

# Report



## ECOWAS Regional Workshop on Information Sharing and Early Warning Coordination Mechanisms and Disaster Risk Reduction

Niamey, Niger 11-14 November 2013



## Background

1. The ECOWAS Commission, in collaboration with the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR), United Nations Development Programme-Bureau for Conflict Prevention and Recovery (UNDP-BCPR), United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), FOREWARN Initiative led by Humanitarian Futures Programme (HFP) King's College London and funded by Australian Aid, and ACMAD, organized a Regional Workshop on Information Sharing and Early Warning Coordination Mechanisms for Disaster Risk Reduction from 11-14 November 2013 in Niamey, Republic of Niger.

2. The objectives of the workshop were:

- To create opportunity for disaster risk reduction experts, meteorological and hydrological services, sub-regional specialized institutions to engage and identify joint early warning, information sharing coordination mechanisms and good practices for major trans-boundary disaster risk reduction (DRR) and climate change adaptation (CCA) in West Africa.
- To discuss opportunities for ECOWAS to engage in resilient infrastructure programming (infrastructures resilient to increasing climate extremes), linking risk reduction to sustainable development.
- To ensure that achievements during 2005-2015 on the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) at regional, national and local levels amongst ECOWAS member states are appropriately reported.
- To discuss based on country experiences a regionally agreed outline on HFA2.
- To share good practices and strengthen capacities to mainstream disaster risk reduction (DRR) into development frameworks and enhance implementation of DRR interventions.

3. Representatives from disaster risk management (DRM) bodies, meteorological services institutions, river basin authorities, researchers, civil society organisations and the academia from the following ECOWAS Member States attended the workshop:

- Republic of Benin
- Republic of Burkina Faso
- Republic of Cote d'Ivoire

- Republic of Cape Verde
- Republic of The Gambia
- Republic of Ghana
- Republic of Guinea
- Republic of Guinea Bissau
- Republic of Liberia
- Republic of Mali
- Republic of Niger
- Federal Republic of Nigeria
- Republic of Senegal
- Republic of Sierra Leone
- Republic of Togo

4. Participants from the following regional and international organizations were also present:

- United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR)
- United Nations Development Programme-Bureau for Conflict Prevention (UNDP-BCPR)
- United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA)
- United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP)
- Humanitarian Futures Programme (HFP) King's College London
- ACMAD.
- AGHRYMET
- Niger and Volta River Basin authorities

The list of participants is attached as an annex to this report.

### **Welcome address and opening remarks**

5. The workshop was chaired by Cote d'Ivoire, the current Chair of the Authority of ECOWAS Heads of State and Government and the statutory chair of regional meetings, ably represented by Prof. Ochou Abe Delfin. In his welcome address, he underlined that it was crucial for ECOWAS Member States to develop effective DRM systems and welcomed the initiative to organize a workshop on early warning and information sharing on cross-border risks. He

further urged participants at the workshop to determine how to strengthen capacity for information exchange to reduce risks. On behalf of the President of Cote d'Ivoire, Alassane Ouattara, he wished the participants fruitful deliberation.

**6.** In his opening speech, the ECOWAS Director for Humanitarian and Social Affairs, Dr. Daniel Eklou highlighted progress in implementing the HFA and the Africa Regional Framework for Disaster Reduction. He saw the meeting as opportunity to assess progress so far on achieving HFA objectives and to plan for 2015 and beyond. He mentioned that he was encouraged by the level of participation from Member States and the support of partners, especially at a time when ECOWAS communities are experiencing disasters. He added that the presence of participants was proof that DRR was prioritized in the strategic programmes of Member States and partners. Dr. Eklou underlined the importance of improving the level of preparedness and response, noting that a lack of harmonized regional early warning information sharing framework has posed a great challenge to DRR efforts within the region. He closed his speech by thanking all participants and partners for supporting ECOWAS in building resilience in Member States. He also expressed gratitude to the Prime Minister, the government and the people of the Republic of Niger for hosting the workshop.

**7.** In his opening statement, Mr. Leon Guy Razafindrakoto, Chief of Weather Watch and Prediction Department, on behalf of the Director General of ACMAD expressed satisfaction with the ECOWAS Commission and partners on the meeting to agree on a coordination mechanism and to improve efficiency in DRM. He explained that disasters and climate change impacts particularly affect people in rural areas in Member States who are unable to understand the changes and lack reliable and up to date information to take informed decisions. This he pointed out makes the people more vulnerable in the face of disasters and climate change impacts. He also linked vulnerability to the heavy reliance of the economy of many African states on natural resources and primary sectors including forestry, fishery, water, agriculture and mining, whose dependence exposes people to higher vulnerability as disasters heavily impact these sectors. He added that knowledge of risk and multidisciplinary and crosscutting information sharing are imperative and ACMAD seeks to contribute to this process. He emphasized that ECOWAS and partners must work together to overcome the challenges and to take timely and rapid measures to prepare for and address disasters such as floods and epidemics.

8. On behalf of the UN Undersecretary General and Executive Secretary of UNECA, Mr. Privat Denis Akochaye was honoured to deliver the statement. Reiterating the workshop objectives, he extended appreciation to the Minister and Permanent Secretary for DRM in Niger and the government for hosting the workshop and congratulated ECOWAS in bringing Member States and partners together to effectively tackle disasters. He hoped that the workshop would arrive at joint, concrete solutions to the problem of disasters in the region. He mentioned that currently six (6) out of the ten (10) fastest growing economies globally are in Africa and there is the challenge to sustain and increase the growth in all sectors in the society. However the increasing number, severity, complexity and impacts of disasters pose a great challenge to sustained economic growth. He added that realization of the objectives of the workshop was important to place ECOWAS and its Member states on a path to effectively manage and prevent disasters. He encouraged stakeholders to jointly develop a roadmap for mainstreaming DRR into all sectors and to turn the outcomes of the workshop into concrete action. He ended by reiterating ECA's commitment in supporting ECOWAS and its Member States.

9. On behalf of the President and the Prime Minister of the Republic of Niger and the national DRR office, Mr. Goni Mahamane BOULIAMA Permanent Secretary National Agency for the Prevention and Management of Food Crises in Niger welcomed participants to the event. He thanked ECOWAS for choosing Niger to host the regional workshop. He added that disasters were becoming more frequent, complex and impactful in Sub-Saharan Africa. He informed participants that Niger had developed a national mechanism for disaster risk prevention and food crisis, with a disaster early warning unit, a food crisis unit, a social unit, and a permanent secretariat. He also mentioned that the early warning unit had developed data collection and processing tools which other Member States could learn from. The Permanent Secretary declared the meeting open.

### **Introductions, adoption of the agenda and expectations**

10. A round-the-table introduction of participants was conducted. The chair appointed Burkina Faso and Nigeria representatives as rapporteurs. The agenda for the workshop was adopted with suggested changes to better manage time.

**11.** Participants were informed that the workshop objectives derived from the Priorities for Action under the ECOWAS Policy for Disaster Risk Reduction, which in turn is linked to the HFA priorities. It was also pointed out that the workshop was informed by a biennial meeting of Directors of Meteorological Services in ECOWAS Member States held in 2012, which recommended closer integration of meteorological services initiatives to support DRR.

**12.** The regional workshop which brought together scientists, meteorological and river basin authorities, DRR focal points in Member States, policy makers, disaster managers, CSOs and ECOWAS partners sought, among other things, to articulate a West African position on the HFA2 to be integrated into the African position and subsequently into the global framework.

### **Thematic Presentations**

The following presentations were made during the four days of the workshop:

#### **13. Day one (1):**

- Implementation of ECOWAS DRR Policy and Action Plan - *Mr. Mohammed Ibrahim, ECOWAS PPO DRR*
- Implementation of ECOWAS Regional Framework on Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) – *Mr. Bertrand Zida, Consultant ECOWAS Environment Directorate*
- Existing Regional Tools for Risk Reduction and Anticipation – *ACMAD*
- River Basin: A Specific Tool – *Niger River Basin Authority*
- Disaster Risk Forecasting Scenario Exercise – led by *Emma Visman, Humanitarian Futures Programme (HFP) King's College London*

#### **14. Day two (2):**

- Information and Coordination for Science-based DRM – *Emma Visman, Humanitarian Futures Programme (HFP) King's College London*
- Best Practices for Integrating Science into Risk Management - *Dr. Leonard Njau, ACMAD; Ms. Aisseta Kabre-Tapsoba, Christian Aid Burkina Faso; Mr. Adama Gnanou, Reseau Marp Burkina Faso; Dr. Meteugue Diack, Peri-Peri U network*

- Overview of the Focus on Science for HFA 2 – *Mr. Lo Mare, DRR Expert UNISDR*
- Post 2015 Risk Reduction Framework: Facilitating HFA 2 for West Africa – *Mr. Youcef Ait-Chellouche, UNISDR*
- Post Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA)– *UNISDR*
- Post Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) Nigeria Experience – *Mr. Aliyu Baffale SAMBO, Head DRR NEMA*
- Implementation of the African Strategy on DRR and the African Working Group – *African Union Commission*
- Flood Risk Modeling – *Prof. Aliou Diop, Université Gaston Berger, Senegal*
- Situation and Challenges for HFA 1 Reporting in West Africa – *Prof. Ochu Abé Delfin, Cote d'Ivoire*

**15. Day three (3):**

- Identification, Assessment and Monitoring Disaster Risk and Early Warning: The Nigerian Experience Towards HFA 2 – *Mr. Sunday Amama, NEMA*
- Entry Points for Mainstreaming DRR into Development– *Ms. Sophie Baranes, UNDP-BCPR*
- Content and Process of HFA 2: Nigeria National Consultation Reports – *NEMA*
- DRR Mainstreaming and Implementation: Progress and Good Practices in the ECOWAS Region – *Dr. Olusegun Edward Ojo, Consultant ECOWAS*
- DRR Mainstreaming and Implementation including HFA Tools, Progress and Good Practices in Togo – *Togo*
- DRR Mainstreaming and Implementation including HFA Tools, Progress and Good Practices in Nigeria – *Prof. Edwin Igusi, Centre for disaster Risk Management, Ahmadu Bello University- Zaria*
- DRR Mainstreaming and Implementation including HFA Tools, Progress and Good Practices in Cape Verde – *Mrs. Alexandrina Martins*
- Products and climate services in early warning and planning - *Mbaiguedem Miambaye, Expert en Application Climatique ACMAD*

**16. Day four (4):**

- Strengthening DRR Mainstreaming and Implementation in the ECOWAS region
- Reflections from participants on key points for ECOWAS HFA2 Position Paper – led by *Mr. Youcef Ait-Chellouche, UNISDR*

- Articulating ECOWAS HFA2 Position Paper- *Mr. Lo Mare, DRR Expert UNISDR*

### **Outcomes of the workshop**

17. The following outcomes emerged from the workshop:

- ECOWAS HFA-2 position paper articulated and is to be improved upon in subsequent meetings.
- Strengthened network of stakeholders on Information Sharing and Early Warning Mechanisms between Meteorological Services and DRR experts to reduce disaster and climate risks in the ECOWAS region.
- Increased appreciation of the need to promote opportunities and platforms for collaboration and dialogue between academic partners, including scientists, community-level actors, including local, national and regional Civil Society Organisations, and national and regional organisations responsible for meteorological services and disaster risk reduction and management.
- Increased awareness by ECOWAS Member States to move away from workshops to more structured training in DRR and science-based risk management at Masters and Doctorate levels to build strong capacity and expertise to support institutions in DRR/DRM.
- There is equally a need to ensure that efforts to strengthen integration of relevant scientific understandings of risk move beyond dialogue and result in concrete implementation and benefits amongst at risk groups.
- The next Africa Ministerial meeting and sub-regional platform to be held in Abuja, Nigeria from 05 – 08 May 2014.

### **Key observations and recommendations**

18. The following general observations and specific recommendations were made as ways of advancing the objectives of the workshop:

- An agency for DRR/DRM should be established in all ECOWAS Member States with international, national, local, and private sectors partnership for the support, funding and implementation of DRR related policies, plans and programmes. ECOWAS' efforts to finalise a model national disaster risk reduction and management agency should be strengthened.



- To have more force and to achieve greater impact, DRR policies, programmes and plans should have legal backing. DRR laws should be formulated, adopted and enforced in all the ECOWAS Member States.
- DRR activities should be increasingly decentralized to be able to reach at-risk populations. Community-based DRR and CSO engagement should be given priority to ensure active local participation.
- Annual budgeting for DRR activities should be institutionalized in ECOWAS Member States at the federal, state and local levels. Channeling funding to prioritized DRR activities is key to building resilience.
- HFA 2 should be made a Convention with binding force rather than mere guidelines. Ratification and domestication by states is also a key way to demonstrate and promote commitment to realizing the objectives.
- International DRR assistance should be based on ratification of the HFA 2 Convention beyond 2015.
- ECOWAS Member States should move from away from workshops to structured training at Masters and Doctorate levels to build capacity and expertise in DRR/DRM.
- National and regional reporting on HFA-1 and ECOWAS HFA-2 Position and national consultations processes should be strengthened to ensure that the region has a strong voice and representation at the negotiations for HFA-2.
- ECOWAS position should feed into Africa position, roadmap and reports for post 2015 HFA World Conference.
- All ECOWAS Member States should have strong and active National Platform for DRR with a DRR desk officer represented in relevant Ministries, Departments and Agencies at the national and regional levels.
- Greater dialogue should be promoted between the scientific community, meteorological services, policy makers, users of scientific information and communities at risk so as to ensure that the information and decision-making needs of each group are met. It is important to enable concrete channels for such dialogue. There are many ongoing and proposed initiatives and channels through which such dialogue could be more closely integrated and will be important to collate and maximize the benefits of greater collaboration and coordination in such efforts.
- Beyond greater cooperation between disaster risk reduction specialists and the scientific community, it was emphasized that more could be done to build links between existing regional networks of institutes of higher education, such as Peri-Peri U., and DRR policy makers.

## **Closing remarks**

**19.** ECOWAS Director of Humanitarian and Social Affairs informed participants that the position paper may be refined and amended in subsequent meetings at national and regional levels, starting with Sierra Leone. The workshop was brought to a close with concluding remarks and words of thanks from representative of the Niger Government.

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