



UNDP

EL NIÑO ANTICIPATORY CAPABILITY

Country Office Pathway for El Niño Risk Management

A visual companion to the Global Overview and Strategy · 2026–2027 El Niño

INTRODUCTION

As outlined in the UNDP El Niño Anticipatory Capability: Global Overview and Strategy 2026–2027, the 2026–2027 El Niño event is already unfolding and is expected to generate significant drought, flood and heat-related impacts across multiple regions. In this context, early, risk-informed action is critical. This companion UNDP Country Office Pathway translates the strategic directions and intervention framework presented in the main document into a practical, step-by-step guide for Country Offices, helping them anticipate risks, strengthen preparedness, protect development gains, and embed El Niño risk management within longer-term development planning and recovery efforts.

The steps suggested here are not a rigid timeline: UNDP Country Offices will often work on several at once, and should adapt scope and sequencing to their own risk tier, capacity and the hazard windows identified in their regional brief. What holds across all four is the same principle: El Niño preparedness works best when it is embedded in development planning, not treated as a stand-alone humanitarian exercise that ends when the emergency passes. This document is a living resource and will be updated regularly as the 2026–2027 El Niño event evolves, as forecast institutions issue new guidance, and as regional briefs are revised.

THE PATHWAY AT A GLANCE

STEP 1

See the Risk

Monitor & Analyse

Build the shared evidence base before anything else is decided.

4 PRIORITY ACTIONS

STEP 2

Get Ready

Preparedness & Institutional Strengthening

Turn evidence into agreed triggers, plans and government-facing action.

5 PRIORITY ACTIONS

STEP 3

Protect People & Services

Institutional & Service Continuity

Keep essential services running and reach the people most exposed.

3 PRIORITY ACTIONS

STEP 4

Recover & Institutionalize

Recovery Readiness & Risk-Informed Development

Plan recovery in parallel, not in sequence — and make the next event find a stronger UNDP.

2 PRIORITY ACTIONS

STEP 1 OF 4

**See the Risk**

Monitor & Analyse

Build the shared evidence base before anything else is decided.**Activate El Niño risk monitoring capacity**

Assign a focal point and track ENSO and IOD updates, national seasonal forecasts, and regional outlook products.

WHEN / WHERE

All Country Offices; immediate, light-touch action regardless of risk tier.

UNDP SUPPORT

Global/regional alert, key source list and a simple monitoring template.

**Join or convene a regular El Niño risk monitoring group**

Work with NMHS, disaster management authorities, agriculture and water resource management ministries, the UN Resident Coordinator's Office, UN agencies and other sector groups to maintain a common picture of El Niño risk. Prioritise mapping and strengthening existing platforms over creating new ones — most affected countries already have functioning hydro-meteorological services, disaster risk management systems and anticipatory action mechanisms; this is reinforcement, not a first-time exercise.

WHEN / WHERE

Higher-risk Country Offices, especially where government or RCO coordination is already active.

UNDP SUPPORT

Advisory support on risk monitoring; synthesis of regional signals for CO leadership.

**Prepare a short UNDP Country Office risk scan**

Overlay seasonal forecasts with vulnerability, displacement and conflict, social protection coverage, livelihoods, water systems, markets, and ongoing UNDP portfolios. Identify where climate anomalies could erode development gains or intensify fragility.

WHEN / WHERE

Higher-risk Country Offices; countries in the FAO-WFP appeal.

UNDP SUPPORT

Advisory support on risk monitoring, risk-scan templates, remote analytics.

Screen portfolios for no-regret heat entry points

Using the UNDP regional heat resilience notes (South Asia and Southeast Asia, July 2026), screen ongoing DRR, climate change adaptation, urban resilience and social protection projects for heat entry points across the six regional workstreams — knowledge and analytics; governance and heat action planning; early warning and anticipatory action; urban cooling; social protection, health and livelihoods; and financing — without reopening project design.

WHEN / WHERE

South Asia and Southeast Asia Country Offices, ahead of the March–June 2027 (South Asia) and February–May 2027 (Southeast Asia) hot-season windows.

UNDP SUPPORT

BRH Disaster Resilience Team country heat profiles, six-workstream menu and regional donor prospectus.

STEP 2 OF 4

**Get Ready**

Preparedness & Institutional Strengthening

Turn evidence into agreed triggers, plans and government-facing action.**Risk communication support**

Support government along with UN partners to translate probabilistic forecasts into clear, uncertainty-aware messages linked to practical actions.

WHEN / WHERE

UNDP Country Offices where forecast information is likely to be misunderstood, or where government requests communication support.

UNDP SUPPORT

A short set of agreed messages developed with the national meteorological service and RCO, identifying what is known, what remains uncertain, and what actions are recommended.

**Review anticipatory action triggers and readiness mechanisms**

Jointly with other UN agencies (FAO, WFP, OCHA, etc.), identify existing anticipatory action triggers, contingency plans, social protection systems, farmer registries, procurement routes and business continuity arrangements. Test thresholds against 2015/16 and 2023/24 lessons; agree interim indicators where triggers are absent.

WHEN / WHERE

Countries with FAO/WFP/OCHA frameworks or likely activation windows.

UNDP SUPPORT

Trigger-review support, readiness checklist, UNDP Preparedness Learning Pathway materials, and examples from past El Niño impact.

**Ensure UNDP Country Office operational preparedness and business continuity**

Where relevant, support contingency planning, supplier mapping, stand-by agreements, procurement and pre-positioning, logistics, data-sharing, surge arrangements, risk communication, and local service-continuity planning. Review CO business continuity arrangements including office disruption, remote work, and data and ICT backup.

WHEN / WHERE

Countries likely to face major impacts or rapid-onset floods and cyclones.

UNDP SUPPORT

Technical assistance on preparedness planning and BCP review/update; UNDP Preparedness Learning Pathway.



Strengthen preparedness with government counterparts

Use existing relationships to support government planning on water management, drought and flood preparedness, irrigation maintenance, fire prevention, livestock planning, urban heat and drainage, and risk communication. Define and cost priority preparedness measures. Wherever possible, embed these measures within national and sectoral development plans, budgeting processes and UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks — this is what allows preparedness investment to outlast the current event.

WHEN / WHERE

Country Offices with strong government entry points and sufficient staff bandwidth.

UNDP SUPPORT

Technical advisory support, preparedness clinic facilitation, UNDP Preparedness Learning Pathway guidance, and capacity-development materials.



Identify no-regret actions in UNDP projects

Review existing UNDP projects for adjustments that reduce drought, heat, flood, or market-shock impacts. Prioritise measures that remain beneficial across plausible scenarios — water-system and irrigation maintenance, drainage clearing, livestock and agricultural readiness, heat and wildfire preparedness, decentralized warning dissemination, protection of critical services, and integration of anticipatory measures into ongoing UNDP projects.

WHEN / WHERE

Country Offices with active programmes in exposed districts or sectors.

UNDP SUPPORT

Portfolio-screening guidance, examples of no-regret measures, and remote advice on project adaptation options.

STEP 3 OF 4

 Protect People & Services

Institutional & Service Continuity

Keep essential services running and reach the people most exposed.
 Urban and local service preparedness

Support municipalities to review the continuity of priority services, particularly water, drainage, waste management, local markets and services for vulnerable communities. Extend this review beyond municipal services to institutional and service continuity across health, education, and local governance functions — sectors frequently missing from El Niño operational planning but as important to protect as any single livelihoods intervention.

 WHEN / WHERE

Municipalities exposed to heat, water shortages, flash floods or displacement pressures.

 UNDP SUPPORT

Selection of one or two priority municipalities and a rapid review of critical services, bottlenecks, responsible institutions and immediately feasible measures.

 Establish heat-health early warning and anticipatory triggers

Work with national meteorological services and disaster management agencies to set heat-index thresholds tied to pre-agreed actions (school protocols, work-hour adjustments, cooling-centre activation), following the Ahmedabad Heat Action Plan model. Add heat as a hazard module to ongoing EW4All rollouts, with last-mile dissemination to outdoor and informal workers, schools and informal settlements.

 WHEN / WHERE

Pilot cities in very-high/high heat-risk tier countries (e.g., India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan; Myanmar, Philippines, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Viet Nam) before their respective 2027 hot seasons.

 UNDP SUPPORT

BRH heat-trigger design guidance; RIMES, SAHHIN/GHHIN and national met-service partnerships.

 Extend heat protection to social protection, health and livelihoods

Issue practical heat-safety guidance for outdoor and informal workers with labour ministries and worker organisations; embed heat-responsive features (seasonal top-ups, trigger-based payments, registry flags) into existing social protection systems; assess health-facility readiness for heat surges — prioritising women home-based and informal workers, who are least likely to be covered by occupational heat-safety standards.



 WHEN / WHERE Very-high and high heat-risk tier countries, ahead of their respective 2027 hot seasons.	 UNDP SUPPORT BRH heat-safety guidance aligned with WHO/WMO workplace heat-stress standards; adaptive social protection rapid-assessment format (as piloted in Viet Nam).
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STEP 4 OF 4

**Recover & Institutionalize**

Recovery Readiness & Risk-Informed Development

Plan recovery in parallel, not in sequence — and make the next event find a stronger UNDP.**Begin recovery preparedness early**

Help clarify assessment arrangements, baseline data, government and partner roles and likely recovery priorities before impacts occur. More advanced analytics should be activated only if justified by the scale of impacts. Pre-position recovery financing pathways — including access to Integrated National Financing Frameworks and other contingency and risk-financing instruments — in parallel with anticipatory action rather than waiting until impacts materialize.

**WHEN / WHERE**

Countries where drought, flooding or other impacts could create significant recovery needs.

**UNDP SUPPORT**

A basic recovery-readiness checklist covering SEIA/PDNA roles, available baseline data, priority sectors, assessment partners and potential financing sources.

**Apply UNDP's risk-informed development lens across El Niño programming**

Use the five risk-informed development entry points — knowledge and evidence; policy coherence; risk-informed organisations and implementation; people-centred and stakeholder-driven policymaking; sustainable financing — to move beyond anticipatory action toward embedding El Niño risk management in Country Programme Documents, national development plans and UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks. Map and strengthen — rather than duplicate — existing risk governance platforms.

**WHEN / WHERE**

All Country Offices, as an ongoing practice running alongside the anticipatory action window.

**UNDP SUPPORT**

DRT technical guidance on the five entry points and the country/partners/internal three-pillar approach; UNDP Country Support Platforms.



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