

AFRICA REGIONAL STRATEGY  
FOR  
DISASTER RISK REDUCTION



African Union



NEPAD



International Strategy  
**ISDR**  
for Disaster Reduction

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## Executive Summary

Africa is the only continent whose share of reported disasters in the world total has increased over the past decade. More people are affected by natural hazards, and economic losses incurred are rising. Disaster impacts have become an impediment to sustainable development in Africa.

Disaster risk reduction policies and institutional mechanisms do exist at various degrees of completeness in African countries. However, their effectiveness is limited, hence the need for a strategic approach to improving and enhancing their effectiveness and efficiency by emphasizing disaster risk reduction. The African Union (AU) and its New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) offers the opportunity to promote such a strategic change.

Indeed, the need to address the issue of disasters comprehensively came to the fore during the process of developing NEPAD's operational programmes by the NEPAD Secretariat, which provided the impetus for the development of an Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction.

To develop the Strategy, a baseline study was carried out to establish the status of disaster risk reduction in Africa. It emerged from the study that development was at risk from disasters mainly because of gaps in the following areas: institutional frameworks; risk identification; knowledge management; governance; and emergency response.

In the light of all the above concerns, the aim of the Strategy is to contribute to the attainment of sustainable development and poverty eradication by facilitating the integration of disaster risk reduction into development.

The Strategy's objectives are to:

- (1) increase political commitment to disaster risk reduction;
- (2) improve identification and assessment of disaster risks;
- (3) enhance knowledge management for disaster risk reduction;
- (4) increase public awareness of disaster risk reduction;
- (5) improve governance of disaster risk reduction institutions; and
- (6) integrate of disaster risk reduction in emergency response management.

The Strategy suggests strategic directions to achieve these objectives.

The following stakeholders have key institutional roles to play in the implementation and monitoring of the Strategy: AU/NEPAD, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), the Africa Working Group on Disaster Risk Reduction<sup>1</sup>, national governments, major groups (mainly civil society bodies and the private sector) and international development partners.

This Strategy, which is to be followed by a Programme of Action, was reviewed at several forums May/June 2004: a Meeting of Experts to discuss the Strategy, an African Regional Consultations on the 2005 World Conference on Disaster Reduction (WCDR), and the Second Meeting of the Africa Working Group on disaster risk reduction.

The Strategy was adopted by African ministers at the 10<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) from 26-30 June 2004 and submitted to the AU Assembly Summit, where the Strategy was positively received by Heads of State at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Ordinary Session of the Assembly in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 6-8 July 2004, with a call to develop a Programme of Action for its implementation.

## 1. BACKGROUND

### 1.1. Background

The international community has set targets for global sustainable development and poverty reduction under Agenda 21 in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Progress in reducing vulnerabilities to disasters is essential for achieving the MDGs. In turn, attaining the MDGs is crucial for reducing vulnerability to disasters. To achieve the Agenda 21 objectives, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) called for the mainstreaming of disaster risk management into development. With specific regard to Africa, Section 8 of the Plan urges actions at all levels to assist Africa to deal effectively with disasters induced by natural hazards and conflicts - including their environmental and humanitarian impacts - within the framework of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

Regional, sub-regional and national efforts are ongoing to institutionalize disaster management in Africa. The African Union (AU) has some experience in response management and NEPAD has developed strategies in health, agriculture, environment and infrastructure that contain elements relating to disaster issues. Regional Economic Communities (RECs) attach importance to disaster management, and national disaster risk reduction policies and institutional mechanisms exist at various degrees of completeness in African countries. However, the effectiveness of these mechanisms in stemming the tide of increasing vulnerability to and impacts of disasters is limited. Hence the need for a strategic approach to improving and enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of disaster risk management in Africa by emphasizing disaster risk reduction. NEPAD offers the opportunity to promote such a strategic change.

### 1.2. Context

The objective of NEPAD is to eradicate poverty and promote sustainable development. This includes reducing livelihood and development risks on the continent arising from disasters and other threats. The need to address the issue of disasters comprehensively came to the fore during the process of developing NEPAD's operational programmes by the NEPAD Secretariat. This provided the impetus for the development of the Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction.

The process for formulating a continental disaster risk reduction strategy started with a NEPAD Workshop on Disaster Management in April 2003. The Workshop called for interventions to address issues of food security and disaster management in Africa. The outputs of the workshop were two-fold: (a) the need to develop a regional strategy on disaster risk reduction; and (b) the need to develop a programme of action on disaster risk reduction.

At a follow-on "African Consultative Meeting on Disaster Risk Reduction in Africa" in June 2003, a decision was made to develop the Regional Strategy on Disaster Risk Reduction in two phases: (1) undertaking a baseline study to establish the status of disaster risk reduction in Africa; and (2) drafting the Regional Strategy on Disaster Risk Reduction. The baseline study has identified gaps and issues to form the basis for developing the regional strategy.

An outline of the Strategy and key areas of focus were reviewed at a preliminary meeting of the Africa Working Group on Disaster Risk Reduction in April 2004. A draft Strategy was reviewed at several forums in May/June 2004, namely: a Meeting of Experts to discuss the Strategy, an African Regional Consultation on the January 2005 World Conference on Disaster Reduction (WCDR), and the Second Meeting of the Africa Working Group on Disaster Risk Reduction.

The Strategy was adopted by African ministers at the 10<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) from 26-30 June 2004 and submitted to the AU Assembly Summit, where the Strategy was positively received by Heads of State at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Ordinary Session of the Assembly in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 6-8 July 2004, with a call to develop a Programme of Action for its implementation.

The strategic directions imply an initial set of programmatic interventions necessary to address the problems outlined in the baseline study. This core set of interventions or actions will be developed as part of a Programme of Action to implement the strategy.

### 1.3. Scope of the Strategy

Disaster risk results from the interaction between natural, technological or conflict induced hazards and vulnerability conditions. The Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction will focus on disasters arising from natural and related human induced hazards.

The Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction will build on existing disaster risk reduction institutions and programmes available in African countries and in the RECs, and aims to mainstream them into development so that they can better contribute to disaster risk reduction. Disaster risk reduction is the systematic development and application of policies, strategies and practices to minimize vulnerabilities and disaster risks and avoid (prevent) or limit (mitigate and prepare) the adverse impacts of hazards, within the broad context of sustainable development. The Strategy recognizes that some of these interventions are best undertaken at the national level. Therefore, its focus is not to establish a regional mechanism for disaster risk reduction, but to facilitate initiatives by RECs and countries to develop and implement their own strategies in harmony with the Strategy. In recognition of the different status of disaster risk reduction in RECs and countries, the Strategy provides a broad range of strategic directions that RECs and countries can select from to suit their respective contexts and needs.

AU/NEPAD recognizes that promoting disaster risk reduction as an integral part of development is a major challenge. Indeed strengthening and expanding the existing practices and mechanisms for disaster management will not adequately address the disaster risk problem in Africa: what is required is a transformation of the basic mindset and practices of national authorities; the disaster management community; the public and development partners regarding the reduction of disaster risks. However, changing mindsets can take some time, so the Strategy will not cover a short-term timeframe.

The Strategy is comprehensive in that it takes into account the need to reduce disaster risks sustainably, including those induced by conflicts. Complex humanitarian emergencies arising from conflicts exacerbate the effects of natural hazards, such as famine and epidemics. This is because they increase the vulnerability status of populations and ecosystems already stressed, thereby worsening the level of disaster risks. In turn, the type, onset and intensity of conflicts are also influenced by natural hazards, particularly environmental hazards. Therefore, both issues need to be integrated in disaster risk reduction interventions.

However, it was decided that the issue of conflict resolution and peace building was best left to the AU Commission on Peace and Security to deal with, the Commission having more experience and expertise in these fields. But the linkages between conflict and disaster reduction should be maintained through regular communications between those institutions implementing the Regional Strategy on Disaster Risk Reduction and the Commission. More practical interventions in the area of conflict will also be addressed at sub-regional level. Nonetheless, the Strategy will address disasters caused by natural hazards induced by mass population movement resulting from conflicts. Also, effective implementation of the Strategy should contribute to sustainable development and poverty reduction.

## 2. ISSUES AND GAPS IN DISASTER RISK REDUCTION IN AFRICA

### 2.1. The Disaster Problem in Africa

The occurrence of disasters triggered by natural hazards, the number of people affected and economic losses are rising in Africa. Africa is the only continent where the regional share of reported disasters in the world total has increased over the past decade. Hydro-meteorological hazards (drought, flood, windstorms, particularly tropical cyclones, landslides and wildfire), occur most pervasively and account for most of the people affected by disasters. On an individual hazard basis, epidemics are the major cause of disasters. In particular, the effects of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and the malaria and tuberculosis epidemics are impacting households and communities so severely that they place downward pressure on sustainable development, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. Other major hazards are floods, droughts and windstorms. Less frequent hazards include pest infestation, earthquakes, landslides, wildfire and volcanic eruptions.

In 2000-2001, about 35 million people, equivalent to 13 per cent of the total population in Africa, were affected by disasters. In terms of economic losses, disasters significantly derail development in affected countries. For example, the year 2000 flood in Mozambique lowered the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by about 12 per cent, and the 1992 drought reduced Zimbabwe's and Zambia's GDPs by about 9 per cent. In addition to such large, discrete and high-impact disasters, recurrent but localized hazards erode the development capacity and livelihoods of the majority of the poor and weaken their coping and survival capacities. In the future, climate change may be a key trigger for the occurrence of disasters involving droughts, floods and other hydro-meteorological phenomena.

### 2.2. Findings of the Baseline Study

As said earlier, undertaking a baseline study, to establish the status of disaster risk reduction in Africa, was the first phase of the development of the Africa Regional Strategy on Disaster Risk Reduction. Key findings of the baseline study are categorized below according to major gaps identified in the practice of disaster risk reduction in Africa. These gaps were identified based on the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) framework which covers: political commitment and institutional development; risk identification and assessment; knowledge management; risk management applications and instruments; and preparedness and emergency management.

#### 2.2.1. Institutional Frameworks

Regional and sub-regional organizations and countries are making efforts to develop their policies, legislation, plans and agencies for disaster risk management. However, disaster risk reduction is yet to be effectively institutionalized in Africa. The experience of the AU is limited to support for disaster response under the Special Emergency Assistance Fund (SEAF), the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) sub-regional disaster management programmes are only beginning to be implemented, and other RECs are yet to develop theirs. At the technical level, institutions such as the African Centre of Meteorological Applications for Development (ACMAD), the IGAD Climate Prediction and Applications Centre (ICPAC), and the SADC Drought Monitoring Centre (DMC) provide disaster risk reduction services. However, these technical institutions are few and their services are limited due to resource, capacity and other constraints. National initiatives in developing the institutional framework for disaster risk reduction have not been systematically implemented. Moreover, the quality of several policy frameworks needs to be upgraded.

Governments have a key responsibility to create the facilitating environment in which people can be empowered to prevent or reduce natural disaster risks. However, because of the failure or absence of development that can arise partly from an unfavourable environment, people are highly vulnerable to disaster risks in Africa. For example, macroeconomic policies in most African countries do not take adequate account of the potential variability of economic activity from natural hazard-related shocks and they do not promote the generation of requisite resources and incentives for their mitigation. Also, key sectoral policies, such as on food and agriculture, rural and urban development and enterprise development, do not sufficiently consider how they impact people's vulnerability to hazards. Furthermore, there are no tax or financial incentives to promote greater use of engineered and disaster-resistant construction.

Countries are at different stages in the development of institutional frameworks for comprehensive disaster risk reduction because some embraced the need earlier, others are yet to understand the implications, while others lack the capacity to design them. Consequently, disaster risk management mechanisms in Africa do not yet possess the requisite capacity to adequately help reduce disaster risks.

Most disaster management structures focus on one or two key natural hazards, mainly flood and drought. Policy frameworks rarely cover small localized disasters. Also, national disaster risk reduction plans neither focus on strengthening traditional coping strategies nor do they emphasize preservation of the local and traditional knowledge and experience that underlie these survival mechanisms.

Some national disaster risk reduction plans make provisions for financing their operations but, in practice, national disaster risk reduction structures in Africa generally suffer from inadequate financial support. In some countries, development partners provide the bulk of financial resources for the system, but, in general, development partners find it difficult to meet financing requirements for disaster risk reduction. Inadequate financing for disaster risk reduction is the result of many factors including the low priority accorded to disaster reduction in national budgeting; lack of dedicated disaster funding mechanisms; and limited use of risk-spreading and transfer mechanisms such as micro-finance, formal insurance and private risk pools.

## **2.2.2. Risk Identification and Assessment**

Risk reduction begins with risk identification and assessment, including early warning. However, the practice of risk identification is limited in Africa. Sub-regional early warning systems covering food security, drought and climatic factors exist in parts of Africa but desertification monitoring systems are only now being developed. A few countries have completed vulnerability and capacity assessments but these were to support food assistance and social protection management. Though some countries are improving their data coverage of hazards, land use capacity maps rarely indicate hazard risk. The continued focus on emergency response in Africa results in greater emphasis on post-disaster loss assessment than on anticipatory risk assessment. Most risk mappings undertaken are top-down processes with little participation by people or subjective risk estimation. However, the growing practice of holding stakeholder consultations in climate outlook forums and community-based assessment of vulnerability to volcanic eruptions are examples of progress in expanding participatory risk assessment in Africa.

## **2.2.3. Knowledge Management**

Disaster risk reduction comprises a series of management actions that require the involvement of communities and various stakeholders and partners. Information and communications management play a crucial role in this process. The ability of people to take informed actions to secure their safety during disasters also depends on availability of timely and targeted information on disaster risk reduction.

A major gap in disaster risk reduction in Africa is weak knowledge management. There is inadequate attention to information management and communications, and training and research. Consequently, there are gaps in knowledge about disaster risks. For example, national statistical systems do not systematically cover disasters. Also, knowledge about the interpretation of

disaster data and information available on web sites and other sources is insufficient. There is limited knowledge about best practices, institutions and networks of practitioners in disaster risk reduction. There has been some progress in applying information, communications and space technologies in disaster and environmental management in Africa but the human dimension of communications has received relatively less attention.

National authorities utilize various means to provide the public with information on disaster risks and risk management but public awareness of disaster risks and risk reduction options is generally limited. This is partly due to the fact that communications systems within the disaster management community for informing and educating stakeholders on potential hazards are often weak. The media can help to create awareness among the public and political authorities about hazards, risks and risk reduction interventions and responsibilities, but their coverage, language, presentation and extent of distribution limit their utility to promote effective public awareness. Some national authorities publish newsletters on disasters, but they often cover semi-intellectual topics with little relevance to the everyday risk situations of the majority of the people and are not translated into local languages. These defects limit the utility of media reportage in promoting effective public awareness of disaster risk reduction.

Disaster risk reduction is not part of the educational system curriculum as a stand-alone discipline, though national institutions utilize several training avenues to develop capacities in various areas. However, these training programmes are unable to meet the existing demand. Some are too expensive for national authorities to take full advantage of, and others primarily focus on emergency management. Moreover, attention to promoting research on risk reduction has been relatively limited, partly because there are few outstanding academic institutions where disaster risk reduction education and research could be promoted.

#### **2.2.4. Governance**

Governments explicitly regard civil protection against disasters as a key governance responsibility. However, since the aim of disaster risk reduction ultimately is to empower people to take timely and adequate actions to protect themselves, their livelihoods and ecosystems against disasters, disaster risk reduction is a shared responsibility and partnership between the State and the people. The effectiveness of this partnership depends partly on the coordination of disaster responses between the State and the people.

Coordinating the interests and activities of various stakeholders in disaster risk reduction has been ineffective. This is due partly to unclear specification of responsibilities within the disaster management system and partly to weak communications systems for informing stakeholders about potential hazards and for harmonizing their responsibilities. Also, inter-country cooperation and coordination to address common hazards has been inadequate.

Disaster risk reduction mechanisms suffer from similar governance weaknesses as development interventions, particularly low compliance and enforcement of policies, laws, regulations, standards and codes.

Improved governance of disaster risk reduction depends on the participation of a wide range of actors. In their policy, legal and programme documents, national disaster programmes set out the key roles of non-State entities and communities in disaster management, but the extent to which these recognised roles are actualized roles varies. Often citizens are mere recipients of disaster management activity outputs, mainly relief delivery by governments and donors, and do not adequately participate in the design and implementation of disaster reduction programmes.

Most African countries espouse decentralized implementation of disaster risk reduction interventions but devolution of authority to lower administrative levels has been limited. This is partly due to the fact that most disaster risk reduction systems are agency-centred and top-down, have inadequate competencies and resources to fulfil decentralized responsibilities, and lack adequate partnerships with communities.



Part of the reason for the weak governance of disaster risk reduction institutions is the low level of gender sensitivity in disaster policies and programmes. There are gender differences in vulnerabilities, disaster impacts, coping strategies and response measures. Yet, national disaster management frameworks in Africa lack explicit gender objectives.

## **2.2.5. Emergency Response**

Most of the factors that make people vulnerable to hazards are due to development pressures or outcomes of the development process. Therefore, the task of disaster management is two-fold: (1) to reduce the impact of disasters; and (2) to promote development processes that help to reduce disaster risks. Reducing disaster impacts requires transforming disaster management towards a risk reduction approach while promoting risk-sensitive development depends on the integration of disaster risk reduction into development planning and practices. Some policy frameworks clearly articulate the integration of disaster risk reduction into national development processes as an objective. However, disaster management is not yet integrated in national development frameworks in most of African countries, even though few countries have explicitly included disaster reduction as specific thematic focus areas in their Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs).

Disaster risk reduction practice in Africa has focused on attempting to reduce the impacts of disasters on development through emergency management. Substantial amounts of humanitarian assistance flow into Africa, partly to provide relief assistance in emergencies. But despite the relatively longer history of emergency response management relative to disaster risk reduction and significant humanitarian assistance, disaster response activities remain largely divorced from mainstream development activities in Africa. Relief agencies often focus on immediate emergency needs, with an emphasis on food aid distribution. They concentrate less on bridging the relief-rehabilitation gap or investing in developing people's capacities to cope with future disasters. Consequently, the underlying causes of chronic food insecurity and vulnerability remain.

In this regard, the divergence between emergency management and development occurs because:

- ☹ Assessment of development interventions often fails consider disaster risk issues;
- ☹ Early warning, contingency planning and other preparedness measures are inadequate in pre-emergency management;
- ☹ Financing of post-disaster development activities is often insufficient and delayed;
- ☹ Local capacities for undertaking development and disaster risk reduction interventions are lacking; and
- ☹ Experience, capacity and resources of national disaster authorities to undertake or coordinate comprehensive recovery programmes, involving rehabilitation and reconstruction aimed at reducing vulnerability to future hazards, is limited.

## 3. AIM, OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

### 3.1. Aim

The aim of the Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction is to contribute to the attainment of sustainable development and poverty eradication by facilitating the integration of disaster risk reduction into development.

### 3.2. Objectives

Based on the findings of the above-mentioned baseline study (carried out as the first phase of the development of this Strategy) and consultations with major stakeholders, the objectives of the Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction are 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 institutions; and
- ☒ Integrate disaster risk reduction into emergency response management.

### 3.3 Strategies

The following describes the strategies to be promoted to achieve each objective.

#### 3.3.1. Increase Political Commitment to Disaster Risk Reduction

The commitment of national leaders is key to achieving visibility for disaster risk reduction, creating a culture of disaster risk reduction at all levels, and empowering those at risk to achieve protection against disaster impacts. Governments should demonstrate their commitment by improving their governance structures and processes. There is the need to develop missing elements of the institutional framework for disaster risk reduction at national and sub-regional levels and to improve the quality of the policy frameworks. Development of the institutional framework can be facilitated through several means, including providing guidance, facilitating information, knowledge and experience sharing, and lobbying political leaders and legislators.

To discharge their leadership and stewardship responsibilities effectively, governments need to express this commitment through strategically and adequately resourced actions. One way is to strengthen dedicated public funding for disaster risk reduction through special funds. There are examples of constitutionally mandated funding for disaster risk reduction in some African countries that can be promoted throughout the region. Governments should be encouraged to demonstrate their commitment to disaster risk reduction by adopting a resolution as part of the approval process of this Strategy to commit and allocate a percentage of national financial resources directly to disaster risk reduction.

The resourcing of disaster risk reduction is a shared responsibility between the State and other stakeholders. Therefore, a committed political leadership should also facilitate the mobilization of resource investment by communities and the private sector in disaster risk reduction. This partly depends on promoting other forms of resourcing disaster risk reduction, such as insurance and micro-finance. To facilitate this increased resourcing commitment, both political leaders and investors need to be

convinced of the developmental benefits of investing in disaster risk reduction. This requires demonstrating the cost-benefit of investment in reducing disaster risks.

*The strategic directions to increase political commitment to disaster risk reduction are to:*

- ☞ strengthen lobbying and advocacy for political commitment, responsibility and accountability;
- ☞ strengthen institutional frameworks for disaster risk reduction;
- ☞ increase resource allocation for disaster risk reduction; and
- ☞ strengthen capacities of RECs to facilitate implementation of this Strategy.

### **3.3.2. Improve Identification and Assessment of Disaster Risks**

Hazards and vulnerability factors are dynamic and their potential impacts vary. Hence, it is important to strengthen knowledge of the variety, geographical coverage and type and extent of their impacts. Greater knowledge of hazards and vulnerability enables communities and countries to better understand and anticipate future hazards and can help them minimize the risk of disasters.

Prospective assessment of the risk of disasters to development and the effect of development interventions on disasters, effective early warning of impending risks, and systematic assessment of disaster losses are particularly important in helping communities and countries to determine and understand the actions which they may take in order to reduce the impact of potential and existing risks. Effectively undertaking the above tasks, especially through human-centered and participatory approaches, also helps identify available strengths and capacities that can reduce disaster risks. Public authorities and the public need to be better familiar with risk assessment processes and early warning systems and be aware of the utility of these processes and systems in informing them of impending risks and empowering them to take timely action to reduce disaster risks.

The ultimate objective of risk identification and assessment is to help individuals, communities and countries protect life, livelihoods, infrastructure and ecosystems. To effectively achieve this requires integration of risk identification and assessment processes and their mainstreaming in development activities. Hence, early warning systems need to provide information about vulnerability factors and patterns in addition to hazards forecasting. Also, post-disaster loss assessment needs to provide information for prospective risk assessment and early warning. This way, hazard analysis, vulnerability assessment, risk monitoring and early warning can be better integrated.

To help fill the gap of inadequate risk identification and assessment, it is necessary to strengthen risk analysis capacities, promote integrated vulnerability and capacity assessment, upgrade data monitoring stations and capacity for early warning, and improve loss assessment.

*The strategic directions to improve identification and assessment of disaster risks are to:*

- ☞ improve the quality of information and data on disaster risks;
- ☞ improve identification, assessment and monitoring of hazards, vulnerabilities and capacities;
- ☞ strengthen early warning systems, institutions, capacities and resource base, including observational and research sub-systems;
- ☞ improve communication and information exchange among stakeholders in risk identification and assessment; and
- ☞ engender and improve integration and coordination of risk identification and assessment processes and interventions.

### 3.3.3. Enhance Knowledge Management for Disaster Risk Reduction

Transforming disaster management practices towards a disaster risk reduction approach will not materialize if knowledge of disaster risks and risk reduction options is not generated and disseminated effectively to all partners. It is therefore necessary to strengthen national statistics systems to improve collection and analysis of data to generate risk information. Given the focus of the Strategy on integrating disaster risk reduction in development, Governments need to expand the scope of national information systems to enable them to be used for both day-to-day development planning and for disaster risk reduction planning during times of crises.

To help enhance access to information and to expand information dissemination, there is the need to strengthen disaster risk reduction information services and public communications mechanisms, including space technology and geographical information systems. It is necessary to encourage and facilitate public-private partnerships that increase the availability of and accessibility to these means of disaster risk information and communications.

Given the dynamic nature of development knowledge and information, it is necessary to adopt a continuous learning approach to promoting disaster risk management. This involves facilitating the identification and strengthening of outstanding academic institutions to spearhead training and research in disaster risk reduction.

*The strategic directions to enhance knowledge management for disaster risk reduction are to:*

- ☞ enhance generation of information (statistics and data);
- ☞ increase access to information;
- ☞ improve communications in disaster risk reduction;
- ☞ develop inventory and exchange of best practices;
- ☞ develop outstanding academic institutions in disaster risk reduction; and
- ☞ expand research on disaster risk reduction.

### 3.3.4 Increase Public Awareness of Disaster Risk Reduction

Public awareness of disaster risk reduction is part of knowledge management, but its role in disaster risk reduction is so important that the Strategy considers it necessary to treat it separately.

Increasing public awareness of disaster risks and risk reduction options is central to the empowerment of people to protect their livelihoods against disaster risks. This depends on the effective development of information services that can increase generation, availability and communication of information on disaster risk reduction, promote wider and increased understanding of disaster risk reduction practices, and provide information to monitor progress in disaster risk reduction at all levels. At the regional level, there is a need for the capacity to undertake clearing-house functions in disaster risk reduction information identification, compilation and dissemination.

For disaster risk reduction communications systems to empower communities threatened by impending disasters, risk reduction information must be provided in good time, precise, prompt, reliable and actionable. Effective disaster risk reduction communications requires that the target population not only receives advance information on hazards and vulnerability changes but also that they understand the content of the message, accept it, believe it and know how to use it to guide their response actions. Public education and awareness-strengthening processes about potential risks and the role of risk information in disaster risk reduction needs to be continuous to promote this process. Public awareness needs to be undertaken through all means of communications interaction between disaster risk reduction authorities and the public and at all levels.



In the long run, increasing public awareness depends on disaster risk reduction practices successfully becoming part of the development culture and practice in Africa. One way to ensure this is to integrate disaster risk reduction into education. Lobbying governments, identifying resourcing mechanisms and providing guidance and information to countries on the process can facilitate the integration of disaster education in school curricula.

Much media reporting about disasters takes place in the immediate aftermath of disaster occurrence. After the disaster event, the media do not routinely cover potential hazards, prevalent risk reduction practices or similar topics in disaster risk reduction. It is essential that disaster risk reduction authorities work together with the media to capitalize on disaster events and that they use all opportunities to consistently provide the public with more timely, frequent and comprehensive information on disasters and on how to reduce disaster risks.

Communities tackle disasters at local levels often utilizing traditional coping mechanisms based on local knowledge and experience. Local community experience provides the basis for people to improve their knowledge and adopt more effective disaster risk reduction approaches. It is therefore important that efforts to enhance disaster risk reduction incorporate interventions that strengthen the role of traditional authorities, knowledge, experience and coping strategies. It is necessary that disaster risk reduction interventions be informed by local survival strategies so as to promote more risk-neutral or risk-reducing survival strategies.

In terms of disaster impacts, almost all communities are vulnerable to hazards but different regions, communities and groups of people are prone to various types of hazards in varied ways. Often, the poor and other disadvantaged groups are more vulnerable to hazards. But, varied groups of people also have different roles to play in implementing disaster risk reduction interventions needed for communities to avert disasters or reduce their impacts. Therefore, the strategic directions below apply to all groups of people, particularly the most vulnerable, including the youth.

*The strategic directions to raise public awareness of disaster risk reduction are to:*

- ☞ improve information dissemination and communication;
- ☞ promote integration of disaster risk reduction in education;
- ☞ expand the role of the media;
- ☞ strengthen the role of traditional and local authorities and experience; and
- ☞ strengthen the role of the youth and other major groups in disaster risk reduction.

### **3.3.5 Improve Governance of Disaster Risk Reduction Institutions**

Integrating disaster risk reduction into development can be sustained only if disaster management institutions facilitating the process are strengthened. This requires that, among others, the governance of these institutions be improved. This includes the institutions developing the requisite capacity, accessing adequate and secure resources, focusing interventions on the felt needs of people at risk, using inclusive and participatory processes, and coordinating and harmonizing activities with other stakeholders.

Harmonizing national policies and legislation can be facilitated by providing forums for countries and RECs to discuss disaster risk reduction concepts and policies, by supporting the dissemination of best practices and standards in institutional development, and by monitoring progress in the implementation of national and sub-regional institutional frameworks. This should contribute to strengthening cooperation and coordination among countries to address common hazards.

Efforts to improve disaster risk reduction can be enhanced by coordinating them within an integrated advocacy and lobbying framework. This coordination can be effective when there is an active coalition of national and sub-regional interests in promoting disaster risk reduction. To help improve the governance of disaster risk reduction institutions, there is a need to promote the development of disaster risk reduction advocacy and lobbying groups. Some countries have established national

platforms for disaster risk reduction and several others are planning to do so. These initiatives need to be supported and popularized among all countries.

Facilitating participatory design and implementation of disaster risk reduction interventions can increase people's participation in them. Institutionalizing risk reduction at the local level involves modern management approaches that emphasize decentralized and coordinated partnerships between disaster management agencies and the people, based on the principle of self-consent. It is therefore important to encourage governments to accelerate the decentralization of disaster risk reduction mechanisms, particularly local-level risk management interventions.

Efforts to enhance governance of disaster risk reduction will be limited without concurrent initiatives to mainstream gender in disaster risk reduction. This involves promoting gender equality in participation in disaster risk reduction interventions. It also requires empowering women to take decisions to protect their lives and livelihoods. There are development costs to gender bias and clear benefits to reversing gender inequality. It is therefore important to promote the integration of gender issues in disaster risk reduction. Ways of doing this include expanding opportunities for women participation in decision making and leadership roles in the management of disaster risk reduction organizations and programmes, and promoting the use of formal guidelines on the application of gender-mainstreaming tools in disaster risk reduction.

The strategic directions to improve governance of disaster risk reduction institutions are to:

- ☞ harmonize terms and policies in disaster risk reduction;
- ☞ develop national platforms for disaster risk reduction;
- ☞ strengthen decentralization of disaster risk reduction interventions;
- ☞ increase public participation in planning and implementing disaster risk reduction interventions;
- ☞ increase gender sensitivity of disaster risk reduction policies, legislation and programmes; and
- ☞ promote increased inter-country cooperation and coordination.

### **3.3.6 Integrate Disaster Risk Reduction into Emergency Response Management**

Given the explicit cause-and-effect links between disasters and development interventions, development policy should aim at reducing basic societal risks while attaining sustainable development objectives. Balancing these two goals requires incorporating disaster risk reduction in development policies, strategies and programmes at local, national and sub-regional levels.

Incorporating disaster reduction objectives into national development policies is a key action required to mainstream disaster risk reduction into development processes, including internationally-agreed development ones (such as the MDGs, Johannesburg Plan of Implementation of World Summit for Sustainable Development and NEPAD). It is therefore essential that disaster risk reduction is included in PRSPs, United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks and other national strategies for sustainable development. In the past, this has been limited by several factors including the lack of guiding principles, inadequate advocacy and limited exchange of knowledge and experiences among countries and RECs and with other regions on how to mainstream disaster risk reduction in development.

Emergency assistance, together with post-disaster rehabilitation and reconstruction, is necessary but not sufficient for disaster risk reduction. It is essential that they be complemented by development actions that do not result in the accumulation of risks. This is particularly important in post-disaster situations when the opportunity exists to reduce prospective risk through development interventions.

Experience, with some major disasters, shows that timely and comprehensive recovery, comprising relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction interventions, can reduce vulnerability and promote development. This depends on effective management of the post-disaster transition stage when external relief support is being phased out and local coping capacities begin to contribute to sustainable recovery. Aid agencies in Africa have begun to employ increasingly innovative approaches to emergency response

aimed at laying the basis for longer-term recovery. These include cash-for relief instead of food, voucher-based seed programmes at seed fairs, small-scale water harvesting and integrated food, health and functional education programmes. There is the need to support and popularize similar innovative emergency management measures.

*The strategic directions to integrate disaster risk reduction in emergency management are to:*

- ¥ advocate the inclusion of disaster risk reduction in development strategies at local, national, sub-regional and regional levels;
- ¥ prepare and disseminate guidelines for integrating disaster risk reduction in development planning and activities;
- ¥ facilitate the orientation of emergency response management towards disaster risk reduction; and
- ¥ facilitate the strengthening of contingency planning and other preparedness measures in emergency management.

## 4. INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

Effective implementation of the Strategy depends crucially on the institutional arrangements and capacities as well as resources. The development of the Strategy has involved the participation of RECs, national authorities and development partners through a consultative process. This participatory approach will continue throughout the implementation phase of the Strategy, including the designing of Programme of Action.

The following stakeholders have key roles to play in the implementation of the Strategy:

**AU Commission:** The AU Commission will focus on strategic guidance, facilitating, promoting the implementation of the Strategy, and seeking support from development partners and coordination at the regional level.

**RECs:** The RECs should focus on interpreting strategic guidance for their member States, facilitating the implementation of the regional Strategy within their sub-regions, and coordination, particularly in respect of inter-State initiatives. They are to implement the above through establishing sub-regional disaster risk reduction platforms and focal points, and through preparation of programmes for resource mobilization to support national and sub-regional efforts.

**Africa Working Group on Disaster Risk Reduction:** This Group has been established by AU/NEPAD on the recommendation of the UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Disaster Reduction (UN-IATF). Chaired by the AU, its membership comprises the AU Commission, the NEPAD Secretariat and all RECs. UN/ISDR Africa provides support to the Group. The Group's goal is to deploy efforts and support those of national governments to advance disaster risk reduction and facilitate the mainstreaming and integration of disaster risk reduction into all phases of development in Africa to help achieve NEPAD's objectives.

**National Governments:** Governments will lead the process of developing disaster risk reduction capacities and the integration of disaster risk reduction into sustainable development. They will also ensure the establishment of enabling environments, including by adopting enabling legislation and setting up the relevant national mechanisms and platforms to engage participation by all stakeholders. They will take the necessary steps to empower the relevant RECs to establish regional disaster risk reduction platforms and focal points to coordinate sub-regional approaches to disaster risk reduction.

**Major Groups:** Civil society organizations, the private sector and other major groups will collaborate with disaster risk reduction authorities by participating in the development and implementation of the Strategy, within the context of national participatory processes that National Governments will develop in collaboration with them.

**International Development Partners:** All the above institutions and groups will need to work together to provide guidance to the international development and humanitarian community on the provision of assistance and resources for disaster risk reduction. The development partners' assistance will be targeted mainly towards support for risk identification, information management and communications, training, research and emergency management.

**The United Nations:** The United Nations and its programmes and specialized agencies should include objectives of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction in all their programmes by developing action in this regard and by reporting annually on the impact of these actions.



## 5. MONITORING THE STRATEGY

### 5.1. Monitoring Responsibilities

The AU/NEPAD, RECs and national governments will monitor the Strategy but from complementary perspectives, as follows:

**AU:** Based on the principle of subsidiarity, the monitoring responsibility of the AU Commission/NEPAD Secretariat will be at the sub-regional level. They will monitor the progress of RECs towards achieving the goals and objectives of the Strategy. The AU Commission/NEPAD Secretariat will mobilise, where appropriate, assistance for monitoring the implementation of the Strategy at sub-regional level.

**RECs:** The RECs will focus on the implementation of the strategy at the sub-regional level and their member countries. This will include the publication of periodic overview reports on progress in the implementation of disaster risk reduction policies by countries in their sub-regions based on reporting requirements of governments to be agreed beforehand between the governments.

**National Governments:** Governments will monitor objectives and outputs at national and local levels. They will compile periodic summary reports on the state of disaster risk reduction in their jurisdiction and develop a set of targets to address the gaps and challenges. Each country will develop its own indicators and monitoring mechanisms in line with the objectives of the Strategy.

### 5.2. Monitoring Indicators

To monitor progress towards achieving the objectives of the Strategy, data will be collected on indicators of the following expected outputs and impacts:

- ☒ increased knowledge of disaster risk reduction among people;
- ☒ disaster risk reduction adopted by RECs, governments and people in development and business activities;
- ☒ improved governance of disaster risk reduction institutions;
- ☒ increased participation of people in community, national and sub-regional disaster risk reduction interventions;
- ☒ strengthened capacity of people to undertake disaster risk reduction initiatives;
- ☒ management of emergency response interventions re-oriented towards disaster risk reduction focus at community, national and sub-regional levels; and
- ☒ increased resources invested in disaster risk reduction from public and private sources and international partners.

### 5.3. Means of Verification

Most of the information required for monitoring will be obtained from existing national statistical systems and data from international sources, as appropriate.

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<sup>1</sup> The AU/NEPAD established this Working Group to support efforts by governments and the AU/NEPAD to advance disaster risk reduction and facilitate mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction in all aspects of development in Africa to help achieve Africa's development objectives. Membership of the Working Group comprises the AU Commission, NEPAD Secretariat and all RECs, with support from UN/ISDR Africa.



