

DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT



ICPAC

Climate Prediction & Application Centre

Background to IGAD's Disaster Risk Management Programme

IGAD was initially established to address issues of drought and development in the region. It was revitalized in 1996 and its mandate expanded. IGAD's expanded mandate is to coordinate and harmonize policies in the areas of socio-economic, agricultural development, environmental protection and political and humanitarian affairs. The prioritization of programme and projects in the expanded areas of cooperation recognizes the alleviation and mitigation of humanitarian crises as an integral part of IGAD's overall strategy for sustainable development in the region. A series of natural and manmade hazards induced disasters and other urgent challenges facing the IGAD Region have necessitated the realization by the political leaders of the region for more integrated cooperation in the area of DRM. The IGAD Secretariat with the active participation of the member states has been involved in consultative work to develop Regional Disaster Preparedness Strategy and Programme. The strategy/programme was presented to the IGAD Policy Organs for endorsement. The strategy/programme was endorsed 2003 and mandated the IGAD Secretariat to start the process of operationalization.

The overall goal of the Programme is:

- To manage risks and mitigate the incidence and seriousness of disaster emergencies
- IGAD members states are better prepared to manage and respond to disasters at regional and national levels.

The concept of disasters risk management covers all aspects related to planning and response to disasters with the objective of managing both the risks and consequences of disasters. This includes the body of policy and administrative decisions, as operational activities, which pertain to various stages of a disaster at all levels. Yet, in the region, the disaster risk management sector reflects the economic situation of most of the IGAD countries, as both government and donors give low priority to disaster risk management, unless a disaster is in progress. In other words much resource is given for response activities and much less or none to long-term developmental activities that deal with prevention, mitigation and preparedness to disasters.

Disaster risk management is a crosscutting activity that affects every sector of society, helping develop comprehensive management structures that encompass all levels of government and community throughout each country.

Disaster Risks

The IGAD member states are exposed to risks from a variety of hazards that can cause disasters in suitable circumstances. These hazards were discussed with expert representatives from each member states as to determine their commonality and then classified into three levels reflecting their current importance in the risks they pose.

Relative Importance of the Risks by Hazards

Level one – the most serious

1. Drought
2. Conflict (internal and external)
3. Pandemics and epidemics (notably HIV-AIDS)
4. Floods

Level Two – significant but lesser importance

1. Environmental hazards
2. Pest infestations
3. Fire (rural and urban)

Level Three – rare but potentially posing serious risk or posing risks to smaller segments of national communities

1. Earthquakes: seismic and volcanism
2. Livestock disease and Crop Pests
3. Transport and industrial accidents
4. Tsunami

Programme approach

The risk management concept is used to refer not only to primary risk reduction or prevention and mitigation activities, but it is also perceived as an integral concept and a tool that covers the whole spectrum of risk, including conflict, disaster risk management from prevention through reconstruction, preparedness and response. Here the major conceptual shift is that it is the risk scenario rather than the disaster itself, which becomes the centre for stakeholder interventions.

Programme Objective

The overall objective of the disaster risk management programme is to establish capacities to mitigate impacts and manage disaster risks and ensure that when people are affected by disasters they can continue to meet their minimum needs for food, water, shelter, health and security and reduce impacts on the people.

Other specific strategic objectives are:

1. To promote the development and implementation of suitable national disaster management plans and strategies in IGAD countries;
2. To put in place an appropriate framework of principles, policies, legislation and agreements at regional and national levels which will enable disaster management programmes to be implemented effectively;
3. To ensure that national, regional and international agencies collaborate effectively in disaster management in the region,
4. To ensure that communities which may be affected by disasters, and staff of institutions expected to provide assistance in response to disasters, are aware of disaster hazards and are capable of acting effectively when disasters strike;
5. To establish mechanisms and infrastructure required for implementing disaster risk management at regional level.

Strategic principles

The basic principles of the DRM programme are the following:

1. Establish the project with clear IGAD regional identity that takes account of the strength, weaknesses, cultural and governmental, traditional and community of member states;
2. Build on existing expertise in the region and its member countries;
3. Adopt internationally accepted principles to meet regional and local needs;
4. Encourage widespread examination of locally formulated appropriate strategies and their formalization in appropriate plans at every level; and
5. Develop local capacities through consultations and consensus.

Programme Strategies

The Disasters Risk management Programme is made of seven components. These components are:

1. Development of disaster preparedness strategies and contingency planning process;
2. Elaboration of supporting policies, legislation and agreements for disaster risk management;
3. Improvement of regional collaboration of preparedness and response;
4. Strengthening of early warning and information systems and vulnerability analysis;
5. Development of education and training for disaster mitigation;
6. Improving preparedness for impact and needs assessment and resource mobilization; and
7. Improving preparedness for targeting, implementation and monitoring an evaluation of relief and rehabilitation assistance.