

# **DISASTER MANAGEMENT IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA**

## **POLICIES, INSTITUTIONS AND PROCESSES**

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# **Disaster Management in Sub-Saharan Africa**

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# **Disaster Management in Sub-Saharan Africa: Policies, Institutions and Processes**

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# Preface

More than ever before, disaster risk reduction (DRR) and disaster risk management (DRM) policies, institutional frameworks, processes and related issues are gaining increasing importance at national, regional and international levels. The importance is not surprising, given the current surging levels of hazards and disasters and their future predictions. According to the Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR, 2019), multi-hazards affected over 88 million people worldwide between 1997 and 2017. Floods alone are accounting for almost 88% (76 million) of those affected by natural hazards and disasters.<sup>1</sup> In the past 50 years, some 11,000 mostly weather-related disasters (such as floods and droughts) claimed over 2 million lives, leaving behind economic losses to the tune of US\$3.6 trillion. Thirty-five percentage of deaths related to weather, climate and water extremes occurred in Africa (WMO, 2020). Two of the three top affected countries (Kenya and South Africa) are in sub-Saharan Africa (CREG, 2019). In the absence of sufficient efforts, the number of people affected by disasters will surge by 50% in 2030 (UNDRR, 2019). A rapid paradigm reversal at global and regional levels is needed to backstop natural disaster effects. Policies that move from response strategies towards disaster preparedness, risk reduction and mitigation are urgently needed (Buchenrieder, Brandl, & Balgah, 2021).

The international community recognises this and has made tremendous efforts in the last decade towards DRR. The two key instruments in this direction are the Hyogo Framework for Action (2005–2015) and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015–2030). Both are indicators of international political will to rapidly drift from disaster management towards risk reduction.<sup>2</sup> It then

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<sup>1</sup>By definition, hazards are potentially damaging physical events capable of inflicting injury, property damage, social and economic disruption or environmental degradation (UNDRR, 2020). Disasters seriously disrupt the normal functioning of communities and societies, inflicting widespread (human, economic, material and environmental) losses, superseding the capacity of the affected to cope, based on endogenous resources (UNDRR, 2009). Disasters only occur when existing conditions favour the transformation of hazards into damaging events, which exceed endogenous coping capacities, demanding external interventions (UNDRR, 2015).

<sup>2</sup>On the one hand, UN (2017) defines disaster risk reduction (DRR) as the application of policies and strategies to prevent new disaster risk and to reduce existing disaster risk. On the other hand, disaster risk management (DRM) ought to contribute to the

becomes imperative for developing countries, which are currently hardest hit by hazards and disasters to develop policy frameworks which align with these international instruments (UNISDR, 2021; WMO, 2020). In fact, about 80% of the world's poorest countries will be living in fragile contexts by 2030 if considerable efforts are not made to enhance and strengthen DRR strategies in these countries (OECD, 2018).

Over 90% of the world's current poorest countries are located in Africa, the bulk of them in sub-Saharan Africa. At the same time, sub-Saharan Africa is hardest hit by natural hazards and disasters in Africa (UNDRR, 2019). The presence of widespread poverty and increasing natural disasters suggest an urgent need for policies and institutions, to backstop the escalation of hazards and disasters in the short run and their potential transformation into complex emergencies in the long run.<sup>3</sup> What is the current state of policy and institutional frameworks in sub-Saharan African countries? What challenges or shortcomings abound? How do these policies resonate with the African Union's strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction (AU-DRR)? To what extent does the AU-DRR align with international risk reduction frameworks? This edited volume provides urgently needed initial responses to these questions.

To set the stage, Chapter 1 presents a review of key concepts commonly used in the disaster parlance. This is intended as a quick reminder for experts in the field and to motivate understanding for non-expert readers. Chapter 2 reviews key international DRM frameworks, particularly the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Hyogo Framework for Action. This is important to eventually situate the African policies within important international regime frameworks. Chapter 3 critically assesses the AU-DRR strategy. Central to this is the analysis of processes, institutions and arrangements that shaped the development of the AU-DRR strategy document and the AU-DRR's alignment to international expectations. Chapters 4 and 5 analyse policies and institutional frameworks for DRR in Cameroon (Central Africa) and Nigeria (West Africa), respectively. These five review-based chapters constitute the first part of this book: *A Review of Disaster Management Concepts and Policy Processes*.

Part II of this book, *Disaster Management Institutions, Policy and Processes: Empirical Evidence*, constitutes three empirically oriented chapters from Kenya (Eastern Africa), The Republic of South Africa (Southern Africa) and Ghana (West Africa), respectively.

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strengthening of resilience and reduction of disaster losses. This definition suggests that DRR measures are mostly ex ante (e.g. obtaining an insurance policy), while DRM is largely ex post (e.g. paying out insurance premiums).

<sup>3</sup>A complex emergency is said to exist when humanitarian crisis in a country, region or society results from considerable breakdown of endogenous processes (such as ethnic conflicts and political decay), requiring an international response exceeding the mandate or capacity of the United Nations or any other mandated humanitarian organisation (Albala-Bertrand, 2000).

This edited volume contributes to the contextual knowledge on DRM in sub-Saharan Africa. It also contains an extensive glossary of disaster-related terms, which can be helpful to students, lecturers, other scholars and policy actors within and outside of the disaster management discipline. It is my fervent expectation that different actors will optimise the potentials offered by the insights of the scholarly contribution to DRR and DRM.



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