

## Integrating Gender in Disaster Risk Management, Food Security Outbreaks and Epidemics on the African Continent



*A policy brief built from the recommendations of the inaugural series policy dialogue on Gender, DRR, Outbreaks, Epidemics and food security on the African continent held from 04-05 July 2023 in Addis Ababa*

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## 1 Introductory overview

*“Women and their participation are critical to effectively managing disaster risk and designing, resourcing and implementing gender-sensitive disaster risk reduction policies, plans and programmes; and adequate capacity building measures need to be taken to empower women for preparedness as well as to build their capacity to secure alternate means of livelihood in post-disaster situations”. Sendai Framework for DRR 2015-2030*

In the last decades, disasters have struck with more frequency and intensity in all regions of the African continent, leaving in their wake the destruction of properties, loss of lives and livelihoods and food insecurity. Evidence suggests that climatic disasters can exacerbate human pathogenic diseases, resulting in increased outbreaks and epidemics as changes in geographic distribution or ecological structure create new conditions for pathogens, giving them more opportunities to encounter susceptible hosts.<sup>1</sup>

Such disasters disproportionately impact gender and particular age groups, with a greater impact on women, older people, youth, children and people with disabilities. The rise in natural and climate-induced disasters on the African Continent is of great concern for this population demographic. Mainstreaming gender in Disaster Risk Management (DRM) policies and actions is, therefore, critical in strengthening the resilience of these vulnerable groups.

The increase in frequency and intensity of climate-induced hazards, extreme food insecurity outbreaks and epidemics, compounded by gender inequality which is especially pronounced in Africa, as well as the interlinkages between these factors, is proving to be one of the greatest challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Combined, these factors stand in the way of sustainable development and significantly impact the attainment of Africa’s Agenda 2063 goals.

Building Africa’s resilience to climate threats and public health emergencies while addressing food insecurity and gender inequality must be done within the broader policy formulation and implementation context by adapting policies, strategies, programmes and plans that respond to evolving complex contexts. The policy dialogue advocated for several policy changes to strengthen Africa’s response summarised in this policy brief.

The magnitude of the threat from Climate change, outbreaks, epidemics and food insecurity to the lives and livelihoods of many African communities demands that Africa responds decisively and effectively to build resilience, mitigate the impacts and promote adaptation.

Policy changes at a continental level are necessary to guide these efforts and drive the necessary change at scale and breadth.



<sup>1</sup> Agosta, S. J., Janz, N., & Brooks, D. R. (2010). How specialists can be generalists: Resolving the “parasite paradox” and implications for emerging infectious disease. *Zoologia (Curitiba)*, 27, 151–162.  
<https://doi.org/10.1590/S1984-46702010000200001>

## 2 Policy challenges

- The climate crisis is not gender-neutral – women and girls most impacted;
- 1700 natural disasters between 1970 and 2019, and 730 000 deaths;
- 4.03 billion people affected by disaster in the last decade, up by 124% from previous two decades;
- Direct economic losses of \$3 trillion, up by 182% compared to 1980 – 1999;
- Agriculture sector, an important sector for women, is the most impacted;
- 1.3 billion people affected by poverty are women.

- 70% - 90% of wealth is generated from land - less than 10% is women-owned;
- 98% of 842 million food insecure people are in developing countries;
- 1 in 5 Africans go to bed hungry;
- 140 million African face acute food insecurity.

The COVID-19 example in Africa showed:

- Extreme poverty: Over 30 million in 2020 and 38.7 million in 2021;
- 26 million more children fell below the poverty line by the end of 2020;
- 15.6% working hours and 60 million full-time jobs lost by Q2 2020;
- 10.7% income loss recorded during first three quarters of 2020.

- Women's access to financial services in sub-Saharan Africa is low;
- In 2017, 37% women in sub-Saharan Africa had bank accounts compared to 48% of men;
- More women do not have any form of identification compared to men;
- Less women participate in insurance than men.

- **Gender, Disaster Risk Management and Financing (DRM/F) & Food Security** Despite being the main food providers in Africa, women are largely marginalised, do not own land and have limited decision-making powers and often times have no access to means of production. They are also excluded from essential discussions. This renders women and girls more vulnerable to climate-induced disasters, a growing threat, and to food insecurity.

- **Gender, women leadership & Food Security:** In addressing the needs of women, the value of disaggregated data cannot be underestimated. There is need to promote women leadership in climate research and capacity-building in climate technologies adopted for agribusinesses which must be gender intentional.

- **Women in Insurance: Enhanced coping mechanisms for women in the context of DRM and food security:** Insurance provides a great opportunity for collaboration between the public and private sectors but is however not readily available to support women in their role as food providers. Tailored insurance products such as credit insurance for women can be instruments to enhance coping mechanisms for women in agriculture during shocks



### 3 Policy recommendations



#### 3.1 Policy Recommendation 1: Promote gender-sensitive risk assessment and early warning



- **Ensure basic needs for women and girls in disasters:** Develop and implement policies to ensure the fulfilment of basic needs for women and girls during and after disasters, including strengthening capacities at all levels;
- **Prioritise gender mainstreaming:** Promote gender mainstreaming practices in the Disaster Risk Management and Financing environment;
- **Promote disaggregated data collection and analysis:** Implement policies that prioritise the collection of gender-specific data to better understand the unique needs, vulnerabilities, and experiences of women and girls.

#### 3.2 Policy Recommendation 2: Improve community empowerment and preparedness



- **Harmonise standards in cross-border programmes:** Promote the harmonisation of standards and regulations to facilitate the implementation of African cross-border programmes;
- **Promote women's leadership and ownership:** Encourage women's leadership and ownership of factors of production through targeted policies and initiatives that empower women in emergency response and recovery;
- **Enhance recognition of women's contributions:** Emphasise women's contribution to increase awareness and change perceptions of women's roles in Disaster Risk Management;
- **Improve communication strategies for affected populations:** Develop effective communication strategies that target affected populations and are tailored to the local context and utilising understandable messages;

### 3.3 Policy Recommendation 3: Enhance Insurance and Financial Mechanisms in Africa



- **Promote domestic resource mobilisation:** Implement policies that prioritise domestic resource mobilisation and strengthen local financial institutions to improve communities' financial capacities;
- **Enhance disaster risk financing for women:** Introduce policies to promote gender-responsive budgeting, increase resource allocation to address women's needs and equitable access to financial resources;
- **Create a conducive insurance environment:** Create a conducive environment to ensure women's easy access to insurance through regulations and policy reforms to introduce gender-sensitive products;
- **Strengthen private sector capacity:** Strengthen the capacity of the private sector to empower women through training and support to enable their active participation in the insurance industry;
- **Establish the Gender Transformative Fund:** Establish a Gender Transformative Fund through government initiatives that foster inclusion in accessing financial services.

### 3.4 Policy Recommendation 4: Promote a coordinated approach and international cooperation



- **Develop a regional preparedness plan:** Develop a comprehensive regional preparedness plan for Africa that addresses the unique challenges and vulnerabilities faced by the continent and prioritises proactive measures to enhance preparedness for various hazards and emergencies;
- **Implement gender mainstreaming and analysis:** Implement a continuous gender mainstreaming and analysis process to systematically integrate gender considerations into all programmes and policies;
- **Promote capacity-building:** Promote capacity-strengthening programmes at national levels;
- **Ease the burden on women:** Break codes and burden on women;
- **Increase stakeholder collaboration:** Collaborate with stakeholders at country levels towards economic growth, nutrition, Disaster Risk Management while promoting a basket funding approach.
- Promote regional knowledge sharing and collaboration

### 3.5 Policy Recommendation 5: Strengthen climate change adaptation in communities



- **Promote land ownership by women:** Promote the ownership of factors of production by women;
- **Improve access to technologies:** Enhance access to affordable and advanced technologies, land, and finance for women to promote sustainable food and agriculture systems;
- **Implement effective monitoring:** Close the monitoring gaps in implementing gender, disaster risk management, food security, and other established policies across all levels. Advocate for policy operationalisation and ensure active monitoring;
- **Drive for policy implementation:** Develop and implement comprehensive policies that address immediate crisis response and long-term recovery strategies following natural

### 3.6 Policy Recommendation 6: Smart partnership recommendations



- **Prioritise collaboration:** Collaborate on multiple levels and with other donors at the country levels, for economic growth, nutrition, DRM, and put forward the approach of basket funding
- **Leverage existing resources:** Partnerships should leverage and harmonise existing resources such as basket funding towards meeting common development needs
- **Broaden the role of partnerships:** Sustainable financial and technical partnerships must address gender, DRM and food security gaps;
- **Strengthen regional partnerships:** Promote and strengthen regional partnerships and multi-stakeholder collaborations as key drivers of sustainable development.

## 4 Sources of complementary references

Here are more sources of information for further references on the topics under discussion.

1. The ARC Gender Strategy: [https://www.arc.int/sites/default/files/2021-09/ARC\\_Gender-Strategy\\_2019.pdf](https://www.arc.int/sites/default/files/2021-09/ARC_Gender-Strategy_2019.pdf)
2. The African Disaster Risk Management Platforms and videos: <https://www.arc.int/gender-platform/>
3. Summary Report from the Policy Dialogue on Gender, DRR, Outbreaks, Epidemics and food security on the African continent held from 04-05 July 2023 in Addis Ababa: <https://www.arc.int/gender-platform/sites/default/files/2021-05/PB3-AP-Gender-and-disaster-risk-reduction.pdf>
4. The UNDP Gender and Disaster Risk Management: <https://www.arc.int/gender-platform/sites/default/files/2021-05/PB3-AP-Gender-and-disaster-risk-reduction.pdf>
5. The World Bank Gender Dimensions of Disaster Risk and Reduction: <https://www.arc.int/gender-platform/sites/default/files/2021-05/Gender-Dimensions-of-Disaster-Risk-and-Resilience-Existing-Evidence.pdf>
6. FAO and ARC. 2021. Women’s leadership and gender equality in climate action and disaster risk reduction in Africa –A call for action. Accra. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb7431en>
7. UNDRR.2021. Gender-responsive disaster risk reduction: A Policy brief <https://www.undrr.org/publication/policy-brief-gender-responsive-disaster-risk-reduction>
8. Proportion of world population moderately or severely food insecure by sex, 2025-2021
9. The African Union Gender Strategy <https://au.int/en/documents/20190320/au-strategy-gender-equality-womens-empowerment-2018-2028>

