (ANAMET), the main authority designated for issuing CAP alerts, planned for the workshop to coincide with a WMO supervision mission for the evaluation of the CREWS Togo project from which ANAMET benefits and which includes a support component to CAP in Togo. The other beneficiaries of the CREWS project, led in Togo by the WMO and the World Bank, are ANPC and Direction General de L'Education (DRE).

The integration of the CAP engagement under the IFRC Alert Hub Initiative into the CREWS project was driven by their complementary objectives and the potential for synergies in addressing climate-related risks and enhancing early warning systems. In March 2023, WMO and the Climate Centre had a week-long meeting in Togo where they identified how the CRT can link the CAP project to CREWS to support CAP engagement. Within the Togo CREWS project, The World Bank supports the ANPC for the disaster management side while WMO supports the component dedicated to the strengthening of national capacity to deliver climate, hydrometeorological and early warning services in selected sectors and communities. As such, the WMO supported the ANAMET to enhance CAP and work with national partners to build capacities. The ANAMET was trained on CAP editing while CRT and the participants to the workshop were introduced to the [WhatNow](#) Service which serves as a digital

library for actionable messages. When issuing CAP alerts, these actionable messages can be included directly in the instruction field to provide guidance to the public on how to act in an emergency. The CAP Workshop participants were trained on how to receive and understand the contextualized messages.

CRT's history played a significant role in attracting the CAP engagement with partners from diverse agencies i.e., UN agencies, public agencies and Civil Society Organizations (CSO). In the morning of the first meeting day, the CAP team (RCCC, IFRC and CRT focal point) met with CRT strategic management team (CRT governance) to introduce them to the Alert Hub initiative and the CAP focus. The national leadership's eagerness to be informed of ongoing programmes in all sectors including the CAP project demonstrates their support for an innovative approach to disasters such as Forecast-based Financing but also their desire to integrate all the programmes that they have to not work in silos. Moreover, the National Agency was envisioning to introduce some protocols without necessarily knowing that it is CAP.

Togo's innovative approach to Early Warning and Early Action has fostered peer-to-peer learning within the region. In 2018, CRT hosted a Mali delegation led by Mali Red Cross for a study visit to learn and be inspired by Togo's CBEWS. The Mali delegation visited selected villages where they discovered that communities already have a place to move to when public alerts are issued on oncoming floods from upstream by the dam or through rainfall. The communities had also constructed a medical centre and a 'school' to shelter children for a few days during floods.

CRT is well-known and well-positioned in the country. It has a strong relationship with the MET office, hydrological unit and civil protection office. This increases the risk of raising some

expectations within the country expecting them to fulfill some obligations that they may not be able to meet. There is an extremely scarce Partner National Society (PNS) presence in Togo to provide funding support. Until recently, only the German Red Cross has maintained a physical presence in the country. Other PNSs such as the French Red Cross and the Swiss Red Cross have had limited presence in the country, providing remote technical and financial support to projects. The current policy environment for the CAP project is a good entry point for PNS engagement on FbF/Anticipatory Action mechanisms. CRT is really looking forward to reviewing the draft flood Early Action Protocol (EAP) and linking it to CAP to establish trigger mechanisms.

Through the CREWS and other previous projects, the country has collected a lot of scientific evidence of hazards happening in the country which are well documented by the World Bank and WMO. The CRT Climate and Early Warning System has some indicators that the National Society relies on, including forecasts from the Meteorological office. Additionally, they are looking at local indicators and traditional ones e.g. behavior of insects and animals and their presence or not before the season. The aim is to harmonize all these types of signals and combine them with a scientific approach to the forecast. The gathered findings can provide a good baseline framework to advance FbF/AA engagement.

Lessons learnt from Anticipatory Action (AA) and CAP engagement in Togo

While Togo was the first country (even before the IFRC institutionalized FbF window to the DREF) to engage in a Forecast-based Financing (FbF) experience, there is still not any formal flood EAP at the moment. The only viable early warning triggers¹ defined so far were with regard to Nangbeto dam water levels coupled with water level gauges, to inform CRT before opening the floodgates. In 2018, the CRT benefited from the service of a consultant to draft their EAP for floods. Unfortunately, the EAP did not go through because the project that was supporting it ended before the finalization of the EAP. One of the outcomes of the CAP workshop in Togo is that there is renewed interest in establishing EAPs

focusing on floods and storm surges. Building on the previously drafted EAP, CRT will review the draft document, refine it and seek seed funding to update the document with up-to-date potential warnings on the flood side. Once completed it will be submitted to IFRC for validation.

The CAP fits into the triggering mechanism of an EAP. The two hazards being looked at are floods and storm surges in the coastal areas of Togo. Actionable warnings provided by the CAP mechanism can fit into the trigger mechanism of an EAP to mobilize early actions such as evacuations.

While there are limited AA mechanisms, Togo has continuously utilized preparedness and response mechanisms to mitigate disasters and reduce their humanitarian impact. While WMO's CREWS team found the CAP project compelling, they advised the CAP team to go further and study

1 Trigger elements: 1) FUNES Level E: Very low risk (All villages < 55%); lake level: < 141 m; volume of anticipated flow: < 400 m³/sec; water level yellow markers; 2) FUNES Level D: Low risk (Grp1 between 55% and 85%; remainder < 55%); lake level: > 141 m; anticipated flow volume: > 400 m³/sec; water level yellow/red markers; 3) FUNES Level C: Medium risk (Grp1 > 85%; remainder < 55%); lake level: > 143 m; volume of anticipated flow: > 600 m³/sec; water level yellow/red markers; 4) FUNES Level B: High risk (Grp1 > 85%; Grp2 between 55% and 85%; remainder < 55%); lake level: 143.5 m (to be confirmed); volume of anticipated flow: > 800 m³/sec; water level red markers; 5) FUNES Level A: Very high risk (Grp1 and 2 > 85%; Gpr3 < 55%); lake level: > 144 m; anticipated flow volume: > 1,000 m³/sec; water level red markers.

existing Early Warning Systems for floods on the ground to help define Standard Operating Procedures and harmonize information channeling for the one who will be coordinating at the end. In

many African countries, there exists Multi-Hazard Contingency Planning at national level whereby 4-5 hazards are defined, as well as the conditions of preparation in case of impending disasters.

Recommendations to National Societies on Early Warning Early Action

CRT's experience with the Alert Hub Initiative and working on CAP emphasizes the importance of conducting initial research to determine the existing conditions, weaknesses and strengths of National Societies, draft a baseline situation and use the findings to draft a scheme of interventions before implementing early warning early action initiatives. For example, the availability of the community radios and media that are supportive of the process and how they are linked to the communities is crucial for early warning. Early Action in Togo is highly impeded by culture whereby local communities do not heed to early warnings because of their traditional practices, beliefs, and close relationships with their lands. Efforts to transform the local mindset through CAP have been futile. Through the CAP project, CRT sought to enhance the system of disseminating information to enhance preparedness. According to a "Radio Lumière" representative who is well embedded in his community, it is expected to be a long-term process which will require raising awareness in communities and hopefully the new generation will adopt a transformative mindsets that effectively acts on Early Warnings.

Thus, CRT is partnering with research communities such as The West African Science Service Centre on Climate Change and Adapted Land Use (WASCAL) to establish linkages between cultural beliefs and Early Action. WASCAL is a German programme supporting joint Master and PhD students from ECOWAS countries studying in 7 different domains in both Germany and their home country universities. The domains include Climate Change, Biodiversity, Water, Meteorology, Human Security, Energy and Hydrogen. The WASCAL programme aims to have the aforementioned subjects introduced into the curriculum of Master and PhD students so that they can investigate the relations between climate change and human security, particularly the impacts of climate hazards with a perspective on the traditions within the country. CRT expressed a high level of enthusiasm to explore this type of collaboration.

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