



## AFRICA REGIONAL PLATFORM FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

□ *TOWARDS DISASTER RISK-INFORMED DEVELOPMENT FOR A RESILIENT AFRICA IN A COVID-19 TRANSFORMED WORLD* □

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### **PRECONFERENCE CONCEPT NOTE**

**Event Title: “Gender and Disaster Risk Reduction/Management in times of Covid-19”**

**16 November 2021**

#### **1. Introduction**

A recent report developed by the UN<sup>i</sup> about the Covid-19 and girls and women, indicates that in addition to the spike in domestic violence, the pandemic will cause loss of employment for women who hold the majority of insecure, informal and lower-paying jobs. “The current emergency is poised to deeply exacerbate a stubborn one: while early reports suggest that men are more likely to succumb to COVID-19, the social and economic toll will be paid disproportionately by the world’s girls and women.”

The impacts of disasters, including the Covid-19 pandemic are not distributed evenly within a population, due to existing socio-economic conditions, cultural beliefs and traditional practices. Women, men, boys and girls belonging to different age and socio-economic strata, have distinct vulnerabilities. In disaster prone areas, where there is high prevalence of prominent hazards such as cyclones, drought, flood, earthquake, volcanoes, landslides, etc., the vulnerable groups, especially women and girls are often the ones who suffer the most, and therefore it is important to develop smart strategies to ensure gender equality and empowerment of the vulnerable groups in the context of Disaster Risk Reduction and Management. Gender inequality heightens exposure to risk, increases vulnerability and restrains capacity. It shapes women’s and girls’ uneven capacity to anticipate, adapt, and recover from disasters, including COVID19, and to build their resilience to disasters. To increase the resilience to disasters of women and their families, African countries need gender responsive DRR systems, plans and policies (which also cover pandemics such as COVID19) and targeted action for women’s disaster (and COVID19) resilience. Gender-responsive multi-hazard risk assessments and post-disaster needs assessments need to be undertaken<sup>ii</sup>.

Upon the on-set of COVID-19, Sub-Saharan Africa member states at the national, sub-national, and local levels developed various measures to respond and contain the pandemic and address its implications on vulnerable groups and national economies. Some governments lowered the tax bracket to support business. Sensitization campaigns were started and the repositioning of health facilities including personal protective equipment, face mask and hand sanitizers were undertaken. The response to COVID-19 in the region unfolded with various Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) approaches and initiatives to curb the spread of the pandemic and its interconnected socio-economic impacts. Despite often resource-constrained situations in many Sub-Saharan countries, measures to respond to and combat the pandemic were quickly put in place. Perhaps due to the experience gained from dealing with past cyclic occurrences of Ebola outbreaks and a largely youthful population, most SSA countries may have managed to dodge the high mortality rates seen in other parts of the world.

The Covid-19 pandemic has created deep shocks to many countries, to their economies and their health systems. The pandemic has underscored society's reliance on women both on the front line and at home, while simultaneously exposing structural inequalities across every sphere, from health to the economy, security to social protection. In times of crisis, when resources are strained and institutional capacity is limited, women and girls face disproportionate impacts with far reaching consequences that are only further amplified in contexts of fragility, conflict, and emergencies. Hard-fought gains for women's rights are also under threat. Responding to the pandemic is not just about rectifying long-standing inequalities, but also about building a resilient world in the interest of everyone with women at the centre of recovery.

While we acknowledge that African governments tried to develop strategies to limit the impacts of the Covid-19 on the population, we cannot ignore the impacts of the pandemic on vulnerable groups such as women, the elderly, and people with disabilities. As the African continent grapples with the reality of Covid-19, it becomes very critical to ensure gender mainstreaming in DRR/M policies and actions in order to reduce vulnerability and strengthen resilience of women, the elderly, children and people living with disabilities. Urgent investment is needed for the development of national and local gender-responsive disaster risk reduction plans, policies and strategies to adequately prepare for disasters, including potential recurrent waves of COVID19. Direct support, both financial and technical, needs to be provided to local women's organizations in high-risk areas so as to enable them to work with DRR practitioners to design gender-responsive prevention, preparedness and response systems, plans policies and strategies

It is in this context that the G&DRM Platform is conducting a Gender and DRM panel in the context of the 8<sup>th</sup> Africa Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in order to examine the impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable populations living in disaster prone areas in Africa. The event will also explore pathways through which stakeholders can accelerate the implementation of the programme of action for the implementation of the Sendai Framework in Africa with special focus on COVID-19 impacts and implications. In addition, this event which will be facilitated by the Members of the D&DRM Platform, will bring together all relevant stakeholders that are active in addressing, not only DRR/M issues, but also COVID-19 related concerns. The event will focus on the interplay of COVID-19 and DRR/M factors such as information, preparedness, financing, recovery, response, women's leadership, etc. that influence the way vulnerable groups are affected, during and after the disasters.

## **2. Objectives**

The objectives of the pre-conference will be:

1. To identify the impacts of COVID-19 on gender relations and women's empowerment in the context of DRR/M
2. To raise awareness on the disproportionate impacts of COVID-19 on women, girls and youth in disaster prone areas.
3. To explore mechanisms for preventing, mitigating and addressing such impacts through policy dialogue, advocacy and financing.

*The panelists will attempt to answer the following questions:*

1. What can be done/ is being done at the level of policy makers at the African Union in order to protect women in disaster prone regions, especially in the times of Covid-19?
2. If Covid-19 is classified as a disaster and that women and other vulnerable groups are the most affected, which strategies can African government put in place to reduce vulnerability and strengthen resilience of women, the elderly, children and people living with disabilities?
3. What are the main challenges that civil society organisations have identified during this time and how can they mobilise and advocate for more awareness and support towards building resilience for the vulnerable and towards empowering women?
4. What data is available in terms of the impact of Covid-19 on women and other vulnerable groups globally and specifically on the African continent? What does this data tell us about women's resilience and empowerment?

### 3. Outcomes

The preconference is expected to impact the main conference through the following outcomes:

- Shared knowledge about the dynamics influencing gender equality and women empowerment in times of COVID-19.
- Innovative mechanisms and smart partnerships created in the context of Gender and DRR/M.
- Push for policy dialogue and advocacy towards the development of a gender transformative fund that will serve for the empowerment of vulnerable groups in the context of Gender and DRR/M
- Policy coherence for gender and disaster risk reduction/management.

### 4. Key messages

The panel will engage in in-depth discussion on Gender and DRR/M in times of Covid-19. The panelists attempt to demonstrate that:

- COVID-19, like other disasters, exacerbate gender inequalities and continue to affect the most vulnerable of our societies
- It is important to adopt innovative approaches, including financing mechanisms, to address gender and DRR/M concerns.
- Women's inclusion, participation and leadership at the DRR decision-making spaces will make strategies more efficient and sustainable
- Smart partnerships and collaboration are needed in order to influence policy and decision makers

### 5. Organisers, structure of the event

The Preconference will be organised by the African Risk Capacity- Gender and Disaster Risk Management Platform in collaboration with the AU Directorate of Women, Gender and Youth Development.

The event will last **one (1) hour** and will be made of a panel of experts from UN Women, ARC, the AUC, and from Civil Society Organisations.

### 6. Date, Venue, Time, and Format

The Preconference will take place **virtually** on Tuesday, **16 November 2021** from **12hrs-13hrs EAT (Nairobi Time)**; to attend, please [register here](#)

### 7. Language

The Preconference will be delivered in all AU languages

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<sup>i</sup> Policy brief: The Impact of Covid-19 on Women-UN April 2020

<sup>ii</sup> From insight to action. Gender equality in the wake of Covid19, UN Women 2020  
<https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/09/gender-equality-in-the-wake-of-covid-19>