

Disaster Risk Management Challenges in Sub-Saharan Africa

Side Event during the 40th Annual Meeting of IDB

To be jointly organized by IDB and SESRIC

8 June 2015, Maputo, Mozambique (11:30 – 13:00)

CONCEPT NOTE

BACKGROUND

The majority of disasters in Africa are hydro-meteorological in nature, with droughts still affecting the largest number of people on the continent and floods occurring frequently along the major river systems and in many urban areas. While geological hazards are less pronounced, cyclones mainly affect Mozambique and some of the islands. On the other hand, a higher magnitude and frequency of these extreme weather events is expected with climate change.

Sub-Saharan Africa's disaster profile is closely connected with the vulnerability of its population and economies and exacerbated by minimal coping capacities. Most OIC countries in the SSA region have limited resources to invest in disaster risk reduction and minimal fiscal space to fund relief and recovery efforts after a major disaster. Disasters can be a huge setback for economic growth and performance of the already struggling economies in the region with limited capacities of disaster risk management (DRM). Economic activities are already highly influenced by climate variability in many areas. Critical infrastructure particularly in transportation, telecommunication and water resource management are often inadequate and not constructed according to solid risk assessments. Moreover, a large proportion of the population lives in informal settlements often located in areas that are highly vulnerable to disasters.

In this framework, the OIC countries in the SSA region face significant challenges in disaster risk management. This side event aims at bringing experts and policy makers to discuss these challenges and propose targeted and implementable actions to tackle some of these challenges.

DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

The challenges faced by the countries in the SSA region are mostly related to their level of development. World Bank (2010) identifies several critical areas in explaining the main culprits of vulnerability to disasters in Africa. Most important ones can be listed as follows:

- i. Limited fiscal resources and low resilience of economies,
- ii. Limited infrastructure,

- iii. Weak governance and institutional capacities,
- iv. Limited knowledge base.

This vulnerability is further fueled by environmental degradation and climate change, which will likely increase the frequency and magnitude of extreme weather events. In justifying these challenges, the WB report highlights several important points.

- Although the economic performance of many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa has improved, their **fiscal resources and scope to invest in DRR** measures is limited. Public spending on ex-ante investments in DRR competes with other demands, such as health, infrastructure, defense, and debt service. Additionally, the fiscal resources of many governments cannot cover any relief and reconstruction efforts. They face shortages of funds, as emergency funds are often not immediately available, and have difficulties accessing additional financing. Most countries in Africa depend fully or partly on external aid and relief operations following a major disaster event.
- Similarly, **Africa's infrastructure** to buffer against hydro-meteorological events is **fairly limited** compared to other continents. Africa's average water storage capacity is very limited compared to developed countries. Transport infrastructure, schools and hospitals need to be constructed and maintained according to minimum standards to resist certain earthquakes, cyclones, or flood events. However, building codes and standards are often not enforced and may result in higher costs for construction and the costs for reconstruction of extensive infrastructure networks can be a major burden for these economies.
- On the other hand, a number of countries in Sub-Saharan Africa face significant **governance challenges**, including an institutional and policy framework to effectively respond to disasters and manage risk reduction measures. This includes poor staffing and skills, weak analytical and implementation capacity, an unclear institutional landscape addressing DRM across various ministries and agencies, and weak partnerships with other agencies and academia, NGOs, and the private sector. In most countries, DRM policy and legislation follow an ex-post responsive approach to disasters and are often not equipped with the right strategies and instruments for an ex-ante approach to risk reduction. Even well-equipped national DRM authorities often lack critical resources to invest in communications, early warning systems, or vehicles. Funding for DRM authorities at sub-national and local levels is particularly limited, where remote district offices depend on funding and information provided in the capitals.
- Finally, the capacities of a large number of DRM organizations in Africa are limited, not only due to lack of equipment, but more importantly due to a **lack of trained officials**. Graduate courses for DRM specialists to improve the knowledge base are rare in most countries. Widespread deficiencies are reported in the observing networks, telecommunications, and informatics system and low capacities in data management related to hydro-meteorological services. The knowledge base to assess other hazards (for example, geological equipment and experts to monitor earthquakes) is even more limited. For that reason, planning for DRR is generally not informed by a comprehensive risk analysis and thus it may not address the priority needs for effective disaster risk management.

These challenges are also highlighted in the IDB/SESRIC report on **"Managing Disasters and Conflicts in OIC Countries"** and it accordingly proposes relevant policy options, ranging from developing institutional

capacities to improving the knowledge base. Therefore, key disaster risk management challenges facing the SSA region provided above require coordinated efforts for effective treatment. In this context, given the fact that OIC Member States in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) region are vulnerable to a range of natural disasters and their vulnerability is further exacerbated by limited coping capacities, **this side event will focus on these critical challenges** identified above faced by the member countries in SSA region.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Despite significant progress in many countries in lowering risks and improving disaster preparedness and response capacities, the expanding and accelerating exposure of people and assets to natural disasters in countries that lack appropriate capacities for reducing and managing such risks is alarming. A significant number of OIC member countries are low-income countries with insufficient technical and financial capabilities. In these countries, prioritization of actions remains a critical issue when it comes to reducing vulnerabilities to disasters.

In this framework, the side event aims to explore a number of issues related to capacity development including, among others:

- Identification of the critical issues for institutional and technical capacity development for disaster risk management in disaster-prone OIC member countries in SSA region;
- Actions to be taken to improve the capacities for disaster related data collection and information sharing;
- Roles to be played by international partners in capacity development;
- Roles to be played by NGOs and universities in developing capacities at local level for better protection of poor and improving the knowledge base;
- Possible mechanisms to be developed by IDB and the member countries as part of their short as well as long-term financing strategy for disaster risk management.

EXPECTED OUTPUTS

The side event is expected to identify actions on the part of OIC member countries in SSA region in support of disaster risk management programs and sustainable development, particularly through prioritizing the needs of the member countries with respect to capacity development.

FORMAT OF THE SIDE EVENT

The session will start with a brief presentation of the recent study prepared by SESRIC and IDB on managing disasters and conflicts in OIC countries, with special focus on sub-Saharan Africa. The rest of the event will be organized in a panel discussion format. The participants will discuss the role of capacity development for effective disaster risk management in low-income disaster-prone OIC member countries. Key speakers from the member countries as well as relevant international organizations will be invited to deliberate on the issue of capacity development. After the panel discussion, there will be a wrap-up section to summarize the key outcome of the discussions.

DATE, VENUE AND LANGUAGE

The side event will take place on **8 June 2015** as part of the activities that will accompany the 40th Annual Meeting of the Islamic Development Bank Group, to be held in Maputo, Mozambique. The presentations and discussions during the side event will be in English.

RESOURCE PERSONS AND PARTICIPANTS

Speakers will be invited to the side event from disaster-prone member countries as well as other international organizations, including:

- High Level Representative from Host Country (Mozambique)
- High Level Representative from West Africa (Senegal)
- High Level Representative from East Africa (Sudan)
- High Level Representative from Turkey
- High Level Representative from UNISDR Africa Office
- High Level Representative from a NGO or University

All delegations of OIC Member States attending the 40th Annual Meeting of the Islamic Development Bank Group are invited to participate to the special session. Representatives of relevant NGOs, OIC institutions, international organizations, academicians as well as other relevant stakeholders are invited to attend the event to share their perspectives.