

Community Engagement and Accountability in Drought Anticipatory Action

Operational Case Study 2023



Kenya
Red Cross



BritishRedCross

Acknowledgement

We acknowledge all Kenya Red Cross Society (KRCS) staff and volunteers in the targeted program counties that have, with passion, enhanced the way we engage communities affected by diverse disasters. This undertaking has enabled us to document our experiences in integrating community engagement in drought anticipatory actions. We acknowledge the target communities and key stakeholders in Kitui and Kwale counties who implemented the actions and shared honest feedback on outcomes of the engagement efforts.

While KRCS has implemented community engagement and accountability standards for years now, this documentation gives us a unique perspective on the Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) approach in Anticipatory actions.

We acknowledge the generous financial contributions of the British Red Cross (BRC) in enabling these interventions and believing in the community engagement agenda within the Red Cross Red Crescent movement.

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Introduction

Kenya Red Cross Society (KRCS) believes that a central focus on communities in its programming and emergency response cycle results into building trust, enhances sustainability and creates maximum impact amongst the affected populations. While Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) has been undertaken in the national society, climate related challenges including drought, floods and epidemics have over time affected livelihoods and wellbeing of local communities in a number of geographical areas in Kenya.

British Red Cross (BRC) has funded a number of integrated food security and livelihoods projects in Kenya, aimed at improving resilience amongst the targeted communities. In the recent past, BRC has equally supported development of drought and floods early action protocols that consolidate preparedness, activation and early actions to reduce the serious effects of climate change in Kenya. One of the projects that British RC funded was the anticipatory actions against drought undertaken in Kitui and Kwale counties of Kenya. The design of the project integrated defined CEA initiatives to enable effective implementation and realization of greater results.

Anticipatory action in Kenya Red Cross Society

Anticipatory action refers to actions we can take before a predicted hazard occurs in order to prevent or reduce its potential impacts. This entails setting up an early warning and early action (EWEA) system in which the Red Cross, in partnership with government and other key stakeholders, delivers cost-efficient, well-targeted and timely action to the most vulnerable people faced with probable climate-related disasters. Kenya Red Cross Society (KRCS) has developed two early action protocols, one for drought and the other for floods to guide the EWEA system set-up process. The development of the protocols was supported by three work streams, Forecast-based Financing (FbF), Data preparedness and Cash and Voucher Assistance Preparedness (CVAP) in the Innovative Approaches to Response Preparedness Programme.

Within these three components', community engagement and accountability aspects were streamlined as they are key in enabling ownership and sustainability while strengthening capacities of vulnerable communities to prepare, respond and cope with disasters as well as understand the best locally available solutions. The community was involved in various aspects from the assessments through to the activation of the drought Early Action Protocol (EAP) and monitoring.

Following the development of the drought early action protocol, Kenya Red Cross and stakeholders continuously monitored Kenya Meteorology Department (KMD) seasonal forecast tracking the trigger threshold of seasonal Standardized Precipitation Index (SPI) that was set at <-0.98 .



Picture 1: Community Focus Group Discussion

After the threshold was met in August 2022, based on the forecast, the EAP was activated, and early actions initiated in September 2022 as guided by the trigger calendar. The key early actions implemented include participatory scenario planning; where early warning messages and advisories were co-developed and co-designed with target communities, rehabilitation of strategic water facilities and distribution of drought tolerant-fast maturing seeds. The early actions were implemented in Kitui and Kwale counties which were prioritized following impact-based forecasting.



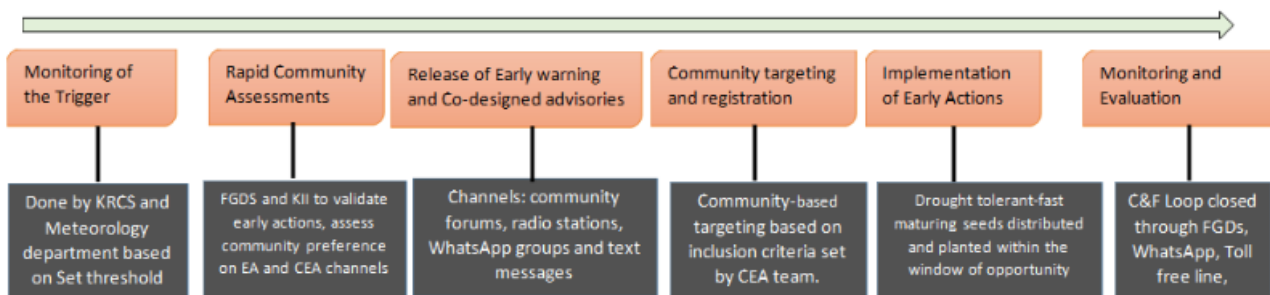
USHAURI WA MSIMU WA VULI (OKTOBA NOVEMBA DESEMBA 2022 KAUNTI YA KWALE)

SEHEMU/WODI (ZONE)	KIWANGO CHA MVUA	MWANZO WA MSIMU	MWISHO WA MSIMU	MIMEA	MBEGU ZINAZOPENEKESWA
Mackinnon Road, Samburu/Chengoni, Mwavumbo, Kasemeni, Puma, Ndavaya, Mwereni, Kinango,	100 – 200 mm	1 hadi 15 Novemba 2022	15 – 31 Desemba 2022	Mahindi, pojo, kunde na Mtama (Maize Green grams, Cowpeas & Sorghum)	Mahindi: PHI, DIB01, DIB02, DIB04, Duma, DIB0031, DIB 77 Pajo: KS20, N20 kunde, K-80, M66 Kunde: Ken Kunde, K-80, M66 Mtama Gadum, Seredo, Serena, Muhogo
Tsimba- Gollni, Vanga, Waa, Tiwi, Kubo South, Gombato-Bongwe, Kinondo, Ukunda, Ramisi, Pongwe/Kinoneni,	100 – 300 mm	15 hadi 30 Novemba 2022	15 – 31 Desemba 2022	Mahindi, pojo, kunde na Mtama (Maize Green grams, Cowpeas & sorghum).	Mahindi: PHI, DIB04, Duma, DIB0031, DIB 77 Pajo: KS20, N20 kunde, K-80, M66 Kunde: Ken Kunde, K-80, M66 Mtama Gadum, Seredo, Serena.

Advisory released in Swahili

Figure 1: Sample advisory done in local language

Anticipatory Action Project Cycle



Community Voices

"I brought a woman to my home some time back since I wasn't giving birth. She had five children of her own. I equally took in one of my sister in-laws who had two children following the demise of my brother. The woman I brought to my home gave birth to other children with my husband before she passed on. So, people in my community selected me because they thought my household size was big and was thus vulnerable."

Female farmer in Muthaa, Kitui.

"We taught the community on the planting procedure/measures. Green grams, cowpeas and sorghum were to be planted in a standard hole measuring 30cm by 60cm and not more than two seeds in a hole if ploughing by Oxen. But if ploughing manually by hands the measurement can be reduced to 15cm by 30cm and still produce a good harvest."

Ward agricultural officer, Kwale county



The **area ward representative** said, "We received complaints that Elephants had destroyed many plants in the farms, majorly the sorghum stalks. Currently am working on 20 cases reported on the same. These animals are also in search of food and water, so we requested the County government and the Kenya Wildlife Service to fence up the animal zones so they don't come to human land. We also taught the communities on the need to fence their farms too and light fires to scare the elephants away."

Communicating with Communities

Rapid assessment amongst community members identified communication channels preferences for face-to-face engagements and use of local radio. The CEA team conducted the following:

Community Review Meetings:

Monthly meetings with the farmers were undertaken in the company of the government agricultural extension officers. The meetings informed farmers on the progress made by project teams and planned activities in various locations. The meetings equally raised discussions and were a great platform for addressing community questions and concerns. The challenges, which included pests, elephants and birds were addressed in the meetings adequately. The government officials gave technical information on choice of pesticides and crop management. The meetings saw engagement of people living with disabilities who had planted their seeds and sought more knowledge to ensure a good harvest.



Picture 2: Ongoing review meeting in Kwale county

Indaba Participatory Video Sessions:

Indaba participatory video sessions were video consultative sessions undertaken by communities interviewing their own community members to realize their opinions. The Indaba sessions took five days and consisted of a training and actual video recording amongst the participants resulting in the production of a complete ten-minute video that captures community feedback on the whole anticipatory action processes. They were done twice (at the start and end of the response) in each of the counties and attended by farmers and some local leaders who participated in the first and last days. The indaba process followed the below steps:

1) Meeting with the targeted community members: The CEA team had meetings with community members that were farmers. The CEA staff and volunteers sensitized the participants on the project and highlighted the need for identification of about 15 to 20 farmers to engaged in the Indaba approach. The identified teams needed to be farmers that had been targeted and planned to plant and manage the crops up to harvesting phase. Additional criteria were a representation of different villages that had benefitted from the program. The communities then selected and agreed on the participants.

2) Photo-Walk: The selected farmers then met in an agreed venue around the community area. The response Photos (taken by staff and volunteers) of initial sessions undertaken in the program were hanged on walls showing all the processes including community entry meetings, identification and registration of farmers, seeds distributions, community sensitizations, planting and crop management, CEA activities, harvesting and post-harvest management. The photos displayed were based on the progress made in the project implementation. The farmers then walked around the room identifying the people they know in the community that appeared in the photos. This encouraged ownership and recall of the activities undertaken.



Picture 3&4: Community photo walk session

3) Ideation: In this step the participants detailed the activities undertaken and the locations they recalled them being undertaken. They also discussed what worked well in the processes and what challenges they encountered. They then came up with recommendations to counter the challenges.

4) Orienting the community groups on the mobile application and First Video

Capture: The CEA staff demonstrated the use of tablets to make the short videos which addressed the groups topics that had been discussed in the photo walk and ideation stages. They were sensitized on interviewing skills to ensure that the respondents covered all the agreed subtopics to avail adequate information required. The community members organized themselves in making some test videos and later proceeded to their selected respective area that would give them preferred backgrounds. The group members would each be interviewed while members who volunteered in the group did the actual video capture. The backgrounds selected ranged from a farm with growing plants, a traditional granary, a water facility, cultivated land, harvested seeds in husks etc.

5) Review of the group videos: In their own groups, the farmers were engaged in reviewing their videos that were recorded during the capture process. During the review, the community members were able to identify the gaps with the help of the CEA facilitating team which prompted them to reshoot the videos. The sections that seemed not to have good sound/voice or respondents were not concentrating during the recording would for instance be cut off. The video sections were then tagged to ensure proper flow from the identification to harvest phase based on the progress made by the time of the video being taken. The agreed flow was then merged and reviewed to create a not more than ten-minute video per group that was systematic.

6) Creation of the compiled community video: The three groups of the participants availed their 10-minute videos which were merged, tagged and at plenary agreed on final reviews to produce one consolidate video.

7) Community Feedback video dissemination: A bigger community meeting was then mobilized by community leaders. The meeting would see all the first day participants attend the event. The CEA team then recapped the activities undertaken by the project and what the indaba process covered for the five days. The final product, i.e., the compiled participatory video, was then played for the community members. Community members largely agreed with the process, challenges and recommendations raised by their own. Any aspects left out in the video were equally opened to discussions accordingly to ensure all points of concern were fully addressed. A copy of the video stored in a flash disk was handed over to the local area chief/representative for future dissemination.



Picture 5&6: Video capture sessions

Advantages of the Indaba participatory video approach for community feedback:

- The sessions are consultative, ensuring that the representatives of different villages and diverse groups including People living with disabilities, men and women are selected by the communities themselves.
- The communities pause and reflect during the photo walk sessions which enable them to evaluate the project initiatives.
- Group discussions realize real challenges that the communities identify with and this enables them to come up with own solutions/recommendations.
- Video documentations motivate the community members to actively participate as this is a relatively new skill to them and the fact that they get to see their faces in the videos excites them.
- Identification of fellow community members in the video during the final dissemination forum in the larger meeting builds trust in the community. This enables them to easily agree with the sentiments raised, which represent their own experiences.
- Handing over a copy of the video documentation enables the local leaders to replay the videos to other community members who could have missed the feedback sessions. This would equally trigger discussions during future engagements that would remind target communities of actions to undertake in order to improve their wellbeing.

"The process provided a platform for free expression, no fear at all, and someone could pass their true message without intimidation because it allowed us to do the recordings by ourselves in our own languages or the language we felt okay to use. No one was limiting us on what to say, it was freedom of expression and was fully engaging and fun as we handled the technical gadgets to tell our stories." **Dzivani indaba participant**

Forum Theatres

Forum theatres are interactive community plays in which the Red Cross volunteers act before community members to communicate behaviors change messages and address community concerns. Communities are given opportunities to act certain scenes in the play to display varied opinions. The Forum theatres were conducted twice a quarter in the two counties. The theaters started off with song and dance to attract audience in a communal place before the moderator sensitizes the audience on the theme of the play. The theaters covered the different processes undertaken in the project to engage and support the targeted farmers and equally addressed the challenges faced by the farmers. The government agriculture experts attended the theaters and helped address any technical questions raised by the communities. This communication approach was found to be effective in addressing emotive issues/complaints from the communities e.g., cases where some community members raised concerns about the targeting criteria. The mix of laughter and fun following community participation as actors in the plays opened up great discussions on possible solutions to challenges faced by the farmers.



Picture 7: Forum theatre sessions

Local Radio Stations

Musyi radio station in Kitui and Kaya radio station in Kwale were the preferred stations in the two counties. A few of the radio sessions were conducted as a way of engaging communities. The radio sessions were mainly in the evenings when most people were back home. Radio spots were done on meteorology advisories as well as radio talks with the government counterparts from the ministry of agriculture. Questions raised by communities were well addressed and the Red Cross community feedback back mechanisms shared with audiences.

WhatsApp Groups

Social media, mainly WhatsApp platforms were effective channels of communication especially amongst the farmers, volunteers and supporting county government officers. Mr. Jeremiah the Muthaa ward agricultural extension officer in Kitui indicated that the WhatsApp group he administers has 94 farmers. Those are the farmers than had access to smart phones and would be expected to pass key messages to neighboring famers. He reported to have regularly sent messages to them throughout the crop farming season including the weather advisories, pest management, planting and post-harvest management. He would send photos of specific pesticides and fertilizers needed to buy and where to find them in the local markets. After harvesting, he indicated that most community members in Muthaa ward would sell green grams as this is considered a cash crop in the area. He reported that he negotiated good pricing by the national cereals produce board (NCPB) that would usually buy from farmers. The farmers however decided to sell mostly to middlemen as they found it expensive to meet the standards of the board in terms of the quality of the produce.

Community Feedback Management

CEA teams collected information on preferred feedback mechanisms during the rapid assessments in which most farmers preferred use of phones through calls and text messages. The feedback was however collected through various means including the village elders, radio sessions, indaba video sessions, community review meetings, forum theaters and community feedback desks. Feedback desks were set up during registrations, distributions and the various community engagement activities. A total of over 200 feedbacks were recorded, most of which were appreciative feedback. CEA volunteers in Kwale county made phone calls to about 600 farmers to check on how they were progressing. They addressed their concerns that included need for pesticides and fertilizers, destruction of crops by elephants in Mackinnon and birds that preyed on sorghum.

The KRCS toll free feedback line set up at HQ received a few calls where people asked for more seeds especially for those that were not targeted. Farmers that benefited indicated that they ended up sharing the seeds with their other family members who did not receive any. The sharing of seeds and the harvest minimized cases of theft reported during the community engagement sessions. The community members who harvested well ensured they locked up their granaries as they feared their produce would be stolen.



Picture 8: Volunteers attending to a community member at a feedback desk station

Twenty staff and volunteers were trained in CEA minimum standards and actions in addition to collation and analysis of community feedback data. Community feedback recorded in volunteer log sheets were consolidated in excel data bases, coded, analyzed and responses given back to individuals and community groups based on the themes of the feedback. The project team would provide feedback during community forums based on the feedback information given by communities e.g. addressing questions on why some people were not targeted by explaining the targeting criteria and community validation process that was used.

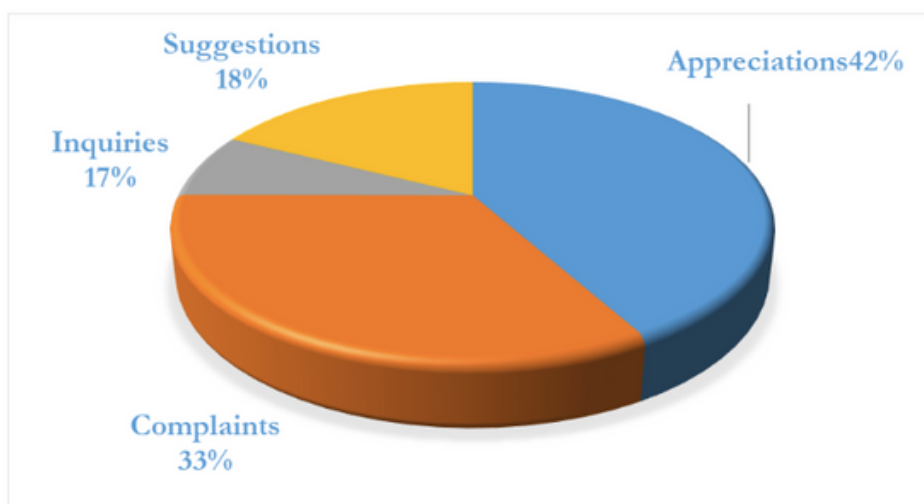


Figure 2: Collated Community feedback thematic areas

Enhancing Inclusion

Fifty eight percent (58%) of the targeted households were male headed while 42% were female headed. 24% of the targeted households had pregnant and lactating mothers, 45% had children under five years while 9% had people living with disabilities.

In the Ndakani Focus Group Discussion (FGD) in Kitui county, the CEA documentation team met Mr. Mutua, who is a person living with disability as he is deaf. The participants in the FGD said the wife is equally deaf and dumb and they have three children under five years of age. Mr. Mutua narrates his story regarding farming the green grams and the cowpeas in sign language. That was interpreted to KRCS team by one of the community members, and occasionally participants burst in laughter as they have gotten to understand his language. One male participant indicated that they have learnt to support him during the cultivation and planting seasons as they occasionally gave him their oxen for cultivation and free seeds during past planting seasons. He indicated that the move by Red Cross to support the farmers has been very significant to the vulnerable households in their communities.



Picture 9: Mr. Mutua reacting to a comment in sign language.

Mutua reported to have harvested 20 kgs of green grams and 84 kgs of cowpeas which he indicated to have sold almost half of the produce and consumed the rest in his household. He said that the returns enabled him to visit his in-laws with ease as he had not visited them in a long time. He bought food stuff for his in-laws during the visit which strengthened family ties because for a long time he had been requested to pay the visit but could not afford to prepare adequately for the same.

Effects and Lessons Learnt

- Community engagement in forecast-based initiatives strengthen preparedness for seasonal disasters. The target communities have enough time to think through how to respond to the disasters and capacities are effectively built in advance.
- Messages sent to targeted communities in drought anticipatory action are well guided by the meteorological department advisories and thus the CEA implementers and weather forecast experts' messages and actions are well aligned.
- Community trust in the meteorological forecast was enhanced because the forecast was received by the technical government officers, analyzed together with community traditional weather forecast approaches, then converted into advisory messages that were co-developed with communities.
- Continued regular communication with affected populations ensures that challenges are addressed real time within key phases of farming. Timely communication and response in this case ensured that seeds were planted within the window of opportunity and at the right time to enable quick germination.
- Community feedback on challenges were internalized and presented through fun/exciting audio and visual approaches of the indaba and forum theatres. This fully addressed community fears that motivated farmers to positively manage their crops up to harvest time.
- WhatsApp platforms for community engagement with targeted farmers/beneficiaries gave opportunities for experience sharing by the farmers and availed support amongst one another with real time technical guidance from the government officers. This enabled most farmers to access pesticides and other farm products at more affordable prices following negotiations between the agricultural officers and community leaders with the local retailers. This enhanced produce for most farmers.
- Drought tolerant seeds availed to the farmers were informed by the needs of the target beneficiaries as voiced during the rapid assessments. These enabled farmers to embrace the distributed seeds and most of them planted in the targeted season.
- Community feedback handling through various approaches ensured community answers were quickly relayed to individuals and community groups. This was vital considering the actions undertaken in the project were season dependent thus quick turnaround times on feedback was crucial.

- Engaging communities in the beneficiary targeting criteria that included vulnerable persons like people living with disability and households with children under five years, the elderly and those with a big household size ensured that no major conflicts were recorded in the community. Persons with disabilities interviewed were happy with the initiative and realized good harvest that equally reduced food insecurity in their households.

Challenges

- Community capacity to implement early actions within the window of opportunity. Some community members had challenges to implement on time the early actions like planting due to their levels of vulnerability and economic power. Other community members had to come to the aid of the very vulnerable households to help them with sowing.
- Understanding of scientific forecast: This had to be resolved through community participatory scenario planning and linkage with traditional forecast.
- Inability to visit/reach all villages of project implementation for face-to-face engagements: technology like WhatsApp platform was used to pass information to communities in far to reach areas.

Contact Information

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