

**ANNUAL GENDER AND DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT
CONFERENCE**

***“REFRESHING AFRICAN RISK CAPACITY GENDER AND DRM
STRATEGY AND NAVIGATING NEW PARTNERSHIPS IN THE
EVOLVING GENDER AND DRM LANDSCAPE”***

28-29 MAY 2024: ACCRA, GHANA



CONFERENCE REPORT

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2024 Annual Gender and Disaster Risk Management (DRM) Conference, held in Accra, Ghana on 28-29 May 2024, served as a pivotal moment for the African Risk Capacity (ARC), marking the culmination of the ARC Gender Strategy initiated in 2019. The conference provided a platform to evaluate the progress made, exchange insights, and chart a course for future endeavours. Participants from various sectors convened to assess gender mainstreaming efforts comprehensively within ARC, laying the groundwork for inclusive disaster risk management in the years ahead.

Central to the discussions was the implementation of ARC Gender Strategy in ARC member states in ESA and WCA regions. Testimonies from government coordinators provided real-world examples of gender integration in disaster risk management at national levels, offering valuable lessons for replication and scaling. Additionally, dialogues with both existing and potential partners highlighted the pivotal role of collaboration in advancing gender-sensitive disaster risk management initiatives.

As the conference concluded, a resounding call for sustained momentum and expanded collaboration emerged. Participants underscored the need to refresh the ARC Gender Strategy and develop new activities for the next phase (2025-2029). By aligning efforts, leveraging partnerships, and embracing innovation, ARC aims to uphold its commitment to gender equality and effective disaster risk management, fostering resilience and inclusivity in communities across Africa.

In summary, the 2024 conference reaffirmed ARC's collective dedication to meaningful progress in gender-integrated disaster risk management. Through continued collaboration and forward-thinking strategies, ARC is poised to lead the way in creating safer and more resilient societies for all, ensuring that no one is left behind in the face of disasters.

II. INTRODUCTION

ARC's Gender integration work received an accelerated boost in November 2022 with the signing of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) investment grant agreement on "Gender Sensitive Mechanisms for Epidemic Preparedness". The objective of the investment agreement is to support the member countries of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to provide rapid and appropriate responses to epidemics and outbreaks of diseases in the region, with the following fundamental objectives:

- Strengthen the capacity of ECOWAS Member States to better respond to outbreaks and epidemics.
- Promote gender-sensitive mechanisms for disease outbreaks and epidemic management.

- Provide technical support and outreach activities on the polio virus in West Africa; and
- Strengthen innovative partnerships in promoting Pan-African and Sub-regional collaboration.

Through this project, ARC commissioned Gender, Health Emergency and Disaster Risk Management Specialists in each country to conduct an in-depth gender analysis of the health sector from the perspective of disease outbreaks and the interlinked disaster risk management and financing sector in the six project countries (Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Nigeria, Senegal and Sierra Leone).

ARC's Gender Strategy has as its goal to transform Disaster Risk Management (DRM) approaches to ensure gender equality for vulnerable women and men in ARC Member States. The Gender strategy proposed a 5-year Plan of Action, outlining key actions to be carried out by ARC towards effective Gender mainstreaming in its Member States.

As the Gender Strategy tenure ends in 2024, , and as the Gender and O&E projects was completed in May 2024, it was important to take stock of our collective actions, share experiences, learn lessons and map out important steps going forwards. The main objective of this Gender Conference was to take stock of Gender Mainstreaming in ARC from a wholistic perspective with the following specific objectives:

- 1) To share experiences and outline lessons learnt in the integration of Gender in the O&E project.
- 2) To set an agenda for the next phase of the gender in O&E project
- 3) To critically examine the implementation of the ARC Gender Strategy Plan of Action 2019-2024
- 4) To explore critical actions and initiatives for consolidation of achievements of the Gender Strategy in the light of changing DRM landscape
- 5) To examine the Gender Partnership strategy and explore avenues of strengthening partnership in the light of changing DRM landscape.

The conference was organised under three major themes:

- 1) *Outbreaks and Epidemics*: Sharing lessons and experiences learned from integrating gender perspectives in the Outbreaks and Epidemics (O&E) project. These discussions were pivotal in planning for the next phase, ensuring that O&E strategies remain effective and inclusive.
- 2) *ARC Gender Strategy*: Reviewing the Gender Strategy and Proposing Key Fundamentals for its Refresh, critically examining the implementation of the ARC Gender Strategy Plan of Action 2019-2024; to identifying successes, address challenges, and set a refreshed agenda that will guide efforts for the implementation of the gender strategy in the coming years.
- 3) *Navigating New Partnerships in the Evolving DRM Landscape*: Exploring avenues to strengthen partnerships considering the changing DRM landscape. This involved identifying potential collaborators, leveraging existing relationships, and creating a roadmap for sustainable and impactful partnerships

This report will focus exclusively on day two of the conference, which focused on the refresh of the ARC Gender strategy.

III. REVIEW OF THE GENDER STRATEG AND THE GENDER PLAN OF ACTION 2025-2029

The second day of the conference focused on the implementation of the Gender strategy in the WCA and ESA regions with the morning session focusing on making an overview of the ARC Gender Strategy and Plan of Action, the process of its implementation, identifying the key challenges and the key achievements. Experiences from members states from WCA and ESA regions shared the journey for gender integration in the their respective regions, focusing on the challenges, opportunities and best practices that are scalable. The afternoon session focused on discussions on initiatives for the refresh of the gender strategy through the adoption of a plan of work for the next five (5) years, as the strategic objectives of the gender strategy remained relevant.



1. The implementation of the gender strategy

Discussions in a form of panel discussions from government coordinators from West and Central Africa and East Africa member states from Zimbabwe, Malawi, the Union of Comoros, Somalia, The Gambia, Burkina Faso, Senegal, and Côte d'Ivoire focused on sharing insights on the extent of the implementation of the gender strategy in their respective member states, highlighting both challenges and opportunities in their respective regions. The journey towards gender equity in Disaster Risk Management (DRM) in Africa's member states has been a dynamic and an evolving process, characterized by significant strides, challenges, and transformative initiatives. Each representative shared best practices that could inspire other countries to enhance their gender integration efforts.

The following were the salient points of the discussions:

❖ *Awareness-Raising and Capacity-Building:*

Many countries focused on raising awareness about the importance of gender equity in DRM. Training programs and workshops were conducted to educate stakeholders on the differential impacts of disasters on men and women, emphasizing the need for inclusive approaches.

- ❖ *Strategic Planning and Policy Formulation:* Member states developed national gender strategies that aligned with broader national development plans and international frameworks. These strategies included specific actions and targets for achieving gender equity in DRM.

❖ *Community Engagement:*

- Recognizing the critical role of communities, member states involved local communities, particularly women's groups, in the planning and implementation of DRM activities. This ensured that strategies were culturally relevant and effectively addressed local needs.

❖ *Challenges*

Despite significant progress, the journey has not been without challenges. Cultural barriers and traditional gender roles sometimes hindered the full participation of women in DRM activities. Addressing these barriers required continuous advocacy and community engagement. Additionally, limited financial and technical resources posed challenges to implementing gender-sensitive DRM initiatives. However, these challenges also presented opportunities for innovative solutions and partnerships

❖ *Opportunities*

Despite these challenges, the discussions also showcased numerous opportunities and best practices:

Inclusive Policy Frameworks: Developing and adopting policies that explicitly incorporate gender considerations can lead to more equitable and effective DRM outcomes.

Community Engagement: Actively involving women and marginalized groups in DRM activities enhances the inclusivity and effectiveness of interventions.

Digital Platforms: Utilizing digital platforms for knowledge sharing and capacity building has proven to be a valuable tool in advancing gender integration efforts.

❖ **Achievements and Lessons Learned**

Gender-Sensitive Policies: Several member states successfully mainstreamed gender perspectives into their national DRM policies and frameworks, leading to more inclusive and effective disaster risk reduction and management practices.

Inclusive Response and Recovery: Gender considerations were integrated into disaster response and recovery plans, ensuring equitable access to relief resources and promoting women's participation in recovery efforts.

Global and Regional Partnerships: Establishing partnerships with international organizations and regional bodies played a crucial role in aligning DRM efforts with global gender equality goals and securing sustainable funding and technical support.

In summary, it can be said that the journey for gender integration in DRM in Africa's member states represented at the conference has been marked by significant progress and valuable lessons. Through awareness-raising, capacity-building, strategic planning, and continuous adaptation, member states have made considerable strides in integrating gender perspectives into DRM. The achievements and challenges encountered along the way provide a strong foundation for continued efforts towards a more inclusive and resilient future for all communities across the continent. The insights and best practices shared by national coordinators during the panel discussion serve as an inspiration for other countries striving to advance gender equity in DRM.

❖ **Priorities for action for a better gender integration in DRM**

It is important to note that throughout the discussions, panellists and the audience made suggestions in terms of priorities for action by the African Risk Capacity, its partners and stakeholders engaged in the DRM landscape.

To the African Risk Capacity

Strengthening Partnerships:

- Global and Regional Alliances: Foster partnerships with international organizations like the United Nations, World Bank, and regional bodies such as the African Union.

- Public-Private Collaborations: Engage with the private sector to leverage resources and expertise.
- Academic and Research Institutions: Collaborate with universities and research centres to support evidence-based policy making.

Capacity Building:

- Training Programs: Develop and implement comprehensive training programs for stakeholders at all levels, focusing on gender-sensitive DRM practices.
- Workshops and Seminars: Organize regular workshops and seminars to share knowledge and best practices.
- E-Learning Platforms: Use e digital platforms to provide continuous learning opportunities and resources.

Data and Analysis:

- Gender-Disaggregated Data: Improve the collection and analysis of gender-disaggregated data to identify specific vulnerabilities and needs.
- Impact Assessments: Conduct regular impact assessments to evaluate the effectiveness of gender-integrated DRM initiatives.
- Research and Reports: Publish research findings and reports to disseminate knowledge and inform policy decisions.

Innovative Solutions:

- Technology Integration: Encourage the use of innovative technologies, such as remote sensing and geographic information systems (GIS), in DRM.
- Pilot Projects: Implement pilot projects to test and refine new approaches to gender-sensitive DRM.
- Innovation Hubs: Establish innovation hubs to foster creativity and problem-solving among stakeholders.

Community-Based Approaches:

- Participatory Planning: Engage communities in the planning and implementation of DRM strategies to ensure inclusivity.
- Local Leadership: Empower local leaders, especially women, to take active roles in DRM efforts.

- Tailored Interventions: Develop interventions that are culturally sensitive and tailored to the specific needs of different communities.

To National Governments

Policy Development and Implementation

- Gender-Inclusive Policies: Develop national policies that integrate gender perspectives into all aspects of DRM.
- Resource Allocation: Ensure adequate funding and resources are allocated to support gender-sensitive DRM initiatives.
- Regulatory Frameworks: Establish regulatory frameworks that mandate the inclusion of gender considerations in DRM planning and response.

Institutional Strengthening

- Dedicated Units: Create or strengthen dedicated gender units within national DRM agencies.
- Inter-Ministerial Coordination: Foster coordination between different government ministries to ensure a cohesive approach to gender and DRM.
- Capacity Building: Provide training for government officials on gender-sensitive DRM practices.

Community Engagement:

- Grassroots Involvement: Promote the active involvement of grassroots organizations and community members in DRM planning and implementation.
- Public Awareness Campaigns: Conduct public awareness campaigns to educate communities about the importance of gender equality in DRM.
- Feedback Mechanisms: Establish mechanisms for community feedback to ensure that DRM strategies are responsive to local needs.

To Partners (International Organizations, NGOs, and Private Sector)

Collaborative Projects

- Joint Initiatives: Develop and implement joint projects that address gender and DRM, leveraging the strengths of each partner.
- Funding Mechanisms: Establish funding mechanisms to support collaborative efforts and ensure sustainability.

- Knowledge Exchange: Facilitate knowledge exchange and best practices sharing through conferences, webinars, and publications.

Technical Assistance

- Expert Support: Provide technical assistance to governments and local organizations to build their capacity in gender-sensitive DRM.
- Toolkits and Guidelines: Develop toolkits and guidelines to support the implementation of gender-integrated DRM strategies.
- Monitoring and Evaluation: Assist in the monitoring and evaluation of DRM initiatives to ensure they effectively address gender disparities.

Advocacy and Awareness

- Global Campaigns: Launch global advocacy campaigns to raise awareness about the importance of gender equality in DRM.
- Policy Influence: Engage in policy dialogues to influence international and national DRM policies towards greater gender inclusivity.
- Media Partnerships: Partner with media organizations to amplify messages and stories that highlight successful gender-sensitive DRM initiatives.

To Civil Society

Grassroots Mobilization

- Community Networks: Strengthen community networks to mobilize grassroots action on gender and DRM.
- Women's Groups: Empower women's groups to take leadership roles in DRM activities.
- Youth Engagement: Encourage the participation of youth in DRM initiatives to ensure intergenerational equity and sustainability.

Advocacy and Education:

- Public Education Campaigns: Conduct campaigns to educate the public about the importance of integrating gender perspectives into DRM.
- Capacity Building: Offer training programs for civil society organizations on effective advocacy and gender-sensitive DRM practices.
- Policy Advocacy: Advocate for policies that address the specific needs of women and marginalized groups in DRM.

Monitoring and Accountability:

- Community Monitoring: Implement community-based monitoring systems to track the effectiveness of DRM initiatives.
- Feedback Mechanisms: Establish channels for community feedback to ensure that policies and programs are responsive to local needs.
- Transparency Initiatives: Promote transparency and accountability in the implementation of DRM projects to build trust and ensure effectiveness.

By addressing these priorities, ARC and its stakeholders can work together to create a more resilient and inclusive future where gender equality and effective disaster risk management are seamlessly integrated.

IV. PARTNERSHIP BUILDING: IDENTIFYING TECHNICAL AND FINANCIAL PATHWAYS FOR ADVANCING GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN DRM, O&E AND CCA



1. Proposing initiatives towards scaling up/consolidation and identifying potential partners

As ARC and its partners move forward, it is crucial to sustain the momentum generated by these discussions and collaborations. The working groups at the conference generated several actionable recommendations to enhance gender mainstreaming efforts within ARC and beyond. These recommendations include:

❖ *Leveraging Digital Platforms:*

- Enhancing the use of digital tools for knowledge sharing, capacity building, and real-time collaboration among stakeholders.
- Identify and capacitate communities, male champions, and train focal points through digital platforms, ensuring that these key actors are equipped to lead and support gender-sensitive DRM initiatives.

❖ *Strengthening Partnerships:*

- Building and nurturing partnerships with a diverse range of stakeholders, including government agencies, NGOs, community groups, and international bodies. In particular, strengthen gender units within organizations, as these are the drivers of implementation, by fostering partnerships that provide the necessary support and resources for their effective functioning.

❖ *Prioritizing Capacity Building:*

- Continuously investing in capacity building initiatives to equip stakeholders with the necessary skills and knowledge for effective gender integration in DRM.
- Develop tools and mobilize resources specifically aimed at capacity building, ensuring that stakeholders have access to the materials and funding needed to carry out gender-responsive DRM activities.
- Incorporate gender-responsive planning and budgeting into capacity building efforts, ensuring that resources are allocated in a manner that supports gender equality in DRM
- Model best practices in gender-sensitive DRM and share these through digital platforms and partnerships, promoting the replication of successful strategies.
- Increase advocacy efforts by developing a national community risk strategy and action plan that prioritizes gender issues, ensuring that DRM efforts are informed by a comprehensive understanding of community needs and risks

❖ ***Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL):***

- Add M&E as a goal by developing MEAL tools and indicators that specifically track the progress and impact of gender-sensitive DRM initiatives.

By embracing these recommendations and maintaining a steadfast commitment to gender equality in DRM, ARC and its partners can further advance their collective goal of creating safer and more resilient communities. In this vision, gender equality and effective disaster risk management go hand in hand, laying the foundation for a more equitable and sustainable future for all.

2. Identifying potential partners

The panel discussion highlighted the necessity of forming strong partnerships among stakeholders to implement effective public policies on gender and Disaster Risk Management (DRM). Representatives from CORAF, UN Women, FAO, and UNITAR shared their insights on building effective partnerships and emphasized the following key points:

❖ ***Inter-Organizational Collaboration:***

- CORAF: Emphasized the role of regional agricultural organizations in integrating gender and DRM, showcasing successful collaborations that have led to gender-sensitive agricultural practices and enhanced community resilience.
- UN Women: Stressed the importance of aligning DRM strategies with gender equality policies to ensure women's active participation and leadership in these initiatives.

❖ ***Sectoral Synergies:***

- FAO Highlighted the need to incorporate gender perspectives in food security and agricultural resilience programs, providing examples of how these approaches can mitigate disaster impacts and improve resilience.

❖ ***Capacity Building and Education:***

- UNITAR focused on the importance of training and capacity-building initiatives to equip stakeholders with the necessary skills to implement gender-sensitive DRM strategies, highlighting comprehensive training programs that integrate gender considerations.

❖ *Strategies for Partnership Development*

Global and Regional Partnerships

- Establish partnerships with international organizations (e.g., United Nations, World Bank) and regional bodies (e.g., African Union) to align DRM efforts with global gender equality goals.
- Collaborate with regional economic communities (RECs) to harmonize gender-sensitive DRM policies across member states.

National and Local Collaborations:

- Form alliances with national governments to integrate gender perspectives into national DRM policies.
- Partner with local NGOs, community-based organizations, and women's groups for grassroots involvement and culturally relevant DRM approaches.

Private Sector Engagement

- Encourage private sector involvement in DRM initiatives through corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs focusing on gender equality and community resilience.
- Leverage private enterprises' expertise and resources to support innovative DRM solutions.

Actionable Recommendations

- Establishing a Multi-Stakeholder Coalition in creating a coalition comprising government agencies, international organizations, NGOs, the private sector, and community groups to drive coordinated gender-sensitive DRM efforts.
- Develop Joint Action Plans: Formulate joint action plans with clear roles and responsibilities for each partner, ensuring alignment with national and regional DRM strategies and gender equality goals.
- Promote Knowledge Sharing and Best Practices: Organize forums and workshops for exchanging knowledge, experiences, and best practices among partners, utilizing digital platforms for continuous learning and collaboration.

- Secure Sustainable Funding: Identify and secure funding from diverse sources, including international donors, government budgets, and private sector investments, to support long-term gender-sensitive DRM initiatives

- Monitor and Evaluate Progress: Implement robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks to track partnership activities' progress and assess their impact on gender equity and DRM outcomes, using data to inform policy adjustments and improve practices.

These recommendations once embraced and implemented, fostering strong, win-win partnerships, ARC and its allies can create a more resilient and inclusive approach to disaster risk management. This collaborative effort will ensure gender equality is at the forefront of DRM initiatives, ultimately leading to safer and more equitable communities across the African continent.

ANNEX PLAN OF WORK 2025-2029



Resources:

- 1) ARC Gender Strategy: https://www.arc.int/sites/default/files/2021-09/ARC_Gender-Strategy_2019.pdf
- 2) ARC Gender strategy Infographic: <https://www.arc.int/sites/default/files/2021-09/Gender-Strategy-Infographic.pdf>
- 3) Gender and DRMF Guidance Notes
- 4) ARC Gender and DRM Platform : <https://www.arc.int/gender-drmp>