

THE EIGHTH AFRICA REGIONAL PLATFORM AND THE SEVENTH HIGH-LEVEL MEETING ON DISASTER RISK REDUCTION 16 -19 NOVEMBER 2021, NAIROBI, KENYA

THEME: TOWARDS DISASTER RISK-INFORMED DEVELOPMENT FOR A RESILIENT
AFRICA IN A COVID-19 TRANSFORMED WORLD

1. INTRODUCTION

Home to just over one billion people (14% of the world's population¹), the Sub-Saharan African (SSA) region continues to grapple with the impacts and implications of the COVID-19 pandemic which has exposed severe and systemic inequalities as the world plummets into its deepest recession since WWII.² This health risk has radically altered our way of living, working, and socializing. Urban areas are the epidemic's epicenters, with over 95% of the confirmed COVID-19 cases. Africa faces the dire consequences of the crisis, necessitating timely responses, recovery, and for rebuilding more robust policies and strategies with a critical focus on health emergencies.

Over 50% of Africa's GDP is accounted for by the continent's cities.³ In Africa urban areas are the main economic engines supporting national governments in terms of growth, jobs, and revenues. Given their centrality in urban development, the economic shock resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic has had a cascading impact on cities and their functions. As the leading financial hubs in most SSA countries, primary cities will experience pronounced economic implications due to lockdowns and movement restrictions.

On the on-set of COVID-19, Sub-Saharan Africa's Member States at the national, sub-national, and local levels developed various measures to respond and contain the pandemic and address its implications on vulnerable groups and national economies. Sensitization campaigns were launched and the prepositioning of health facilities, including personal protective equipment, face masks and hand sanitizers were undertaken. Some governments also lowered the tax bracket to support business, The response to COVID-19 in the region unfolded with various Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) approaches and initiatives to curb the spread of the pandemic and its interconnected socio-economic impacts. Despite often-resource constrained situations in many Sub-Saharan countries, measures to respond to and combat the pandemic were quickly put in place. Due to the experience gained from dealing with past cyclic occurrences of Ebola outbreaks and a largely youthful population, most SSA countries may have managed to dodge the high mortality rates seen in other parts of the world.

¹ World Bank Statistics, 2019

² COMESA, 2020. *Macroeconomic Impacts of COVID 19 in Sub-Saharan- Africa*, Lusaka: COMESA Monetary Institute.

³ UNHabitat, 2020. *COVID-19 In African Cities*

The Sendai Framework⁴ with its expanded scope to cover the risk of small-scale and large-scale, frequent, and infrequent, sudden, and slow-onset disasters caused by natural or man-made hazards, as well as related environmental, technological, and biological hazards and risks, provides the key principles and guidance on how to reduce vulnerability and exposure to risk. It aims to guide the multi-hazard management of disaster risk at all levels as well as within and across all sectors.

The health sector is singled out as a critical sector that governments need to address to build a resilient health infrastructure that can withstand a high magnitude of health emergencies. During the COVID-19 period, AUC, UNDRR and their partners have continued to engage with member states to ensure that all the efforts that have been undertaken during the last years to promote the implementation of the DRR agenda in Africa are achieved. These efforts were more recently illustrated through the priorities identified in the ministerial declaration adopted at the 7th High Level meeting on DRR in 2018, the Africa Common Position to the 2019 Global Platform⁵ for DRR, the key recommendations from the meeting with national and regional DRR focal points (28 April 2020), and subsequent three virtual meetings of the Africa Working Group on DRR held on 23 July 2020⁶, 22 October 2021⁷ and 25-26 March 2021⁸. They included a call to action to design DRR strategies at the national and local levels and to establish a continentally harmonized impact-based early warning system for early action and transboundary risk management. Other key recommendations included the need for the collection and analysis of disaster data, the strengthening of national platforms to enhance coordination among multiple stakeholders.

2. BACKGROUND

UNDRR's biennially published African Status Report (2015)⁹, describes Africa as home to half of the world's most risk-prone countries and that it is experiencing a rising number of disasters. The report identifies climate change, poorly planned urbanization, environmental degradation, poverty, and inequality as well as fragility and conflict as the biggest disaster risk drivers across the continent. The Africa biennial report published by the African Union¹⁰ covering the period from 2015-2018, also underlined the rise in risks, vulnerability and exposure that are occurring in all the AU member States.

Africa faces a significant challenge from climate change. In early 2019, the continent witnessed the most devastating disasters on record due to tropical cyclones Idai and Kenneth. These cyclones affected Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Malawi, and Comoros and left more than 1,000 people dead and many more displaced. The forthcoming Africa Regional Assessment report

⁴ <https://www.undrr.org/publication/sendai-framework-disaster-risk-reduction-2015-2030>

⁵ https://www.preventionweb.net/files/67051_africacommonpositiontothe2019global.pdf

⁶ <https://www.undrr.org/publication/1st-virtual-africa-working-group-disaster-risk-reduction>

⁷ <https://www.undrr.org/publication/2nd-virtual-africa-working-group-disaster-risk-reduction>

⁸ <https://www.undrr.org/publication/3rd-virtual-africa-working-group-disaster-risk-reduction>

⁹ <https://www.undrr.org/publication/disaster-risk-reduction-africa-status-report-2015>

¹⁰ <https://au.int/en/documents/20200805/first-africa-biennial-report-disaster-risk-reduction-synopsis-report>

(2020)¹¹ also indicates that, across the 44 countries in the SSA and during the decade of 2008–2018, over 157 million persons were directly and indirectly affected by disasters, and in most cases, these were associated with natural hazards. Historically, we have witnessed a pattern of progress and setbacks occurring in many parts of Africa, where droughts and floods—two of Africa’s most common natural hazards- have caused significant displacement of populations, losses in agriculture and food production systems and infrastructure damage. All of which resulted in huge economic losses and hampered the attainment of the sustainable development goals.

The countries in the region are increasingly becoming aware of hazard risks and are undertaking efforts to address it, with varying degrees of success. Efforts to reduce hazard-induced disasters are progressing, albeit in the face of technical and financial capacity constraints. However, the risk landscape, and the dynamics of the interrelationships between threats, hazards, vulnerability, and exposure, are changing. There is a need to address the increasing prevalence of systemic risk, as well as hazard risk. Reducing both hazard and systemic risks requires science-based and knowledge-informed DRR integrated within a coherent policy framework. This is because disaster risk management (DRM) is an area of public service whose performance depends on increasing knowledge of risk and its reduction. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 also prioritizes the understanding of risk in all its dimensions as key to attaining resilience at all levels.

Following the adoption of the Sendai Framework, the African Union Commission, Member States, Regional Economic Communities and other relevant stakeholders, guided by the Africa Working Group on Disaster risk Reduction, developed a roadmap to facilitate the alignment of the Africa Programme of Action (POA)¹² with the Sendai Framework and thereby pave the way towards effective implementation of the Sendai Framework in Africa as a key instrument contributing to the realization of the Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want.

3. REGIONAL PLATFORMS FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

Regional Platforms for Disaster Risk Reduction are multi-stakeholder forums that were developed incrementally after the Kobe Conference 2005. While they have varying characteristics, they all share the same traits as dynamic forums for policymakers, partners, experts, and practitioners to announce initiatives, launch products, share information, promote campaigns, monitor progress, and provide evidence about disaster risk reduction. The Sendai Framework recognizes the Global and Regional Platforms for Disaster Risk Reduction as key mediums for its implementation and underscores the need for the Global Platform and Regional Platforms to function as a coherent system of mechanisms to fully leverage the potential of collaboration across all stakeholders and sectors to provide guidance and support in implementation. The function of the Global and Regional Platforms is identified in the Sendai Framework’s paragraphs 28 (c) and 49. In particular,

¹¹ <https://www.undrr.org/publication/highlights-africa-regional-assessment-report-2020>

¹² <https://www.preventionweb.net/publication/programme-action-implementation-sendai-framework-disaster-risk-reduction-2015-2030>

they are expected to serve as instruments to: Forge partnerships; Periodically assess progress on implementation, Share practice and knowledge on disaster risk-informed policies, programmes and investments, including on development and climate issues; Promote the integration of disaster risk management in other relevant sectors; and Contribute to the integrated and coordinated follow-up processes to United Nations conferences and summits.

4. AFRICA REGIONAL PLATFORM

The Africa Regional Platform is held once every two years as a forum that brings together African Member States, intergovernmental organizations, development partners, civil society organizations and other stakeholders to review progress in the implementation of the continental and global disaster risk reduction frameworks. In the case of Africa, the regional platform also deliberates on the POA for the implementation of the Sendai Framework in Africa, and the Sendai Framework. The Platform also enables the creation of beneficial networks for sharing of good practices and lessons learned with a view to enhancing synergies for co-creation, coordination, increasing awareness, and mobilizing commitments to disaster risk reduction across the continent. The last session of the Africa Regional Platform was held in Tunisia and combined both the African and Arab regions. The key outcome from this platform was the Tunis Declaration¹³ on accelerating the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 and the Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction.

5. THE HIGH-LEVEL MEETING

To review progress made in the domestication and implementation of the Sendai Framework and discuss and agree on follow-up actions to accelerate implementation, UNDRR in collaboration with the African Union Commission, and the IGAD Secretariat will organize the Eighth Session of the Africa Regional Platform and the Seventh High-Level Meeting of African Ministers responsible for DRR in November 2021. The Platform and the High-Level Meeting will be hosted by the Government of Kenya.

6. THEMATIC FOCUS AREAS

The Eighth Session of the Africa Regional Platform will review the progress made in DRR in Africa and provide pathways through which stakeholders can accelerate the implementation of the POA for the implementation of the Sendai Framework in Africa. Special focus will be on COVID-19 impacts and implications and how governments are continuing to address recovery and building-back-better for a resilient future.

The Eighth Session of the Africa Regional Platform will encompass several thematic areas including, but not limited to:

1. Understanding and management of disaster risk;
2. Risk-informed and resilient recovery in the face of COVID-19

¹³ https://www.preventionweb.net/files/57759_finaladopteddrafttunisdeclaration13.pdf

3. Strengthening disaster risk governance in the context of multiple hazards and COVID-19;
4. Disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and sustainable development;
5. Financing for DRR and risk-informed investments and development; and
6. Urban resilience: Enhancing resilience at the local level.

Pre-conference and side events will focus on topics, including but not limited to the following:

1. Continentally harmonized impact-based multi-hazard early warning systems for early action and transboundary risk management;
2. Sendai Framework Monitoring tool, including the regional module;
3. Leave no one behind-investing in local action and empowering those most at risk.
4. Progress made in implementing commitments in the Tunis Declaration and the Africa Common Position to 2019 Global Platform for DRR: is Africa on track to achieve the Sendai Framework and POA targets?
5. North-South, South-South and Triangular Cooperation: an accelerator to achieve the goal and targets of the Sendai Framework and the POA (access to resources, technology transfer, capacity building, etc.);
6. Nature-based solutions;
7. Scaling up DRR in humanitarian action;
8. Food security, Disaster Displacement, conflicts, and migration; and
9. Gender and DRR/M

7. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the Eighth Session of Africa Regional Platform on DRR will be:

- a. To review progress in the implementation of Sendai Framework and its Programme of Action in Africa, according to priorities identified in the outcome of the last Regional Platform and the High-Level meeting on DRR (Tunis Declaration) and in the Africa Common Position to the 2019 Global Platform for DRR;
- b. To discuss and agree on the revised implementation matrix for the Programme of Action for the implementation of the Sendai Framework in Africa for the second phase, 2021-2025;
- c. To discuss and agree on recommendations to accelerate the implementation of the Sendai Framework in the continent.

8. EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Being a multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral platform, the expected outcomes will include;

1. Documented good practices and knowledge on disaster risk-informed policies, programmes and investments are shared, with a focus on lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic prevention and recovery measures;

2. Multi-stakeholder and multi-sector partnerships are forged for increased disaster resilience;
3. Progress is assessed in the implementation of the Sendai Framework for DRR in the region;
4. Adoption of the matrix for the Programme of Action for the implementation of the Sendai Framework in Africa for the second phase, 2021-2025; and
5. The integration of disaster risk management in relevant sectors, particularly the health sector, is promoted for longer term resilience.

9. KEY DELIVERABLES

The technical segment of the platform will result in key recommendations and guidance on the way forward including stakeholders' voluntary commitments. The high-level segment will adopt the implementation matrix for the Programme of Action for the implementation of the Sendai Framework in Africa for the period 2021-2025, as well as a declaration in support of Member States commitments to accelerate the implementation of the Sendai Framework and POA in the region. The key outcome documents will include:

1. Stakeholder Voluntary Commitments registered and documented.
2. Ministerial Declaration
3. Implementation Matrix for the Programme of Action for the implementation of the Sendai Framework in Africa for the period 2021-2025

10. PARTICIPATION

The Africa Regional Platform is the highest multi-stakeholder forum on disaster risk reduction in Africa. Participants include African Member States, Regional Economic Communities, mayors and local governments, parliamentarians, development partners including donors, United Nations, Non-Governmental Organizations, academic, scientific, and technological institutions, community practitioners, persons with disabilities, youth, women's groups, private sector, media, and other international, national, and local organizations. The participants of High-Level Meeting are the ministers responsible for disaster risk reduction in African Member States or their designates.

11. PLATFORM STRUCTURE

The Eighth Session of Africa Regional Platform on DRR will be fully virtual due to the on-going COVID-19 Crisis. However, the Seventh High Level meeting of ministers responsible for DRR in Africa will be held in a hybrid format but for a limited number of people with physical contact at the venue. The platform will be comprised of virtual pre-conference side events and stakeholders' consultations, virtual plenary and special sessions hosting panel discussions and roundtable discussions on topical issues as per the thematic focus areas. Broad consultations will be held to bring on board African professionals, experts, and practitioners to participate in these sessions

of the platform. Partners and Stakeholders wishing to host special sessions and side events will also be invited to participate.

