

# Stories of Impact

*A series highlighting achievements in disaster risk management*

## Safeguarding Against Disasters in Ethiopia



Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

**REGION:** AFRICA  
**FOCUS:** RISK REDUCTION,  
**COUNTRY:** ETHIOPIA



### RESULTS:

- With support from GFDRR and the World Bank, four regional Local Area Networks (LANs) serving 35 districts have been established. This has resulted in the capacity for more rapid government response during times of crisis and improved sharing of information.
- 35 district disaster risk profiles covering a population of more than 350,000 have been completed and a database of district profiles has been developed. The profiles are used to better plan and respond to disasters. In addition, federal and regional staff have been trained in data collection, analysis and management.
- Livelihoods Early Assessment and Protection software, a multi-hazard forecasting and early warning system, has been refined and further developed. These indices and software have been verified and validated thanks to the new LANs, contributing to faster responses to disasters, better sharing of weather forecasts, and easier coordination of risk reduction procedures.

The aftermath of drought weighs heavily on Ethiopians. But aligning overall disaster risk management (DRM) with the country's Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP) allows for the most vulnerable individuals to have an opportunity to establish a safeguard system to protect their household savings from future drought risks. The program, administered by Ethiopia's Ministry of Agriculture and supported by the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR) and the World Bank, provides food or cash transfers to households in chronically food-insecure districts in exchange for labor-intensive public works, while labor-poor households receive unconditional "direct for support" cash transfers.

The program, which finances key elements of Ethiopia's DRM system, relies on more than \$550 million in annual funding and supports more than 7.6 million regular beneficiaries. This includes the development of clearer early warning indicators and support for contingency planning and financing. It also supports the country's new "National Policy and Strategy on Disaster Risk Management," which shifts from a system that mainly focused on drought response and emergency relief assistance toward a modern DRM system that contains a multi-hazard approach.



## CONTEXT:

Ethiopia suffers from a long history of drought due to increasing dependency on rain-fed agriculture and years of extremely poor rainfall. For more than 30 years, the immediate response to food crises was food aid. But in 2005, the government established the GFDRR and World Bank-supported safety net program, a component of the national Food Security Program. The country's DRM system plays a critical role, as the goal is to implement its key concepts in the program districts in the hopes of building upon existing viable structures.

## APPROACH:

To ensure synergies with ongoing projects, Ethiopia's disaster risk management country plan is linked with the Productive Safety Net Program and is particularly important for human resources, including fiduciary, environmental, and social safeguards and project management.

The following components of the plan will be implemented in the 35 program districts:

- Improving institutional capacity and connectivity between district, regional, and national DRM agencies
- Establishing risk and vulnerability assessments for selected districts, including contingency planning
- Increasing and sustaining awareness creation, education and capacity building
- Reducing underlying risk and vulnerability and integrating disaster risk reduction into sector planning and practices
- Improving emergency preparedness and response through capacity strengthening

Thus far, there has been improved connectivity of district DRM offices, regional and state DRM offices, and strategic warehouses with the DRM and food security sector. This enables an improved early warning capacity and exchange of food security, drought and flood early warning data, which works hand in hand with the PSNP to ensure food security and a minimum standard of livelihood among the most food-insecure populations in Ethiopia. This progress signifies early, major steps in reframing the country's DRM practice toward a proactive approach rather than responsive, post-disaster action.

## NEXT STEPS:

The implementation of a legal DRM framework will move ahead upon approval. New priorities will be defined and it is envisioned that connectivity improvement, risk and vulnerability profiling and contingency planning will be implemented in a number of additional districts, with the goal of tripling the current population coverage of 350,000.

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\*ALL MONETARY VALUES IN USD



*"While there were years when the crops did not do so well, the money I received through the safety net program meant I never had to sell anything. If I had not joined the food security program, I would have had to sell my livestock."*

– Amare Berhe, Productive Safety Net Program Participant

## LESSONS LEARNED:

**Contingency planning builds on hazard risk assessments and improved early warning infrastructure.** Comprehensive contingency planning is a crucial element of a sustainable DRM framework. The envisioned methodology builds upon a framework for contingency planning, which was earlier developed for pastoral districts in Ethiopian lowlands. Together with district authorities and local stakeholders, scenarios for droughts, floods, and other events were described and possible intervention strategies (e.g. food for work activities, flood protection work) were defined and prepared.

**Purposefully linking public works to livelihood investments can generate significant livelihood outcomes. A strong DRM component can help with such investments.** In areas where specific efforts were made to explicitly link public works to livelihood investments, greater impacts were seen. For example, as watersheds become productive, more substantial livelihoods-based public works, like land reclamation and small-scale-irrigation schemes have been successfully implemented under this program.