



SAVING
LIVES
CHANGING
LIVES

Fostering Urban Resilience through Preparedness Activities in Southern Africa

Methodology Overview

CONTEXT & OBJECTIVES

WFP is implementing a Regional Urban Preparedness Project in Lesotho, Madagascar, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe, with activities in 12 urban areas. Funded by the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO), the project aims to build a common

understanding of the specific characteristics of urban vulnerability and essential needs and strengthen national capacity by providing partners, local governments, and national institutions with a set of tools to better prepare for responding to shocks in urban areas.



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The rapid, unplanned growth of cities in Southern Africa has tilted the scales of humanitarian response—what was for decades a rural field of expertise has gradually shifted as needs increase in urban areas due to protracted crises, conflict, and politics of the city. More than 170 million people in the region live on less than one USD per day,¹ while 55% of urbanites are living in informal settlements.²

A “fresh” approach is needed to understand the multiple factors shaping people’s vulnerability in urban areas of Southern Africa. The project was therefore structured around **three critical knowledge gaps**:

1. **Who are the relevant actors and institutions? And how they can work better together?**
2. **How is vulnerability experienced in cities and why? And how can the most vulnerable communities be best located and identified?**
3. **What is the adequacy of cash-based transfer (CBT) interventions in urban areas of the region?**



5 PRINCIPLES OF THE METHODOLOGY APPROACH



1

Multi-sectoral and inter-disciplinary
Promoting horizontal coordination

2



Multi-level governance
Localising coordination for preparedness

3



Use of triangulation
Complementary qualitative and quantitative analysis

4



Participatory
Leveraging knowledge of urban stakeholders and communities

5

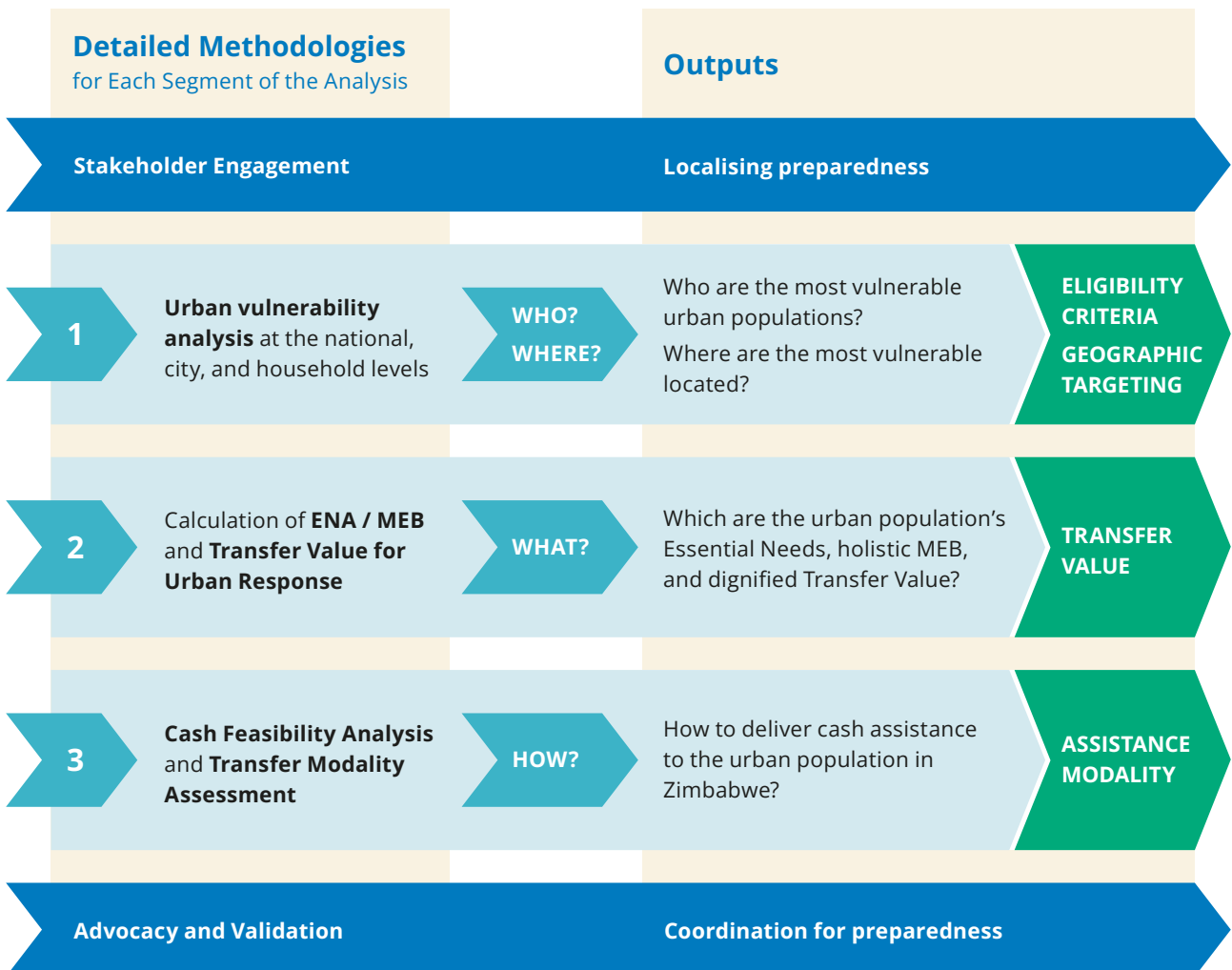
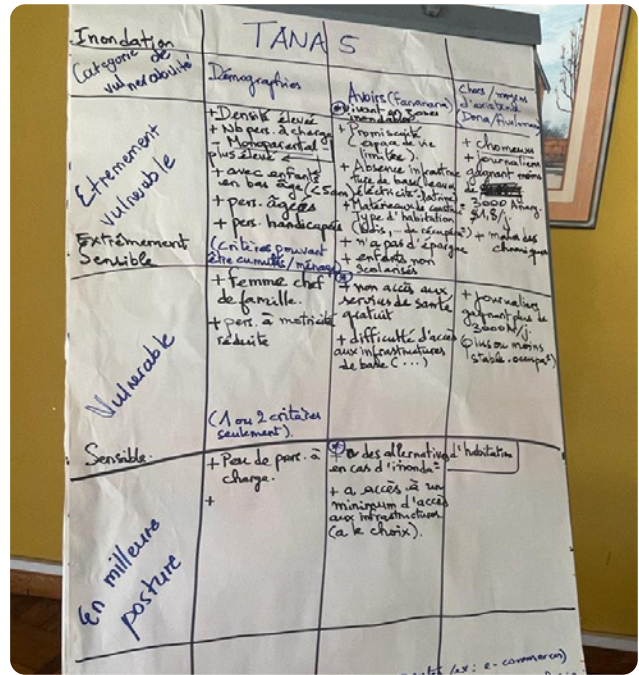


Area-based
Tying specific geographical locations to multi-layered analysis



SEGMENTS OF THE ANALYSIS

The analysis is comprised of three main segments, with stakeholder engagement and advocacy and validation activities embedded throughout (see figure below). To fulfil the need for a strongly coordinated and government-owned preparedness strategy, the project focused on strengthening the government's ownership of the process and enhancing capacities at both the local and national levels to collect and analyse data on urban vulnerability and to advance evidence-based research on urban essential needs and cash-based assistance. In each country, the government lead identified facilitated the implementation of activities, such as workshops, community focus groups, participatory mapping exercises, and drafting of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and MoUs emerging from the project.



BOX 1 – STEP-BY-STEP MULTI-STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

An in-depth understanding of the roles and responsibilities of both formal and informal urban actors is key to defining a coordinated response. Stakeholders were invited at each step to participate in the identification of key issues and collectively define, agree on, and prioritise the next steps. Stakeholders ranged from national disaster risk management (DRM) authorities and social welfare bodies to city-based civil society organisations and community members. A combination of participatory events and information-gathering tools was used to listen (e.g., via structured interviews, brainstorming sessions), to observe and learn, and to facilitate joint mapping (drawing and making models collectively).

A National Inception Workshop was organised to kickstart the engagement activities of the project in each country. The main goal was to convene different actors at both the national and local level to debate and reach a common understanding of how coordination, communications, and collaboration mechanisms for urban preparedness and response can be strengthened.

The National Inception Workshops have allowed WFP to identify the main government entry point for urban preparedness activities. In Zimbabwe, traditional WFP partners, such as the Department of Civil Protection, have been reconfirmed as entry point. Meanwhile, in Madagascar, the project laid the foundation for WFP to explore new partnerships, such as the collaboration with the Municipality of Antananarivo (*Commune Urbaine de Antananarivo (CUA)*).



SEGMENTS OF THE ANALYSIS AND THEIR OUTPUTS

SEGMENT 1. Urban Vulnerability Assessment

The urban vulnerability assessment and profiling was performed at the national, city, and household levels. The multi-level assessment allowed linking the social and economic dimensions of inequality (traditionally included in household vulnerability profiling) with the spatial dimension—analysed with a progressive focus from the whole nation to the detail of the targeted cities’ neighbourhoods.

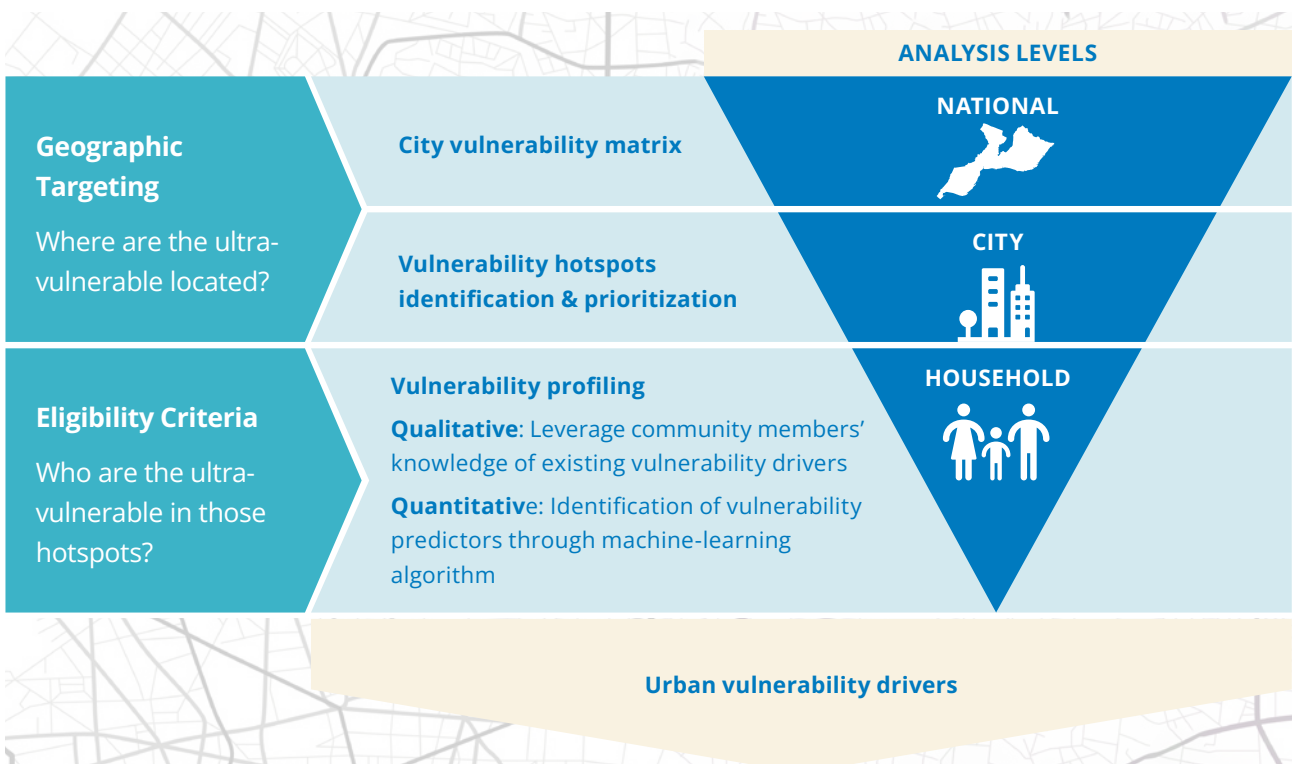
National level: This part of the analysis explored the status of vulnerability using a sample of 10 cities from each of the participating countries. The goal was to provide a tool for future urban programming and decision-making at the country level, by developing a ranking of cities that compares their general vulnerability and exposure to specific climate and disaster risks. The result was a matrix, then visualized in a map with the cities’ scores, that can serve as a starting point for further research and prioritisation of areas.

City level: The city-level analysis comprised a two-step geographic targeting exercise to define where the ultra-vulnerable are located within the cities prioritised through the national-level analysis. First, a **participatory mapping exercise** was facilitated to identify and select

the most vulnerable neighbourhoods through group discussions on satellite maps, using stakeholders’ knowledge to include informal settlements and other areas underrepresented in National Vulnerability Assessments (NVAs). Second, a **vulnerability hotspots identification and prioritisation exercise** allowed confirming and cross-referencing the participatory mapping outcomes, engaging a sample of community representatives from each neighbourhood. The result was a ranking and mapping of the 2-5 most vulnerable neighbourhoods (hotspots), confirmed and agreed upon by the participants.

Household level: Urban vulnerability profiling at the household level required a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. For the former, community-based vulnerability profiling was conducted through focus group discussions with around 15-20 community members from the 5 highest-ranking hotspots identified during the city-level analysis. The focus group discussions led to defining the characteristics of the ultra-vulnerable and producing a set of minimum vulnerability indicators adapted to the local context, to later reflect in the eligibility criteria for cash-based assistance (the first step of a targeting exercise). These findings were later complemented and cross-referenced with the quantitative analysis of the most recent national vulnerability assessment datasets, run through a machine-learning algorithm to identify vulnerability predictors.

FRAMEWORK FOR URBAN VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT AND PROFILING



SEGMENT 2. Calculating the MEB and transfer value

Minimum expenditure basket (MEB)³ estimations were done to 1) better understand the essential needs of vulnerable households and their costs, 2) set a benchmark against which to compare the status of households and thus to determine their vulnerability (as the inability to meet the minimum essential needs, 3) provide a reference value for potential CBT interventions in urban areas, and 4) to support multi-sectoral coordination and harmonisation of humanitarian and social protection assistance in urban areas. Two main methods were used for constructing the MEB—the **rights-based approach** (qualitative) and the **expenditure-based approach** (quantitative), each with its own set of strengths and weaknesses. It is recommended to combine elements of both and adopt a **hybrid-approach** to strengthen the MEB estimations.⁴ In this analysis, the two methods were adopted to estimate a holistic MEB (dimensions: food, hygiene, energy, housing and sanitation, health, education, transport, and communication).

To provide the basis for potential CBT interventions in urban areas, a gap analysis was conducted as well as a calculation of transfer values for cash-based programmes. For the gap analysis, the economic capacity of vulnerable households (i.e., the amount of resources households use to cover their essential needs) was estimated using detailed expenditure data from household surveys. The gap analysis explained how far away households who could not cover their needs were from being able to meet them, in monetary terms.

SEGMENT 3. Cash feasibility analysis and transfer modality assessment

Despite the challenges associated with working in urban environments, there are multiple opportunities for cash-based programming in cities. Urban dwellers most often rely on cash for their household expenses, such as rent, utilities, transportation, and food; CBTs can therefore provide recipients with the flexibility to purchase essential goods and services of their choice based on their self-determined priorities and needs. Urban areas also have more diversified and robust financial institutions, providing more options for partners to transfer funds to recipients. Yet, setting an appropriate benefit amount and regularly adjustment is crucial due to a more diverse set of expenses in urban areas (including rent and transportation), higher prices and inflation, low and erratic incomes from casual jobs, and underemployment.

Three key assessments to inform implementation of CBT interventions were applied in this analysis: 1) market assessment, 2) financial assessment, and 3) beneficiary preference and experience assessment.



BOX 2 – ADVOCACY AND VALIDATION

National level. The project has generated tools, methodologies, findings, and recommendations that fill a substantial knowledge gap in urban programming or suggest adjustments to existing programmes in the region. Advocacy is needed to encourage policymakers to actively support and adopt the findings, informing SOPs of regional, national, and local state and non-state actors and guaranteeing impact beyond WFP’s own programming.

The advocacy strategy for the project includes activities for:

1. Conducting National Validation Workshops to convene actors and endorse the project findings.
2. Sensitising NVACs on the revision/ establishment of the urban vulnerability framework.
3. Advocating with National Cash Working Groups for the revision and updating of national MEBs.

4. Crafting of new partnerships around urban, providing MoUs and ToRs for newly established Working Groups such as the National Urban Working Group in Madagascar and the National Cash Working Group in Lesotho.
5. Participating in international events to engage national and local governments in advocacy for urban preparedness.

Regional level. More broadly, the project has taken steps to perform a cross-country analysis through regional-level discussions and engagements. On the one hand, the application of this methodology in the four countries has laid the foundation for defining a **common regional framework** on urban preparedness across coordination, vulnerability, and cash assistance. On the other hand, convening key stakeholders to share their experiences and discuss challenges and priorities under the theme of urban preparedness and response has also revealed the need for a longer-term engagement and peer-learning platform to fulfil three strategic priorities identified for the region (see below).

OVERARCHING STRATEGIC REGIONAL PRIORITIES



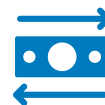
Closing the vertical coordination gap

Translating national contingency plans into locally relevant emergency operation procedures for a more effective response



Revising the urban vulnerability framework

Enabling the multi-dimensional analysis of urban vulnerability at the national, city, and household level



Strengthening urban cash preparedness

Improving urban population registries, targeting processes, and harmonising transfer values

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE APPLICATION OF THE METHODOLOGY

Limitations



The qualitative methodology (e.g., correct conduction of tools and their implementation with key informants and communities) requires workforce capacity and training within the Country Office (CO) staff. This may compete with other ongoing activities.



Qualitative tools conduction requires a dedicated time (a minimum of one week per location) to make sure the right people are consulted, and the right data are collected; time constraints due to competing activities at CO level may affect the results.



Lack of granular urban secondary data may affect vulnerability mapping at the national and city level. Generally, most data available in the Southern Africa region are in national statistics, with some rare instances of data availability at the district level and none at the city level. Challenges were encountered when searching for data on informal settlements, urban governance, etc., where some gaps though not all have been filled through collaboration with other agencies (e.g., UN-Habitat). Major challenges also remain for profiling at the urban level – partners like UN-Habitat can close fill some voids but not all, as in the case of Lesotho. Urban profiling on secondary data requires a background of detailed urban information.



The use of a participatory approach requires a correct pre-engagement with the interested key informants and communities. It also requires continuous involvement of the same people (or at least majority of them) in the whole process, from inception to validation, throughout all technical consultations. Challenges were encountered when different CBOs or community representatives were attending the sessions, since it meant that the engagement work done previously had to be re-built from scratch each time.



Qualitative approaches must consider integrating additional communication challenges to accommodate for the use of indigenous languages.

Opportunities



The qualitative methodology can provide meta-information, not only on the hazards and risks, but also on the way communities elaborate their thinking about it. For example, in Madagascar, “perception of risk” was suggested by the key informants (community leaders) as one of the vulnerability categories on which data collection should have been conducted. The use of meta-information can positively influence the elaboration of further tools and implementation of effective activities in those communities.



The use of geo-satellite maps in a participatory exercise with key informants and communities represented a great success for the project, stimulating a deep engagement of beneficiaries and leveraging unexpected pockets of community knowledge on hazards exposure, but also on informal settlements, access to services, crime affected areas, etc.



Working in urban areas, through a multi-stakeholder and multi-level approach provides WFP the opportunity to explore non-traditional partnerships with local governments and especially Mayor’s offices and city councils who set an agenda in response to concrete urban problems. This work can positively link and influence several cross-functional areas, such as social protection, food systems, emergencies, and South-South and Triangular-Cooperation.



The use of a mixed method (i.e., combining quantitative and qualitative methods through focus group discussions (FGDs)) approach can compensate for the lack of secondary data and is more cost-effective than primary data collection (e.g., surveys). It can also help generate live information and documentation for visibility and communications outputs (e.g., photos, videos).



The urban environment, analysed under a regional lens and methodological approach, opens an opportunity for country-to-country collaboration and learning.



ABOUT THE PROJECT

WFP is implementing a Regional Urban Preparedness Project in **Lesotho, Madagascar, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe**, focusing activities in 12 urban areas. Funded by the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO), the project, titled “Fostering Community Resilience through Preparedness Activities in Southern Africa,” aims to build a common understanding on the specific characteristics of urban vulnerability and essential needs, and provide partners, local governments, and national institutions a set of tools to better prepare for responding to shocks in urban areas.

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Photo credits

Photos page 1, 2, 6, 9: WFP/Aina Andrianalizaha
Photo page 3: WFP/Arianna Francioni
Photo page 4: WFP/Hannah Berry

Endnotes

- 1 African Food Security Urban Network
- 2 UN-Habitat. World Cities Report 2020 – The Value of Sustainable Urbanization
- 3 A minimum expenditure basket (MEB) is defined as what a household requires to meet their essential needs, on a regular or seasonal basis, and its cost.
- 4 WFP Minimum Expenditure Guidance Note, 2020

