



Draft Statement from the Scientific, Technical and Academic Communities in Disaster Risk Reduction (6th African Regional Platform, Port Louis, Mauritius)

Overview

The Science, Technology and Academic Communities consultative session was convened by the Periperi U (Partners Enhancing Resilience for People Exposed to Risks) Consortium in association with the International Council of Science's Regional Office for Africa. This pre-event on 22 November 2016 was attended by approximately 50 delegates. Those attending represented a diverse and inclusive range of disaster risk-related disciplines, professions and related practice fields, drawn from across the continent and beyond.

We acknowledge that:

1. Africa faces a diverse range of complex, rapidly changing and interlinked risks that have potential to undermine its development potential, and that require enhanced human resource capacity to address.
2. Disaster risk knowledge is most useful for informing disaster risk and adaptation planning and decision-making when it is integrated across different scientific disciplines and other bodies of knowledge and jointly framed by practitioners, policy makers and community stake-holders.
3. There is increasing evidence of success in Africa in the use of appropriate technologies to protect lives and build resilience to recurrent threats (including agricultural innovations, socio-informatic methodologies, geo-spatial, mobile phone and other accessible technologies).
4. Opportunities are also expanding for improved exchange of risk knowledge and collaboration within countries, across the continent and internationally, as underlined in UNISDR's Science and Technology Roadmap.
5. However, despite evidence of progress in disaster risk-related capacity building and expanding risk-research capability in many countries, there are highly vulnerable areas that remain under-resourced (for instance, in Central Africa and Francophone African countries).
6. Africa's science bodies and higher education institutions (HEIs) constitute key resources for strengthening disaster risk-related science, technology and play vital roles at all scales in advancing relevant risk knowledge, research and skilled capacity in the management of current and future risks.
7. While the integration of science, technology and academic knowledge in decision making for risk reduction has made encouraging progress in recent years, these

advancements have not kept pace with Africa's increasing risk profile, including existing and emerging risks.

8. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction provides an integrative architecture for advancing collective efforts to reduce disaster risks, and is central for optimising the disaster risk reduction efforts of Africa's scientists and educators at all levels.

Therefore, we call for:

1. Urgent advancement and investment in skilled human resources in disaster risk management at local, sub-national, national, regional and continental scales, through greater engagement with the continent's science bodies and institutions of higher learning, and student bursary/scholarship support.
2. Urgent support to systematically expand and resource Africa's existing science and academic networks to strengthen human capacity in disaster risk reduction, for example, through consortia and partnerships such as Periperi U. This includes greater engagement of disciplinary domains including health, agriculture, finance and economics that are vital in managing disaster risks.
3. Commitment to providing evidence-based information to strengthen practice, leadership and governance in DRR that actively involves Africa's science, technology and academic communities in integrated, inter-disciplinary disaster risk research including risk analysis and planning, as well as risk surveillance efforts, loss recording and post disaster needs assessments.
4. Commitment to a better coordinated and coherent assessment of scientific knowledge to enhance understanding of risk to support stronger use of scientific knowledge in policy and decision making at all governance levels.
5. Urgent engagement of Africa's Ministries of Education and Higher Education as well as Ministries of Science and Technology to systematically advance disaster risk knowledge and capacity.
6. The establishment of an African Science and Technology Advisory Committee to advise on the programmes and activities of AfRP, ISDR regional office, governments and local governments as well as for higher education engagement in disaster risk reduction and management.
Organisation of a bi-ennial Science and Technology Disaster Risk Reduction conference pre-AfRP and Africa Ministerial meetings to inform continental discussions and decision-making on disaster risk reduction.

Conclusion

We would like to emphasise the urgency for skilled human resources in Disaster Risk Management (DRM) at local, sub-national, national and regional scales and need for greater engagement with the continent's science bodies and institutions of higher learning. This recognises their vital roles in advancing relevant risk knowledge, research and skilled capacity in the management of Africa's current and future risks.