

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

Press Release No: xxxxxxxx
Venue: Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Date: 20 July 2023

AU Commission and ARC commence Joint Policy Dialogue Series on Gender and Disaster Risk Management



AU Member States and other stakeholders have been called upon to ensure gender-sensitive products to their populations. This message was the consolidated call at the inaugural policy Dialogue on Gender, Disaster Risk Reduction, Outbreaks, Epidemics and Food Security held on 4-5 July in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The much-anticipated event convened policy and decision-makers, representatives from member states, experts and representatives from partner organisations and institutions, think tanks, academia, media and the private sector to deliberate on these topics.

The [African Risk Capacity](#) (ARC), a specialised agency of the African Union (AU), in collaboration with the AU Commission through the Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Unit and the Women, Youth and Gender Directorate, organised the event. The Policy Dialogues are integral to promoting gender equality in implementing policies and programmes on Disaster Risk Management (DRM).

Specifically, the inaugural Policy Dialogue sought to facilitate the transformation of DRM approaches to attain gender equality for vulnerable women and men in Africa; sensitise policymakers on the interlinkages between climate disasters, disease outbreaks, food security, and the associated gender implications; and share experiences and lessons learnt on the implementation of gender & DRM and food security from ARC member states. The Dialogue also aimed to reflect on the importance of strengthening monitoring systems and predictive analysis for additional, more frequent and qualitative updates on food crises; identify ways to expedite the implementation of phase II matrix 2021-2025 of the Programme of Action for the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 in

Africa; and discuss policy options to implement the Nairobi Declaration, which calls for the Member States and RECs to increase the annual budgetary allocation and establish innovative financing solutions for implementing gender-sensitive and inclusive DRR strategies, programmes and action plans.



Mr Gatkuoth Kai, the AUC Technical Coordinator for Disaster Risk Reduction, who represented HE Ambassador Josefa Sacko, Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment (ARBE), noted that "The Dialogue is very relevant, given what we, as a continent, have been experiencing lately - from the locust upsurge in East Africa to record-breaking drought and food insecurity, the COVID-19 pandemic, recurring floods and destructive cyclones". He said, "disasters are here to stay and more needs to be done to counter the growing disaster events."

Dr Tapiwa Nyasulu-Rweyemamu, the Head of the Gender Policy and Development Division at the AUC's Women, Gender and Youth Directorate, spoke in-depth about the institution's activities, including the [AU Guidelines on Gender-Responsive Responses to COVID-19](#) in 2020. In collaboration with ARC, the Directorate was also pivotal in establishing the Gender and Disaster Risk Management Platform (GDRMP) in 2021.

Dr Ibrahima Cheikh Diong, United Nations Assistant-Secretary General and ARC Group Director General, lauded the Policy Dialogue series as a game-changer, saying, "Key stakeholders with experience in embedding the gender angle indifferent interventions are in attendance. We are happy that the Member States are present. We also recognise the support of the European Union and the Government of Canada that continue to enable our work." He underscored the importance of going beyond talk in mainstreaming gender in DRM. "We must be deliberate in driving for gender equality in DRM and all our other efforts to achieve true resilience to the growing threats of climate change, outbreaks, epidemics and food insecurity. These pose a significant risk to our development, and we cannot afford to leave anyone behind."

Dr Chimimba David Phiri, Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) Subregional Coordinator for Eastern Africa and Representative to the AUC and UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), pointed out that increasing disasters are the new norm. Disasters take lives and devastate livelihoods in rural areas. FAO has a history of long-term experience in mainstreaming DRR in agricultural plans through risk mapping, application of geospatial information in risk management and multi-hazard risk assessment. Its best practices include using early warning systems in Malawi's disease surveillance and food security. FAO is committed to enhancing gender-disaggregated data and long-term recovery. The organisation also signed a Memorandum of Understanding with ARC on 1 February 2023.

Lara Bremner, Counsellor and Head of Cooperation, Pan Africa and Regional Development, expressed how the Government of Canada is proud to partner with and have a strong position on feminism and women and girls.

Other critical best practices from the Dialogue included the application of gender-sensitive budgeting and gender mainstreaming with the positioning of a gender director in every ministry in Zimbabwe. Towards early warning systems, the Government of Zimbabwe also procured a weather radar system in 2022.

Rita Missal, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Global Recovery Advisor, explained that the organisation supported the AU Commission in developing the COVID-19 Recovery Framework for Africa. Ms Missal noted, "One of the biggest lessons from the global pandemic is preparedness for recovery; therefore, as we address any crisis, we should also address the long-term recovery."

The Policy Dialogue pointed out various challenges, including significant impediments in the legal and institutional capacity of gender. More gaps also exist in pre-disaster preparedness and financing. The lack of disaggregated gender data to influence policy or inform actionable steps in disaster risk management remains challenging.

Participants emphasised essential aspects such as women's empowerment, women's ownership of land, meeting the basic needs of women and girls during disasters, prioritising resource mobilisation at a local level, gender mainstreaming and analysis, and enhancing access to advanced technologies to promote sustainable food and agriculture systems as critical to driving the change we want.

As a follow-up, the recommendations and outcomes of the policy dialogue will feed into relevant regional and global events and processes. A report of the Dialogue will inform the next steps in this process. The recommendations will be translated into a policy brief that will be published on the Gender and Disaster Risk Management Platform and also on the AU website.

Under the leadership of the African Union, the Policy Dialogue was made possible by ARC's partners, Global Affairs Canada and the European Union Commission. It was a collaboration with the FAO, an example of the impact of working together to achieve the same goal.

For further information, please contact:

Mr. Gatkuoth Kai | Technical Coordinator for Disaster Risk Reduction | Directorate of Sustainable Environment and Blue Economy, | E-mail: KaiG@africa-union.org | WhatsApp: +251 909537884

For media enquiry:

Mr. Molalet Tsedeke, Information and Communications Directorate | African Union Commission | +251-911-630 631; Molalett@africa-union.org

Ms. Maryanne Muriuki, Communication Specialist, Disaster Risk Reduction Unit, Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment, AU Commission. Email: MuriukiM@africa-union.org

Information and Communication Directorate, African Union Commission | **E-mail:** DIC@africa-union.org
Web: au.int | Addis Ababa, Ethiopia | **Follow Us:** [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#) | [YouTube](#)