

From Global Frameworks to Africa's Disaster Risk Reduction Realities: Gaps and the Path to 2030

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A disaster is an acute ecological event whose severity overwhelms the affected community's coping capacity, requiring assistance from outside sources. It carries profound socio-economic and political repercussions. ^(1, 2)Between 2005 and 2015, disasters globally claimed over 700,000 lives, injured more than 1.4 million people, displaced approximately 23 million from their homes, and affected over 1.5 billion individuals, with women, children, and vulnerable populations bearing a disproportionately heavy burden. ⁽²⁾Disasters damage and destroy infrastructure and cause loss of life; in 2000, total GDP loss in the African region due to disaster deaths was estimated at approximately 2.2 billion. This represented about 0.4% of the region's total GDP. ⁽³⁾

To mitigate these impacts, the United Nations developed a strategic framework known as the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. ⁽²⁾ The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030) is the global blueprint for substantially reducing disaster risk and losses in lives, livelihoods, and assets by 2030. It outlines four priorities for action: understanding disaster risk; strengthening disaster risk governance to manage it; investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience; and enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and "Build Back Better" recovery. To guide the progress, the framework sets Seven global targets by 2030: (A) reduce global disaster mortality, (B) reduce the number of affected people, (C) reduce direct disaster economic loss in relation to Gross Domestic Product, (D) reduce damage to critical infrastructure and disruption of basic services, (E) increase number of the number of countries with national and local and local DRR strategies within 2030 deadline, (F) enhance international cooperation to developing countries, and (G) increase the availability of and access to multi-hazard early warning system and disaster risk information. ⁽²⁾ Since 2017, the African Union has adapted and implemented the strategy. ⁽⁴⁾

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As the world approaches the

2030 deadline for the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, African countries held a review meeting in Windhoek, Namibia, from October 21–24, 2024. The review found a major gap between what global plans promise and what is happening on the ground. It also highlighted several ongoing problems that make it hard to implement these plans effectively. These include a lack of funding, insufficient reliable data on disaster risks, poor integration of disaster planning into broader development efforts, and failure to turn strategies into actions that help local communities.⁽⁵⁾

With less than five years to 2030, Africa must shift from planning to accelerated action. This requires strengthening inclusive partnerships, mobilizing resources, and securing political will. Key actions include: embedding DRR across all government ministries, investing in localized risk data systems, decentralizing financing to community levels, enforcing "Build Back Better" standards in recovery, and establishing a biennial Africa-wide peer-review mechanism to share lessons and foster accountability. Only through these concrete steps can Africa close the implementation gap and build genuine resilience by 2030.

In conclusion, while the Sendai Framework has provided a crucial global blueprint, Africa's journey to 2030 reveals a persistent gap between policy aspiration and on-the-ground implementation. The path forward demands a decisive shift from planning to accelerated action, driven by stronger partnerships, political will, and tangible community-level investment. Only through this paradigm shift can Africa build genuine resilience and meet the framework's ambitious targets.

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