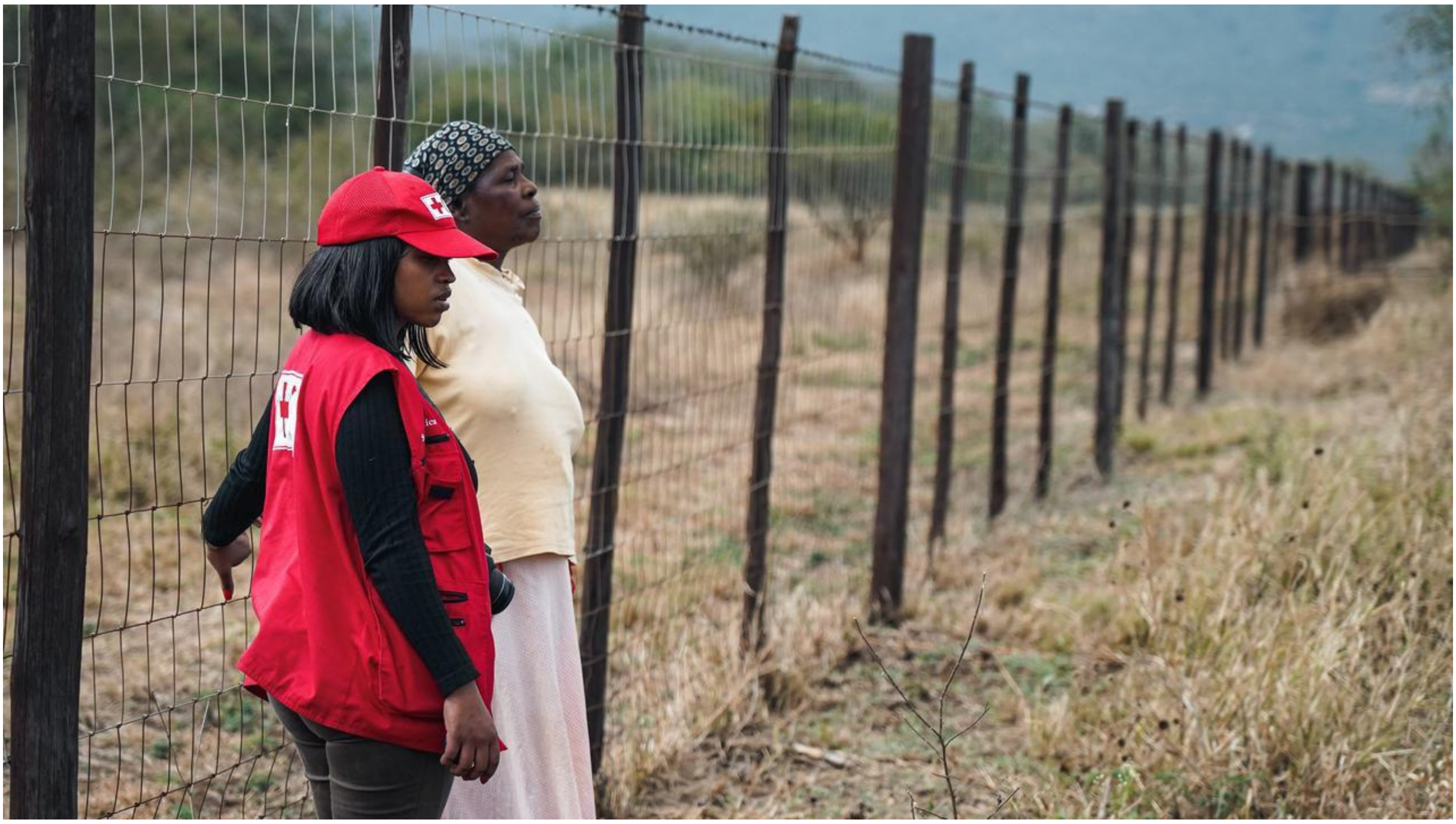
# EARLY ACTION PROTOCOL ANNUAL REPORT

## Eswatini | Drought

MARCH 2026



*Water assessment at a community garden during a monitoring visit*

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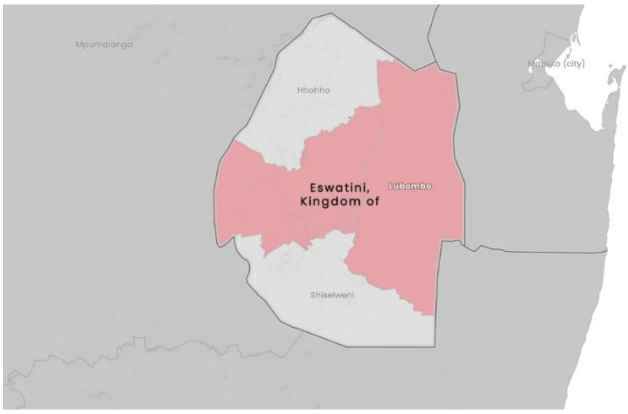
|---|---|---|
| EAP №: **EAP2025CO00** | Operation №: **MDRSZ005** | Period covered by this annual report: **01/01/2025 to 31/12/2025** |
| EAP approved: **15/04/2024** | EAP timeframe: **5 Years** | |

**Annual Budget: 7, 264 CHF**
**EAP Budget: 546,685 CHF**

# SUMMARY OF THE EARLY ACTION PROTOCOL




The IFRC Disaster Response Emergency Fund (DREF) has allocated CHF 546,685 for the implementation of anticipatory actions aimed at reducing and mitigating the impact of drought in Eswatini. This Early Action Protocol includes an allocation to pre-position stock and carry out annual readiness activities to enable the implementation of early actions when the trigger is reached. The early actions to be undertaken have been pre-agreed with the National Society and are outlined in the Early Action Protocol summary. [Eswatini Drought Early Action Protocol.]

**Eswatini Drought Early Action Protocol Overview**

This report provides a summary of achievements, lessons learnt, challenges and future outlook of the annual readiness and prepositioning activities planned in the agreed reporting period and plan.

In 2025, the BERCS EAP for drought entered its second-year reporting period (January–December 2025). The implementation of Drought EAP activities for Year 1 (March 2024–December 2024) was postponed to 2025. All readiness and pre-positioning activities were delayed but were completed only in 2025.

### ACHIEVEMENTS

The Eswatini EAP aims to reduce human loss and suffering, protect livelihoods, and improve food security in anticipation of a forecasted drought hazard. The prioritized risks and impacts to be addressed by early actions include drought-induced crop failure, declining yields and deteriorating pasture, livestock deaths due to hunger and thirst, water shortages for both human and livestock consumption, loss of income and livelihoods, and compromised dietary intake or hunger.

Early actions under the respective Areas of Focus (AOF) include providing multi-purpose cash for food security; conditional and restricted cash for garden fencing materials, vegetable seeds or seedlings, animal care kits; procuring water tanks and transporting and delivering treated water to at-risk communities; and procuring, transporting, and delivering hay bales. The intended number of households to be reached varied across interventions food-for-cash, backyard gardening, farm inputs and agro-seeds, and hay bales for livestock. The total number of households targeted is 5,400 as of year 2 initiavtives, 9 300 community members were reached.

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|---|---|---|
| **Livelihoods and basic needs** | **Readiness** | 1. Constituency and chiefdom sensitizations<br>2. Targeting, registration and verification |
| | **Budget: CHF 88,514** | **Actual: CHF 22,503** |
| **Indicator:** | # of people reached with livelihood interventions in advance of a hazard | Target: 7,680 |

**Narrative description of achievements**

In 2025, the trigger thresholds did not warrant the activation of early action activities. The first trigger is activated when the Eswatini Meteorological Services (EMS) issues the October–November–December (OND) seasonal forecast in September indicating a 'below-to-normal' rainfall outlook. EMS seasonal forecasts during the reporting period consistently indicated Normal-to-Above-Normal rainfall conditions, meaning the drought

activation triggers were not met. The second trigger is met when the Composite Drought Index (CDI), averaged across the OND season, falls below the 30th percentile over at least half of the country. Again, this trigger was not met as the country experienced high rainfall over this reporting period. When achieved, these conditions support the timely release of funds and positively influence the burn rate.
As a result, there were no activities for Year 1 and Year 2 in the Area of Focus distribution activities will only be done when there is an activation.

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|---|---|---|
| **Multi-purpose Cash (Unconditional Cash transfers)** | **Readiness** | 1. Constituency and chiefdom sensitizations.<br>2. Targeting, registration and verification. |
| | **Budget: CHF 305, 514** | **Actual: CHF** 0 |
| **Indicator:** | # of people reached with multi-purpose cash in advance of a hazard | Target: 10,800 |

## Narrative description of achievements

The Targeting and selection of vulnerable households is scheduled for Year of activation, considering that there was no activation in 2025 there were no activities done.

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| **Water, Sanitation and Hygiene** | **Readiness** | 1. Assessment of water sources: availability of community tanks, existing springs, and wetlands for protection .<br>2. Strengthening/(Re) establishment of local level water management committees. |
| | **Prepositioning** | Procurements of water tanks and water taps.<br>2. Procurements of water treatment packs. |
| | **Budget: CHF 45 948** | **Actual: CHF** 0 |
| **Indicator:** | # of people reached with WASH interventions in advance of hazard | Target: 10,800 |

**Narrative description of achievements**

BERCS was unable to procure WASH stock in 2024, hence during the reporting period, the National Society undertook key pre-positioning activities to strengthen drought preparedness under the WASH pillar. A total of **35 units of 5,000-litre water tanks and accompanying water taps were procured in October 2025**. These items have since been securely stored at the Matsapha Warehouse, pending deployment to communities once activation triggers are met. This procurement forms part of the early readiness measures designed to ensure timely access to safe water during drought conditions.

In addition, **25 water treatment packs were scheduled for procurement** as part of the same pre-positioning effort. However, the process remained **pending** due to concerns regarding the potential expiry of the items while in storage. Since the packs are intended specifically for pre-positioning and water purification, delaying procurement was deemed prudent to avoid wastage and ensure that the items remain effective when needed for emergency response.

Some readiness activities were conducted which include the assessment of water sources verifying the availability of community tanks, existing springs, and wetlands for protection as well as the strengthening or re-establishment of local-level water management committees.

The Water Sources Assessment conducted from **10–13 March 2025** in the Lubombo region evaluated the availability, quality, and sustainability of various water sources, including boreholes, rivers, wells, springs, and rainwater harvesting systems. Prior to fieldwork, volunteers received pre-assessment training covering data collection tools, Community Engagement Approach (CEA), volunteering policies, and the Code of Conduct, ensuring ethical and consistent information gathering.
Findings revealed **significant disparities** in water access across constituencies. Urban-proximate areas had better access through piped systems and functional boreholes, while rural areas relied heavily on open wells and rivers prone to contamination. Water quality testing showed that boreholes generally met acceptable standards, though some required pump rehabilitation or had saline water. In contrast, surface water sources exhibited **high turbidity and bacterial contamination**, including E. coli, posing substantial health risks.
Sustainability concerns emerged due to seasonal variability, inadequate infrastructure, and agricultural runoff. Key challenges highlighted include limited access to safe water in remote communities, recurrent contamination of surface sources, climate-induced scarcity, and low community awareness on proper water management.
The report recommends investing in **water treatment systems**, rehabilitating boreholes, improving storage and fencing, promoting community-based water management and hygiene education, and establishing continuous monitoring mechanisms. The water management committees established by the BERCS are on standby to support once distributions of water and water tanks commences but they continue to monitor water management and community behaviors. These interventions aim to ensure reliable, safe, and sustainable water access for all communities in the Lubombo region.

During the migration from the Business Object (old system) to ERP, all PSSR budget lines were consolidated and imported under a single budget line. As a result, the individual budget lines reflected in the ERP exclude their respective PSSR allocations, while one consolidated budget line contains the total PSSR budget for the entire project. Consequently, variances observed at the individual budget-line level are attributable to the budget migration and allocation methodology rather than actual overspending or underspending.

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| **Community Engagement and Accountability** | **Readiness** | 1. Drought awareness and training on fodder production, drought-tolerant crops, destocking, animal care kits (to run concurrently with sensitization activities).<br>2. Training of communities on the interpretation of weather and drought forecasts to enhance understanding. |

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| | **Budget: CHF 1224** | **Actual: CHF** 0 |
| **Indicator:** | # of people reached with community engagement and accountability interventions in advance of a hazard | Target: 10,800 |

**Narrative description of achievements**

In complementarity with BERCS ongoing projects during the reporting period, the National Society implemented a series of drought awareness and capacity-building activities aimed at strengthening community preparedness for anticipated drought conditions reaching 9 300 community members. These activities included trainings on drought-tolerant crops, destocking practices, and the use of animal care kits which ran concurrently with broader community sensitization efforts. In addition, through these awareness campaigns BERCS trained communities on interpreting weather and drought forecasts to enhance their understanding and ability to make informed decisions ahead of potential drought events.

However, the specific activity on drought awareness and training on fodder production, which had been planned for implementation during the reporting period, has been **deferred to 3rd quarter of 2026** due to implementation delays and competing priorities within the reporting year for BERCS and the Ministry of Agriculture who will be supporting the BERCS.

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| **Strengthening National Society** | **Readiness** | 1. Office costs<br>2. Monitoring visits by HQ<br>3. Vehicle rental and mileage charge<br>4. Staff cost - Project Coordinator (10%)<br>5. Staff cost - Finance (10%)<br>6. Staff cost - Disaster Management Officer (10%) |
| | **Budget: CHF 52, 876** | **Actual: CHF** 112 |
| **Indicator:** | **N/A** | |

**Narrative description of achievements**

**Indicator:** ***The National Society has the capacity to implement all planned activities on time***

During the reporting period, the National Society continued to strengthen its internal capacity to ensure effective implementation of the Early Action Protocol. Staff-related expenditures were fully absorbed as planned, with the **Project Coordinator**, **Finance Officer**, and **Disaster Management (DM) Officer** each allocated at **10% level of effort** for a total of **12 months**, and all three cost lines were **completed** as budgeted. These staff costs were charged directly to the project, contributing to sustained programme oversight, financial management, and operational coordination necessary for progressing readiness activities.

In terms of operational support, the **vehicle rental and mileage charges were** secured and fully utilized within the reporting period, this ensured mobility for field monitoring, coordination meetings, and readiness activities. This transport support remained essential for accessing target regions and facilitating timely operational follow-ups.

Similarly, **office cost allocations** covered the procurement of airtime and a work phone to facilitate communication and coordination. This has provided additional operational support to strengthen the programme team's daily functionality. These costs played a key role in maintaining effective communication flows, particularly between headquarters, field teams, and stakeholders during the implementation period. Overall, the expenditures under National Society Strengthening demonstrate steady progress in securing core operational capacities. While some activities were only partially completed due to timing and utilization factors, all cost lines contributed to maintaining minimum operational readiness and enabling the National Society to coordinate and monitor EAP-related activities effectively.

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| **Secretariat Services** | **Readiness** | 1. Monitoring visits by the IFRC<br>2. AA Officer Salary Contribution |
| | **Budget: CHF 49,008** | **Actual: CHF** 13,350 |
| **Indicator:** | **N/A** | |

**Narrative description of achievements**

The Cluster Delegation technically supported the BERCS especially on linking project deliverables with other ongoing projects to ensure impactful Red Cross footprint in the communities. In efforts to strengthen AA capacity the Delegation ensured that BERCS gets exposure on AA implementation from other countries, BERCS was trained on Impact based forecasting amongst other National Societies and government departments in Johannesburg where South Africa Weather Services, WFP, FAO, national Disaster Management Authorities, national Meteorological Services, national Communications Departments and Red Cross National Societies from Lesotho, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Zambia and Mozambique were in attendance. BERCS has also been an active member of the RAAWG sharing their expertise in AA also providing peer to peer support to other countries who are developing EAPs. The EAP also contributed to the salary of the AA Officer.

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| **Coordination and Partnerships** | **Readiness** | 1. Review meeting (of plans)<br>2. TWG Meeting<br>3. Internal coordination<br>4.Issue drought alert including development of (common alerting protocol) CAP messages. |
| | **Budget: CHF 3600** | **Actual: CHF** 12,923 |
| **Indicator** | Local stakeholders are engaged in the implementation of readiness and early action activities | |

**Narrative description of achievements**

During the reporting period, several coordination and planning activities were undertaken to strengthen the implementation of drought-related readiness measures. A multi-stakeholder review meeting was held on 25 June 2025 in Mbabane, bringing together twenty representatives from government institutions, UN agencies, academia, civil society, and the Baphalali Eswatini Red Cross Society (BERCS) to assess the effectiveness of the Drought Early Action Protocol (EAP) triggers. Given that the primary meteorological trigger normal to below-normal rainfall had not been met since the EAP's inception despite worsening drought impacts, stakeholders agreed on the need to refine the trigger system.

The review highlighted challenges related to relying on a single forecast-based indicator and emphasized the value of incorporating timely, multi-sectoral data. Through technical discussions and group work, participants reached consensus on adopting a strengthened dual-trigger approach: a refined primary meteorological trigger complemented by a secondary socio-economic trigger based on the VAC projection of 25% or more of the population in IPC Phase 3+. Additional hydrological, agricultural, and economic indicators will be used as corroborative evidence, however stakeholders committed to further consultations to finalize the revised trigger matrix. Key recommendations included institutionalizing the dual-trigger system, enhancing data coordination across sectors, periodically validating trigger thresholds, and mobilizing resources to support regular technical coordination meetings essential for anticipatory drought response.
In addition, one Technical Working Group (TWG) meeting was held on 25 July 2025, bringing together 20 stakeholders engaged in drought and broader disaster management initiatives.

Internal coordination efforts continued through three virtual meetings convened by the existing Internal TWG, which comprises five National Society staff members. These meetings facilitated ongoing planning, follow-up on readiness actions, and harmonization of programme and operational priorities.
The activity related to issuing a drought alert and developing Common Alerting Protocol (CAP) messages remained pending as there were no drought conditions in the country Thought the CAP messages were already developed just awaiting distribution.

## CHALLENGES, LESSONS LEARNED, PROPOSED AJUSTMENTS

**Lessons Learned**

The experience highlighted the critical importance of aligning implementation timelines with the financial trigger mechanisms of Early Action Protocols. Delays in the execution of initial project phases can have cascading effects on subsequent phases, particularly where funding releases depend on demonstrated financial absorption and timely reporting. It also underscored the need for proactive implementation planning, close monitoring of expenditure rates, and timely submission of financial reports to ensure that trigger conditions for subsequent funding tranches are met. Strengthening internal coordination between programmatic and financial management teams is essential to maintain implementation momentum and ensure compliance with donor funding conditions.

**CHALLENGES**

The implementation of Year 2 of the Eswatini Drought Early Action Protocol (EAP) faced significant challenges primarily related to the delayed Inception of the project during the first year. The National Society had not implemented activities during Year 1 within the planned timeframe, which resulted in Year 1 implementation taking place during the period that had been scheduled for Year 2. As per the EAP funding mechanism, the release of Year 2 funds was contingent upon the submission of the Year 1 financial report demonstrating at least 30% financial absorption. However, since Year 1 activities had only commenced during the Year 2 period and the Year 1 budget had not yet been utilized, the required financial absorption threshold had not been reached. Consequently, Year 2 funding was not triggered, leaving the National Society with only the Year 1 allocation and no available financial resources to implement Year 2 activities as originally planned.

In addition, the National Society undertook a review of the Drought Early Action Protocol (EAP) triggers with stakeholders to ensure that they are better aligned with the current climate and seasonal forecast context. The revised triggers were compiled, and stakeholders are doing internal reviews in their different departments. However, a draft of the revised triggers has been shared with IFRC.

**Way Forward**

Moving forward, the National Society will prioritize timely implementation and monitoring through **monthly meetings** on planned activities to ensure that financial absorption milestones are achieved within the stipulated timelines. Internal planning and coordination mechanisms will be strengthened to better align programmatic implementation with financial reporting requirements. In addition, regular progress reviews will be conducted to track expenditure and activity implementation against project timelines, enabling the early identification and resolution of potential delays. Engagement with the IFRC EAP Focal Person will also be enhanced to ensure clarity on funding triggers and reporting expectations, thereby supporting smoother implementation and timely access to subsequent funding phases. As part of the way forward, the National Society will implement a clear Plan of

Action outlining key activities, timelines, and responsible teams to ensure systematic progress across all readiness and pre-positioning components.

## FINANCIAL REPORT

During the migration from the Business Object (old system) to ERP, all PSSR budget lines were consolidated and imported under a single budget line. As a result, the individual budget lines reflected in the ERP exclude their respective PSSR allocations, while one consolidated budget line contains the total PSSR budget for the entire project. Consequently, variances observed at the individual budget-line level are attributable to the budget migration and allocation methodology rather than actual overspending or underspending.

IFRC

**DREF Operation**

Interim Report (CHF)

Date from: 3 Mar 2024 to 31 Dec 2025

MDRSZ005 - Eswatini - Drought EAP

| | |
|---|---|
| Operating timeframe: | *Start date: 15-Mar-2024 End date: 31-Mar-2029* |
| Appeal launch date: | *18-Mar-2024* |

**I. Summary**

| | Actual (CHF) |
|---|---:|
| **Opening Balance** | **0** |
| **Funds & Other Income** | **546,685** |
| DREF Response Pillar | 0 |
| **Expenditure** | -48,888 |
| **Closing Balance** | **497,797** |

**II. Expenditure by planned operations / enabling approaches**

| Description | Budget | Expenditure | Variance |
|---|---:|---:|---:|
| PO01 - Shelter and Basic Household Items | | | |
| PO02 - Livelihoods | 88,514 | 22,503 | 66,011 |
| PO03 - Multi-purpose Cash | 305,514 | | 305,514 |
| PO04 - Health | | | |
| PO05 - Water, Sanitation & Hygiene | 45,948 | | 45,948 |
| PO06 - Protection, Gender and Inclusion | | | |
| PO07 - Education | | | |
| PO08 - Migration | | | |
| PO09 - Risk Reduction, Climate Adaptation and Recovery | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| PO10 - Community Engagement and Accountability | 1,224 | | 1,224 |
| PO11 - Environmental Sustainability | | | |
| **Planned Operations Total** | **441,200** | **22,503** | **418,697** |
| | | 0 | 0 |
| EA01 - Coordination and Partnerships | 3,600 | 12,923 | -9,323 |
| EA02 - Secretariat Services | 49,008 | 13,350 | 35,658 |
| EA03 - National Society Strengthening | 52,876 | 112 | 52,764 |
| **Enabling Approaches Total** | **105,484** | **26,385** | **79,099** |
| **Total** | **546,685** | **48,888** | **497,796** |

**III. Expenditure by budget category & group**

# DREF Operation

Interim Report (CHF)

Date from: 3 Mar 2024 to 31 Dec 2025

| Description | Budget | Expenditure | Variance |
|---|---|---|---|
| Operational Forecasting | | 0 | 0 |
| WatSan items | 0 | | 0 |
| **Relief items, Construction, Supplies** | **0** | | **0** |
| Computers & Telecom | | 143 | -143 |
| **Land, vehicles & equipment** | | **143** | **-143** |
| Distribution & Monitoring | 0 | | 0 |
| Transport & Vehicles Costs | 0 | | 0 |
| **Logistics, Transport & Storage** | **0** | | **0** |
| National Staff | 26,664 | 4,737 | 21,927 |
| National Society Staff | 0 | | 0 |
| **Personnel** | **26,664** | **4,737** | **21,927** |
| Workshops & Training | 0 | 12,345 | -12,345 |
| **Workshops & Training** | **0** | **12,345** | **-12,345** |
| Travel | 17,208 | 1,073 | 16,135 |
| Information & Public Relations | 0 | | 0 |
| Office Costs | 0 | | 0 |
| Communications | 450 | 278 | 172 |
| Financial Charges | | 1,047 | -1,047 |
| **General Expenditure** | **17,658** | **2,398** | **15,260** |
| Cash Transfers National Societies | 464,311 | | 464,311 |
| National Society Expenditure | | 21,130 | -21,130 |
| **Contributions & Transfers** | **464,311** | **21,130** | **443,181** |
| Programme & Services Support Recovery | 33,366 | 2,984 | 30,382 |
| **Indirect Costs** | **33,366** | **2,984** | **30,382** |
| Shared Office and Services Costs | 4,686 | 5,152 | -466 |
| **SOSC Allocations** | **4,686** | **5,152** | **-466** |
| **Total** | **546,685** | **48,888** | **497,796** |

## Contact information

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**Reference**

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Click here for:

- FbF Drought Early Action Protocol (EAP) Presentation (Summary).pptx
- EAP budget template 202301 05.12.2023 (004).xlsm
- EAP Budget Year 1.xlsx
- Seasonal Forecast Outlook 2026.pdf

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