

Committee: African Union (AU)

Agenda Item: Minimizing the consequences of continental disasters by creating all-inclusive African framework on disaster risk reduction

Student Officer: Delphine Boulanger & Berru Dağlı - Deputy Chairs

Introduction

Many individuals are severely affected by the natural hazards that are specifically happening in the African continent. Therefore, we should urgently implement all-inclusive solutions in order to solve this massive issue. The best way is maintaining risk reduction processes. In addition, these processes are essential for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as effective disaster risk reduction (DRR) is directly linked to social and economic development. Health crises or natural disasters can quickly escalate into socio-economic crises with long-term consequences, highlighting the urgent need for proactive measures.

To resonate with communities and enhance awareness, more effective media coverage of DRR is essential. However, many African countries, especially Least Developed Countries (LDCs), face challenges due to limited capacities. While 32 sub-Saharan nations have national DRR strategies, some—such as Botswana, Burkina Faso, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Mali, and Togo—require updates. Countries must integrate DRR and climate change authorities to develop cohesive and effective strategies. Without proper investment in DRR, achieving the SDGs becomes nearly impossible, making it a top global priority.

Definition of Key Terms

Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR): Actions put in work in order to reduce the damage caused by natural disasters by implementing multiple strategies that focus on prevention, mitigation, and preparedness. As well as, outlining the risk knowledge particularly the data collection process.

Early Warning Systems: Technological and social mechanisms designed to detect and monitor potential hazards, providing continuous alerts to mitigate risks and ensure preparedness.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): The UN-adopted agenda of 17 goals that aims for global development which will provide peace and prosperity for people and the planet.

Continental Disaster Management Framework: A united and collaborative strategy to address disaster risk and manage responses effectively across Africa at the continental level.

Community-Based Solutions: Initiatives that support community knowledge and resources to address disaster risks and enhance resilience.

Major Actors Involved

The implementation of the ongoing early warning systems for all initiative

This system is introduced as a priority by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), and has a significant global effort to enhance disaster preparedness and mitigate risks associated with disasters and conflicts.

Its core objective is to ensure that every individual worldwide is protected by reliable early warning systems by fostering international cooperation, sharing technological advancements, and improving communication channels. This initiative underscores the UNSC's commitment to proactive crisis management, emphasizing prevention and resilience-building as essential components of global security and humanitarian action.

African Risk Capacity (ARC)

The African Risk Capacity is a specialized agency of the African Union that focuses on innovative financial solutions for disaster risk management. ARC provides insurance products and rapid funding mechanisms to member states, enabling them to respond quickly to disasters like droughts and floods. By pooling risks across the continent, ARC reduces the economic burden on individual countries and fosters resilience. However, its effectiveness depends on member states' ability to pay premiums and their political stability.

Regional Economic Communities (RECs)

Organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and the East African Community (EAC) play critical roles in regional disaster management efforts. These RECs facilitate cross-border collaboration, harmonize DRR policies, and implement regional strategies tailored to specific geographic and climatic challenges. Their localized knowledge and political influence are crucial for effective disaster mitigation.

National Governments

African nations implement DRR policies through national disaster management agencies (NDMAs). Governments like those of Kenya, South Africa, and Rwanda are particularly proactive in adopting innovative disaster management approaches.

The Sahel Resilience Project

This project of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) aims to enhance disaster risk data, anticipatory action, and resilience-building in seven countries which are: Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, and Senegal. The efforts these projects put in are at the national level.

Emergency Operation and Communication Center (EOCC) Situation Room

These rooms are set up under the African Union's Africa Multi-Hazard Early Warning and Early Action System (AMHEWAS) Programme. The first national situation room was inaugurated in Tanzania. The Programme outlines the effects of disaster risk reduction across the African continent substantially through increased access and availability of multi-hazard warning systems and disaster risk information, including for transboundary risk management

General Overview of the Issue

The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) has pointed out that more than 110 million people in Africa have been affected by weather, climate and water-related disasters with floods and droughts being the most frequent disasters as a result of increasing effects of climate change. The 2023/2024 El Niño phenomenon had negative consequences with the most adverse impact being felt in the Southern and Eastern Africa regions. By August 2024, six countries namely Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe had declared states of emergency due to El Niño induced drought as stated by UN OCHA. Southern Africa also received cyclones such as Cyclone Freddy and Cyclone Idai, which were very destructive.

Floods have affected more than 1.2 million people in Nigeria as reported by OCHA while res have emerged as a major threat especially in Ethiopia. Earthquakes are not very frequent but have been experienced in Nairobi and North Africa for instance where recent quakes in Morocco led to a lot of damage. Cyclone Daniel affected Libya where neglected dams burst their banks and caused devastating floods that killed more than 10,000 people. Algeria also faces the problem of frequent forest fires which shows how fragile the region is. Namibia is also among the countries that have been affected by drought, the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) revealed that acute food insecurity in the country was 1.2 million people in the period between April to June 2024 which is double the number of people from the same period in 2023. These disasters have emphasized the importance of the development of proper risk management and adaptation strategies to reduce the social and economic consequences on the whole continent.

Timeline of Important Events

Date:	Event:
2005	Launch of the African Union's Program of Action for Disaster Risk Reduction aligned with the Hyogo Framework.
2011	Establishment of the African Risk Capacity (ARC) to provide financial tools and insurance against natural disasters.
2015	Adoption of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction by African nations.
2019	Mozambique was hit by Cyclone Idai, exposing gaps in regional disaster preparedness and response mechanisms.

2021	ARC payouts delivered to several countries, including Malawi and Madagascar, in response to severe droughts.
2023	Regional meetings on DRR held by the African Union to discuss scaling up efforts under the Sendai Framework.

Related Documents

- https://disasterlaw.ifrc.org/sites/default/les/media/disaster_law/2021-03/UNISDR_africa_regional_strategy_disaster_risk_reduction_2011.pdf
- https://disasterlaw.ifrc.org/sites/default/les/media/disaster_law/2021-02/Synthesis%20report%20-%20Web.pdf
- https://disasterlaw.ifrc.org/sites/default/les/media/disaster_law/2021-03/67054_poimplementationohesendaiframewo%5B1%5D.pdf
- <https://wmo.int/media/news/africa-regional-platform-early-warning-reduce-disaster-risks>

Past Solution Attempts

The African Union (AU) launched the Program of Action for Disaster Risk Reduction in 2005 as part of its efforts to align with the global Hyogo Framework for Action. This initiative sought to improve disaster risk governance, strengthen early warning systems, and build capacity at both the national and regional levels. Countries like South Africa and Kenya made strides in creating national disaster management agencies, but weaker governance structures in nations such as South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Somalia hampered implementation.

While the program increased awareness about disaster risks, it struggled due to limited funding and lack of community engagement in vulnerable areas. For example, flood-prone regions in Mozambique and drought-hit areas in Ethiopia and Kenya remained highly vulnerable due to the absence of locally tailored solutions and sustainable financial mechanisms. The program underscored the importance of addressing governance challenges and building resilience from the grassroots level. In 2015, African nations adopted the global Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, aiming to reduce vulnerability and improve resilience. While countries like Ghana and Rwanda made progress by integrating disaster risk management into their development plans, the framework faced significant hurdles. Many nations lacked the financial resources to implement robust measures, and external donors dictated priorities that did not align with local needs.

In regions like the Sahel, where desertification and climate change exacerbate vulnerabilities, the framework's reliance on national implementation exposed gaps in coordination and funding. The Sendai Framework revealed that without regional coherence and sustainable funding, the vision of comprehensive disaster risk reduction could not be realized. Another notable initiative was the African Risk Capacity (ARC), established as a specialized agency of the AU to provide insurance and risk transfer tools for member states. The ARC helped countries like Senegal and Malawi respond to droughts through quick payouts that supported affected communities.

However, its effectiveness was limited by the inability of poorer nations, such as Niger and Chad, to pay insurance premiums. Political instability in some regions further hampered participation, leaving many vulnerable populations without coverage. The ARC highlighted the necessity of creating broader, more inclusive funding mechanisms that could accommodate nations with constrained financial capacities. Despite these efforts, the overall failure to implement effective solutions consistently across the continent demonstrated the need for stronger governance, sustainable financing, and more inclusive community involvement.

Possible Solutions

To resolve the issue of disaster risk reduction comprehensively, delegates should develop a resolution that focuses on integrating solutions from multiple domains: governance, economic capacity, environmental resilience, and community involvement. The resolution should encourage member states to assess their specific vulnerabilities and address the gaps in their disaster risk management strategies. Name-Surname Position 8 Firstly, delegates should focus on improving governance by establishing regional disaster management centers that coordinate national efforts.

Countries with stronger institutional capacities, such as South Africa and Egypt, could provide technical expertise and training to nations with weaker governance, like Somalia or the Central African Republic. Delegates must also advocate for mechanisms that enforce accountability and transparency in disaster funding and implementation. Economic sustainability is another key aspect. The resolution should recommend the creation of an African Disaster Resilience Fund, supported by contributions from wealthier nations like Nigeria and international donors. This fund should provide grants or low-interest loans to poorer nations, enabling them to invest in risk reduction measures. Delegates should also propose expanding the African Risk Capacity's mandate to subsidize insurance premiums for low-income countries, ensuring broader coverage. Environmental resilience must be addressed through sustainable land management practices and climate adaptation strategies.

For instance, countries in the Sahel region could implement large-scale reforestation projects, supported by international funding and local labor. Coastal nations like Mozambique should receive support to build natural and engineered barriers against rising sea levels and cyclones. Delegates should ensure that these measures are tied to long-term development plans to prevent a recurrence of vulnerabilities. Lastly, community involvement is essential. Delegates should advocate for programs that empower local populations to participate in disaster risk reduction. For example, disaster education campaigns in schools, particularly in high-risk areas like Ethiopia and Madagascar, can raise awareness and prepare communities for emergencies. The resolution should also call for integrating traditional knowledge and practices into national strategies, ensuring culturally sensitive approaches to disaster management.

Useful Links

- <https://wmo.int/media/news/africa-regional-platform-early-warnings-reduce-disaster-risks>
- <https://www.undrr.org/media/79552/download?startDownload=20241130>
- <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/october-2024/building-resilient-africa-through-disaster-risk-reduction-preparedness>
- https://youtu.be/qN5A_t8ADks?si=PU8nEReUmtISKP8f
- https://youtu.be/meFcyt_DTZY?si=J4QeQmDoLO5QhKMz
- <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/disasterriskmanagement>

Bibliography

“Building a Resilient Africa through Disaster Risk Reduction, Preparedness | Africa Renewal.” United Nations,
www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/october-2024/building-resilient-africa-through-disaster-risk-reduction-preparedness. Accessed 30 Nov. 2024.

“Africa Regional Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction.” UNDRR, 22 Apr. 2022,
www.undrr.org/publication/africa-regional-assessment-report-disaster-risk-reduction. Accessed 30 Nov. 2024.

“Africa Marks a Turning Point towards Addressing Disasters through Its Multi-Hazard Early Warning and Action Systems Situation Room.” Africa Marks a Turning Point Towards Addressing Disasters Through Its Multi-Hazard Early Warning and Action Systems Situation Room | African Union, 28 Nov. 2024,
au.int/en/pressreleases/20220228/africa-marks-turning-point-towards-addressing-disasters-through-its-multi. Accessed 30 Nov. 2024.

African Union. Programme of Action for the Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 in Africa. <https://au.int>
Name-Surname Position 10

United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR). Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. <https://www.undrr.org>

African Risk Capacity. Annual Reports and Key Initiatives.
<https://www.africanriskcapacity.org>

World Bank. Building Resilience in Africa: The Need for a Comprehensive Approach to Disaster Risk Reduction. <https://www.worldbank.org>

“Disaster Law.” IFRC, 29 Oct. 1970, disasterlaw.ifrc.org/. Accessed 30 Nov. 2024.

ReliefWeb. Case Study: Cyclone Idai and Disaster Preparedness in Mozambique. <https://reliefweb.int>