

Evaluation Summary

Title: Climate Risk and Early Warning Systems (CREWS) Initiative

Initial Phase External Evaluation

(maximum four pages)

Quick Facts

Countries covered: Caribbean, Pacific, South West Indian Ocean and West Africa Regional Projects, Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, Mali, Niger, Papua New Guinea and Togo

Type of Evaluation: Initial Phase External Evaluation

Evaluator(s): Evan Green (Team Lead/Quality Assurance), Alecia Bennett-Bryan (Evaluator), and Naomi Harris (Evaluator/Data Analyst)

Scope of evaluation: Initial Phase of CREWS (from start of CREWS operations in 2017 until 30 June 2021)

Background and Context

The Climate Risk and Early Warning Systems (CREWS) Initiative is a specialised funding mechanism that provides support for the strengthening of risk informed early warning systems (EWS) in Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS). CREWS' three Implementing Partners (IPs), the World Bank (WB), the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) work directly with National Weather Services (NWS), National Disaster Management Offices, other government agencies, regional institutions and local organizations to provide technical assistance and capacity development, seeking to increase the availability of, and access to, early warning systems.

The CREWS Initiative, therefore, works to address the four elements required for effective impact-based multi-hazards early warning systems (MHEWS), namely:

1. Monitoring, detection, and forecasting of hydro-meteorological hazards providing lead times for action
2. Analysis of at-risk populations and assets;
3. Dissemination of timely and authoritative warnings; and,
4. Preparedness and response plans triggered by warnings and weather and climate predictions; and to achieve a reduction of deaths and economic losses consistent with:
 - a. Target 11.5 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)¹
 - b. Targets (a), (b), (c), and (g) of the Sendai Framework² and
 - c. The adaptation goal of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.³

Purpose, Scope and Clients of the Evaluation

The objective of this consultancy was to conduct an Initial Phase External Evaluation for the CREWS Initiative as commissioned by the Contributing Members of the CREWS

Steering Committee. The evaluation spanned the initial phase of the interventions (from the commencement of CREWS operations in 2017 until 30 June 2021) and focused on what worked, key achievements, good practices, and areas for improvement. The evaluation put forward recommendations to strengthen the Initiative's future directions. The outcomes of the evaluation provide an opportunity to assess the relevance of the Initiative's directions as it relates to the objectives and expected results as well as consider its effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, and potential sustainability of outcomes.

Methodology of the Evaluation

The approach to the evaluation was consultative, participatory, and utilisation focused. The evaluation was guided by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development - Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) Evaluation Standards and complemented by the United Nations Evaluation Group Guidance on human rights and gender mainstreaming. In applying the OECD-DAC criteria, the evaluation assesses the CREWS Initiative along five criteria i.e., relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, and potential for sustainability (the evaluation matrix is provided in Annex 6.1). Additionally, gender-responsiveness, people-centred approaches, and monitoring and evaluation were treated as cross-cutting issues across the evaluation. A mixed methods approach was utilized to enable triangulation across data sources. This approach incorporated qualitative and quantitative data collection methods and analysis to respond to the questions detailed in the evaluation matrix (Annex 6.1). The recommendations are based on evidenced-based findings from the triangulation of sources. The main lines of inquiry were document review, group and individual interviews, and the administration of an e-survey.

Main Findings and Conclusions

Relevance

F1 – The CREWS Initiative was found to be highly relevant in the current context of policy discussions and global frameworks given the focus on EWS to support LDCs and SIDS to better prepare for natural hazards, reduce risks, and adapt to climate change (CC) and in terms of its contribution to global discussions on averting and minimizing loss and damage through EWS. The CREWS Initiative is becoming increasingly pertinent following the declaration by the United Nations Secretary General (UNSG) that all countries will be protected by early warning systems against extreme weather and CC within the next five years.

F2 – The comparative advantage of CREWS is that it brings together experienced IPs whose mandates focus on supporting countries and regions to build sustainable EWSs and provide timely, accurate, as well as accessible climate risk information and weather services.

Coherence

F4 – The mandate, objectives, and outcomes of CREWS are consistent with global frameworks and interventions while complementary and in coordination with other MHEWS partners to deliver tailored country projects aimed at strengthening national and regional institutions to deliver early warning services to the most vulnerable across SIDS and LDCs.

F6 – The CREWS Initiative's objective, outcomes, outputs, and activities were clear and logically outlined within the CREWS Monitoring Framework. However, there was no evidence of well-developed indicators for projects across regional and national projects to

facilitate effective results tracking across strategic partners with a view to achieving CREWS' objective.

Effectiveness

F7 – The CREWS Initiative has contributed to improved availability of early warning information which contributes to the CREWS objective to significantly increase access to early warnings and risk information in LDCs and SIDS (Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Target G).

F10 – The evaluation found that one of the key factors influencing the achievement of CREWS outputs at global, regional, and national levels is the fact that CREWS objectives are measured against global agreements such as the Sendai Framework for DRR targets A, B, C, and G, the SDGs and the Climate Change Paris Agreement (Adaptation Goals). On the other hand, the major factor influencing the non-achievement of results is the inability of some of CREWS projects to provide disaggregated data to report on results at the output levels in keeping with the CREWS Monitoring Framework.

Efficiency

F11 – The CREWS projects were widely considered to be efficiently managed, despite interruptions due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. CREWS was characterized by quality communication between partners and flexible operational procedures in project implementation. However, more efforts are required throughout CREWS Initiative's programme cycle to optimize synergies and avoid duplications with other early warning projects or related IP activities especially with actors at the last mile.

Potential for Sustainability

F14 – Net benefits of CREWS are expected to be sustained where there are partnerships with local and/or regional actors, ownership by regional organizations and national governments, and coordination with other, larger climate change adaptation (CCA), DRR, and EW investments. However, the lack of exit strategies may threaten the sustainability of results. The effectiveness, efficiency, and by extension the potential for sustainability of CREWS can be improved through the documentation and optimization of leveraging actions. CREWS possesses the ability to promote the importance of and mainstream EWS in the development agendas of DRR and CCA actors through strategic partnerships and implementation strategies that capitalize on respective strengths. CREWS presents the potential to leverage considerable amounts of funding through their role as strategic partner on the Santiago Framework; strategic learning partnerships with actors such REAP and InsuResilience; and in light of the UN five-year deadline on EWS global coverage to be spearheaded by one of CREWS' Implementing Partners: WMO. In addition, although some important sustainability measures are being implemented, the project lacks a deliberate, comprehensive, and structured exit strategy.

Recommendations

The evaluation developed a series of recommendations flowing from the evaluation findings and concluding observations under each evaluation criteria.

R1 – *In line with finding 1* – To increase scalability and improve reach with regards to the achievement of targets aligned to international agreements such as Agenda 2030 and the SDGs, UNFCCC Paris Agreement and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, the CREWS Initiative will need to

continue forging partnerships with larger financing mechanisms such as the GCF, WB, and SOFF (once it becomes operational).

R2 – *In line with finding 3* – There is a continued need to promote strategic engagement with constituents on the ground across all CREWS Initiative locations. Strategic engagement should be increased among and between partners to strengthen both people-centred and gender responsive approaches to improve the relevance of CREWS interventions, as well as the ability to leverage scarce resources.

R3 – *In line with finding 4* – There is need for the continued streamlining and alignment of the CREWS programming with other global Initiatives being undertaken by CREWS strategic partners such as REAP, RIMES, and InsuResilience, among others. Engaging these partners in project design will enable the formulation of proposals that are more technically sound with aligned indicators for reporting across global agreements and applicability at regional and national levels.

R4 – *In line with finding 6* – There is need for participatory stakeholder consultations towards the development of a robust Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) Framework inclusive of a Theory of Change (ToC) which will outline the key building blocks required and inherent assumptions to realize the CREWS Initiative objective. Improved strategic planning will support strengthened monitoring of CREWS Monitoring Framework in alignment with global targets and indicators to ensure the consistency and reportability of CREWS results with global frameworks such as the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 and Loss and Damage Framework (Santiago Network).

R5 – *In line with finding 9* – The evaluation found that while end-users at regional and national levels were targeted for CREWS interventions – there is need for the systematic integration of the Standard Operating Procedures on people-centered approaches as well as the CREWS Operational Procedures Note 3 – gender-sensitive programming – which are both now being spearheaded by CREWS to fully engage with and deliver tailor-made EW adapted to different end-users such as farmers, fisherfolk, civil protection, women, men, children, persons with disabilities, etc.

R6 – *In line with finding 10* – The CREWS Initiative will work with partners and other initiatives such as the Anticipation Hub, REAP, InsuResilience and GCF to establish mechanisms to promote a community of practice to facilitate knowledge exchanges and collaborative adaptive learning. A community of practice around MHEWS will augur well for knowledge sharing and strengthening of capacities across key stakeholders IPs to support monitoring, visibility, and communication functions.

R7 – *In line with finding 11* – The CREWS Initiative should map similar initiatives during project design to find and capitalize upon synergies, increasing the efficiency and reach of CREWS programming. CREWS should increase strategic partnerships and systematic engagement of partners such as InsuResilience, IFRC, and RIMES, to support project design, beneficiary engagement, and visibility to ensure that all four components of the people centred approached to EWS are met, last mile is reached, and EWS efforts are not duplicated.

R8 – *In line with finding 13* – The CREWS Initiative should further integrate sustainability planning in the design phase of project development. The sustainability plan should detail institutional or organizational arrangements for, exit, result maintenance and ownership arrangements for the project.

R9 – *In line with finding 14* – CREWS investments and leveraging efforts need to be better aligned and focused on streamlining implementation for results achievement. CREWS projects should better document the leveraging strategy employed as well as the mobilization and operationalization of leveraged funds to support the achievement of CREWS deliverables. Scale-up capacity may be increased by wider financing windows, created through fund leveraging and operational alignment.