

2024/25 NAMIBIA EL NIÑO INDUCED-DROUGHT RESPONSE

After-Action Review Report

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

AAP	Accountability to Affected Populations
AAR	After Action Review
BHA	Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (USAID)
CBMIS	Commodity and Beneficiary Management Information System
CDCs	Community Development Committees
CDRMCs	Constituency Disaster Risk Management Committees
CERF	Central Emergency Response Fund
CFM	Complaints and Feedback Mechanism
CONOPS	Concept of Operations
CRO	Chief Regional Officer
DDRM	Directorate Disaster Risk Management
DRM	Disaster Risk Management
EDRM	Emergency Disaster Risk Management
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GRM	Grievance Redress Mechanism
GRN	Government of the Republic of Namibia
IPC	Integrated Food Security Phase Classification
LADRMCS	Local Authority Disaster Risk Management Committees
MAWFLR	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Water and Land Reform
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MoHSS	Ministry of Health and Social Services
NAD	Namibian Dollar
NAFSAN	Namibia Alliance for Improved Food Security and Nutrition
NCCI	Namibia Chamber of Commerce and Industry
NDF	Namibia Defence Force
NDRMC	National Disaster Risk Management Committee
NDRP	National Drought Relief Programme
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
OPM	Office of the Prime Minister
PSEA	Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
RCO	Resident Coordinator's Office
RDRMCs	Regional Disaster Risk Management Committees
SCF	Special Contingency Fund (<i>context-dependent; used in livestock section</i>)
SMART	Standardized Monitoring and Assessment of Relief and Transitions
SOPs	Standard Operating Procedures
ToRs	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VAA	Vulnerability Assessment and Analysis
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme

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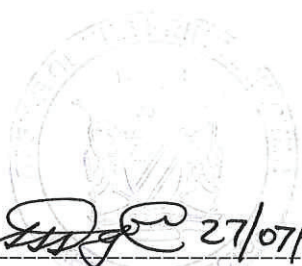
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Executive Summary

The 2024/25 El Niño-induced drought in Namibia represents one of the most severe climate shocks the country has experienced in recent decades, affecting nearly half of the population and exposing fundamental weaknesses in national preparedness and response systems. An estimated 1.4 million people, approximately 48 percent of those assessed—faced acute food insecurity at Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) Phase 3 or worse, driven by below-normal rainfall, prolonged dry spells, crop failure, livestock losses, and rising food prices at the peak of the drought season.

In response, the Government of Namibia, led by the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), mounted a large-scale, multi-sector intervention reaching approximately 385,000 households across all 14 regions. This effort demonstrated strong political leadership, significant institutional mobilization, and robust engagement from development partners, the United Nations, and the private sector.

However, this After-Action Review (AAR) finds that while the response achieved substantial scale and coverage, it was ultimately too reactive to effectively address a predictable, slow-onset crisis. The overarching conclusion is clear: Namibia must transition from a predominantly humanitarian response model to a system anchored in anticipatory action, integrated programming, and long-term resilience.

- **Early Warning vs. Early Action Gap:** A central finding across all sectors is the persistent disconnect between early warning and early action. Forecasts, vulnerability assessments, and food security analyses had already highlighted worsening conditions well in advance. Despite this, early warning signals did not translate into timely operational decisions.

Critical preparedness measures, including pre-positioning of suppliers, activation of contingency financing, early beneficiary registration, and anticipatory nutrition and livelihood interventions, were delayed or insufficiently implemented. Although the declaration of a State of Emergency on 22nd May 2024 provided an important political trigger, operational scale-up at subnational level remained slow. Consequently, assistance often arrived after livelihoods had already been eroded, shifting interventions from prevention to mitigation and increasing overall response costs.

- **Scale vs. Efficiency in Response Delivery:** The response demonstrated strong capacity for rapid scale-up, reflecting effective national coordination and the ability of institutions and partners to mobilize quickly. However, expansion at scale exposed systemic inefficiencies.

Weak planning assumptions, logistical bottlenecks, fragmented data systems, and inconsistent implementation undermined delivery effectiveness. Targeting and beneficiary management were particularly challenging, with widespread inclusion and exclusion errors, non-adherence to targeting criteria across regions, and exposure to political interference. While the inclusion of peri-urban populations was a positive shift, the absence of standardized and enforceable targeting frameworks limited the overall effectiveness of the response.

- **Food Assistance Performance and Modality Choices:** Food assistance stood out as the strongest-performing component of the response, particularly where market-based modalities were used. Voucher approaches enhanced transparency, reduced duplication, improved delivery timelines, and eased logistical constraints.

In contrast, in-kind distributions faced procurement delays, high transportation costs, and supply chain disruptions. Despite the overall success of food assistance, several challenges persisted, including rigid transfer packages that did not reflect household size, erosion of purchasing power due to inflation, and continued targeting inaccuracies. These findings point to the need for a more flexible, data-driven approach that adapts assistance value and design to evolving needs.

- **Data Systems and Information Management Challenges:** Data and information management systems played an important but uneven role. The Commodity and Beneficiary Management Information System (CBMIS) supported beneficiary registration and tracking, particularly for voucher-based assistance.

However, the broader data ecosystem remained fragmented, with multiple non-interoperable systems, outdated beneficiary lists, and limited real-time analytics. This fragmentation constrained situational awareness, reduced coordination efficiency, and limited the ability to adapt interventions in real time. Strengthening integrated and interoperable data systems is therefore critical to enable predictive decision-making and improve accountability.

- **Sectoral Performance: Reactive Implementation Patterns:** Across sectors, interventions were generally appropriate in design but often reactive in execution.
 - **Nutrition and Health:** Lifesaving and technically sound but scaled up after malnutrition rates had already worsened.
 - **Livelihoods:** Relevant but poorly timed and insufficiently scaled to effectively prevent household food insecurity and livestock losses.
 - **Water:** Essential short-term relief through water trucking, drilling/rehabilitation of boreholes but costly and unsustainable, with limited progress on long-term infrastructure solutions.
 - These patterns highlight the need for earlier; preventive interventions aligned with seasonal and climate forecasts.

- **Coordination: Strong at National Level, Weaker Locally:** Coordination mechanisms functioned effectively at the national level, providing strategic oversight and aligning partners. However, effectiveness declined significantly at regional and local levels.

Subnational structures were often under-resourced and lacked decision-making authority, while centralized funding and planning limited responsiveness. In addition, parallel systems across institutions and weak data sharing contributed to uneven execution at field level.

- **Cross-Cutting Issues: Partial Integration:** Cross-cutting priorities—including gender, protection, and accountability to affected populations (AAP)—were recognized but not fully institutionalized. Gaps were evident in the use of disaggregated data, protection monitoring, accessibility of services for vulnerable groups, and the consistency of complaints and feedback mechanisms. While community engagement structures were utilized, feedback was not systematically integrated into decision-making processes.
- **Strategic Shift Toward Resilience and Anticipatory Systems:** The AAR's overarching conclusion is that Namibia's drought management approach requires a fundamental transformation. Given the predictable and recurrent nature of drought, incremental improvements to emergency response are insufficient. A strategic transition is required:

- From reactive response to **anticipatory action and early financing**
- From fragmented systems to **integrated and interoperable platforms**
- From centralized control to **empowered subnational structures**
- From emergency water trucking to **resilient infrastructure investment**
- From blanket assistance to **targeted, data-driven support**

Conclusion: The 2024/25 drought response demonstrated strong national commitment and operational reach, but also highlighted critical systemic gaps in preparedness, coordination, targeting, and data integration. There is also a need to review the National disaster risk management policy to reflect the present realities.

Addressing these gaps is essential not only to strengthen future responses but to fundamentally reshape how Namibia manages recurrent climate shocks. The AAR underscores that anticipatory action, institutional strengthening, and long-term resilience investments are no longer optional—they are indispensable to reducing humanitarian needs and safeguarding livelihoods.

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1.0 Background and Context

1.1. Background

The 2024/2025 drought in Namibia represents one of the most severe climate-induced shocks experienced in over four decades. The drought was primarily driven by the El Niño phenomenon, which significantly disrupted normal rainfall patterns across Southern Africa. This resulted in prolonged dry spells, erratic and below-average rainfall, and elevated temperatures, creating widespread and persistent drought conditions across the country.

The impacts on livelihoods and food systems were severe and far-reaching. Crop production was heavily affected, with many households experiencing total or near-total crop failure due to moisture stress and poor germination. At the same time, deteriorating pasture and water availability led to significant livestock losses and declining productivity, undermining a critical source of rural income and household assets. These climatic shocks were further compounded by rising food prices, broader macroeconomic pressures, and high levels of unemployment, which reduced purchasing power and limited households' ability to cope.

The scale of food insecurity escalated rapidly. According to the April–September 2024 Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) analysis, approximately 1.4 million people, representing 48 percent of the population analyzed, were facing high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 and above). This included 85,168 people in IPC Phase 4 (Emergency) and approximately 1.35 million people in IPC Phase 3 (Crisis). An additional 842,187 people (28 percent) were classified as Stressed (IPC Phase 2), while only 745,425 people (25 percent) remained in Minimal (IPC Phase 1)¹. These figures highlight the severity and widespread nature of the crisis, with nearly half the population analyzed requiring urgent humanitarian assistance.

The deteriorating food security situation was further reflected in the 2024 Namibia National SMART Survey, which reported increased risks of acute malnutrition (wasting) and chronic malnutrition (stunting) among children under five years of age, as well as among pregnant and breastfeeding women. The survey also indicated declining dietary diversity, reduced food consumption, and an increased reliance on negative coping strategies, including the sale of productive assets and reduced meal frequency, all of which signal deepening vulnerability.

In response to the escalating crisis, the Government of the Republic of Namibia declared a State of Emergency on 22 May 2024, enabling the rapid mobilization of national and international resources and strengthening coordination mechanisms. Recognizing the protracted nature of the drought and the continued humanitarian needs, the Government approved an extension of the national drought response programme from 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025, which was subsequently further extended to 31 August 2025. These extensions underscored the sustained severity of the crisis and the slow recovery prospects for affected communities.

¹ IPC. (2024). Namibia: Acute Food Insecurity Analysis (April–September 2024). Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC). Retrieved from https://www.ipcinfo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/ipcinfo/docs/IPC_Namibia_Acute_Food_Insecurity_Apr_Sept%202024_report.pdf

1.2. Context of the Response

In response to the widespread impacts of the El Niño-induced drought, the Government of Namibia, in collaboration with development partners, United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations, civil society, and the private sector, implemented a coordinated, multi-sectoral response. The response targeted more than 384,954 vulnerable households, equivalent to approximately 1.4 million food-insecure individuals, primarily in rural areas where livelihoods were most severely affected.

The national response focused on a set of core intervention areas designed to address immediate humanitarian needs while supporting the protection of livelihoods and laying foundations for recovery:

- **Food Assistance:** Provision of emergency food assistance to vulnerable households to meet immediate consumption needs and prevent further deterioration of food security.
- **Livestock Support:** Livestock marketing incentives, lease of grazing areas, transport to and from grazing areas and subsidized animal feeds and fodder.
- **Agricultural Inputs (Seeds and Horticulture):** Supply of drought-resistant seeds and promotion of small-scale horticulture to support household food production and enhance dietary diversity.
- **Water Supply Interventions:** Water trucking to severely affected communities, alongside rehabilitation and drilling of boreholes to ensure access to water for both human consumption and livelihoods.
- **Malnutrition Management Services:** Strengthening of nutrition services to identify, prevent, and treat malnutrition among vulnerable groups, particularly children under five and pregnant and breastfeeding women.

The response was centrally coordinated by the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) at the national level, which provided overall leadership and strategic direction. Regional Councils played a critical role in operational coordination and implementation at sub-national level, ensuring interventions were tailored to local contexts and effectively reached targeted populations.

Sectoral ministries played key roles in delivering specific components of the response. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Water and Land Reform (MAFWLR) led the livestock support, water supply, and agricultural input interventions, working in close collaboration with the OPM. These interventions were essential in safeguarding livelihoods, preserving productive assets, and maintaining basic access to water amid widespread shortages. Simultaneously, food assistance programmes implemented under the leadership of OPM ensured that the most vulnerable households received timely support during the peak of food insecurity.

The response was further strengthened through significant contributions from development partners, NGOs, civil society organizations, and international actors, whose technical, financial, and operational support enhanced both the scale and quality of assistance delivered. This collective effort enabled a broad-based response that combined humanitarian relief with early recovery and resilience-building elements.

Overall, the El Niño-induced drought was characterized by prolonged climatic stress, which translated into widespread livelihood disruptions, increased vulnerability, and heightened humanitarian needs. The response, therefore, required a coordinated, multi-sectoral approach that addressed both immediate life-saving needs and the protection of livelihoods, while recognizing the importance of supporting recovery and strengthening resilience to future climate shocks.

2.0 Objectives and Scope of the AAR

The purpose of this National AAR is to assess the effectiveness, timeliness, and appropriateness of the 2024–2025 El Niño induced-drought response, and to generate actionable lessons to strengthen preparedness, coordination, and resilience systems for future climate-related shocks. This AAR is intended to:

- **Inform learning** by identifying good practices and critical gaps across sectors;
- **Strengthen accountability** by comparing planned versus actual response delivery;
- **Drive improvement** through evidence-based recommendations to enhance institutional readiness and operational performance.

2.1. Key Evaluation Questions

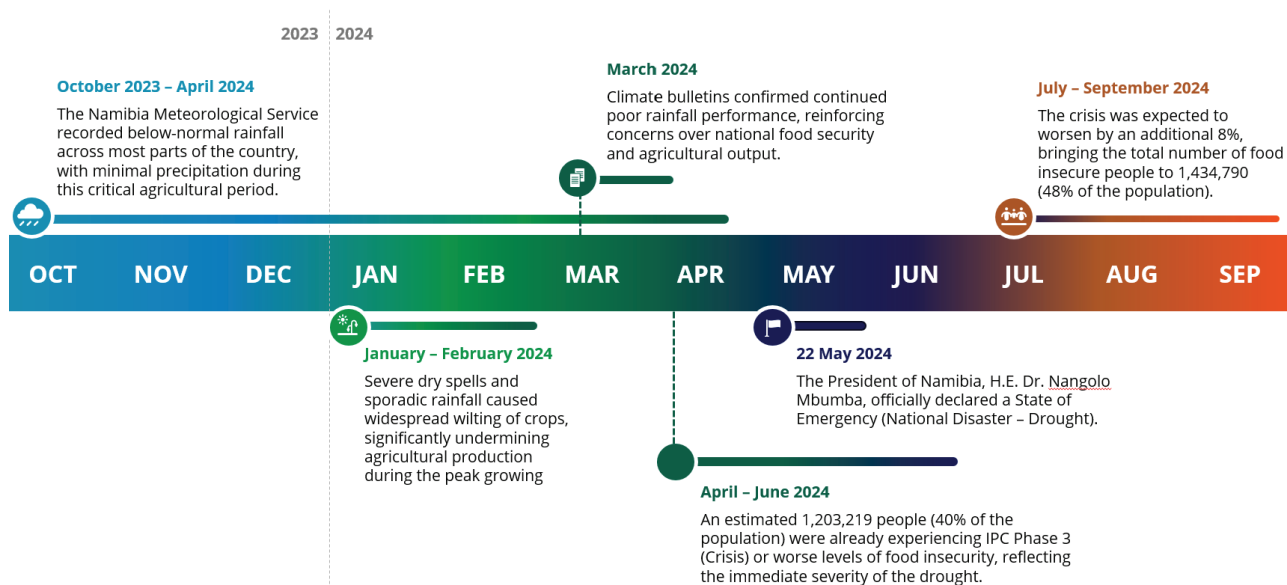
- What was planned?
- What happened?
- What worked well, and why?
- What did not work, and why?
- What should be improved to strengthen future responses?

2.2. Scope

The AAR covers the national-level drought response implementation during the 2024–2025 period, with a focus on:

- Multi-sectoral coordination and delivery across key response pillars;
- Timeliness, targeting, and appropriateness of interventions;
- Institutional performance, systems, and partnerships;
- Cross-cutting issues including gender, protection, and accountability to affected populations.

Figure 1 Timeline



3.0 Methodology

The After-Action Review (AAR) employed a structured, participatory, and evidence-based methodology to ensure a comprehensive and balanced assessment of the drought response.

Data collection and analysis drew on multiple complementary sources. First, an extensive desk review was undertaken, covering national drought response plans, sectoral assessments, operational updates, and implementation reports. This provided a solid foundation for understanding the design, execution, and performance of response interventions across sectors.

Second, sectoral group discussions were conducted, with participants organized into thematic areas—Food Assistance, Water, Health and Nutrition, and Livestock and Seeds. This facilitated the systematic capture of sector-specific insights, technical perspectives, and operational experiences.

Findings from these discussions were consolidated and validated through plenary sessions, where outputs were presented, reviewed, and collectively endorsed by all participants to ensure consistency and credibility.

A standardized analytical framework guided all sectoral assessments, focusing on four core areas:

- **Performance and good practices:** Identification of successful interventions and analysis of key enabling factors.
- **Operational gaps and bottlenecks:** Examination of implementation challenges, including underlying systemic constraints.
- **Targeting effectiveness:** Assessment of beneficiary selection systems, including inclusion and exclusion issues.
- **System strengthening and recommendations:** Identification of opportunities to enhance coordination, planning, and service delivery, alongside the development of actionable recommendations.

Despite this structured approach, several limitations were encountered. Fragmented data systems constrained access to consistent and integrated information across sectors, while weak real-time monitoring limited the depth of evidence-based analysis. As a result, some findings relied more heavily on qualitative input. In addition, incomplete documentation in certain sectors restricted the comprehensiveness of the review.

4.0 Finding and Analysis

4.1. Response Sequencing and Timeliness

The drought response followed a structured and technically sound progression, from early warning and assessment through to full-scale implementation. However, critical gaps in sequencing and timeliness significantly reduced its overall effectiveness.

Early warning systems functioned effectively in identifying and communicating the severity of the drought. Seasonal forecasts, Vulnerability Assessment and Analysis (VAA), and Integrated Phase Classification (IPC) analyses consistently indicated deteriorating food security conditions, with more than 1.2 million people classified in IPC Phase 3 (Crisis) and Phase 4 (Emergency) - confirming the scale and urgency of the crisis.

Despite the availability of robust analytical evidence, a systemic disconnect between early warning and early action persisted. While risk information was timely and credible, it was not sufficiently translated into early preparedness measures such as pre-positioning of supplies, early financing, beneficiary registration readiness, and contingency planning. As a result, opportunities for anticipatory action - critical in slow-onset crises like drought - were not fully utilized.

The formal declaration of a State of Emergency on 22 May 2024 marked a key decision point, enabling activation of national coordination systems and resource mobilization. However, AAR findings indicate that this declaration did not immediately translate into rapid operational delivery. There remained a notable lag between policy activation and field implementation, particularly in the initiation of food distributions and sectoral interventions.

Furthermore, programme rollout and subsequent scale-up occurred at a stage when drought impacts had already intensified significantly. This resulted in a shift from a potentially anticipatory response to a predominantly reactive one, with interventions focused more on mitigating already severe impacts rather than preventing deterioration.

While the response architecture and analytical systems were strong, the response was not time optimal. Delays in translating early warning into early action reduced the ability of the response to protect livelihoods, prevent escalation of food insecurity, and lower overall humanitarian and economic costs.

4.2. Targeting, Coverage, and Beneficiary Management

The drought response achieved a significant scale-up beyond its initial target of 308,000 households, ultimately reaching approximately 385,000 households (around 1.4 million people). This expansion reflects both the worsening severity of the crisis and the programme's flexibility to adapt to evolving needs. Notably, the inclusion of urban, peri-urban, and informal settlements marked an important shift in recognizing changing vulnerability patterns driven by rising food prices, unemployment, and disrupted livelihoods beyond rural areas.

However, this rapid scale-up exposed critical weaknesses in targeting and beneficiary management. While the response successfully prioritized scale and inclusivity, it did so at the expense of targeting precision and cost-efficiency. Inclusion errors and over-registration led to assistance reaching non-eligible beneficiaries, while at the same time, some vulnerable households were excluded. This was compounded by inconsistent application of eligibility criteria across regions, reflecting weak standardization, unclear targeting thresholds, and inadequate enforcement of targeting frameworks.

Targeting approaches were designed to prioritize vulnerable populations, but their effectiveness was uneven. Criteria were not sufficiently sensitive to household variability or dynamic socio-economic conditions, limiting their ability to capture changing vulnerability profiles. Exclusion errors were driven by factors such as lack of documentation, population mobility, and rapidly shifting livelihoods. At the same time, limited community awareness and understanding of targeting criteria contributed to misinterpretation and pressure for inclusion.

Coverage also did not fully align with actual needs. Needs were often underestimated during planning, resulting in assistance gaps, while over-registration in some areas increased programme costs and diluted support to the most vulnerable. This mismatch highlights shortcomings in forecasting, targeting accuracy, and the adaptability of response models.

Data systems, including the Commodity and Beneficiary Management Information System (CBMIS), played a valuable role in supporting registration, beneficiary tracking, and planning, with the added benefit of real-time database updates. However, persistent challenges limited their effectiveness. Systems remained fragmented across institutions, with limited integration and interoperability, while beneficiary lists were often incomplete or outdated. In some locations, reliance on manual processes led to duplication, errors, and delays in verification, and undocumented or mobile populations were not adequately captured.

Overall, while the programme demonstrated strong adaptability and reach, weaknesses in targeting design, implementation, and data systems reduced efficiency and effectiveness. Strengthening standardized targeting protocols, improving community engagement, enhancing data integration, and adopting more adaptive and context-sensitive targeting approaches will be critical to improving future responses.

4.3. Food Assistance

Food assistance interventions achieved broad national coverage and high delivery rates; however, performance varied significantly across modalities, with market-based approaches demonstrating clear operational advantages over in-kind systems.

Food assistance constituted the largest component of the response and was delivered through a combination of in-kind distributions, commodity vouchers (CBMIS), and cash/value-based transfers supported by WFP. Overall programme reach was substantial, with WFP-supported interventions achieving approximately 98% of targeted coverage. However, modality performance differed considerably:

- **In-kind distributions, while essential for scale, experienced persistent challenges including:**
 - Supply chain disruptions
 - High transportation and logistics costs
 - Delays in pipeline delivery and distribution cycles
- **Voucher and cash-based modalities demonstrated:**
 - Greater efficiency in delivery
 - Improved timeliness and flexibility
 - Enhanced transparency and accountability

Despite these strengths, design limitations persisted. The use of a uniform food basket allocation across households, irrespective of household size, reduced proportional adequacy, particularly for larger households. In addition, inflation (estimated at 12–13%) and fluctuating market prices eroded the purchasing power of beneficiaries, particularly under voucher systems.

The response clearly highlights the operational and efficiency advantages of cash and voucher modalities, particularly in contexts with functioning local markets. Future responses should prioritise scalable, market-based delivery mechanisms, complemented by flexible transfer values that adjust to inflation and household size.

Successes/ (What Worked?)

High coverage and strong delivery performance

- Food assistance achieved near-universal reach (~98% of targeted beneficiaries), providing broad national coverage at scale.

Effective and context-appropriate modalities

- Voucher modalities outperformed in-kind in efficiency, timeliness, and flexibility in areas with functioning markets.
- In-kind distributions remained critical for reaching remote and market-constrained populations, ensuring no exclusion.

Operational efficiency, transparency, and cost-effectiveness

- Digital voucher systems improved accountability, reduced duplication, and lowered operational and logistics costs.
- Market-based approaches demonstrated clear operational advantages over in-kind systems.

Improved food security, stability, and dignity

- Consistent assistance stabilized household consumption and supported food security outcomes.
- Vouchers enhanced beneficiary choice, flexibility, and dignity.

Strong supply chains and partnerships

- Retailer networks ensured reliable and timely food availability under voucher systems.
- International contributions and partnerships improved basket diversity and adequacy.
- Private sector logistics support strengthened delivery continuity.

Effective coordination and rapid system mobilization

- Strong collaboration between OPM and Regional Councils enabled smooth, aligned implementation.
- Rapid procurement and responsive systems ensured timely commodity availability.

Resilient delivery despite system constraints

- The response maintained high delivery rates despite challenges in in-kind systems (e.g., supply chain disruptions and high transport costs), demonstrating strong operational capacity overall.

Challenges/ opportunities for improvement (What didn't work well?)

Targeting and inclusion gaps

- Inconsistent application of targeting criteria, political influence, and weak verification led to duplication and exclusion errors.
- Vulnerable groups lacking documentation were left out, highlighting the need for more inclusive and standardized targeting systems.

Logistical and infrastructure constraints

- Limited preparedness increased operational costs and reliance on emergency procurement.
- Aging transport fleets, poor infrastructure, and inadequate storage capacity caused delays and reduced efficiency.

System fragmentation and coordination weaknesses

- Fragmented stakeholder coordination and parallel systems reduced coherence and efficiency.
- Limited integration of beneficiary data (e.g., CBMIS) increased risks of duplication and inconsistencies.
- Overlapping response cycles further delayed timely implementation.

Financial and planning limitations

- Underestimation of needs resulted in funding gaps and constrained response scale.
- Absence of dedicated preparedness financing reduced readiness across sectors.
- Inflation and rising costs strained resources and undermined sustainability.

Recommendations

Strengthen Targeting and Inclusion Systems

- Standardize targeting criteria across all actors to reduce inconsistencies and political influence.
- Enforce robust verification processes to minimize duplication and exclusion errors.
- Expand inclusion mechanisms to ensure marginalized groups are systematically captured.
- Adopt more transparent, data-driven targeting approaches to improve accountability and equity.

Invest in Preparedness and Core Infrastructure

- Shift from reactive to proactive operations through pre-positioning of food and non-food items.
- Upgrade transport fleets and logistics systems to improve delivery efficiency and reduce delays.
- Expand and modernize storage capacity (warehousing) to support scale and continuity.
- Strengthen infrastructure in remote areas to address last-mile delivery constraints.

Enhance System Integration and Coordination

- Integrate beneficiary data systems (e.g., CBMIS) to reduce duplication and improve consistency.
- Streamline parallel systems into a unified, interoperable platform.
- Strengthen inter-agency coordination mechanisms, including clear roles and accountability structures.
- Align response cycles and planning timelines across stakeholders to avoid delays and inefficiencies.

Improve Planning and Financing Models

- Adopt realistic, evidence-based needs assessments to better match response scale with actual demand.
 - Establish dedicated preparedness and activation of the national disaster management fund to improve readiness and reduce emergency procurement reliance.
 - Adjust transfer values dynamically to reflect inflation, market conditions, and household size.
 - Promote more sustainable, forward-looking financing approaches to reduce recurrent funding gaps.
-

4.4. Health and Nutrition

Nutrition interventions were appropriately targeted to vulnerable groups and technically sound but were implemented largely as reactive measures and constrained by capacity limitations.

Interventions focused on nutritionally vulnerable populations, including children under five, pregnant and breastfeeding women, were aligned with observed deterioration in nutrition indicators. Screening, treatment of malnutrition, and supplementary feeding programmes contributed to life-saving interventions and stabilization of acute cases. Routine monitoring of anthropometric indicators (e.g., weight, height) allowed for early detection of malnutrition at the programmatic level, facilitating targeted responses.

However, similar to other sectors, nutrition interventions were scaled up after the deterioration of conditions had already occurred, limiting their preventive impact. Integration between early warning systems and nutrition programming remained weak, resulting in delayed activation of preventive nutrition measures.

Although technically well-designed, nutrition interventions were not sufficiently anticipatory, reducing their effectiveness in preventing malnutrition rather than treating it.

Successes/ (What Worked?)

Strong reach and life-saving impact

- Screening of 20,000+ children enabled early identification and treatment of acute malnutrition.
- Treatment programmes (MAM/SAM) and supplementary feeding stabilized cases and saved lives.

Appropriate targeting and technical soundness

- Interventions focused on high-risk groups (children under five, PLW), aligned with deteriorating nutrition indicators.
- Programmes were technically well-designed and adhered to established treatment protocols.

Strengthened health system capacity

- Training of healthcare workers improved case management and adherence to nutrition treatment standards.
- Procurement and distribution of therapeutic foods ensured availability of life-saving commodities.

Improved monitoring and early detection

- Routine anthropometric monitoring (weight, height) supported early identification of malnutrition trends and informed targeted responses.

Enhanced quality of food assistance

- Development of nutrition-sensitive food basket guidelines improved the nutritional adequacy and relevance of assistance.

Contribution to stabilization of nutrition outcomes

- Combined screening, treatment, and supplementation interventions helped contain deterioration and stabilize affected populations despite challenging conditions.

Challenges/ opportunities for improvement (What didn't work well?)

Reactive rather than anticipatory response

- Interventions were largely scaled up after conditions deteriorated, limiting preventive impact.
- Weak integration with early warning systems delayed early action and activation of nutrition measures.

Capacity limitations

- Constraints in staffing and system capacity affected timely scale-up and sustained delivery of nutrition services.

Weak data systems and tracking

- Limited data collection and beneficiary tracking reduced the ability to monitor performance, track cases, and ensure effective follow-up and accountability.

Limited reach to mobile populations

- Difficulty in consistently reaching nomadic pastoralist led to gaps in coverage and continuity of care.

Insufficient multi-sectoral integration

- Weak linkages with other sectors (food security, WASH, social protection) reduced overall effectiveness.
- Missed opportunities to address underlying drivers of malnutrition through a more holistic approach.

Gaps in preventive programming

- Despite strong technical design, interventions focused more on treatment than prevention, reducing impact on mitigating future malnutrition risks.

Recommendations

Shift to anticipatory, early action systems

- Integrate early warning with nutrition/health programming to trigger timely preventive interventions and avoid delayed scale-up.

Strengthen data, tracking, and follow-up systems

- Invest in integrated digital systems for real-time beneficiary tracking, case management, and strengthened community-level follow-up for malnourished children.

Expand inclusive and adaptive service delivery

- Scale up mobile/outreach models to reach nomadic and hard-to-reach populations and ensure continuous access to services.

Enhance multi-sectoral coordination and integration

- Strengthen collaboration across Health, Nutrition, Gender, Agriculture, WASH, and Social Protection to address underlying drivers of malnutrition holistically.

Improve programme design, quality, and preparedness

- Standardize and operationalize nutrition-sensitive food baskets, pre-position supplies, and strengthen workforce capacity to support both preventive and treatment interventions.
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4.5. Agriculture/livelihood support (seeds, livestock)

Livelihood support interventions contributed to short-term coping and recovery; however, their overall impact on resilience remained limited due to challenges related to timing, scale, and alignment with agricultural cycles. Interventions under agriculture and livelihoods, including seed distribution, livestock support, and subsidized fodder, were appropriate and aligned with sector priorities, helping to mitigate some losses and support early recovery. However, many of these interventions were implemented after significant crops and livestock losses had already occurred, reducing their effectiveness in protecting productive assets. In addition, limited alignment with seasonal agricultural calendars constrained the productive use of inputs, while recurrent drought patterns—highlighted in the AAR findings—continued to undermine agricultural livelihoods due to heavy dependence on rainfall and repeated shocks.

The livestock support programme comprised a range of interventions, including livestock marketing incentives (destocking through sales), leasing of grazing areas, transport support for livestock movement, provision of subsidized licks and fodder, and the sale of fodder through agricultural offices. The programme was planned for implementation between April 2024 and March 2025, targeting drought-affected regions, with technical designs in place for all interventions. Similarly, planned agricultural support interventions included the provision of seeds and horticulture inputs aligned with drought-resilient crop types, seasonal calendars, and targeted vulnerable populations.

Despite the existence of sound technical designs, implementation was uneven and constrained in both coverage and timeliness. Livestock marketing incentives reached 6,757 farmers but were not delivered in a timely manner, while grazing lease support reached only 107 farmers, and transport support benefitted just 52 farmers nationwide. Subsidized licks and fodder supported 3,695 farmers, although the allocation for fodder sales—estimated at NAD 50 million—was not matched by systematic tracking of beneficiaries. Overall, implementation was further weakened by the absence of clear targeting criteria and cumbersome administrative processes, which limited access and uptake. While relevant in design, these constraints reduced the effectiveness of livelihood interventions in protecting assets and strengthening resilience at scale.

Successes/ (What Worked?)

- Strong uptake and reach: High demand for support (11,500+ claims; ~9,000 processed) demonstrated relevance and wide coverage of the programme.
- Responsive financial support: Significant disbursements—sometimes exceeding initial allocations—showed flexibility in responding to evolving needs.
- Effective core livestock interventions: Destocking incentives, subsidized fodder/licks, and grazing access helped protect livestock assets and reduce mortality.
- Stabilization of pastoral livelihoods: Support enabled farmers to maintain minimum herd productivity and adopt short-term coping strategies during peak drought stress.
- Timely support within crisis window: Despite delays, interventions were implemented during the declared drought period, reaching farmers at a critical time of need.
- Functional administrative systems: Documentation and approval processes ensured accountability and enabled approved beneficiaries to access support efficiently.
- Contribution to loss mitigation: Overall, the programme helped reduce livestock losses and eased pressure on grazing resources in affected areas.

Challenges/ opportunities for improvement (What didn't work well?)

- Weak coordination and targeting: Limited inter-agency coordination and absence of clear vulnerability-based targeting led to blanket approaches and inadequate prioritization of the most vulnerable farmers.
- Delayed and complex implementation: Late delivery of key interventions (especially destocking) and cumbersome administrative processes slowed access and reduced programme effectiveness.
- Limited coverage and accessibility: Complex procedures and restricted access points constrained reach, leaving many affected farmers underserved.
- Resource and market constraints: Insufficient budget, feed shortages, and inefficiencies in procurement and payment systems undermined scale, timeliness, and impact.
- Gaps in monitoring and data systems: Weak tracking of beneficiaries and impacts, particularly across different livestock types, limited evidence-based decision-making.

Technical misalignment and systemic gaps: Interventions were not always aligned with seasonal calendars or diverse livestock systems, while broader issues (e.g., drought recurrence, rainfall dependence) continued to erode resilience.

Recommendations

Programme Redesign and Systems Strengthening

- Redesign the livestock support programme to align with drought risk profiles and livelihood systems.
- Introduce digital claims management systems to enhance transparency, reduce processing delays, and strengthen tracking and accountability.
- Streamline approval and payment processes to improve efficiency and timeliness.

Targeting and Inclusion

- Establish clear, vulnerability-based targeting criteria to ensure support reaches the most affected households.
- Transition from blanket approaches to more tailored, needs-based interventions.

Decentralization and Governance

- Decentralize funding and decision-making to regional levels to enable more responsive and context-specific implementation.
- Strengthen coordination across national, regional, and local stakeholders.

Financial Innovation and Risk Management

- Explore microinsurance schemes for livestock to mitigate risks from future climate shocks.
- Strengthen financial systems to ensure timely disbursement of funds and efficient supplier engagement.

Resilience Building and Sustainability

- Promote long-term resilience through investments in fodder production, improved pasture and rangeland management, and farmer-level risk reduction strategies.
- Diversify livestock support models to reflect regional variations, climate risks, and livelihood diversification needs.

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Data Systems

- Strengthening monitoring and evaluation frameworks to improve tracking of beneficiary coverage and measurement of programme impact across livestock systems.
 - Enhance data systems to support evidence-based decision-making and real-time programme adjustments.
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4.6. Water and sanitation interventions

Water interventions improved access for targeted communities, particularly through infrastructure investments such as borehole installation and the completion of localized water supply schemes (e.g., Onamatanga). These efforts were critical in addressing immediate water shortages in drought-affected areas.

The response was designed to combine short- and medium-term modalities, including water trucking for emergency supply, borehole rehabilitation to restore functionality, and water storage solutions to enhance continuity. These interventions were intended to be guided by needs assessments, clearly defined geographic priorities, and established service delivery standards covering water quantity, duration, and quality.

However, implementation diverged significantly from these plans. Interventions were not consistently aligned with identified needs or predefined targets, largely due to the absence of operationalized preparedness and contingency frameworks. Delivery became predominantly resource-driven, with activities shaped by available funding, infrastructure, and assets rather than systematic prioritization. In addition, adherence to service standards, particularly in coverage, duration, and quality was inconsistent.

Despite these constraints, tangible outputs were achieved, including the installation of 147 boreholes and improved water access for approximately 972 households. While these results were important at the local level, their overall impact remained limited relative to the scale of national need. The increase in rural water access was estimated at only 0.28%, highlighting a substantial gap between needs and response capacity.

Overall, while water interventions were strategically important, they were under-scaled and insufficiently aligned with planning frameworks, limiting their contribution to system-wide resilience and long-term drought preparedness.

Successes/ (What Worked?)

- **Rapid emergency response through water trucking**
 - Water tanker services were quickly deployed, ensuring timely provision of water to affected communities, especially in areas with limited or non-functional infrastructure
- **Effective first-line life-saving intervention**
 - Served as the primary and immediate response mechanism during acute drought phases, maintaining continuity of water supply
- **Maintained basic access to water**
 - Sustained minimum water access for households and livestock, preventing severe disruption to livelihoods
- **Mitigated public health risks**
 - Prevented reliance on unsafe water sources, thereby reducing exposure to waterborne diseases and health risks
- **Reduced protection risks and negative coping strategies**
 - Lowered vulnerability among affected populations, particularly women and vulnerable groups, by reducing unsafe coping mechanisms
- **High operational responsiveness**
 - Demonstrated strong capacity to mobilize and deliver resources quickly to priority locations, enabling immediate mitigation of critical shortages
- **Complementary water interventions showed value**
 - Borehole drilling and rehabilitation improved water access, particularly for medium- to longer-term needs
 - Water harvesting initiatives contributed to resilience-building, where implemented
 - Infrastructure investments improved local access
 - Installation of boreholes and localized schemes enhanced targeted community-level water access
 - Combination of modalities strengthened response design
 - Use of mixed interventions (water trucking + rehabilitation + storage) provided a more comprehensive approach across immediate and short-term needs

Challenges/ opportunities for improvement (What didn't work well?)

- **Weak coordination and fragmented implementation**
 - Sub-national coordination structures (e.g., RDRMCs) were not fully functional or empowered, leading to parallel, ministry-driven interventions rather than an integrated response
- **Centralized decision-making and limited regional autonomy**
 - Funding and authority remained concentrated at national level, limiting flexibility, responsiveness, and context-specific action at regional level
 - Absence of operationalized preparedness frameworks
 - Contingency plans were either weak or not operationalized, resulting in delayed response activation and reactive implementation

- **Significant financial and cost-efficiency constraints**
 - Heavy reliance on high-cost interventions (e.g., water trucking), combined with limited and inflexible funding, reduced scalability and sustainability
- **Operational inefficiencies and aging infrastructure**
 - Aging equipment, weak logistics, and coordination gaps contributed to reduced efficiency, delays, and higher maintenance costs
- **Weak monitoring, data, and targeting systems**
 - Lack of structured M&E and integrated data systems limited visibility on coverage, impact, and performance, and affected targeting accuracy
- **Supply chain and procurement bottlenecks**
 - Procurement delays and supply chain disruptions slowed timely delivery of critical water interventions
- **Under-scaled response relative to needs**
 - Limited resources and infrastructure meant interventions were insufficient in scale compared to national demand
- **Weak integration of emergency response and long-term resilience**
 - Continued tension between short-term response and long-term solutions, with insufficient investment in sustainable water systems and resilience-building
- **Limited inclusivity and stakeholder engagement**
 - Coordination processes were not fully inclusive, with limited participation of technical actors, private sector, and broader stakeholders

Recommendations

- **Transition from Reactive Water Trucking to Integrated, Resilient Water Systems**
 - ◇ Gradually reduce reliance on costly emergency water trucking by prioritizing sustainable water infrastructure investments (boreholes, pipelines, storage, water harvesting).
 - ◇ Adopt a layered response model:
 - Immediate: targeted water trucking
 - Short-term: rehabilitation of existing systems
 - Medium-long term: climate-resilient water supply systems
 - ◇ Align interventions with forecast-based and anticipatory action approaches, given the predictable nature of drought.
- **Strengthen Sub-National Coordination and Decentralized Decision-Making**
 - ◇ Fully operationalized and resource Regional and District DRM structures. Ensure that sectoral funding (e.g., rural water, livestock) are decentralized to enable context-specific, faster response at regional level.
 - ◇ Establish integrated coordination platforms across ministries, UN, NGOs, and private sector to eliminate parallel interventions.

- **Operationalize Preparedness and Contingency Planning Frameworks**

- ◇ Ensure contingency plans are:
 - Costed, prioritized, and regularly updated
 - Linked to clear trigger mechanisms and early warning systems
- ◇ Institutionalize “no-regret” early action protocols based on seasonal forecasts to avoid delayed response activation.
- ◇ Conduct regular simulation exercises (SIMEX) to test operational readiness.

- **Improve Targeting, Planning, and Standards Compliance**

- ◇ Enforce needs-based planning and geographic prioritization, ensuring interventions align with vulnerability data rather than available resources.
- ◇ Standardized service delivery benchmarks for:
 - Water quantity
 - Duration and continuity
 - Quality and safety
- ◇ Strengthen adherence to operational plans to reduce resource-driven implementation drift.

- **Enhance Cost-Efficiency and Financing Flexibility**

- ◇ Diversify financing modalities to reduce over-reliance on high-cost interventions:
 - Increased investment in capital infrastructure vs. recurrent emergency costs
- ◇ Introduce flexible, anticipatory financing mechanisms that can be triggered early.
- ◇ Promote public-private partnerships for water service delivery to improve efficiency and scalability.

- **Strengthening Monitoring, Data Systems, and Accountability**

- ◇ Establish integrated data and M&E systems linking national and sub-national levels for real-time tracking of:
 - Coverage
 - Functionality of water systems
 - Service delivery standards
- ◇ Improve use of disaggregated data for targeting and protection monitoring.
- ◇ Institutionalize feedback and accountability mechanisms (CFM) to inform adaptive decision-making.

- **Clarify Roles and Strengthen Policy-to-Operations Linkages**

- ◇ Translate DRM policies into clear operational mandates and SOPs across all actors.
- ◇ Define roles across national, regional, and community levels to reduce overlaps and gaps.
- ◇ Strengthening accountability frameworks tied to performance and delivery.

- **Address Supply Chain and Operational Bottlenecks**

- ◇ Streamline procurement processes and strengthen pre-positioning strategies for critical materials.
- ◇ Invest in:
 - Logistics systems
 - Maintenance of water infrastructure and equipment

- **Reduce delays linked to procurement and contractor mobilization.**
 - **Scale Up Response to Match Needs**
 - ◊ Align resource mobilization and planning with the actual scale of national demand, avoiding under-coverage.
 - ◊ Prioritize high-impact geographic areas where resources are constrained to maximize effectiveness.
 - ◊ Explore scalability options through modular and phased intervention design.
 - **Strengthen Integration Between Emergency Response and Resilience**
 - ◊ Embed water interventions within broader livelihoods, food security, and climate resilience strategies.
 - ◊ Scale up:
 - Water harvesting systems
 - Preventive infrastructure maintenance
 - Climate-resilient technologies
 - **Shift from short-term crisis response to long-term drought preparedness systems**
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4.7. Preparedness and Early Warning

4.7.1. Forecasting and Early Warning Utilization

The review found that early warning and forecasting systems were underutilized despite available tools (e.g., CBMIS, VAA). Weak data integration, delayed trigger activation, and coordination gaps limited their effectiveness and affected response planning. The absence of operational regional contingency plans, especially in the water sector, further constrained preparedness. Strengthening dissemination, interpretation, and integration of early warning data is critical to enable anticipatory action and timely response.

4.7.2. Preparedness Actions and Gaps

Key emergency interventions included water trucking (effective but costly), borehole rehabilitation, and limited water harvesting initiatives. In food assistance, CBMIS and commodity vouchers significantly improved efficiency, accountability, and delivery.

Preparedness was supported by sub-warehouses, beneficiary databases, and multi-sectoral partnerships.

However, major gaps persisted:

- Weak coordination, fragmented communication, and limited regional engagement
- Inconsistent accountability and oversight at local levels
- Lack of finalized contingency plans and partner integration
- Targeting challenges, political interference, and inclusion gaps
- Limited DRM financing, infrastructure constraints, and data fragmentation
- Capacity, safeguarding, and operational incentive gaps

4.7.3. Priority actions:

- Invest in long-term water infrastructure and system maintenance
- Strengthen DRM legislation, financing, and decentralized planning
- Institutionalize interoperable data systems
- Build staff and community-level capacity
- Develop multi-year resilience and preparedness strategies

4.7.4. Timeliness of Response Activation

Timeliness varied by modality. Voucher assistance and water trucking enabled rapid, continuous delivery, while in-kind food and borehole rehabilitation faced delays due to logistics, infrastructure, and technical constraints.

Overall, the response was largely reactive, with delays driven by centralized decision-making, coordination inefficiencies, and weak links between early warning and response triggers.

To improve timeliness in future responses, priority actions include:

- Strengthening early warning systems and linking them to clear, pre-defined response triggers for anticipatory action;
- Decentralizing decision-making authority and funding to regional and local levels;
- Improving transport, logistics, and storage infrastructure;
- Ensuring continuous updating and verification of beneficiary databases;
- Scaling up efficient modalities such as voucher-based assistance;
- Strengthening coordination across stakeholders and enhancing community-level engagement;
- Increasing staffing capacity and streamlining operational processes to reduce administrative delays.

4.8. Coordination and Partnerships

4.8.1. Government Leadership and Coordination Structures

The drought response was guided by an established OPM-led coordination architecture, which provided overall leadership and strategic direction across sectors under the National Drought Relief Programme (NDRP). Sectoral coordination mechanisms enabled alignment of interventions, supported by generally well-defined institutional roles and mandates across line ministries and sector leads.

However, despite this clarity at policy level, implementation challenges persisted, highlighting a gap between institutional design and field-level execution. At the national level, the National Disaster Risk Management Committee (NDRMC) remained active and played a central role in strategic oversight, coordination, and resource mobilization. Sectoral structures provided a coherent framework for organizing the response and aligning stakeholders.

At the sub-national level, coordination structures—including RDRMCs, CDRMCs, LDRMCs, and CDCs—were established but unevenly functional. Their effectiveness was constrained by:

- Limited functionality, with many structures inactive or under-resourced
- Restricted authority and decision-making power
- Centralized financial control, limiting regional influence over resource allocation

Despite these constraints, coordination platforms facilitated information sharing, stakeholder engagement, and communication with communities through meetings, radio outreach, and engagement with traditional and local leadership. However, inconsistent application of these mechanisms resulted in uneven effectiveness across regions.

4.8.2. Inter-Agency Collaboration (UN, NGOs, Donors)

Inter-agency collaboration was a key strength of the response, particularly at the national level.

The UNCT, through the Emergency Coordination Thematic Group led by the RCO, provided a structured platform for coordination, supported by clear ToRs and workplans. Regular engagement helped ensure alignment across agencies and sectors.

Joint planning and assessments were effectively implemented, including coordinated support to the 2024 VAA and SMART nutrition surveys. These processes demonstrated strong collaboration, with agencies contributing complementary technical, financial, and operational resources.

Key sectoral contributions included:

- **WFP:** Food assistance (in-kind, vouchers, soup kitchens)
- **FAO:** Livelihoods and agricultural support
- **UNICEF and UNFPA:** Nutrition, health, and protection services

Cross-cutting efforts included PSEA sensitization, capacity building of community health workers, and establishment of safe spaces for women.

Donor support: particularly through CERF, Japan, Republic of Korea, State of Qatar, Republic of Turkey, Republic of Malaysia, People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, Republic of India, Republic of Indonesia, People's Republic of China, Philip Morris International, and USAID/BHA—was critical in resource mobilization and programme delivery. Partnerships extended to NGOs and local private sector actors, enhancing logistics, service delivery, and last-mile implementation, particularly for voucher-based assistance.

However, coordination challenges persisted, including:

- Misaligned reporting timelines across agencies and donors
- Lack of a unified beneficiary database, limiting coordinated targeting and increasing duplication risks.

4.8.3. Coordination at National and Sub-National Levels

4.8.3.1. National Level

Coordination at the national level was relatively effective, supported by functioning institutional frameworks and active coordination platforms.

The NDRMC and UNCT structures enabled strategic alignment, joint planning, and regular stakeholder engagement. Key strengths included:

- Joint planning and assessments, particularly in the implementation of the Vulnerability Assessment Analysis (VAA) and nutrition surveys, which were supported collaboratively by multiple stakeholders

- Effective resource mobilization, including the successful leveraging of donor funding mechanisms
- Strong technical collaboration across sectors, which supported alignment of programme strategies and avoided significant overlap at the strategic level

These elements contributed to a coherent national response framework aligned with national priorities. However, gaps remained in translating coordination

4.8.3.2. Sub-National Level

- Coordination at sub-national level was mixed and often weak, with significant variability across regions. While structures existed, functionality was limited due to: Many RDRMCs were inactive or under-resourced, significantly limiting their ability to effectively coordinate response activities
- There were delays in communication and feedback loops between national, regional, and constituency levels, reducing responsiveness and slowing decision-making processes
- Information flow from regions to national structures was frequently delayed, affecting the ability to adjust interventions in a timely manner and respond to emerging needs

Operational constraints further undermine effectiveness, including:

- Delayed data capturing, which undermined effective planning, monitoring, and reporting
- Limited human resource capacity, particularly at regional and local levels, affecting both coordination and implementation
- Resource constraints, including inadequate transport systems and logistical support, which limit the ability to deliver services and coordinate effectively

Nonetheless, some regions demonstrated stronger performance, driven by:

- Active community meetings and engagement platforms, which facilitated information dissemination and beneficiary interaction
- Utilization of focal persons to support communication and coordination across stakeholders
- Effective collaboration among multiple stakeholders, including NGOs, community-based organizations, and local authorities

These examples demonstrate that decentralized coordination mechanisms can be effective when adequately resources and supported.

4.8.4. Key Coordination Gaps (Siloed Approaches and Duplication)

The response revealed several systemic gaps affecting efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability:

- Siloed implementation: Line ministries and partners often operated independently, with limited integration at field level despite existing coordination frameworks
- Weak data systems: Absence of a centralized beneficiary database constrained targeting, visibility, and coverage monitoring, increasing duplication risks
- Fragmented information flows: Delays and weak feedback mechanisms between national and sub-national levels reduced responsiveness
- Duplication and coverage gaps: Fragmented systems contributed to overlapping assistance in some areas and under-coverage in others
- Lack of standardization: Inconsistent reporting formats and operational definitions (e.g., household size) reduced data comparability

- Operational constraints: Transport limitations, staffing shortages, and weak logistics capacity hindered coordination and service delivery
- Preparedness gaps: Limited contingency planning, insufficient pre-positioning, and short lead times affected timely response activation

4.9. Supply Chain and Operational Delivery

While operational systems enabled nationwide delivery, they were strained by scale, coordination challenges, and capacity limitations, affecting efficiency and timeliness.

The response relied on centralized procurement, regional warehousing, and constituency-level distribution systems, providing a structured operational framework.

However, AAR findings highlight persistent challenges:

- Logistical bottlenecks and last-mile delivery constraints, particularly in remote areas
- Delays in procurement and delivery pipelines, affecting continuity of assistance
- Coordination gaps between key actors, including government, partners, and private sector stakeholders

The rapid expansion of beneficiary numbers further strained systems that were not designed to operate at such scale, exposing limitations in flexibility and surge capacity.

Operational systems were functional but not sufficiently scalable or adaptive, leading to inconsistencies in delivery and reduced response efficiency.

4.9.1. Procurement, Logistics, and Delivery Systems

The response leveraged a mixed model combining government-led systems with private sector engagement, which significantly strengthened operational reach and delivery capacity. The use of private transport providers enabled access to remote and hard-to-reach areas, while multi-stakeholder coordination—bringing together government, NGOs, police, and private actors—improved supply chain functionality. In addition, voucher-based modalities reduced pressure on storage and transport systems and enhanced flexibility in commodity access.

Distribution systems, particularly the integration of voucher mechanisms supported by CBMIS, demonstrated clear advantages. These included more predictable delivery cycles, reduced risks associated with storage and theft, and improved beneficiary choice through direct engagement with retailers. Complementary approaches such as sub-warehousing and decentralized storage further enhanced last-mile access, while effective coordination allowed for rapid dispatch of supplies once available.

However, these gains were offset by persistent structural and operational challenges. Procurement processes faced delays due to supplier capacity limitations, supply shortages (especially for food commodities), and the absence of pre-arranged agreements, which constrained rapid scale-up. Inconsistent communication on commodity availability further weakened planning and delivery timelines.

Last-mile delivery remained a critical bottleneck. Poor road infrastructure, long distances to distribution points, and limited transport capacity—exacerbated by aging fleets—restricted accessibility for many beneficiaries. These constraints were compounded by inadequate warehousing, regional staffing shortages, and fragmented coordination across actors. Centralized decision-making also reduced responsiveness at local levels.

Private sector engagement emerged as a key enabler of delivery efficiency and expanded coverage, particularly through retailer participation in voucher systems and contracted logistics services. However, these partnerships were not sufficiently institutionalized, with limited pre-established frameworks for rapid activation, thereby constraining the full and timely utilization of private sector capacity.

Overall, while the response demonstrated strong adaptability and effective use of hybrid delivery models, system inefficiencies—including procurement delays, infrastructure constraints, and weak formalization of partnerships—resulted in delivery delays, reduced operational efficiency, and uneven service coverage.

4.10. Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting

4.10.1. Effectiveness of Monitoring Systems

Monitoring systems were established across the response, though their effectiveness varies. The use of digital tools such as CBMIS strengthened reporting processes and contributed to improved oversight, while regular review meetings supported coordination. Regional and Community-level structures also enabled basic beneficiary feedback, reinforcing accountability at local level.

However, several gaps constrained performance. Monitoring systems were not fully real-time, limiting timely decision-making, and M&E capacity at regional level remained insufficient. In addition, the absence of standardized systems across actors resulted in inconsistencies in data collection and reporting. Evaluation of programme outcomes and impact was also weak, reducing the ability to assess overall effectiveness.

4.10.2. Data Quality and Timeliness

Data-related challenges significantly affected response delivery. Delays in data verification slowed assistance, absence of standard approach to data collection coupled with inconsistent data formats across regions reduced coherence, critical reporting and comparability. In some areas, reliance on manual data entry led to errors, duplication, and data loss, undermining data reliability and exposed the response to data protection related risks. Limited capacity among implementers to effectively use systems such as CBMIS further constrained data utilization and reporting.

Despite these limitations, existing systems provided a foundation for planning and tracking. However, further strengthening is required to improve data accuracy, timeliness, and operational responsiveness.

4.10.3. Use of Evidence for Decision-Making

The application of evidence to inform decision-making was partially effective. Data from systems such as CBMIS, together with assessment findings, supported planning processes, including beneficiary targeting and distribution management. Market assessments also informed us of commodity selection and pricing, particularly for voucher-based interventions.

Nonetheless, several constraints limit the full use of data. Weak integration across institutions hindered the development of a consolidated operational picture, while limited real-time analytics reduced the ability to adapt programmes in a timely manner. Early warning information was underutilized, and delays in information sharing further affected responsiveness.

As a result, decision-making was often reactive rather than anticipatory, underscoring the need for integrated data systems, real-time analytics, and strengthened analytical capacity across sectors.

4.11. Cross-Cutting Issues

4.11.1. Gender

Gender considerations were partially integrated into the response. Women actively participated in community engagement and implementation activities, and female-headed households were included in targeting processes. In addition, some programmes recognized gender-specific vulnerabilities, such as the inclusion of pregnant women in targeting criteria.

However, several gaps were identified. There was no comprehensive gender analysis informing programme design and implementation. Gender-specific needs, particularly those of children and adolescents, were not fully addressed, and there was limited use of sex- and age-disaggregated data to guide decision-making.

To strengthen gender responsiveness, it is recommended to:

- Enhance gender mainstreaming training across all implementing partners
- Systematically integrate gender analysis into targeting, programme design, and delivery modalities

4.11.2. Protection (Including Accountability to Affected Populations – AAP)

The response identified key protection risks, including exclusion errors in targeting and safety risks at distribution points.

Positive practices included:

- Application of dignity measures, such as conducting distributions during daylight hours and using ID-based verification
- Engagement of law enforcement personnel to enhance safety
- Utilization of community structures to identify vulnerable groups

Despite these efforts, important gaps remained:

- Long distances to distribution points, which disproportionately affected vulnerable populations such as older people and people with disabilities
- Weak or non-harmonized referral pathways and coordination mechanisms
- Limited protection monitoring systems
- Weak governance on the use of alternates for household heads without national IDs that further increased the protection risk exposure to affected households

Priority actions include:

- Strengthening protection and mainstreaming across all sectors
- Strengthen governance around the use of alternates to minimize potential protection risks to affected households
- Improving the accessibility and safety of distribution sites ensuring that they are disability friendly and close to the people
- Establishing clear referral systems and standard operating procedures (SOPs)

4.11.3. Complaints and Feedback Mechanisms (CFM)

A range of complaints and feedback channels were utilized, including helpdesks, suggestion boxes, complaint forms and community meetings and radio platforms. In some UN-supported programmes, additional mechanisms were in place, including a dedicated CFM budget, standard operating procedures for logging and resolving complaints and regular analysis and rapid response to high-risk issues.

Despite these efforts, several shortcomings were identified. There was an absence of a standardized national Complaints and Feedback Mechanism (CFM) system, which contributed to inconsistencies in implementation across regions, with some regions lacking any CFM structures altogether. In addition, documentation, tracking/referral systems and feedback to community were weak, limiting the ability to systematically record and follow up on complaints. This was further compounded by the reliance on manual recording of complaints in some instances, which reduced efficiency, traceability, and timeliness of response.

Integration across key actors, including government institutions, United Nations agencies, and non-governmental organizations, remained limited, reducing overall coordination and effectiveness. Accessibility challenges were also evident, particularly for vulnerable groups such as children and illiterate populations, which further restricted the inclusiveness of the mechanisms. Furthermore, trust issues in some reporting channels negatively affected community willingness to report concerns and seek redress.

The most frequently reported complaints included delays in distribution processes, delays in supplier payments, targeting errors that resulted in the exclusion of eligible beneficiaries, and insufficient food allocations. These recurring issues point to systemic inefficiencies that affected both service delivery and beneficiary satisfaction.

To strengthen accountability and responsiveness, several recommendations were proposed:

- Establish a standardized national digitized Complaints and Feedback Mechanism (CFM) or Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) framework to ensure consistency across all regions for strengthened accountability, responsiveness and trust.
- Strengthen awareness of available reporting channels to ensure communities are fully informed about how and where to raise concerns
- Enhance training for focal persons and committees to improve their capacity to manage complaints effectively
- Reinforce referral and case management systems to ensure issues are addressed in a timely and coordinated manner
- Ensure that all mechanisms are inclusive, confidential, accessible, and responsive to the needs of all community members

4.11.4. Community Engagement and Accountability

Regarding Community Engagement and Accountability, this was identified as a notable strength of the response. Community engagement was facilitated through regular community meetings and local consultations, as well as through active engagement with traditional authorities, councilors, and other local leadership structures. Existing Disaster Risk Management (DRM) structures at national, regional, and community levels also played a key role in supporting engagement efforts. Feedback channels were established through designated focal persons and regional and constituency offices, enabling communities to share concerns and receive information. Furthermore, social and behavioral change initiatives, particularly around nutrition, contributed to raising awareness and encouraging community participation.

However, despite these strengths, several gaps were identified that limited overall accountability:

- Weak feedback loops between communities and national decision-making levels, resulting in limited upward flow of information
- Lack of structured feedback mechanisms, such as complaint boxes at constituency offices, constraining formal submission of concerns
- Absence of real-time community engagement systems, limiting timely communication and responsiveness
- Trust gaps between communities and implementing committees, undermining confidence in the system
- Limited community involvement in decision-making processes, reducing ownership and participation

To address these challenges and enhance community engagement and accountability, several recommendations were put forward:

- Establish regional emergency communication centers to streamline information flow and improve coordination
- Strengthen community feedback systems and enhance two-way communication channels between communities and authorities
- Increase community participation in planning, implementation, and monitoring processes to enhance ownership and accountability
- Expand the use of radio platforms and local communication systems to broaden outreach and ensure timely dissemination of information

5.0 Key Lessons Learned

5.1. Food Assistance

5.1.1. Strategic

- Strengthen system integration (CBMIS with national systems) to improve targeting, validation, and reduce duplication.
- Establish clear, well-defined business processes, underpinned by adequate capacity as the foundation for implementation, ensuring digital systems are effectively aligned, configured, and leveraged to drive efficiency, consistency, and overall operational effectiveness. Establish clear SOPs to accompany business processes for consistency, enhanced accountability and to provide a structured framework that enables efficient and effective implementation of processes
- Institutionalize realistic anticipatory planning, including better drought impact modelling and resource allocation.
- Address systemic gaps through inter-ministerial engagement (e.g., Home Affairs for documentation).
- Invest in DRM financing

5.1.2. Operational

- Enforce contextualized targeting criteria with strong oversight and sensitization.
- Improve logistics readiness (fleet maintenance + private sector engagement).
- Ensure prior relevant feasibility assessments to support effective implementation through voucher system (including market functionality assessments)
- Streamline voucher systems and ensure timely retailer payments.

5.1.3. Coordination

- Strengthen government–private sector–partner coordination.
- Improve data sharing and interoperability across institutions.
- Establish clear governance for shared logistics infrastructure.

5.1.4. Sustainability / Transition

- Scale up market-based approaches (voucher systems) where feasible.
- Transition toward shock-responsive, integrated systems.
- Balance immediate delivery with long-term system resilience (targeting, logistics, financing).

5.2. Livestock Support & Seed/Horticulture

5.2.1. Strategic

- Institutionalize clear, context-specific targeting for livestock farmers.
- Strengthen decentralized financing for responsiveness.
- Promote digital systems for tracking and accountability.
- Align interventions with climate-smart agriculture, water availability, and early warning systems.

5.2.2. Operational

- Simplify administrative processes and ensure timely intervention rollout.
- Align seed distribution with seasonal calendars and rainfall forecasts.
- Improve monitoring of beneficiaries and livestock categories.
- Strengthen extension services and promote climate-resilient inputs.

5.2.3. Coordination

- Improve coordination across government, suppliers, and local actors.
- Strengthening linkage between technical design and field implementation.
- Enhance collaboration between extension services, suppliers, and communities.

5.2.4. Sustainability / Transition

- Shift from blanket to targeted farmer-specific support.
- Promote early action (e.g., proactive destocking, livestock marketing).
- Link interventions to long-term resilience systems (rangeland, irrigation, water harvesting).
- Embed climate-smart agriculture for sustained productivity.

5.3. Water Provision

5.3.1. Strategic

- Establish dedicated and decentralized DRM financing for water interventions and in other sectors such as MAWLR.
- Reform DRM policy/legal frameworks to:
 - Enable direct funding to regional structures
 - Clarify mandates and accountability
 - Institutionalize contingency planning
- Align institutional mandates and strengthen performance monitoring systems.

5.3.2. Operational

- Institutionalize robust M&E systems for water delivery.
- Improve preparedness through maintenance and upgrading of tanker fleets.
- Strengthen technical capacity of regional response structures.
- Enhance financial processes for timely fund access.

5.3.3. Coordination

- Strengthen the central coordination role of RDRMCs.
- Improve multi-level coordination (line ministries, regional actors, WASH partners).
- Ensure inclusive consultations across all stakeholders.

5.3.4. Sustainability / Transition

- Reduce over-reliance on water trucking.
- Prioritize sustainable systems (infrastructure, desalination, diversified supply).
- Strengthen transition from emergency response to resilient water systems.
- Elevate water supply as a critical emergency service for rapid mobilization.

6.0 Strategic Conclusion and Next Steps

6.1. Conclusion from the drought response

The 2024/25 drought response in Namibia demonstrated strong national commitment, effective government leadership, and the ability to mobilize multi-sectoral support at scale. Through coordinated efforts involving government institutions, development partners, NGOs, and private sector actors, the response reached large numbers of affected households using a mix of in-kind and market-based modalities. Innovations such as CBMIS, voucher systems, and private sector engagement strengthened operational delivery, improved accountability, and enhanced the overall reach of assistance.

At the same time, the response exposed important structural and operational weaknesses that constrained its overall effectiveness. Targeting systems were not sufficiently standardized or adaptive, resulting in both inclusion and exclusion errors and limiting equitable coverage of the most vulnerable populations. Procurement and logistics systems were strained by delays, supply shortages, and inadequate preparedness arrangements, while last-mile delivery remained difficult in remote and infrastructure-poor areas. Coordination was stronger at national level than at sub-national level, where limited decentralization, staffing shortages, and fragmented systems reduced responsiveness. In addition, while data and monitoring systems provided an important foundation, gaps in interoperability, data quality, and real-time analysis meant that decision-making remained largely reactive rather than anticipatory.

Overall, the drought response was successful in mobilizing resources and delivering assistance at scale, but its efficiency, equity, and adaptability were undermined by persistent weaknesses in preparedness, targeting, operational systems, and decentralized implementation. The key lesson is that future drought responses in Namibia must move beyond large-scale emergency delivery toward a more anticipatory, integrated, and resilience-oriented system.

6.2. Strategic considerations and next steps for future emergencies in Namibia

Looking ahead, Namibia's future emergency responses should be guided by a strategic shift from reactive crisis management to anticipatory and systems-based preparedness. This requires strengthening standardized and inclusive targeting approaches, investing in integrated data and information systems, and improving procurement and supply chain readiness through pre-arranged agreements and stronger public-private partnerships. Equally important is the need to build sub-national capacity, empower decentralized decision-making, and strengthen coordination structures at regional and constituency levels so that responses are faster, more context-specific, and more accountable. There is also a need to review the National disaster risk management policy to reflect the present realities.

Future efforts should also prioritize stronger monitoring, evaluation, and learning systems, with greater emphasis on outcomes, community feedback, and real-time evidence to support adaptive management. Finally, early warning information, market analysis, and risk monitoring must be systematically linked to pre-defined triggers for action, allowing Namibia to act earlier and reduce humanitarian impacts before they escalate. Together, these measures will help transform drought response from a largely reactive intervention model into a more effective system for risk management, early action, and long-term resilience.

7.0 Conclusion

The 2024/25 El Niño-induced drought response in Namibia demonstrated strong national commitment, broad stakeholder solidarity, and an ability to mobilize assistance at significant scale under difficult conditions. At the same time, the After-Action Review makes clear that the greatest lesson is not only how the country responded, but how it must prepare differently for the future. Recurrent drought can no longer be managed primarily as an emergency; it must be addressed as a predictable risk requiring anticipatory action, decentralized preparedness, stronger data systems, and sustained investment in resilience. The value of this AAR therefore lies not only in documenting what happened, but in providing a practical agenda for change. If its lessons are acted upon with urgency and ownership, Namibia will be better positioned not only to respond faster and more effectively to future shocks, but also to protect livelihoods, reduce humanitarian needs, and build a more resilient national disaster management system.

Annexes

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