

# 4<sup>th</sup> Africa Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction

Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania  
13-15 February 2013

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AFRICA STATUS REPORT ON DRR

February 2013

Disasters in Africa are evolving in geography, frequency and impact. Since the turn of the decade (2011 and 2012), 147 recorded disasters – including 19 droughts and 67 flood events – affected millions across Africa and caused US\$ 1.3 billion in economic losses<sup>1</sup>. On average, almost two disasters of significant proportions have been recorded every week in the region since 2000<sup>2</sup>. Few of these ever hit the global headlines but they silently and persistently erode the capacities of Africans to survive or prosper.

An average of 125 events occurred in Africa each year between 2001 and 2010, the largest proportion of which were hydrological (floods or wet mass movement). Although hydrological events are typically responsible for one third of the total economic damage by disasters in Africa, over the past two years alone, they have caused 90% of the economic loss.

Judging by the number of fatalities, however, biological hazards are ravaging the continent in much greater numbers than other hazards: 5 out of 7 of the total deaths (averaging 6833 each year) are due to epidemics.

In Africa, multiple and inter-dependent forms of vulnerability have the potential to transform even minor hazard events into human disasters. Around 400 million people in the region live below the poverty line<sup>3</sup>, and 200 million are considered to be under-nourished<sup>4</sup>. Income poverty and food insecurity play a major role in land degradation, as the poor and hungry are forced to over-exploit natural resources to meet their immediate needs for survival. Furthermore, poor health status, and in particular the high prevalence rates of HIV/AIDS in parts of the region, significantly increases underlying vulnerability to natural hazards.

Both vulnerability and hazard occurrence are subject to dynamic global forces, such as urbanization and climate change that are creating new patterns of disaster risk in the region.

Africa currently has the highest rate of urbanisation in the world. Almost 40% of Africans now live in cities or urban environments, and, if current trends continue, half of Africa's population will be urban by 2050.<sup>5</sup> Rapid, unplanned urbanisation, including the alarming rate of growth of urban slums, is creating dangerous patterns of risk accumulation and exposing an increasingly large proportion of the population to floods, landslides, epidemics and other hazards.

Global climate change will significantly affect the risk profile in Africa. In 2012 alone, over 34 million Africans were affected by climatological hazards (drought and extreme temperatures). Climate change also exacerbates other hazards (i.e. storms and disease transmission) as well as existing vulnerabilities. It likewise triggers decreases in water availability, agricultural yields and suitable land for pasture that will threaten the viability of traditional livelihoods.

For the inhabitants of coastal cities, climate change poses a real threat. Half of Africa's 37 cities with populations above one million are within low elevation coastal zones and therefore vulnerable to sea level rise, coastal erosion, storms and flooding.

---

<sup>1</sup> EM-DAT: The OFDA/CRED International Disaster Database – [www.emdat.be](http://www.emdat.be) – Université Catholique de Louvain – Brussels – Belgium

<sup>2</sup> For a disaster to be entered into the CRED database, at least one of the following criteria must be fulfilled: 10 or more people reported killed; 100 or more people reported affected; declaration of a state of emergency; call for international assistance.

<sup>3</sup> Chen, S. and Ravallion, M. *The developing world is poorer than we thought, but no less successful in the fight against poverty*, World Bank, 2008

<sup>4</sup> Kidane, W. Maetz, M. and Dardel, P., *Food security and agricultural development in Sub-Saharan Africa: Building a case for more public support*, FAO, Rome, 2006.

<sup>5</sup> UN-Habitat State of the World's Cities 2008/09.

**At the regional level,** Member States of the African Union first demonstrated their commitment to disaster risk reduction by adopting the Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction at the 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the Africa Ministerial Conference on the Environment in 2004. The Programme of Action for the Implementation of the Africa Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction (2005-2010) was subsequently formulated and adopted at the First African Ministerial Conference on disaster risk reduction in Addis Ababa in 2005. A substantive revision was discussed and agreed upon at the Second Africa Regional Platform in Nairobi in May 2009, to better reflect current challenges and gaps, extend the timeframe to 2015 and align it with the Hyogo Framework for Action. The Platform also agreed on strengthened regional, sub-regional and national mechanisms to accelerate implementation of the Programme.

At the regional level, Africa has made great strides in following the 18 recommendations made to the African Union Summit at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Ministerial Conference on DRR. In terms of institutions, the National Platform toolkit was updated and 19 National Platforms have been studied. The Africa Working Group for DRR was established and is now functional. Two RECS have established DRR units. ISDR has continued their support to the African Union and have received and analyzed the reports of a total of 37 African countries since 2005. UNISDR has also commissioned a study to explore cost effectiveness of Disaster Risk Reduction in the Health and Education Sector.

**At the sub-regional level,** several Regional Economic Communities (RECs) have also engaged with DRR issues. At least five RECS (ECCAS, ECOWAS, IGAD, SADC and EAC) have established disaster risk reduction policies and/or strategies based on the priorities for action of the Hyogo Framework for Action and the Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction.

Recent achievements include the creation of ECOWARN by ECOWAS. There have also been recent initiatives by OSS for South-South cooperation to build on successful experiences from within the African region.

Specialised sub-regional institutions, such as the IGAD Climate Prediction and Applications Centre (ICPAC), the Southern African Development Community's Drought Monitoring Centre (SADC DMC), the AGRHYMET<sup>6</sup> Regional Centre (ARC) and the African Centre of Meteorological Application for Development (ACMAD) are responding to a major global and regional challenge through enhanced services for disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation. COMESA, SADC and EAC have joined forces to launch a five year Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation program that aims to harmonize CCA practice by the three RECS and increase investments in climate resilience.

Momentum for investment in disaster risk reduction at the regional and sub-regional level must now be sustained by:

*Fully mainstreaming disaster risk reduction objectives into regional and sub-regional development policies;*

*Securing and allocating funding for full implementation of disaster risk reduction plans and programmes;*

*Addressing emerging challenges by forging political, administrative and operational synergies between disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation frameworks and processes; and*

*Developing a regional and sub-regional network for knowledge management (including traditional knowledge) and developing capacities for disaster risk reduction, to meet Africa's expanding need for regionally-tailored expertise.*

**At the national level,** governments in Africa have moved forward with the implementation of the HFA priorities for action and the related regional objectives.

Across the region, there is a positive trend in the establishment or reform of **institutional, legislative and policy frameworks**, for disaster risk reduction, especially for IGAD and EAC. In some cases the lead institution for disaster risk reduction does not yet bear sufficient influence upon all relevant sectors of government.

Decentralised models of governance and administration are in place in most countries of the region, thus providing a potentially effective structure for multi-level disaster risk reduction, but the majority of countries still lack resources and capacity to engage with communities at risk and implement local initiatives.

---

<sup>6</sup>Agronomy and Operational Hydrology and Their Applications

A national platform or a similar multi-sectoral coordination mechanism for DRR has been established in 40 countries. There also may still be insufficient involvement of representatives of civil society organisations, UN agencies, media and the private sector in many contexts.

In terms of **risk identification and assessment**, many countries have aggressively advanced, some with assistance from the GRIP and FEWSNET. African universities have been key players in the assessment, such as in Mozambique. Transboundary assessments and systems are the weakest link to date in risk identification.

**Public awareness and knowledge management** strategies for disaster risk reduction are flourishing across the continent but there are major gaps in developing research tools for DRR. Ghana, while others are using multi-media approaches and innovative technologies.

With respect to public **education**, a growing number of countries have already integrated disaster risk reduction into their educational curricula (Madagascar, Sierra Leone and Mauritius are rising stars), but there is a lot of work to do, especially in non-English speaking countries. A thorough study is underway on the impact of DRR in schools. There is a growing movement to establish university degree programs with a concentration on disaster risk science and sustainable development.

Greater recognition of the relationship between poverty and vulnerability to natural hazards has resulted in the incorporation of disaster risk reduction objectives into an increasing number of sectoral development policies and plans to address **underlying risk factors** in Africa. Strategies to implement such policies are included in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) and United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) of some countries of the region.

However, most governments are not yet implementing effective programmes to reduce the underlying risk factors of disasters, due to financial constraints or limited technical and operational capacity. Furthermore, development strategies in many countries are not keeping pace with physical and demographic growth in informal, unplanned urban settlements where multiple risk factors are present. Urgent and concerted action is required to tackle the underlying causes of vulnerability to disasters, and to track vulnerability in step with the monitoring of each hazard.

In terms of **preparedness for effective response and recovery**, institutional capacities have been strengthened in most countries due to emergency planning exercises, contingency funding mechanisms and improved information management systems. This is one of the highest performers of reporting countries. However, in most countries, emergency preparedness could be significantly improved through the participation of a broader stakeholder base in planning and evaluating responses.

*In order to accelerate progress towards implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action and the Africa Regional Strategy by 21015, governments should now focus on:*

*Translating disaster risk reduction legislation and policies into adequately-resourced programmes in all key development sectors;*

*Consolidating the vertical and horizontal coordination capacities of the institutions responsible for disaster risk reduction;*

*Promoting multi-sectoral, multi-stakeholder participation in national platforms, and empowering them to influence disaster risk reduction policy development, programme design and resource allocation;*

*Insisting on more holistic transboundary assessments and early warning systems;*

*Developing national institutions and engaging African experts to carry out risk assessments, based on the identification and assessment of hazards, vulnerabilities and capacities;*

*Developing national systems to collect, compile and analyse data, and to provide information to multiple sectors;*

*Working with civil society organisations to ensure the participation of local communities in processes to identify, and monitor risks and to make sure that they are genuinely placed at the center of all DRR programmes, early warning included;*

*Increasing the coverage of public awareness strategies to ensure that they reach remote areas and populations most at risk;*

*Integrating information about the impact of climate change into public awareness strategies;*

*Providing incentives to the education sector to incorporate disaster risk reduction into relevant curricula more systematically; teacher training in drr is critical to support dissemination of some of the excellent materials that have started to be developed; and*

*Involving all stakeholder groups, including vulnerable communities and African youth, in disaster preparedness planning*

**Regarding international cooperation**, there is support for a number of HFA priorities but little attention to assure that DRR programs meet the needs of national governments in ways that make final products genuinely “owned” by those governments.

It is now essential for donors, civil society and above all national and regional governments to seize the momentum described in this status report by manifesting political will at the highest levels.

By effectively addressing the above-mentioned issues at regional, sub-regional and national levels, all relevant stakeholders should now accelerate implementation of the Africa Regional Strategy and the Programme of Action for Disaster Risk Reduction, in line with the Hyogo Framework for Action.