

Project Summary

ASPIRE

Introduction

ASPIRE aimed to provide strategic and technical support to social protection initiatives – such as the World Bank’s ASPP (Adaptive Social Protection Programme) – in Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal. The ASPP aims to reduce poverty by helping nations move away from expensive post-disaster emergency aid towards anticipatory action to ensure long-term food security and climate resilience. ASPIRE was delivered from March 2017 to March 2020 by a consortium including the Met Office, Walker Institute at the University of Reading, and the Norwegian Refugee Council. Adaptive Social Protection (ASP) systems help individuals and families cope with crises and shocks. ASP combines social protection with climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction, aiming to protect poor households from climate and other shocks. ASP implements measures before and during a shock, such as cash transfers, building community assets and investment in public works programmes.

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Recommendations made on how climate information can inform adaptive social protection in the Sahel

The project brought climate information service providers and social protection stakeholders together to create national ASPIRE teams. Through shared understanding and a process of co-production, the ASPIRE teams designed prototype climate services which are tailored to the specific needs of key social protection programmes and stakeholders in Niger.

ASPIRE research generated useful findings linking seasonal forecasts with crop production and highlighted the subjectivity of the seasonal forecasts issued by the PRESASS, (the Sahelian regional climate outlook forum). The emphasis was on sharing these insights wider, through regional and global climate events and regional trainings, to ensure relevant stakeholders were aware. In addition, the national embedded consultant supported the World Bank team in Niger to compile available climate data sets that can be used within the Dispositif National to inform and scale up food crises interventions.

The Walker Institute led training labs where training was provided on how climate and livelihoods data can be integrated and made relevant to ASP stakeholders across the region. These training labs, combined with video trainings and seasonal climate films provide future points of reference for stakeholders to this work.

Underpinning capability developed in the region to support integration of climate information into ASP

The project improved the underpinning knowledge and capability of relevant stakeholders, including seasonal forecasting capabilities of climate service providers in the Sahel and training to support to SP stakeholders. This was achieved through: a) a 'train the trainer' programme to support the embedded consultant and regional climate service providers; b) updating seasonal forecasting methods in the Sahel to facilitate the generation of national seasonal outlooks by the NMHSs, supported by the embedded consultant; and c) one-to-one support and training provided by the Walker team to regional institutions and Higher Education Institutes (HEIs).

The Walker Institute in a training lab trained 30 social protection and climate stakeholders. The two-day training programme was designed in response to this with multiple sessions around the key themes: the importance of climatic information, the importance of contextual social information, where these connect and why it is important to for all actors in the process to find and ensure these linkages are met

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and maintained. A key part of the training session was to enable stakeholders to provide frank and realistic feedback about their experience of the social protection process. All participants expressed that the training was worthwhile and enabled opportunities for collaboration and knowledge sharing. A number of participants asked for materials to share with colleagues.

A series of seasonal forecasting videos was made available for dissemination and allows training of a range of users, including climate and SP stakeholders, as well as broader audiences interested in seasonal forecasts. The videos were designed to be accessible but also cover enough detail to build on a basic understanding of seasonal forecasts and how they can be interpreted and applied.

The ASPIRE team also worked with the Red Cross Climate Centre and researchers involved in the BRACED and SHEAR programmers to produce a seasonal forecasting toolkit – a series of two-page summaries of key topics in seasonal forecasting and its use. This has been published on the BRACED website.

Since the inception, it has become increasingly clear that ASPIRE learning outputs – particularly those related to improved seasonal forecasting methods – are not only relevant to ASP interventions but also to wider development and humanitarian activities. For example, in one of the target countries, ASPIRE was asked to target recommendations in relation to food security and early warning triggers. Given the project's earlier difficulties in engaging with the ASPP, and dependent on specific country needs, there was merit in broadening the scope of the intended beneficiaries to produce a wider suite of development and humanitarian interventions (especially those relevant to Forecast Based Financing).

Conclusion

A change in the view of the Adaptive Social Protection teams in the Sahel region to the need to work closely with NMHSs and Regional Climate Centres is work in progress. Most NMHSs are still limited in capability but the more they are exposed to ASP user needs, the more they will learn to adapt their weather and climate services to these needs. The impact of the ASPIRE programme is variable depending on the access the ASPIRE team have had to World Bank Task Team Leaders, appropriate NMHS leads (Director Generals as opposed to technical leads), and the capability of the regional centre, ACMAD. A baseline of the 'value' of climate information, how it can be improved and be more reliable, has been established. The priority for the future is to ensure that this baseline is built on. The online trainings created by Met Office and the Walker Institute should continue to support these endeavours in the short term.

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