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Sistema Económico  
Latinoamericano y del Caribe  
Latin American and Caribbean  
Economic System

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Sistema Económico  
Latino-Americano e do Caribe  
Système Economique  
Latinoaméricain et Caribéen

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## **Disaster Reduction in Africa ISDR Informs – 2009 Issue**

**International Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction (ISDR) –  
United Nations**

*Meeting on the Institutional Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction in Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia and Africa*

*Panama City, Panama*

*13 and 14 December 2010*

*SP/RIALC-AA-RRD/DT N° 3-10*

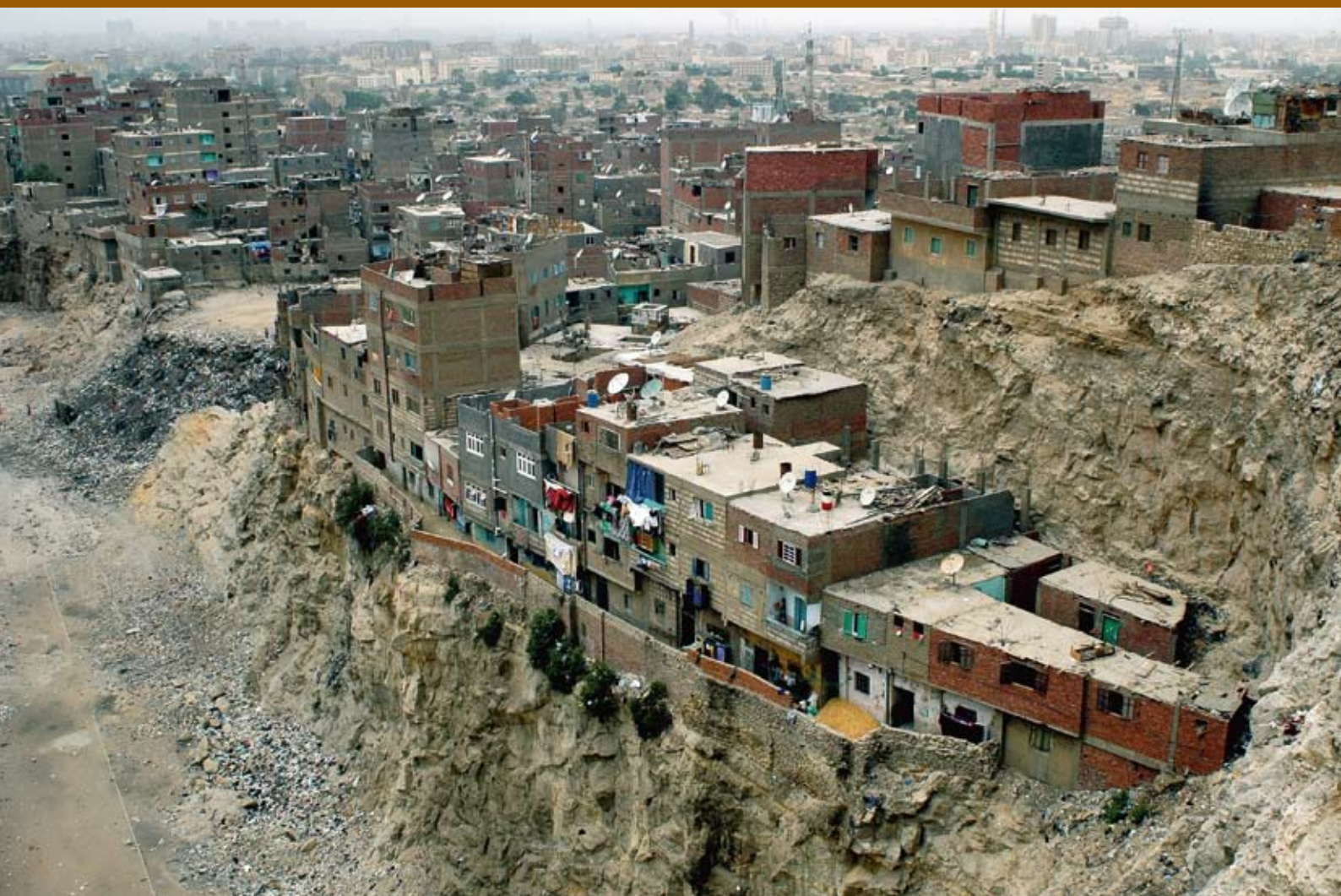
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Printed in the Permanent Secretariat of SELA, Caracas, Venezuela.

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Disaster reduction in  
**AFRICA**

ISDR INFORMS  
2009 Issue



United Nations  
International Strategy for Disaster Reduction

# Africa Informs

2 0 0 9 i s s u e

Africa Informs is a publication produced by UNISDR Africa. We share updates, ongoing campaigns, national platform activities, lessons learnt, and general news information on disaster risk reduction in the Sub Saharan Africa region.

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Disaster Reduction in Africa  
ISDR Informs

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Printed by  
UNON, Publishing Services Section, ISO 14001:2004 - certified.

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The production and printing of this publication is made possible thanks to the financial support of the government of Germany in addition to contributions to the ISDR Trust Fund for Disaster Reduction. Contributors to the Trust Fund include the governments of Australia, Canada, China, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Norway, Philippines, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the European Commission and the World Bank's Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery.

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# Acronyms

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| ACMAD    | African Centre of Meteorological Application for Development       |
| AMCEN    | Africa Ministerial Conference on the Environment                   |
| AUC      | African Union Commission   |
| COP15    | Climate Change Meeting in Copenhagen                               |
| DRR      | Disaster Risk Reduction  |
| ECCAS    | Economic Community of Central African States                       |
| ECOWAS   | Economic Community of Western African States                       |
| GFDRR    | Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery                |
| HFA      | Hyogo Framework for Action   |
| ICPAC    | IGAD Climate Prediction and Applications Centre                    |
| IGAD     | Intergovernmental Authority on Development                         |
| IOC      | Indian Ocean Commission  |
| IPCC     | international panel on climate change                              |
| IRIN     | Integrated Regional Information Networks                           |
| MDG      | Millennium Development Goal  |
| NAPA     | National Adaptation Programmes of Action                           |
| NASRDA   | National Space Research and Development Agency                     |
| NDMA     | National Disaster Management Agency                                |
| NDMC     | National Disaster Management Council                               |
| NEPAD    | the New Partnership for Africa's Development                       |
| NMHS     | National meteorological and hydrological services                  |
| PRSP     | Poverty Reduction Strategy Programme                               |
| RECs     | Regional Economic Communities                                      |
| SADC     | Southern African Development Community                             |
| SADC DMC | Southern African Development Community's Drought Monitoring Centre |
| UN       | United Nations   |
| UNCCD    | United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification                |
| UNDAF    | United Nations Development Assistance Framework                    |
| UNDP     | United Nations Development Programme                               |
| UNEP     | United Nations Environment Programme                               |
| UNFCCC   | United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change              |
| UNISDR   | United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction       |
| UNOCHA   | United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs |
| WHO      | World Health Organization  |
| WMO      | World Meteorological Organization                                  |

# Foreword

This issue of Africa Informs provides a platform through which the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction Regional Office for Africa (UNISDR Africa) continues to promote disaster risk reduction as a core component of sustainable development in Sub Sahara Africa.

UNISDR Africa maintains and strengthens partnerships in the region and collaborates with partners including regional and sub regional intergovernmental organisations such as the African Union Commission (AUC), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Economic Community of Western African States (ECOWAS), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), regional and sub regional specialised institutions, the National Platforms or coordinating mechanisms for disaster risk reduction, government entities, Academia, UN agencies and Civil Society.

This publication focuses on the importance of governments spearheading change, influencing policy and generally incorporating Disaster Risk in individual country strategic and development planning. We also incorporate contributions from partner agencies and reports on progress attained in East, West, Central and Southern Africa.

Disaster risk reduction has many facets and against the backdrop of African culture, demands special consideration due to a myriad of underlying factors. With increasing poverty levels, economic uncertainty, looming effects of climate change and attempts by governments and civil society to cope with and reduce its impact, it remains important to engage in dialogue focused on maintaining disaster risk management as an integral part of economic development planning and application. These issues received great emphasis at the Second Africa Regional Platform and the Second Session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction that took place in Nairobi in May 2009 and Geneva in June 2009 respectively.

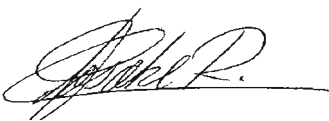
As UNISDR Secretariat works towards increasing awareness on disaster risk reduction and promoting resilient communities by working closely with National Platforms and encouraging the interest and participation of countries, it becomes even more imperative that forums for open discussion on policies and ground level situations are encouraged.

It is for this reason that the attendance of high-level African government leaders including H.E. Ms. Issatou Njie Saidy, Vice President and Head of Disaster Management Programme, The Gambia; The Right Honourable Raila Odinga, Kenya's Prime Minister; and H.E. Ms. Libertina Inaviposa Amathila, the Deputy Prime Minister of Namibia to the Second Session of the Global Platform in June 2009 is highly appreciated. It demonstrates Africa's commitment, speaks to the level of engagement achieved in government circles and the presence of political will necessary to the overall furtherance of disaster risk reduction in the continent.

Following the recommendation of the Second Session of the Global Platform, the UNISDR Secretariat has adopted a Biennial Work Program with four strategic objectives for 2010-2011 that provide the way forward to achieve tangible results in key areas: i) Disaster risk reduction accepted and applied for climate change adaptation; ii) Measurable increases in investment in disaster risk reduction; iii) Disaster resilient cities, schools and hospitals; and iv) Strengthened international system for disaster risk reduction. These strategic objectives are considered in the Africa Programme of Action and will be discussed at the Second Disaster Risk Reduction Ministerial Conference, which will take place in Nairobi in April 2010.

The UNISDR Regional office for Africa will continue to encourage inter agency collaboration and work with all partners towards the implementation of the Africa Regional Strategy and Programme of Action for Disaster Reduction in line with the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015.

Dr. Pedro Basabe



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*Seasonal rains in Africa often come with a risk of flash floods (Photo courtesy of IRIN News)*

# Disaster Risk Reduction in Africa

## Regional Level



Gabions are large metal boxes/cages, which can be filled with stone and/or gravel and placed on riverbanks and other locations to work as flood-resistant walls. (Photo courtesy of IRIN News)

# Disaster Risk Reduction in Sub-Saharan Africa

## *Status report on disaster risk reduction - UNISDR, Africa*

Disasters in Sub-Saharan Africa are increasing in both frequency and impact. There were 96 disasters recorded in 2008 and they included 44 floods and 9 droughts that affected 16.3 million people and incurred economic losses estimated at circa 1 billion dollars. Although very few disasters ever hit global headlines, they silently and persistently erode the capacities of Africans to survive and prosper.

The main hazards affecting the Sub-Saharan Africa region are climatological and hydrological in nature. On average, these hazards affect 12.5 million people each year with drought causing the highest human and socio-economic effects. Moreover, multiple and inter-dependent forms of vulnerability have the potential to transform even minor hazard events into human disasters. Abject poverty and food insecurity contribute to land degradation as the poor and hungry over-exploit natural resources to meet their immediate needs for survival while 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.

Africa has the highest rate of urbanisation in the world and nearly 40% of the population lives in urban areas, according to the UN-Habitat State of the World's Cities 2008/09. This rapid and unplanned urbanisation, including the rate of growth of urban slums is creating dangerous patterns of risk accumulation and exposing more people to floods, landslides, epidemics and other hazards. Global climate change will significantly affect the frequency and intensity of hazard occurrence in Sub-Saharan Africa. It will also create new vulnerabilities and exacerbate existing ones as further

decreases in the availability of water and agricultural yields as well as suitable land for pasture threaten the viability of livelihoods. For the inhabitants of coastal cities in particular, climate change poses a real threat. Half of Africa's 37 cities with populations above one million are in low elevation coastal zones and are vulnerable to sea level rise, coastal erosion, storms and flooding.

## Implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action and the Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction

Based on progress reports by regional and sub-regional institutions Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015 (HFA) reports submitted by 24 countries 7 in Sub-Saharan Africa (14 of which reported for the first time), and an initial mapping of international partners of the ISDR system, a Status Report on Disaster Risk Reduction in Sub-Saharan Africa was produced in May 2009.

At the regional level, Member States of the African Union showed commitment to disaster risk reduction (DRR) by adopting the Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction at the 10th meeting of the Africa Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) in 2004. The African Union Commission (AUC) then formulated and endorsed the Programme of Action for the Implementation of

the Africa Strategy for DRR (2005-2010) at the First African Ministerial Conference on DRR in Addis Ababa in 2005. The Second Africa Regional Platform in Nairobi in May 2009 discussed and agreed upon a substantive revision, which reflects current challenges and gaps, extends the time-frame to 2015 and aligns it with the HFA. The Platform also agreed on strengthened regional, sub-regional and national mechanisms to accelerate the implementation of the Programme.

At the sub-regional level, several Regional Economic Communities (RECs) have engaged with DRR issues. The Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Inter-governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) have established DRR strategies based on the priorities for action of the HFA and the Africa Regional Strategy for DRR. Recent achievements include the formulation of a policy for DRR by ECOWAS, and a three-year grant by the European Union to ECCAS to implement a programme for DRR. There have also been initiatives for South-South cooperation to build on successful experiences from across the region.

In addition, specialized 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 Regional Centre (ARC) and the African Centre of Meteorological Application for Development (ACMAD) are responding to a major regional and global challenge through enhanced services for DRR and climate change adaptation.

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

There is a positive trend in the establishment or reform of institutional, legislative and policy frameworks for DRR in the Sub Sahara Africa region although in some cases the lead institution does not yet have sufficient influence on relevant government sectors.

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

National platforms or similar multi-sector coordination mechanisms for DRR are set up 25 countries, four of which launched since 2007. A process to establish national platforms has started in Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia and Namibia. However, participation in some National Platforms is limited to government actors with insufficient involvement of civil society organizations, UN agencies, media and the private sector.

In terms of risk identification and assessment, there is increased capacity in some countries to carry out multi-hazard risk assessments and operate effective early warning systems. Progress in these countries is due, in part, to strong linkages with regional specialized institutions for climate risk management and effective utilization of their resources. Still, in the majority of countries, hazard mapping is incomplete. There is limited data on vulnerability and national institutions do not yet take full advantage of the resources for climate risk management offered by their sub-regional counterparts. These gaps hinder the development of risk reduction programmes and limit the function and scope of early warning systems.

Public awareness and knowledge management strategies for DRR, based on modern and traditional media to communicate information, are in place in most countries although some of these do not reach remote or rural populations and areas without access to radio, television and electronic media. To date, few initiatives integrate information about the impact of climate change and its effects on disaster risk. As regards public education, a number of countries have already integrated DRR into their educational curricula and others have plans to do so. However, a significant number of countries have not yet started this process.

Due to emergency planning exercises, contingency funding mechanisms and improved information management systems, institutional capacities for preparedness for effective response and recovery are stronger. Still, emergency preparedness can improve through the participation of a broader stakeholder base in planning and evaluating responses.

Regarding international cooperation, there is substantial activity and investment in DRR by a range of UN agencies and programmes, development banks, donors and non-governmental organizations. Many of these stakeholders have developed useful tools and guidelines and are scaling up their own capacities to complement efforts of national governments. However, the current lack of awareness of different agency objectives and resources has resulted in missed opportunities and disconnected initiatives.

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

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*A girl walks along a flooded street in the Pikine department of Senegal's capital Dakar. (Photo courtesy of IRIN news)*

# Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction

## *The African Perspective: recommendations made to the Second Session of the Global Platform*

The second Africa regional platform for disaster risk reduction consultative meeting was held on 5-7 May 2009 in Nairobi and was organized jointly by the AUC and the UNISDR Africa Regional Office in Nairobi. The meeting aimed at reviewing progress in Africa at national, sub-regional and regional levels, promoting regional cooperation, strengthening regional mechanisms and programmes and preparing Africa's participation in the second session of the Global Platform for DRR, held in Geneva, Switzerland from 16-19 June 2009. The participants included representatives from governments, National Platforms or multi-sectoral national committees, regional and sub-regional organizations, UN agencies, donors and international organizations.

At the Global Platform for DRR, the AUC and the UNISDR Regional Office for Africa jointly organised a pre-session event aimed at coordinating the Africa Group's participation to the 2nd Session of the Global Platform for DRR, enhancing African cooperation and responding to possible questions. This meeting hosted over 50 African delegates. Dr. Abebe Haile Gabriel, Acting Director at the Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture at the AUC chaired the meeting with assistance from Dr. Pedro Basabe, Senior Officer in Charge of the ISDR Africa Programme. The meeting concluded that the recommendations from the second Africa Regional Platform meeting for disaster risk reduction should be presented to the Global Platform plenary and the Chair of the plenary session. The meeting also concluded that the Africa Programme of Action would be brought forward to the second Ministerial Conference on DRR for adoption in 2010.

## The Recommendations

One session of the second Africa regional platform for disaster risk reduction focused on elaborating the

recommendations from African stakeholders to the second session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction. After discussion and revision of the draft recommendations, the meeting agreed upon 14 specific recommendations to the Global Platform 2009.

Recognising that Africa is highly vulnerable to natural hazards, and in particular to hydro-meteorological and geological hazards, the impacts which are exacerbated by poverty, conflicts, urbanization, epidemics, pest and insect infestations, and environmental pressures;

Also recognising that the impacts of climate variability and climate change amplify these challenges, increasing the disaster risks for poor and vulnerable groups;

Being aware of the specific vulnerabilities and risks faced by small island developing states (SIDS) in Africa;

Acknowledging that Disaster Risk Reduction is a strategic development issue, given that perennial disasters are gravely hindering Africa's efforts towards the achievement of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs);

Affirming that Disaster Risk Reduction is an effective tool for reducing vulnerability and increasing the resilience of countries and communities to natural hazards in Africa;

Being informed of the progress made in the implementation of the Africa Regional Strategy and the HFA at regional, sub-regional and national levels since the First Session of the Global Platform, with substantive information shared during this event and documented in the 2009 version of the Africa Status Report on Disaster Risk Reduction;

Noting that national governments, RECs, the AUC, United Nations agencies, civil society organisations and other ISDR

system partners in Africa have made concrete progress in setting up institutional frameworks, strengthening policies, and implementing programmes, projects and activities related to Disaster Risk Reduction since the First Session of the Global Platform;

Being conscious that gaps, needs and challenges still exist in the region, particularly in early warning systems, inadequate coordination, and insufficient capacities and resources to translate policies and frameworks into practical tools and programmes for effective reduction of vulnerabilities and disaster impacts at national and community levels, in line with the Africa Regional Strategy and the HFA.

The meeting recommended that:

1. National governments in Africa, with the support of regional and sub-regional intergovernmental organisations, technical institutions and international organisations, should integrate Disaster Risk Reduction into their development policies and planning processes, as well as into emergency response and recovery activities;
2. Funding should be mobilised from donors and partners, such as the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR), in order to implement Disaster Risk Reduction measures within programmes for poverty-reduction, sustainable development and climate change adaptation;
3. In complex situations, post-conflicts and post-disasters, disaster risk reduction and conflict sensitivity approaches should be integrated into plans and programmes, to reduce both vulnerabilities to disasters and the probability of resurgence of conflict;
4. Multi-sectoral, multi-stakeholder national platforms and similar national coordination mechanisms should continue to be developed and strengthened, with greater participation of civil society organisations;
5. The Africa Regional Platform should continue to be the mechanism to review progress in the implementation of the Africa Regional Strategy, the Programme of Action and the HFA, to advocate for Disaster Risk Reduction, coordinate regional and sub-regional activities of stakeholders and facilitate networking among them, and promote information-sharing to avoid duplication of initiatives and encourage replication of good practices;
6. Involvement of disaster-prone communities, including women, vulnerable populations and minorities, in the identification and assessment of risks and vulnerabilities, as well as in disaster preparedness planning, should be ensured through closer coordination with civil society organisations.
7. National meteorological and hydrological services (NMHS), geological surveys, regional specialised centres, and academic, research and scientific institutions should be supported to strengthen their capacities on risk assessment, observations, monitoring, analysis and forecasting of extreme climate events, as well as early warning, in order to improve the collection and provision of data and information and to make these available to affected populations to enhance their response capacity to natural hazards;
8. National meteorological and hydrological services (NMHS), geological surveys, specialised centres, and academic, research and scientific institutions should be integrated into national disaster management mechanisms, including national platforms, and their data and information used for development of policies, strategies and programmes;
9. Development and adoption of Disaster Risk Reduction subject areas into school curricula by national and local authorities should be encouraged, and networks to develop knowledge management (including of traditional knowledge) and capacities for Disaster Risk Reduction in Africa, should be strengthened and promoted;
10. Synergies between Disaster Risk Reduction and climate variability and change frameworks and processes should be forged and promoted at national, sub-regional and regional levels as part of the Africa region's efforts in defining its position for global climate change negotiations, in particular for the climate change meeting (COP15) in Copenhagen.
11. Social and economic development infrastructure should take into account climate-related hazards and associated risks in urban setting and cities, and the functioning of critical facilities, such as schools, hospitals and public transport, should be ensured through appropriate urban planning and management;
12. Africa should apply a regional readiness framework and become ready to manage global protracted disasters such as influenza pandemics through promoting preparedness at all levels, taking into consideration critical inter-sectoral dependencies.
13. United Nations agencies and development partners should provide strategic support to governments, and facilitate a holistic and coordinated approach to Disaster Risk Reduction;
14. The revised Programme of Action for the Implementation of the Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction, extended to 2015, should be resourced and implemented by all stakeholders at local, national, sub-regional and regional levels in Africa.

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The terrain in drought stricken Lodwar, Kenya (Photo courtesy of IRIN news)

# Programme of Action for Implementation of the Africa Regional Strategy for DRR

## *Extension of Programme of Action*

In 2004 the “Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction” and the “Guidelines for Mainstreaming Disaster Risk Assessment in Development” were developed by the AUC, in collaboration with NEPAD Secretariat, African Development Bank, and with support of the UNISDR, UNDP and UNEP. The Africa Regional Strategy was adopted by the African Ministerial Conference of Environment (AMCEN) and subsequently endorsed by the AU Assembly. Similarly, the “Africa Programme of Action on DRR for the period 2006 to 2010” was adopted by the “First Africa Ministerial Conference on DRR” that was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in 2005, which was then endorsed by the AU Summit in early 2006.

The Second Africa Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, organised jointly by the UNISDR secretariat in Africa and the African Union Commission took place in Nairobi, 5-7 May 2009. This meeting reviewed progress made in the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action, promoted regional cooperation and strengthened regional mechanisms and programmes in Africa. In addition, the Africa Regional Platform participants agreed on a revised version of the Africa Programme of Action for the Implementation of

the Africa Strategy for DRR to cover the period until 2015 with some modifications, in line with the HFA.

In line with the Africa Regional Strategy and the HFA, the general objectives of the Programme of Action are:

- To mainstream risk reduction management and climate change adaptation as an integrated part of sustainable development and related programmes
- To strengthen national mechanisms, legal frameworks and capacities for mainstreaming and implementing DRR strategies and programmes
- To translate policies, strategies, and practical tools for decision makers and practitioners to facilitate implementation of the Africa strategy, the Programme of Action and the HFA.
- To strengthen long-term capacities at regional and sub-regional levels to systematically contribute to building resilience to hazards.

| Africa Programme of Action   |   | HFA priority areas   |
|--|---|--|
| 1. Increased political commitment to DRR                                     | → | 1. Ensure that DRR is a national priority with strong basis for implementation                       |
| 2. Improved identification and assessment of disaster risks                  | → | 2. Identification, assess and monitor disaster risks and enhance early warning                       |
| 3. Increases public awareness of DRR   | → | 3. Use knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels |
| 4. Improved governance of DRR institutions                                   | → | 4. Reduce the underlying risk factors  |
| 5. Integration of DRR in emergency response management                       | → | 5. Strengthen disaster preparedness for effective response at all levels                             |
| 6. Overall coordination and monitoring of the implementation of the Strategy | → | Chapter IV: Implementation and follow-up   |

- To develop and maintain sustainable mechanisms of coordination at regional and sub-regional levels to support the implementation of the Africa Strategy and Programme for Disaster Risk Reduction.
- To develop partnerships and mobilize resources to contribute to the implementation of programmes and projects.
- To adopt a holistic approach to systematically incorporate risk reduction approaches into the design and implementation of disaster preparedness, response and recovery programmes.

Some revisions were forwarded to the proposed Programme of Action extended to 2015. For example, it highlights that programmes and activities deriving from the Africa Regional Strategy and the HFA are implemented with clear linkage to existing national development planning processes and frameworks such as Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP), National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPA) and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). The table below shows the clear linkage between the six strategic areas of intervention of the revised Africa Programme of Action and the five priorities of the Hyogo Framework for Action. Regarding regional level implementation and coordination it is proposed that the Africa Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction functions as the primary regional mechanism to support the implementation of DRR strategies and programmes at regional, sub-regional and national levels, to monitor their progress and to facilitate information-sharing and coordination on these DRR related programmes and activities. Periodic high-level meetings will ensure regional consensus on key issues on DRR.

Regarding monitoring and reporting, it is proposed that each national government and sub-regional intergovernmental organization submits a biennial HFA national report using the standard formats and tools developed by UNISDR. UN agencies, civil society organizations and development partners are also encouraged to avail information on their relevant programmes and activities for DRR as part of the above-mentioned biennial reporting process through UNISDR. In addition, measurable benchmarks and indicators are also incorporated.

Based on the recommendations in the Africa Status Report, issues addressed under HFA Priority 4 "Reducing underlying risk factors", including sustainable ecosystems and environmental management, climate change, food security, sustainable agriculture practices, land-use planning, building codes and strengthening social protection mechanisms have been introduced into the revised version of the Programme of Action.

In addition, measurable indicators for each strategic area of intervention are included, in order to facilitate implementation and enable a more systematic monitoring. Lastly, the budget estimations in the initial Programme of Action were deleted in the revised version.

The extended Programme of Action will be brought to the ministerial level for adoption in 2010 and then to the African Union's Executive Council for final revision and official agreement.

*For more information, please send an email to [ISDR-Africa@unep.org](mailto:ISDR-Africa@unep.org)*

# Second Africa Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction

The First Conference of Ministers Responsible for Meteorology in Africa, hosted by the Government of Kenya, will take place in Nairobi from 12 April to 16 April 2010. The first part of the Conference, from 12 to 14 April, will be a technical preparatory meeting of experts and partners of all sectors concerned. The ministerial conference will take place on 15 April.

The AUC in collaboration with the UNISDR Regional Office for Africa and the government of the Republic of Kenya will hold the Second African Ministerial Conference on DRR in Nairobi, Kenya, back to back with the First Conference of Ministers Responsible for Meteorology in Africa.

The main objective of the Conference will be the adoption of the revised Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction. African experts revised the Africa Regional Strategy at the Second Africa Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction Consultative Meeting held in Nairobi, Kenya in May 2009. The revision of the Regional Strategy was necessary to ensure conformity to the HFA adopted at the Second World Conference on Disasters Risk Reduction in Kobe, Japan in 2005. The Africa Regional Strategy will be further revised to link it with the outcomes of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Copenhagen Conference on Climate Change (COP 15) in December 2009, and other relevant Conventions.

Climate change is adversely affecting the African continent. Already, the number and magnitude of natural hazards is increasing thus affecting all sectors, particularly agriculture and food security, transport, public health, water resources management, energy and tourism.

To address these challenges, critical information must be generated and provided to decision-makers and users at all levels. The main purpose of the meteorology conference is to recognize and contribute to strengthen the role and contribution of National Meteorological and Hydrological Services to government policies and initiatives for mitigating, and adapting to, the negative impacts of weather and climate.

The Conference will bring together a broad range of decision-makers, users and providers, drawing on their experiences, to improve weather, water and climate information and services. The Ministerial Conference is expected to endorse high-level support to the expert-based Conference Statement from government representatives and to adopt a Conference Declaration for the development of weather, water and climate services in Africa.

## Objectives of the Conference

- To define a regional mechanism to guide and monitor the implementation of the Africa Strategy and Programme of Action for DRR,
- To review and link the Africa Regional Strategy and Programme of Action on DRR to the outcomes of the Copenhagen Conference on Climate Change, UNFCCC, and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).
- To review and adopt the extended Programme of Action for the Implementation of the Africa Regional Strategy for DRR, period 2006-2015 with special emphasis on investment education and safer schools, hospitals and resilient cities.

## The Second Ministerial Conference will have two Segments:

### Technical Segment

This segment aims at strengthening regional technical mechanism for coordinated policies, define regional programmes for disaster risk reduction and guide the implementation of the Africa Regional Strategy for DRR in line with the HFA and the priorities set at the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction.

#### Expected deliverables:

- Sustained regional mechanism and strengthened institutional and human resources of the African Union and Regional Economic Communities.
- Revision and definition of the Africa Programme of Action for the period 2006-2015, as a tool for implementing the Africa Regional Strategy for DRR.

### Ministerial Segment:

This segment will focus on achieving greater recognition of and commitment to DRR and the Africa Regional Strategy and Programme of Action for DRR in line with the HFA.

#### Expected deliverables:

Decisions on DRR reached at the Conference endorsed by Ministers for approval by the 2010 AU Summit.

Adoption of the Revised Programme of Action for the Implementation of the Africa Regional Strategy for the period until 2015.

*For more information, please send an email to [ISDR-Africa@unep.org](mailto:ISDR-Africa@unep.org)*





*H.E. Mwai Kibaki, President of Kenya (left), H.E. Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete, President of Tanzania, and Dr. Anna Tibajuka, Executive Director, UN HABITAT (IRIN News)*

# Disaster Risk Reduction in Africa

## Sub Regional Level



Residents in Chalbi district, Northern Kenya often grapple with water shortages (IRIN News)

# Disaster Risk Reduction in Regional Economic Communities

## *Institutional Arrangements at Regional Level*

### The African Union

The African Union 53 member states include: Algeria, Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Comoros, Republic of Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Chad, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

The commitment of the African Union (AU) to reduce disaster risk and develop the resilience of its nations and peoples is rooted in its Constitutive Act, which its member states agreed to in 2000. As signatories of this Act, Heads of State and Governments of Member States pledged to promote, among other objectives, security, stability and sustainable development in Africa.

On these foundations, the AU established the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) in 2001 to promote accelerated growth and sustainable development, eradicate widespread and severe poverty and halt the marginalisation of Africa in the globalization process. AU/NEPAD proceeded to form the Africa Working Group on Disaster Risk Reduction to facilitate the mainstreaming and integration of disaster risk reduction in all phases of development in Africa, and developed the Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction.

The Africa Advisory Group on DRR established in 2005, preceded the First Africa Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, which was attended by 42 countries, the African Development Bank, several UN and international agencies and bilateral donors. This ministerial conference adopted the Programme of Action that was endorsed by a Decision of the Eight Ordinary Session of the Executive Council of the African Union.

In 2003, the Africa Working Group commissioned an assessment of the status of DRR in Africa, the results of which constitute the first base-line study of disaster risk reduction in

the region. The assessment report concluded that African countries faced the following major challenges:

- Insufficient institutionalization of disaster risk reduction
- Inadequate information management and communication
- Inadequate involvement of citizens
- Limited risk identification and assessment across the region
- Weak integration of disaster risk reduction in development plans

Based on this assessment, the Africa Working Group developed the Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction. The Strategy's objectives were to:

- Increase political commitment to disaster risk reduction
- Improve identification and assessment of disaster risks
- Enhance knowledge management for disaster risk reduction
- Increase public awareness of disaster risk reduction
- Improve governance of disaster risk reduction
- Integrate disaster risk reduction in emergency management and response

After a comprehensive review by experts, governments and other stakeholders, 53 Africa Union member states adopted the Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction at the 10th Meeting of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) in June 2004 and officially acknowledged it at the AU Summit in 2004. At this event, the AU called for the development of an action plan for its implementation and committed to providing strategic guidance, facilitating, promoting the implementation of the Strategy, and seeking support from development partners and coordination at regional level.

## Institutional Arrangements at Sub-Regional Level

Within the African Union, there are multiple regional blocks known as Regional Economic Communities (RECs). Established primarily as trade blocks, the RECs are increasingly engaged in issues of broader economic and social development, on which they seek political alignment and harmonization of approaches.

At the Eighth Ordinary Session of the AU Executive Council, held in January 2006 in Khartoum, Sudan, the seven RECs in

Africa were encouraged to take responsibility for interpreting strategic guidance for their member states, facilitating the implementation of the regional strategy within their sub-regions, and coordinating inter-state initiatives. The RECs were requested to establish sub-regional platforms and focal points for disaster risk reduction, and mobilise funding to implement the Programme of Action within their member states.

UNISDR currently engages five of the seven RECs to promote disaster risk reduction in Sub-Saharan Africa. The UNISDR regional office for Africa continues to seek ways to collaborate with all RECs in Africa.

## Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS)

ECCAS member states include Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Gabon, Republic of Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Sao Tome and Principe, and Chad. It was first established in October 1983. Following a period of inactivity, it was relaunched 1998 with the stated aims of achieving collective autonomy, raising the standard of living of its populations and maintaining economic stability through harmonious cooperation.

Since then, ECCAS has developed a series of treaties and protocols for cooperation between states. Of relevance to field of disaster risk reduction is the Environment and Natural Resources Policy, which was adopted by Heads of State at the ECCAS Summit in 2007. This policy mainstreams actions to reduce underlying risks, and includes a specific line of action for disaster risk management.

In 2009, with technical support from UNISDR, the ECCAS Coordinating Bureau for the Environment and Natural Resources drafted a sectoral policy for disaster risk reduction and outlined a process to develop and validate this among regional stakeholders in disaster risk reduction. ECCAS also formulated a comprehensive programme for disaster risk reduction and the European Union awarded the programme €1,868,000.

The programme, which is to be implemented over four years (2009-13), seeks to address the following priorities:

### Capacity building of national and sub-regional authorities

- Establish or strengthen national institutions dealing with disaster risk reduction in member states, and establish a dedicated unit for disaster risk reduction within ECCAS Secretariat
- Review and reinforce legal frameworks and strategies for disaster risk reduction within member states, and ECCAS legal framework and disaster risk reduction strategy

## Risk identification

- Undertake hazard identification and analysis in all member states
- Undertake risk assessments in all member states
- Compile risk mapping for ECCAS region

## Implementation of national strategies for disaster risk reduction

- Establish or reinforce national platforms in all member states
- Establish sub-regional and national inter-ministerial committees for disaster risk reduction

## Establishment of national and sub-regional networks

- Establish sub-regional and national information management networks for disaster risk reduction
- Contribute to inter-regional information management networks

In order to secure appropriate expertise to implement this programme and additional disaster risk reduction plans in the sub-region, ECCAS is in the process of forming strategic partnerships with UNISDR, UNOCHA and UNDP/BCPR. ECCAS also plans to establish a Regional Centre for Disaster Risk Reduction in Libreville, Gabon.

## Indian Ocean Commission (IOC)

The Indian Ocean Commission has five member states namely: Mauritius, Seychelles, Comoros, Madagascar and Réunion. It was established as a sub-regional organisation in 1984 with a mandate to protect interests of its member states and support inter-regional exchange.

From 2000 to 2005, the government of France funded a regional project to strengthen the capacities of Civil Protection institutions and facilitate a joint regional response in the event of a major disaster in a member state.

In July 2005, the Summit of the Heads of States and Governments of the IOC encouraged the development of a multi-stakeholder, multi-donor project to focus on strengthening regional early warning and response capacities, training a network of regional disaster management experts, and supporting the development of risk analysis, prevention and crisis management policies.

Following a project feasibility study, a consultative meeting was held in Saint Denis in January 2009. The participants agreed to seek funding for a regional project for disaster risk reduction with the following strategic objectives:

- reinforcement of institutional and operational capacities dedicated to risk management of natural disasters
- implementation or improvement of knowledge, mechanisms and tools aiming at reducing risks and losses caused by natural disasters
- development of solutions facilitating and/or improving the rebuilding and the rehabilitation in the aftermath of natural disasters

Meanwhile, at an international conference in Reunion in July 2008, IOC member states of made a joint declaration on measures to address climate change, which included disaster risk reduction actions.

## Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)

The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) has seven member states, which include Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda. IGAD was originally established in 1986 to coordinate national efforts in Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda to mitigate the impact of drought. Its mandate was expanded in 1996 to the coordination and harmonisation of policies in socio-economic and agricultural development, environmental protection and humanitarian affairs.

Issues of Disaster risk reduction have been a central concern for IGAD since its inception. A disaster management strategy focusing on building the capacities of national disaster management institutions to develop plans policies, legislation, and information management strategies has formed part of the IGAD strategy for sustainable development in the region since 2003. To enhance the capacities of national institutions for disaster risk management, IGAD developed a training kit for disaster risk management, which is still utilised in the region.

With the active participation and involvement of member states and partners, the IGAD Secretariat has formulated a regional Disaster Risk Management Programme. The programme has seven components, which are in line with the HFA expressed as the following objectives:

- Elaborate policies, legislation and agreements for disaster management
- Develop disaster preparedness strategies and the contingency planning process
- Improve regional collaboration for preparedness and response
- Strengthen early warning and information systems and vulnerability analysis

- Develop education and training for disaster mitigation
- Improve preparedness for impact and needs assessment and resource mobilisation
- Improve preparedness for targeting, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of relief and rehabilitation assistance.

The mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction into other key sectors is also evident in the IGAD Environment and Natural Resources Strategy for 2007, which links to the Disaster Risk Management Strategy and includes several actions related to the use of environmental and natural resources information for the purposes of disaster risk reduction.

IGAD's flagship institution for climate risk management, the Climate Prediction and Applications Centre, is playing an increasingly important role in disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation in the region.

## Southern Africa Development Community (SADC)

SADC has 15 member states. They include Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

SADC originates from the Southern Africa Development Coordination Conference (SADCC), which was formed by nine countries in 1980. Transformed in 1992 into the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), its founding objectives include achieving development, economic growth, and poverty alleviation, and ensuring sustainable utilization of natural resources in the sub-region.

SADC has engaged in disaster risk reduction since the development of the Regional Vulnerability Assessment Committee (RVAC) in 1999, as a multi-agency initiative to analyze food crisis vulnerability at sub-regional and national levels and to improve food security in the sub-region.

In 2001, SADC developed a new strategic framework, the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP), to provide Member States with a development agenda on social and economic policies over fifteen years. Although it included a disaster management plan, this was oriented towards disaster response rather than proactive disaster risk reduction.

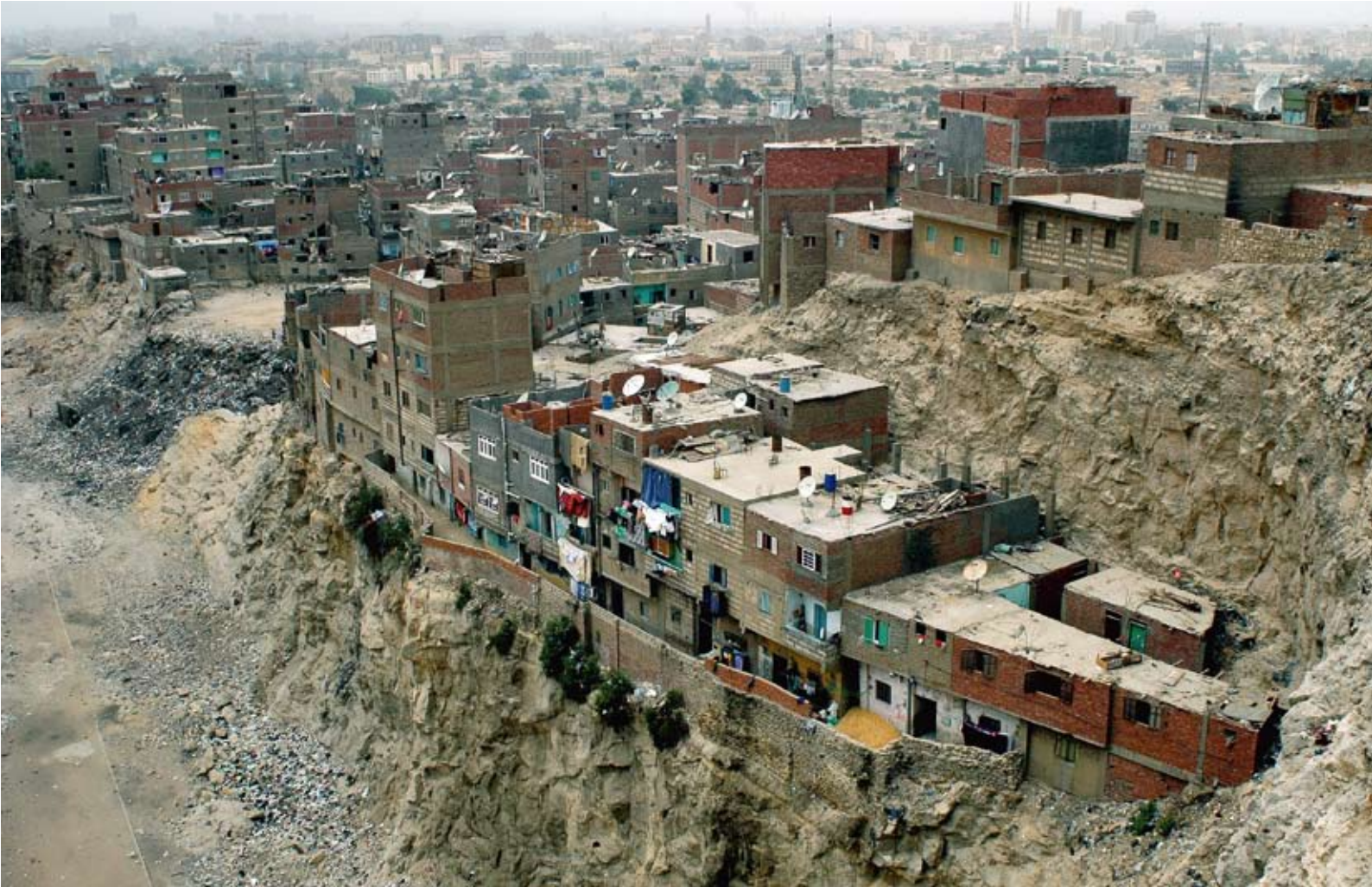
Progress in disaster risk reduction led to a revision of the scope and timeframe of this plan in 2006. The revised plan, the Disaster Risk Reduction Strategic Plan 2006-2010, set out the SADC strategic direction to achieve the long-term goal of building the resilience of member nations and their communities to the impact of disasters. The plan has the following objectives, based on the Africa Regional Strategy and the HFA:

- To strengthen governance, legal and institutional frameworks at all levels of DRR.
- To facilitate the identification, assessment, and monitoring of disaster risks and support the early warning systems at all levels.
- To promote the use and management of information and knowledge, innovation and education, to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels in the SADC region.
- To ensure that disaster risk reduction is a national and local priority with institutional basis for implementation.
- To integrate preparedness and emergency response aspects into disaster risk reduction.

In recognition of the need to maximise linkages between this plan and other SADC strategies the Disaster Management Unit was relocated within the SADC Executive Secretary with the aim of providing the Unit with the leadership and authority to liaise across sectors and departments. The creation of a SADC Disaster Management Trust Fund (SDMTF) was also envisaged, to manage contributions from both SADC member states and donor funds.

In October 2008, SADC hosted a regional training workshop for flood, cyclone and drought preparedness and contingency planning in South Africa, with the support of UNDP, UNICEF, UNAIDS and OCHA. Participants included SADC member states, UN agencies, international organizations, IFRC, NGOs donors, academic and research institutions, and civil society. This strengthened commitment to participatory contingency planning and systematic vulnerability analysis, as well as engendering new commitments to sharing lessons and models of good practice and strategies to address emerging challenges such as flood management in the urban context. Participants emphasized the need for SADC to play a strong coordinating role on issues of disaster risk reduction.

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*Manshiet Nasser, a shanty town perched precariously on sandstone cliffs in the desert outskirts of Cairo. (Photo courtesy of IRIN news)*

# Disaster Risk Reduction in Africa

## National Level



*Budalangi residents left stranded by floods in Busia. More than 40,000 people were displaced after a dyke was washed away at Makunda, River Nzoia, Kenya. (Photo courtesy of IRIN news)*

## A Situation Report from The Gambia

In the Gambia, the office of the Vice President handles Disaster Risk Reduction, which gives the process a “Heavy Weight” status in the Government machinery and underscores the importance of Disaster risk management and preparedness in National Development.

The apex of the disaster management system in the Gambia is the national disaster management governing council, chaired by the vice president. The council co-ordinates disaster risk management activities at national level and through a technical advisory group with representation across sectors and institutions.

The Council is serviced by a technical secretariat in the national disaster management agency, which is a semi-autonomous institution under the jurisdiction of the office of the Vice President, an indication of Government commitment to address disaster management as a development priority.

The recently developed National Disaster Management Policy for the Gambia actively promotes a disaster prevention culture through access to knowledge and information in both the formal and informal educational systems as well as through the activities of community-based organizations. Emphasis is on disaster prevention and preparedness tools for disaster risk reduction and collaborating with humanitarian actors to give the Gambia’s National Adaptation Plan (NAPA) a human face.

The Gambia is one of the least developed countries and is among the poorest countries in Africa with an average per capita income of US\$300. Consequently, living standards levels of human development are low and poverty

remains a major challenge facing the country. According to the 2000 Human Development Report, the Gambia ranked 161 out of 174 countries and had a Human Development Index (HDI) of 0.396. The human poverty index is 0.490 and gives a rank of 75.

The 1998 National household poverty survey showed that 55 percent of households and 69 percent of the population fall below the poverty line. A significant proportion of households (37 percent) and persons (51 percent) are also extremely poor. The highest incidence of poverty occurs in rural areas with 60 percent of households classified as extremely poor. Three divisions in the rural areas have the highest number of poor people: Lower River Division, Upper River Division and Central River Division. Poverty within communities also manifests in the level of access to affordable basic services such as health services, education, sanitation services, potable water and access to markets, and is prevalent among women. This is a result of factors such as unequal opportunities in education, employment and inadequate access to financial, land and other resources.

## Institutional Arrangements and Disaster Risk Reduction Programmes in the Gambia

Due to the frequent occurrences of disaster events, the country has been included in the international panel on climate change (IPCC) list of 100 countries that are most vulnerable to the effects of climate change, especially weather-related hazards such as drought, windstorms, floods and

sea level rise. (Ref – report on the Gambia living with hazard, 2007).

In this report, several core biological hazards include insect infestation such as locust invasion, and epidemics like malaria and cholera. Others mentioned are coastal erosion, disasters at sea, and bushfires, oil spills and domestic fires.

The rationale for highlighting these hazards is the negative socio-economic impact of disasters as they hamper progress in the achievement of the country's development goals. These hazards and disasters have become a major development concern for the government of the Gambia, development partners and local communities. Consequently, both the vision 2020 document and the Poverty Reduction Strategy Programme (PRSP II), recognize disaster risk as a constant threat to achieving millennium development goals.

Since 2006, the government with the assistance of UNDP has taken committed initiative and formulated a national disaster management policy accompanied by a strategic action plan document, and enacted the national disaster management act in 2008. The goal of the policy and institutional framework is to build safe and hazard resilient communities by enhancing the use and access to knowledge and information on disaster prevention and management.

The policy also establishes strategic priorities and targets to guide and inform development practitioners and highlights the need to institutionalize and mainstream DRR approaches into National Development Planning Processes.

The Government of the Gambia also established the following:-

- The National Disaster Management Council, under the auspices of the office of the Vice President and chaired by Her Excellency the Vice President.
- The National Disaster Management Agency whose mandate is to plan and co-ordinate the implementation and monitoring of all activities relating to Disaster Risk Reduction programmes, throughout the Country at national and local levels.

The government's Disaster Risk Management approach currently focuses more on risk reduction and preparedness and in line with the Hyogo Framework for Action, rather than on relief and rehabilitation.

## Disaster Risk Reduction: Examples of Good Practices

### 1. Building National Capacity in Disaster Risk Reduction and Management.

- Developing and Institutionalizing the National Disaster Management Plan, 2008 – 2011).

- The National Planning Commission's Recognition of DRR as a development issue and the need to integrate it in the national development agenda as well as the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF).
- Government recognition of the Country's vulnerability to climate change and emphasis on the need to link Disaster Risk Reduction and climate change adaptation.
- Political commitment to DRR and substantial budgetary allocation to DRR at National level.
- Full involvement of civil society in measuring the progress of the implementation of the HFA at local level as well as comparing inputs at national level with outputs at local level.

### 2. The Need to Link Disaster Risk and Climate Change

In human history, disasters were linked to natural hazards, regarded as acts of God and people resigned themselves to fate. This perception underlines the strong emphasis on reaction or response after the occurrence of disasters, rather than engagement in proactive policies and programmes in preparedness and prevention of disasters. More recently, the realization that disasters also arise from man-made hazards and human vulnerability has gained increased prominence on global and national development agendas. This has led to a wider conceptualization of disaster management, with more attention given to action to address factors that make societies vulnerable to hazards. The linking of disaster with man-made events is more pronounced in the context of climate change and its impact. Increased awareness about climate change has become the main proponent of the increased urgency of disaster risk reduction efforts.

Disaster risk reduction and climate change have occupied separate policy spheres at national level despite their overlap at all levels. In recent years, there are encouraging signs of a convergence of the two spheres. Both the disaster risk and the climate change communities at the global level are now engaged in each other's discussions, offering concepts and methods for integrating the two environmental concerns. Conceptually, there is a need to link strategies for disaster risk management and programmes with decisions and actions related to climate change adaptation. Operationally, this is possible through the integration of the two inter-linked spheres within the common framework of national development policy and planning. In a resource-poor and least developed country like the Gambia, it is also important to recognize the link between human vulnerability to the risk of climate change-related disasters and poverty reduction measures for both disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation in an integrated manner.



The link between climate change and disaster risk aspects can be established through two main pathways:

- Weather extremes and hazardous climatic conditions; and
- Increases in the vulnerability of people and communities to the effects of climate change.

Disaster risk reduction and preparedness systems should therefore pay attention to increases in hazards due to climate extremes and global warming, and human vulnerability to climate change related risks such as infectious diseases, water shortages, food insecurity, population displacement, forced migration and ecosystem degradation. Through these pathways and impacts, climate change-related disasters can undo decades of development efforts and reduce gains in poverty reduction.

Conceptually, Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) is the framework of strategies, policies and practical elements that are required for the purpose of reducing human vulnerability and minimizing disaster risk in a society, in order to avoid (prevention) or to limit (mitigation and preparedness) the adverse impacts of hazard events. In this regard, DRR should be addressed as a crosscutting and development issue. When linked with climate change adaptation, the process of DRR can be complex, consisting of political, institutional, technical, financial and participatory issues, among others.

Linking DRR with climate change and development therefore requires integrated mechanisms at national level to co-ordinate multi-sectoral policy issues and action programmes; to ensure that strategies and policies are communicated to and acted upon at the local and community level; and to disseminate information and report on progress to the population, international development partners and the UN and international community. It may be necessary to develop and strengthen existing national institutions and mechanisms, in order to build capacities for boosting resilience to natural and man-made hazards.

### 3. Integrating Disaster Risk Reduction in Poverty Reduction

Disasters and climate extremes are combining with other development-related changes, such as food insecurity, fragile environmental conditions, conflict, high unemployment and rapid urbanization, to increase the vulnerability of poor and marginalized populations to risks. The devastating impact of disasters on the poor can destroy their ability to sustain livelihoods. The Gambia, as a country exposed to environmental risks and one of the UN-designated least developed countries, faces such a dilemma. It is therefore important to link disaster risk reduction with poverty reduction strategies and programmes in the country. This should be reinforced to ensure the ability to analyze and address the link with poverty and take advantage of the opportunity

that exists in the disaster management process for a positive impact on poverty reduction.

### 4. Gender Perspectives in Disaster Management

In many developing societies, such as the Gambia, women make a sizeable and disproportionate contribution to livelihoods in households and the community. This contribution takes the form of labour inputs, organizational skills and other components of human resource capacity, which contribute to securing food, water and energy. Hazards put women and their inherent resource capacity at risk. When disasters disrupt the functioning of societies and communities, and devastate homes and family lives, significant losses occur with respect to the resources used by women to support livelihoods. Women's roles and responsibilities in households and communities, and as custodians of vital natural resources required to sustain livelihoods, puts them at an advantageous position to develop strategies for managing and adapting to disasters and climate extremes at household and community levels. Yet in many developing country settings, women are still marginalized and excluded from participating in development planning and decision-making processes, particularly at the community level where the impact of environmental factors are direct and greatest. When recognized and supported, women can contribute effectively to disaster preparedness and response efforts at the community and national levels. Without the participation of women, and their valuable experiences of natural resource management, disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation initiatives and strategies will not be meaningful or wholesome to the community and nation in developing countries.

### 5. The Challenge for Resource-Poor and Least developed Countries

Countries like the Gambia may be gravely affected by disasters and climate change, because of intrinsic vulnerabilities to hazards and comparatively low capacities for implementing risk reduction measures. Furthermore, in such a setting, major disaster events, whether hydrological, meteorological or climatic in nature, could have catastrophic effects in terms of economic losses humanitarian tragedies, losses and the costs of reconstruction and resettlement of people in may require for a sizeable proportion of or even exceed the total national income of the country. The already precarious situation of resource-poor and least developed countries is compounded by the widespread poverty in the population, which increases vulnerability, weakens institutions and reduces effectiveness for responding to impacts of climate change and natural disasters.

## Disaster and Climate Risk Reduction in the Gambia

### Existing National Policy and Institutional Context

The Gambian Government has given attention, in terms of raising public awareness, political commitment and national policy and action, to disaster and climate risk management. The level of commitment and effort by the Government to put in place institutional structures and arrangements and mobilize people and resources to address disaster risks and climate change effects are noteworthy, particularly given the limited resources of the country.

Disaster risk reduction is a function of the Office of the Vice President, which underlines the importance attached to disaster risk management and preparedness in national development. The pivot of the disaster management system in the Gambia is the National Disaster Management Council (NDMC), chaired by H.E. the vice- President Dr Ajaratou Isatou Njie-Saidy, and which co-ordinates disaster management activities across sectors at national level. Membership of the council includes the Secretaries of State or Ministers of all the major sectors including finance and planning, health, forestry and the environment, education and agriculture. The technical secretariat, the National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA), services the Council and functions within the Office of the Vice President.

*The NDMA places a high priority on preparedness and prevention, rather than post-disaster rescue, relief and rehabilitation activities. Furthermore, the Government approaches disaster risk management as a people-centred process and has made provision for NGOs and civil society organizations at national and community levels to contribute effectively to disaster management in the Gambia. In addition, the policy and practice of national disaster management is grounded on relevant international and regional conventions and protocols. The 'National Disaster Management Policy' April 2008 and the Strategic Action Plan, 2008 – 2011', developed and executed under the auspices of the NDMA, have demonstrated an acute awareness, by the government, of the need to institutionalize disaster risk reduction approaches and strategies as important components of overall national development planning in line with Government's 'Vision 2020'.*

The risk and recurrence of disaster events in the Gambia underline the importance and attention attached by the Government and its international development partners to disaster management in development planning. As such, disaster prevention and preparedness as the fulcrum of disaster risk reduction is a priority. In the broader context of the National Disaster Management Programme, investment in disaster prevention is a potential savings on expenditure on future disaster relief and rehabilitation. The National Disaster Management Policy of the Gambia therefore promotes a culture of prevention through access to knowledge

and information both in the formal and non-formal educational systems, as well as through the activities of community-based organizations.

### Integrating Climate Change Adaptation with Disaster Risk Management

Disaster risk reduction and climate change initiatives in the Gambia focus on development impacts in terms of policy and practice. Key challenges in disaster risk management and climate change adaptation in the country relate to making adjustments in all sectors to reduce vulnerability and risk to hazards and to mitigate current impacts. These challenges also reflect the urgent need for and the commitment of the Government to continued improvement in the lives of the poorest segments of the population with the aim of achieving Millennium Development Goals. The agenda of climate change and disaster risk management links to poverty reduction and the quest for sustainable development. There is a strong case to integrate activities identified for climate change adaptation within the overall framework of the multi-sectoral National Disaster Management Programme.

### Recommendations

- Regional and sub-regional organizations should prepare and adopt collaborative roles and responsibilities to provide assistance and support to all African countries to pursue and achieve best practices in disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation.
- Sub-regional and international donor organizations should actively liaise with governments in planning, implementing and monitoring funded projects and activities.
- A timely and tactical programme should be prepared as a blueprint for the region to achieve Disaster Risk Reduction and climate change adaptation goals.

Finally, The Gambia has championed this initiative by developing, with the support of UNISDR, a programme for disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation to run from 2010-2013. In addition, considering that DRR is an intrinsic part of adaptation, there is political commitment to integrate the current Climate Change Committee and the DRR Technical Advisory Group under the coordinated authority of the Vice President of The Gambia at the strategic level.

This political commitment and leadership has made it possible to deal with the risks associated with the non-compliance of the various actors on this integration.

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Boys in the Dabondy neighbourhood of Guinea's capital Conakry fill sacks with sand and gravel. The area sees flooding every rainy season. (Photo courtesy of IRIN news)



*A community near Ifotaka, in southern Madagascar, pulls together to build a rain water harvester. (Photo courtesy of IRIN news)*

# Disaster Risk Reduction in Africa

## Inter Agency Activities



## Summary

Presentations focused on different angles to deal with disaster risks based on experience and challenges identified by each speaker. The Mayors introduced the context and role of their local government regarding threats faced, and how these have aggravated floods, drought and other risks. Disease, industrial accidents, and the impact of climate change exacerbate risks, which worsens vulnerability for the population. Specific problems of cities included:

- Unplanned urban development or unattended needs in the peripheries and semi-rural areas i.e. informal housing sites prone to earthquakes, floods or landslides,
- Decline of ecosystems as a result of the depletion of mangroves or wetlands, which is accelerated a major influx of migrants or refugees settle informally in urban or semi-urban areas,
- Low building standards are incapable of containing storm drainage and sometimes result in building collapses, and
- Lack of organization or local governance set-ups to deal with disaster risk and to control or provide for the development public works.

All Mayors focused on improved planning capacities as a key to reduce disaster risk and promote sustainable urbanization. They discussed how they used the participatory approach to seek the involvement of citizens in problem solving, highlighted the importance of information and experience sharing and the need for tools to effectively deal with problems. There is also a need to respond to other urgent needs such as establishing livelihood and income generating activities as well as security and education. Participants also called for risk assessments, data and a framework to deal with existing knowledge on disaster risks and solutions. The Bukedia District Chairman in his presentation on "re-centering the rural agenda" illustrated risk reduction as an opportunity to create jobs.

Elected Mayors and local authorities need to respond to the expectations of the electorate and it is important to link risk reduction to development issues, such as providing water and waste management and address coastal erosion. The Mayors were encouraging more interaction with central Government to build local and regional action plans and protocols, and to become an active actor in the implementation process.

Some local government representatives commented that,

- Mayors need to be aware that disaster risks are often human-induced. For instance, insufficient buffering between settlement areas and rivers may cause severe damage.

- There is a need for better linkage and communication between national and local governments. Central government sometimes does not provide clear guidance, and implements its own programmes without proper consultation with local governments.
- There is a need to build a database of experience, in order to share among local governments existing knowledge and experience.

Mr. Khalifa Sall, Mayor of Dakar, concluded the discussion by summarizing the key points. He emphasized that increasing disaster risk is a common challenge to cities and local governments in Africa, that are struggling with extreme poverty, population growth, and external forces like climate change. He spoke about the importance of, not only blaming others, but also addressing problems arising from within. He encouraged leaders to identify causes of disasters, map risks and learn from their counterparts, and national authorities to involve mayors and local government in planning, as the people expect mayors to respond immediately when disaster strikes. Finally, he mentioned the need to address and take action against disasters in the present.

## Key recommendations

### Bridging the gap between local and national governments

National governments should involve and work with the local governments in building and implementing strategies for risk reduction. It is important to bridge the current gap in communication between national and local authorities.

### Risk intelligence and knowledge

Build a database with risk information for Africa, good practices and expertise to deal with different aspects on local governance and risk reduction.

### Capacity enhancement and mutual learning

Share information regularly and develop knowledge base for capacity enhancement on risk reduction in Africa. South-South cooperation and learning opportunities are also essential. Maintaining a regular forum with local government leaders and national authorities in the region would be useful for this purpose.

## Next Steps

The local government representatives and Mayors present at the session offered to serve as a focal group to build an alliance for disaster risk reduction in Africa, to promote ownership and leadership of local governments in this field, exchange experiences and proactive solutions and joining the ISDR Campaign for resilient cities.

*For more information, please send an email to [ISDR-Africa@unep.org](mailto:ISDR-Africa@unep.org)*



## *Hospitals Safe from Disasters*

# 2009

## International Day for Disaster Reduction

*Wednesday 14 October*



United Nations

*The International Day for Disaster Reduction raises the profile of disaster risk reduction and encourages every citizen and government to take part in building more resilient communities and nations.*

[www.unisdr.org](http://www.unisdr.org)

*Invest Today for a Safer Tomorrow*



ISDR World Disaster Reduction Awareness Symposium. (Photo courtesy of UNISDR)

## 2009 International Day for Disaster Reduction

### *Hospitals Safe from Disasters: Reduce Risk, Protect Health Facilities, Save Lives* Nairobi, Kenya

The 2009 International Day for Disaster Reduction was commemorated across the world in cities like London, Geneva, Welkom, Kathmandu and Nairobi on 14 October. The global event was dedicated to the theme 'Hospitals safe from Disasters' in a culmination of a two-year campaign.

The campaign, 'Hospitals Safe From Disasters' was a vehicle to raise awareness and advocate for governments and all decision-makers, including town planners, to review hospital safety. Hospitals have beyond their practical importance, a unique value as symbols of public well-being. Making them safe from disasters is therefore essential. If a building collapses, many people suffer death and injury but if the collapsed building is a hospital, thousands may suffer or die due to lack of medical care in the aftermath of the disaster.

Following disasters, we rely on hospitals to take care of the injured and as such, they represent the lifeblood of a community. If hospitals suffer immense damage, efforts to save lives are seriously impeded. With weather-related disasters on the increase such as the increased number and frequency of floods and drought among others in Kenya, it is critical to ensure that health facilities are prepared for

emergencies and able to provide life-saving care. Hospitals must be designed, built and maintained to protect health workers and patients in the post disaster period. The cost of making hospitals safe from disasters is relatively small. The most expensive hospital is the one that fails.

The 2009 International Day for Disaster Reduction in Nairobi was organized by UNISDR, Ministry of State for Special Programmes, WHO, UNOCHA, the Kenya Red Cross Society, St. John Ambulance, Medics 24, National Disaster Operation Centre and the Nairobi Hospital.

Several stakeholders participated in the Nairobi event including key hospitals, both private and public, the Ministry of Health, UN agencies and the public. The event gave opportunity to create awareness, facilitate networking and promote the safe hospitals campaign.

The Minister of State for Special Programmes, Dr. Naomi Shaban, gave the day's key speech and revisited the history of the World Disaster Day, which was designated in 1989 by the United Nations General Assembly. The day regained new importance in 2001 as a vehicle through which to promote a global culture of natural disaster reduction through prevention, mitigation and preparedness. The Minister also recognized the role of the ISDR global advocacy campaigns



modeled around priority 3 of the Hyogo Framework for Action, which emphasizes the use of knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of safety, and resilience at all levels.

In emphasizing the importance of the International Day for Disaster Reduction, she noted that Kenya had experienced a number of natural hazards including floods, wild fires, and landslides. As such, she called for a firm foundation for effective strategic management plans and contingencies for Disaster Risk Reduction. In addition, she called for the acceleration of awareness raising disaster reduction campaigns and the education of the public who bear the greatest impact when disasters occur. The minister recognized the importance of the safe hospitals campaign as crucial in saving lives, building resilience and ensuring sustainable development. This, she said, required the involvement of different sectors and thanked the different organizations that had taken lead in collaborating with the government, among them UNISDR, UNOCHA and the Kenya Red Cross among others.

The speech delivered on behalf of the Minister of Health, Sanitation and Health, Hon. Beth Mugo, emphasized the problems of climate change. In the speech, Dr. Amira recalled the role played by the Ministry in conjunction with the Ministries of Environment and Special Programmes in mapping affected areas and reported that measures to address epidemics such as malaria, dysentery and Rift Valley Fever were already in place. The speech highlighted the need for Disaster Risk Reduction as the way forward in preventive rather than responsive health practices.

Mr. Abdishakur Othowai of the Kenya Red Cross, in recognizing UNISDR's role in Disaster Reduction, noted that for every dollar spent on Disaster Reduction saves five dollars in Disaster Response. He further accentuated the active role that Kenya Red Cross Society plays in Disaster Risk Reduction as reflected in their recent programmes, which included the distribution of seeds for planting in drought stricken Eastern Kenya areas ahead of the El-Niño rains. He regretted that the media reflects the Red Cross as merely involved in Disaster Response, overshadowing their active role in Disaster Reduction. This move to adopt Disaster Reduction was adopted not just in Kenya but also in other Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies worldwide. He finally called for the incorporation of Disaster Risk Reduction measures in all spheres including organizational, regional, national and international plans.

The event concluded with a display of information and material on hospital safety from different stakeholders. As a final contribution to the event in Nairobi, a simulation of a disaster scenario including a makeshift hospital with equipment and volunteers focusing on the preparedness of local hospitals, where performed by St. John Ambulance, Kenyan Red Cross and AAR.

## South Africa

On October 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>, 2009, the ISDR World Disaster Reduction Awareness Symposium on Safe Hospitals was held in Welkom, South Africa. The event attracted over 350 participants from UNISDR, WHO, OCHA, governments from seven African countries namely South Africa, Madagascar, Mozambique, Seychelles, Mauritius, Tanzania and Zimbabwe, under the auspices of the South African Government.

The Lejweleputswa District Municipality fire brigade, military and police force organized the opening of the Symposium with a parade. Clr. Sebenzile Ngangelizwe, Executive Mayor of Lejweleputswa District Municipality and all Symposium participants, attended the ceremony.

Ms. Stella Anyangwe, Country representative of WHO South Africa represented the United Nations and delivered the Message for the International Day for Disaster Reduction from the UN Secretary General, *Mr. Ban Ki-moon* and the message from UN Assistant Secretary General for Disaster Risk Reduction, *Ms. Margareta Wahlstrom* and Assistant Director-General, Health Action in Crises, World Health Organization, *Mr. Eric Laroche*.

The main speakers at the symposium included:

- Mr. Mnikeli Ndabambi, Senior Manager, Forecasting, South Africa Weather Service
- Mr. Derek Samson, Ministry of Health and Social Development, Seychelles
- Mr. Casimiro Sande Antonio, INGC Mozambique
- Dr. Joseph Chuwa, Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, Tanzania, presented the current situation in his country and good practice
- Mr. Ndina Mphaphuli, Director of Hospitals Revitalisation Programme, National Department of Health
- Mr. Tapan Patel, Centre for Integrated Development, India
- Mr. Eugene Mahlehla, WHO South Africa
- Dr. Wayne Smith, Division of Emergency medicine UCT/US PGWC, EMS, South Africa
- Mr. Rhett Davis, Deputy Director, EMS and Disaster Management, Department of health, South Africa, presented
- Mr. Tapan Patel, Centre for Integrated Development, India
- Ms. N.P. Sekulisa, Director of the Free State Provincial Disaster Management Center, Free State Province, South Africa

- Ms .Rhea Katsanakis from the UNISDR Africa
- Mr. M.S. Pawadyira, Director Civil Protection, Zimbabwe
- Mr. Gowreesunker, Head Transport and Maintenance of Workshop Services, Ministry of Health & Quality of Life, Mauritius
- Mr. Jean Felix Andrianjosolo, Ministry of Health, Madagascar
- Mr. E. Africa from the National Disaster Management Center, South Africa.

## ISDR Symposium Resolutions

The delegation to the symposium resolved that with commitment, capacity and resources, it is possible to realize the objectives of hospitals safety from disasters as listed hereunder:

- The protection of the lives of patients and health workers by ensuring structural resilience in health facilities;
- Ensuring that health facilities and health services can function in the aftermath of emergencies and disasters, when they are most needed, and;
- Including emergency preparedness in improving the emergency management capacity of health workers and institutions.

The symposium therefore resolved that the following measures would be propagated for adaptation and implementation in the region and within national systems in order to realize developmental disaster risk reduction measures underscoring the campaign and straddling both structural and non-structural measures:

- Ensure risk and vulnerability assessments of all health facilities;
- Ensure risk reduction and resilience towards the impact of disasters in the design and construction of all new health facilities, including compliance with applicable national and local building codes;
- Reduce the non-structural and functional vulnerability of existing health facilities;
- Adopt legislative and financial measures to identify and retrofit the most critical facilities to increase levels of protection;
- Need for adequate institutional capacities and resources;
- Mobilise human and material resources;

- Ensure the availability of safe water supplies;
- Maintain all hospitals and health care facilities;
- Ensure functional communication and early warning systems in all health facilities;
- Ensure an effective transportation network and availability of various modes of transport;
- Ensure availability and resilience of infrastructure including access to evacuation routes as well as emergency facilities such as tents and health care;
- Appointment of a suitable Disaster Risk Manager for each health care facility to oversee disaster risk reduction and mitigation in all health facilities;
- Empower the holistic health care team down to community level to build a culture of safety;
- On-going training and accreditation system;
- Monitoring and evaluation as well as post-emergency/ disaster reflection and lessons learned;
- Upward, downward and lateral communication of disaster plans;
- Carry out regular simulation exercises on disaster preparedness;
- Responsibility and accountability;
- Clarification of legal framework and;
- Adequate resource allocation to realise the objectives of the hospital safety campaign.

Furthermore, in order to build national capacities and sustain the implementation momentum on ISDR campaign themes, the following measures were adopted:

- To convene national pre-campaign workshops and to conduct training programmes to build capacity for the implementation of campaign objectives; and
- To make campaign themes standing items within national, provincial and local forums in order to build and sustain the implementation momentum nationally.

*For more information, please send an email to [ISDR-Africa@unep.org](mailto:ISDR-Africa@unep.org)*



Seasonal rains in Africa often come with a risk of flash floods (Photo courtesy of IRIN News)

# Climate Change Adaptation in Africa

*Division of Environmental Policy Implementation, UNEP*

## Africa Programme and linkages to the Africa Adaptation Network:

The United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) is currently in the process of developing the Africa Adaptation Programme Framework, which is envisioned to be ready before the end of 2009. This programme framework will outline in detail, the focus on adaptation issues particularly within the UNEP Programme of Work for the period 2010 to 2011 and in alignment with UNEP's medium term strategy.

Future proposed work that will be incorporated in this programme will include adaptation as it relates to trans-boundary water resources management, migration, coastal management, mountain areas and small island states. This work will also be linked to the Africa Adaptation Network, which is part of the Global Adaptation Network.

The development of the Africa Adaptation Network, comprising ground facilities, regional centres and an international support group of technical institutions, will help provide essential technical support to the implementation of adaptation issues, through knowledge-sharing, advisory services, monitoring, designing and piloting interventions. The mobilization of knowledge by improving its availability, accessibility and usability for user-communities is a central function of the Global Adaptation Network and therefore, the Africa Adaptation Network. A knowledge management and mobilization system will form an integral part of the Network. It is envisaged therefore, that the network will be used to disseminate good practices both at regional and global levels.

## Policy Support to Pan-African Parliamentarians

UNEP, working closely with several partners and other UN agencies notably UNISDR and UNOCHA, mobilized

Members of Parliament (MPs) across Africa through a meeting to discuss adaptation and its links to disaster risk reduction. Furthermore, UNEP has worked with other MP processes supporting them at the technical and policy levels. It is foreseen that such support will continue particularly in preparation for the CoP15 meeting in December.

## Communication

A number of publications have been prepared that are focused on adaptation issues in Africa. They include:

- Policy brief: Synthesis briefing note focusing on estimates of the costs of climate change adaptation in Africa;
- Brochure: Africa adapting to climate change – A Reality Check

Other publications and materials are underway and will be ready before the end of 2009. Some of these include:

- *Joint publication between UNEP-UNFCCC (DRAFT)* UNFCCC have requested that its publication as a UNEP contribution to the UNFCCC Nairobi Programme of Work for dissemination in Copenhagen. It is tentatively titled "Experiences from the Ground: Examples of coping and adaptation strategies across Africa"
- Posters on adaptation in Africa (Draft) Rollout posters are at the finalization stage
- Booklet on Climate change and adaptation for Parliamentarians Parliamentarians requested this simplified booklet, which will be developed and shared with them.

*For more information, please email [ISDR-Africa@unep.org](mailto:ISDR-Africa@unep.org)*

# Climate Change in a Pastoral Setting

## *The Karamajong of Uganda*

### Oxfam GB

Water scarcity in Karamoja is worsening and is exacerbated by the increasing impact of climatic variability in the region. The Karamajong pastoralists have to wander far to find water and pasture for their animals.

'These days, the heat is too much. It is unbearable,' says 40-year-old Lomaada Nakorilung, a *kraal* leader. 'The seasonal calendar for rain has changed significantly. We used to have rain in January, more rain in March that would bring white ants, a delicacy, and much more rain in April with plenty of mushrooms but 2009 is going to be the fourth year of drought. Earlier, in March, when the rains came there was hope in the community. We were excited ... Women were preparing their gardens, waiting for rain. They have a lot of faith in what they do,' he says

Hunger, locally known as *akoro*, has become the greeting norm of the Karamajong people as climate variability takes its toll on the already degraded environment. Hundreds of thousands of pastoralists are struggling to find enough pasture. They have to adapt to worsening drought and changing rainfall patterns and many are grappling with the difficult situation as they experience changes in the seasons that they and their ancestors have hitherto depended on.

To date, owing to climate change:

- Seasons appear to have shrunk in number and variety
- Rainfall is more unpredictable and shorter in duration
- Wind-storms have increased in strength

All these challenges call for extra measures for disaster risk reduction to avoid the impending humanitarian crisis in this semi arid region. The Karamajong are already dealing with:

- Animal diseases that often break out leading to high livestock mortality
- Increasing resource-based conflicts
- The youth have resorted to environmentally destructive means for generating income such as charcoal burning and brick making / burning

In an attempt to redress the situation, Oxfam GB with funding support from ECHO, has helped to put in place innovative means of harnessing local resources as a measure of disaster risk reduction. For instance, water infrastructure has been set up in Kotido and Kaabong for both animal and human consumption as a mitigation measure to the

worsening effects of the continuing drought. The youth are also encouraged to adopt environmentally friendly means of making building materials that use minimal amount of water and that do not require burning firewood. Community based animal health workers are trained and supported to carry out livestock vaccination and treatment.



A Karamajong family looks for water in the dry riverbed in Kotido district (Photo courtesy of Oxfam GB)



A close view of the dry hills of Karamoja (Photo courtesy of Oxfam GB)

## A. Innovative water harvesting mechanisms



A rock catchment facility in Kotido (Photo courtesy of Oxfam GB)



Children collecting water from an underground tank at the rock catchment facility (Photo courtesy of Oxfam GB)

## B. Using environment friendly mechanisms for making building materials



Disarmed Karacuna (youth) learning the environmental friendly brick making machine (Photo courtesy of Oxfam GB)



Model tukul (residential hut) made out of cheap environment saving building materials (Photo courtesy of Oxfam GB)

## C. Securing pastoralist livelihood and assets – livestock health



Inspecting ongoing work for the animal drug store construction in the community (Photo courtesy of Oxfam GB)



Members of community based animal health workers inside their newly constructed and stocked animal drug store (Photo courtesy of Oxfam GB)

# Swine Flu: the threat of the H1N1 PANDEMIC

## *Hoping for the best, planning for the worst* UNOCHA, West Africa

Each year the influenza virus infects about 1 billion people worldwide and kills hundreds of thousands. When influenza evolves into a pandemic strain such as the current H1N1, however, it can kill millions of people and disrupt the functioning of societies thus causing socio-economic impacts that reach beyond the health sector.

The H1N1 influenza pandemic that emerged in April 2009 is spreading rapidly worldwide. While the overwhelming majority of cases experience mild symptoms and do not require medical care, future evolution of the virus remains unpredictable.

Although viruses from all outbreak sites are following a similar pattern, the impact of the pandemic may be exacerbated in majority of African countries due to weak health systems, poor health status, and limited resources. In these settings, the pandemic can divert scarce resources thereby straining already weak national response capacities. Countries where health services are overburdened by diseases, such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria, will have great difficulty in managing the surge of cases seen as the pandemic influenza continues to spread.

To reduce the impact of the H1N1 pandemic on societies with limited resources key interventions in the following five areas should be prioritized:

### Identify populations at increased risk of disease and death

- Identify and prioritize high-risk groups and areas for increased disease (crowded or closed settings) and death (those with underlying illness, pregnancy or poor access to health care).

### Reduce death by treating acute respiratory illness and pneumonia

- Train, supervise and ensure that health care workers can identify, triage, classify and treat acute respiratory illness and pneumonia in line with national protocols.

- Governments with support by humanitarian partners and donor agencies plan for an additional 30 percent buffer stock of medical supplies to treat pneumonia such as paracetamol, antibiotics, and oxygen at out-patient and inpatient levels.
- Inform and educate the community about home-care of symptoms of non-severe influenza-like illness including diarrhoea and dehydration. Also, give advice about the voluntary separation of the sick as well as when to seek health care.
- If antiviral therapy is available, ensure use for treatment of severe influenza

### Reduce the spread of disease

- Prepare and disseminate risk communication messages by health care workers, volunteers and the community on individual and societal prevention measures in line with national policies and local risk assessment. Risk communication should promote reducing stress on medical facilities through home based-care of mild cases; reduced time in crowded settings, especially by high-risk groups; and respiratory etiquette as well as hand hygiene.
- Map and train social mobilization networks to promote prevention measures when activated.
- Identify target groups to receive first doses of vaccination and advocate for their access.
- Develop operational plans for mass vaccination, when the vaccine is available.

### Continue critical services and plan for the worst

- Review, revise or create business continuity plans for all key organizations to facilitate the continuation of critical operations.
- Revise, reactivate or create contingency plans at country and local levels that prioritize the continuation of critical health and other essential services as part of the society approach.

- Ensure a scenario for a severe pandemic that builds on existing multi-hazard, multi-sector contingency plans and engage national disaster management organizations.
- Ensure at least 8 to 12 weeks of buffer stocks of essential medicines to continue treating priority conditions (i.e. diarrhoea, malaria, malnutrition, HIV and TB) in the community and in health facilities.

## Plan and coordinate efforts

- Incorporate pandemic activities into existing coordination mechanisms such as the health cluster or health sector for coordination, resource mapping and mobilization, assessments and gaps, information management, joint strategies, contingency planning, and training.
- No single agency can provide all priority interventions. Instead, these should be coordinated by building on capacities and comparative advantages of each partner.

Disaster management organizations across Africa should include influenza pandemic as one of the hazards they are preparing for and provide assistance to the Ministries of Health at all stages of the disaster management continuum. Such collaboration will build capacities that will strengthen the resilience of societies to a range of other potential disasters that hit multiple countries at one time and can affect the functioning of many critical services.

*For additional resources, please consult the following sites:*

[www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/en/index.html)  
[www.UN-PIC.org](http://www.UN-PIC.org)  
[www.pandemicpreparedness.org](http://www.pandemicpreparedness.org)



# Disaster Risk Reduction in Africa

## Views and Reviews



# UN-SPIDER Disaster Activities in Africa

*UN-SPIDER is the United Nations Platform for Space Based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response.*

## UN-SPIDER activities include:

- *Technical Advisory Support* to the countries to help in assessing national capacity and in evaluating disaster and risk reduction activities, policies and plans with regard to the use of space-based technologies and solutions.
- *Fostering cooperation* to bridge the gap between space and disaster management communities.
- *Facilitate capacity building* and institutional strengthening including the development of curricula and e-learning platform.
- *Knowledge portal*: the UN-SPIDER knowledge portal is a web-based tool for information, communication and process support. Users can find and share case studies, guides and products through the portal.

UN-SPIDER is active in Africa through a network of National Focal Points and a Regional Support Office. So far, 11 countries in Africa have nominated National Focal Points. The regional support office in Nigeria was formally inaugurated and UN-SPIDER is in the process of signing agreements with the Regional Support Offices in Algeria and South Africa.

## Recent UN-SPIDER Activities in Africa

### UN –SPIDER in Togo

From 13 to 17 July 2009, UN-SPIDER conducted a technical advisory mission to Togo on the official request of the Togolese Government to assess the existing use of space-based technology and information for disaster management and emergency response in the country. Following Burkina Faso, Ghana and Namibia this was the fourth UN-SPIDER technical advisory mission to Africa. The mission was successful in connecting various organizations involved in disaster management within the country and within the region. It also created awareness amongst organizations to undertake collective efforts towards the incorporation of space-based information to support disaster management activities. The mission also pointed out the need to update national disaster management plans with emphasis on space-based technology and information and boosted efforts to establish a National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI) in Togo. The mission team succeeded in strengthening the links of Togo with a number of regional organizations, which will help the country in developing capacity-building plans and benefit from advisory support from these regional organizations in the long-term.



*UN-SPIDER TAM team and participants in Togo  
(Photo courtesy of UN-SPIDER)*

## UN –SPIDER in Burkina Faso

Following the technical advisory mission to Burkina Faso on 17-22 November 2008, UN-SPIDER has supported number of activities in the country. Recently, UN-SPIDER helped Burkina Faso access satellite images during floods in September 2009 and activated the International Charter Space and Major Disasters, upon the request of OCHA-ROWA. UN-SPIDER also fostered networking among experts at regional and international levels to provide advice to focal points to monitor the flood situation and formulate appropriate projects within Flash Appeal.



*Shelter camps in Lome, Togo (Photo courtesy of UN-SPIDER)*

UN-SPIDER has nominated two people from the government for courses on the Geo portal (Geoportal Content Management and (Geo)Database Administration) and Geodatabase (Internet-Map (WMS) Creation and Design), which is organized by 'GLOWA-Volta' projects, a research project funded by the German Ministry of Research and Education. There is a subsequent activity of the GLOWA-Volta project called "Sustainable Development of Research Capacity in the West Africa based on the GLOWA Volta Project" (June 2009-November 2010). The aim of the project "Sustainable Development of Research Capacity in the West Africa" is to strengthen the research network that has developed over the past nine years of the GLOWA Volta Project, and to form a network of scientists, ministries and national institutions experienced with interdisciplinary research in Burkina Faso.

## UN-SPIDER Regional Support Office Network in Africa

Currently, UN-SPIDER has a formally established regional support office (RSO) in Nigeria supported by the National Space Research and Development Agency (NASRDA). UN-SPIDER is also in the process of establishing RSOs in Algeria and South Africa. During the technical advisory mission to Togo, the Nigerian RSO sent two experts to support the UN-SPIDER advisory team. The Algerian Space Agency also supported team in Burkina Faso by sending one expert. Regional support offices support UN-SPIDER activities by promoting UN-SPIDER in regional forums and by providing experts to support UN-SPIDER activities in the region.

## UN –SPIDER in Namibia

UN-SPIDER is co-leading the pilot project on integrated flood management and water related vector borne disease. UN-SPIDER will coordinate this project with scientists from NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center (GSFC) and the NOAA-Cooperative Remote Sensing Science and Technology Center (NOAA-CREST) and in close collaboration with responsible institutions in Namibia. UN-SPIDER especially fosters the dialogue at the national level and with other UN agencies, such as UNDP, UNOCHA, UNISDR, WMO and WHO, which are engaged in this area.

The focus of this pilot project is to collect weekly imagery from satellites such as EO-1, Formosat and Quickbird. Based on the analysis of this imagery and hydrologic modeling, further steps will include deriving useful flood forecasting tools for the next flood season.

From 19th to 21st of August UN-SPIDER hosted a Technical Expert Meeting in Bonn, Germany, to develop further, the "Namibian SensorWeb Pilot project on integrated flood management and water and vector-borne disease modeling". This meeting brought together thirty experts, representing the Department of Water Affairs, Ministry of Agriculture Water and Forestry (MAWF) in Namibia, the German Aerospace Center (DLR), NASA, NOAA, Ukraine Space Research Institute (SRI), City University of New York, Johns Hopkins University – Bloomberg School of Public Health as well as from UN organizations such as UNU-EHS, UNISDR-PPEW and UNW-DPC. The experts also had the opportunity to present the pilot project initiative to the Namibian Ambassador in Germany, His Excellency Mr. Neville Gertze. The pilot project will combine high-resolution satellite imagery with in-situ data and modeling approaches in order to derive useful flood and water-borne disease forecasting tools for local decision makers within a scientifically sound, operational trans-boundary flood management system for the Southern African region.

## UN-SPIDER support GIS Africa in October 2009

UN-SPIDER supported GIS Africa event held in Kampala, Uganda from 26-30 October 2009. The "AfricaGIS 2009" International Conference is a geospatial conference that provides a platform where geo-information professionals from Africa and around the world come together to learn and interact about geo-information technology and its applications. It provides a forum for geo-information professionals to meet, interact, and receive updates on new developments, products and emerging trends and issues.

UN-SPIDER conducted a special session of research papers to present the use of space-based information for disaster management and sponsored the UN booth to exhibit activities carried out by UN Offices in Africa using geo-spatial technologies.

# Introducing Periperi U

## What is Periperi U?

Periperi U is university partnership that focuses on reducing disaster risks in Africa. It stands for 'Partners Enhancing Resilience to People Exposed to Risks' with a special focus on advancing university action on risk and vulnerability reduction in Africa. Periperi is also an African spice. The name is used for a number of risk reduction initiatives in Africa, as well as highly sought after publications on Livelihoods and Urban Vulnerability.

Periperi U aims at strengthening capabilities in disaster risk and vulnerability reduction capacity building in 10 selected institutions of higher learning in Africa from 2008-2011.

## Universities involved

Periperi U partner universities are drawn from Southern, Eastern and Western Africa and include:

- **Bahir Dar University** (Bahir Dar, Ethiopia)
- **Disaster Management Training Centre (DMTC)**, Ardhi University (Dar es Salaam, Tanzania)
- **Built Environment Research Laboratory (LBE)**, University of Science & Technology Houari Boumediene (USTHB) (Algiers, Algeria)
- **Institute of African Studies**, University of Ghana (Accra Ghana)
- **Universidade Técnica de Moçambique (UDM)** (Maputo, Mozambique)
- **Makerere University School of Public Health** (Kampala, Uganda)
- **Disaster Mitigation for Sustainable Livelihoods Programme, DiMP**, University of Cape Town (South Africa)
- **Moi University School of Public Health**, (Eldoret, Kenya)
- **Gaston Berger University**, (St. Louis, Senegal)
- **University of Antananarivo** (Madagascar)

**Over the three-year project, each partner is expected to:**

- Build capacity to provide at least 2-4 short courses annually related to disaster risk management and vulnerability reduction.

- Develop either undergraduate and/or post-graduate programmes related to risk reduction and risk management.
- Generate applied research outputs that will directly benefit national and local risk management.

## Periperi U working with other partners

The Periperi U universities are already working closely with policy makers as well as practitioners across a wide range of disciplines. These collaborations improve the robustness and relevance of teaching and research.

## Accomplishments

In the project's first year, by May 2009, 10 short courses were successfully conducted in Algeria, Mozambique, Tanzania, Uganda and South Africa, reaching 560 participants. This was an impressive first for Africa and showed how the continent's universities can make a real difference in capacity building in disaster risk reduction.

New postgraduate courses at master's level are also at development stage with projections for commencement being as early as October 2009.

## More Information

The Disaster Mitigation for Sustainable Livelihoods Programme (DiMP) at the University of Cape Town is the Periperi U project secretariat but each institution is responsible for its own programme.

There are at least **eight** short courses related to disaster risk reduction scheduled from November 2009.

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*For more information, please visit [riskreductionafrica.org](http://riskreductionafrica.org).*

# Risk Reduction

## The Need for a New Paradigm

### IFRC, West and Central Africa

Since the industrial revolution, risk management within human societies has been organised on the basis of a “fire brigade approach”. This means that alongside significant economic growth and social progress, there is a fire brigade, on stand-by, ready to intervene if things go wrong. After an emergency intervention, the job is done, and the brave fire fighters go back to their station and remain on stand-by, waiting for another emergency alert. For the better part of two centuries, humans were dealing with disaster in this *ad hoc* manner, as disasters were unavoidable.

Having said that, we have to recognise and give the fire fighters credit. They introduced *de facto* the idea of risk reduction, like opening ‘fire cutting’ or having a ‘fire trench’ in the forest to avoid fire extension, impact on surrounding houses and the destruction of entire villages. Through experience and rationality, response interventions generated activities to circumscribe the area of disaster, limit its impact to the minimum and reduce the risk of disaster extension. Even the fire fighting equipment changed and a hatchet was added to the repertoire. In French, ‘pompier’ became ‘sapeur-pompier’ (fire-fighter and sap/cut).

Human development and progress never stops and neither do disasters. This idea was the basis for a paradigm shift based on two new separate but linked ideas:

- Risk is generated by human activities and it is both predictable and manageable. For example, building a dam in a tropical Africa region needs to be accompanied by a basic health program for water-borne disease prevention and control.
- Hazards are natural, like earthquakes, but disasters are not. For instance, a disaster means a hundred thousand deaths due to poor building standards. While very little can be done to predict earthquakes, a lot can be done in ensuring that buildings are constructed to earthquake resistant standards.

This new approach put the responsibility of individuals, organisations, scientific institutions and governments to identify, analyse and treat risk in the centre. The concept as well as the definition of risk management, *to identify, analyse and treat risks*, was born.

Risk management is no longer about firemen waiting for an alert to propel them to manage a crisis and return then return to the station to wait for the next distress call. It is about increasing and collecting scientific knowledge about hazards such as cyclones and other climate related hazards,

identifying risks, developing mitigation measures e.g. earthquake resistant buildings and preparing for the most efficient emergency intervention possible in a multi-sector, multi-interveners framework.

This new approach or paradigm shift from ad hoc actions to more complex approaches covering the disaster risk management cycle: early warning system, prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery, is disaster risk reduction.

Reducing risk is at the heart of the approach. What can individuals and government institutions do before disaster strikes to minimize disaster impact through a well-prepared response plan and coordinated intervention? This became the recommended approach by the international community through the HFA, signed by 168 United Nations member states in Kobe, Japan in January 2005.

An operational mathematical formula has been developed to understand and develop risk reduction activities

#### Vulnerability

$$\text{Risk} = \text{Hazard} \times \text{Vulnerability} - \text{Capacity}$$

#### Capacity

The determinants of risks are hazards, vulnerability and capacity. This operational knowledge should help disaster risk managers to develop community risk reduction programmes.

- Hazards: collecting maximum knowledge and liaising with scientific institutions to understand how hazards work will help to develop EWS, preventive and mitigation measures such as climate science. Hazard analysis will also help to separate natural occurrences from human responsibility. For instance, flood determinants are heavy rain, deforestation and/or uncontrolled urbanisation. Only rain is natural; risk due to deforestation and wild urbanisation can be reduced through DRR programmes.
- Vulnerability is a key modifier of disaster impact. High intensity earthquakes in Japan and cyclones in Cuba and the few related deaths that they cause are no longer surprising. In contrast, less powerful earthquakes around the Mediterranean Sea and cyclones in Haiti

cause huge damage. Building safer living environments and increasing people's resilience is the basis of vulnerability reduction. Vulnerability and capacity assessment could also identify structural change in the environment, support communities to prepare, and adapt to change, like that related to climate change.

- Capacity should be in place to develop Disaster risk programmes, contingency plans and preparedness to intervene in a timely manner and link response activities to recovery action by helping people to go back home and learn the lesson that disasters will recur. Rebuilding homes that will withstand future floods is the best way to link response to risk reduction.

In the mathematic formula, risk is lower if hazard intensity is minimised through immunisation programmes, vulnerability reduced by reforestation, structured urbanisation, poverty reduced and capacity increased through coordinated and efficient response intervention) linked to recovery activities. (Recovery activities increase the denominator— response part— and reduce the numerator—risk reduction part.)

Key questions to develop a Disaster risk reduction programme include:

1. What do we know about a given hazard and can we develop EWS and preventive measures?
2. Can we reduce the consequences (through mitigation and adaptation measures)?
3. Can we support communities to live in safe places and be better prepared to face disasters?
4. What kind of capacities and resources should be put in place to undertake response and recovery activities?

Resource and capacity building for disaster risk reduction are a concern as humanitarian aid is dominating the field of disaster risk management. Even the concept of risk reduction is not well understood among the humanitarian community. Humanitarian aid activities are increasingly receiving more human and financial resources despite the proven "cost effectiveness" of risk reduction programmes.

The ISDR system, in which the IFRC is playing an important role, has been established to create a common framework to enable the international community to join its effort to provide coordinated support to countries to adapt the risk reduction approach and develop disaster risk management programmes.

A joint international community effort also launched the Disaster Risk Reduction Global Platform to boost the implementation of the HFA Plan of Action by member states.

The new risk reduction paradigm is not difficult to understand or to implement. The challenge is to change our old

way of managing disasters, change our mind set, change donors structure and budgeting mechanisms related to disasters—most of them build a humanitarian department with relatively easy access to funds when disaster strike—and get governments to establish policies that promote and develop the risk reduction approach.

Some organisations like the World Bank and donors are in the process of implementing measures to support the new disaster risk reduction approach. Even if measures are taken with "hesitation" by some actors, it is a positive sign.

A change in mindset usually requires time, but hopefully it will not take too long. In the words of J.M. Keynes, "In the long run, we are all dead".

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## About the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction

Adopted by United Nations Member States in 2000, the **International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR)** is a global strategy aimed at coordinating the efforts of different actors to reduce disaster risks and build a "culture of prevention", as part of sustainable development.

The secretariat to the Strategy, **UNISDR**, serves as the focal point in the United Nations system for the coordination of disaster reduction and works towards integrating disaster risk reduction into sound and equitable development, environmental protection and humanitarian action. The motto for UNISDR is "to connect and convince". UNISDR has its headquarters in Geneva, with a liaison office in New York, and regional offices in Africa (Nairobi and Addis Ababa), Arab region (Cairo), Americas (Panama), Asia/Pacific (Bangkok, Fiji, Kobe), Europe and Central Asia (Brussels, Bonn and Dushanbe) and a Training Centre in Incheon, Republic of Korea.

The **ISDR system** comprises partnerships through which governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental

organisations, international financial institutions, technical institutions and networks, civil society organisations and the private sector interact and share information on risk reduction programmes and activities.

The Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction is the main global forum for parties involved in disaster risk reduction and it convenes every two years. In addition, regional organizations in coordination with UNISDR and other ISDR system partners convene Regional Platforms for Disaster Risk Reduction and Ministerial meetings. National Platforms for Disaster Risk Reduction are a generic denomination of national multi-stakeholder committees or mechanisms that promote the implementation of the Hyogo Framework, advocate and coordinate risk reduction issues nationally. Local platforms or alliances for risk reduction are being formed in some communities and cities.

UNISDR coordinates campaigns to raise the awareness to increase commitment and action to reduce disaster losses. The 2010-11 campaign focuses on Making Cities Resilient.

### The Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters

Adopted by 162 Member States of the United Nations, The Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) is the key instrument and global blueprint for implementing disaster risk reduction. Its overarching goal is to build the resilience of nations and communities to disasters, by achieving substantive reduction of disaster losses by 2015.

The HFA offers five areas of priorities for actions to achieve disaster resilience for vulnerable communities in the context of sustainable development. The Priority Areas are:

- 1. Make disaster risk reduction a priority: Ensure that disaster risk reduction is a national and a local priority with a strong institutional basis for implementation.**
- 2. Know the risks and take action: Identify, assess, and monitor disaster risks and enhance early warning.**
- 3. Build understanding and awareness: Use knowledge, innovation, and education to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels.**
- 4. Reduce risk: Reduce the underlying risk factors.**
- 5. Be prepared and ready to act: Strengthen disaster preparedness for effective response at all levels.**



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International Strategy for Disaster Reduction

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