

## WORKSTREAM 2: DROUGHT RISK GOVERNANCE: ACHIEVEMENTS, CHALLENGES, AND THE WAY FORWARD

Lead Organizations:



United Nations  
Convention to Combat  
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### »»» A LOOK BACK AT THE PAST 10 YEARS

The impact of drought is increasing as the world moves towards a 2°C warmer world. If not properly managed, drought is one of the drivers of desertification and land degradation, increasing ecosystem fragility and social instability. The change from a reactive to a proactive approach in drought management planning was a crucial milestone which emerged from the inaugural High-level meeting on National Drought Policy (HMNDP) in 2013. Since then, the HMNDP has laid the groundwork for greater recognition of drought as a major risk factor and of the role of governance in drought. Considerable progress has been made at international, regional, and national levels.

Several UN agencies and initiatives have increased their focus on drought and started to work on drought-related issues at an **international** level. As a result, there are a wide variety of guidelines, instruments, and publication that support enhanced drought governance<sup>1</sup> such as the National Drought Management Policy Guidelines, which outline a ten-step process for developing and implementing national drought management policies<sup>2</sup> and the "3 key pillars" approach to integrated drought management.<sup>3</sup> **Regionally**, progress in strengthening drought governance and management was initiated in 2013 with the launch of the Integrated Drought Management Programme (IDMP). Within the framework of the IDMP five Regional Programmes<sup>4</sup> were established in Central Eastern Europe, West Africa, Horn of Africa, Central Asia and Caucasus, and Central.<sup>5</sup> The UN-Water collaborative initiative to support countries develop National Drought Management Polices (NDMP) was another distinct outcome of HMNDP in 2013 where a series of regional drought management policy capacity building workshops were held in Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia-Pacific, and Africa (East and South, Near East and North, West and Central). Considerable progress also took place at the national level. For instance, the UNCCD Drought Initiative<sup>6</sup> was launched to enhance drought preparedness systems and reduce drought vulnerability and risk.

## ➤➤➤ MAIN CHALLENGES

Countries still struggle, to varying degrees, with inadequate governance and management of drought risks at regional, national, and local levels. Often cited challenges include inadequate funding, limited adaptive capacity, lack of institutional coordination, ineffective legislation/regulation, policy disconnections, as well as external factors (such as conflicts). Considering the multi-dimensional nature of drought vulnerability, its assessment is highly dependent on available data of sufficient quality and detail to identify vulnerability at the relevant spatial scales. The lack thereof can further hamper an appropriate drought governance focus on vulnerable communities. Key questions also remain around characterizing and predicting drought events, understanding the nature of vulnerability and resilience as well as what constitutes an effective response to the risk of drought. There is a lack of action to better prepare for drought at the community level, such as insufficient risk transfer, financial instruments, local community participation, and territorial governance arrangements. At the global level, drought governance is fragmented, with separate organizations, platforms, and political constituencies, and often different accountability structures. This makes convergent action more difficult, as different constituencies place different expectations and pressures on each international and UN agency.

## ➤➤➤ THE WAY FORWARD

To develop effective solutions, a decentralized, transdisciplinary, integrated and multi-sectoral approach to drought risk is essential, as is a whole-of-society approach that optimizes the benefits of risk reduction and adaptation at local and global scales and across sectors to address growing inequalities. In particular, the following issues need to be addressed and discussed.

### **STRENGTHEN DROUGHT RISK ARRANGEMENTS**

The operationalization of the concept of systemic risk into principles and tools for its governance poses significant challenges to traditional risk management. These challenges are related to the limited capacities of countries to detect, manage, and control innovative, unanticipated, or complex risks in practice. The governance of systemic risk requires the strengthening of conventional risk governance arrangements as a precondition for reducing systemic risk. Such risk governance should address both systemic and conventional risks and their interdependencies.

### **PROMOTE AND INTEGRATE ECOSYSTEM-BASED APPROACHES FOR BUILDING RESILIENCE TO COMPLEX DROUGHT RISKS**

Ecosystems should be sustainably managed, conserved and restored to reduce the environmental drivers of drought risk. This is because ecosystem-based approaches and nature-based solutions help prevent and mitigate or buffer the effects of disasters, thereby building resilience. Ecosystem-based adaptation, drought-smart land management practices and nature-based solutions improve ecosystem health and restore or protect ecosystem services, thereby reducing vulnerability and exposure and thereby reducing risk.

## REDUCE VULNERABILITY AND PUT PEOPLE FRONT AND CENTER

Vulnerability is the key factor that turns a natural hazard event into an often-catastrophic disaster. To address vulnerability, future drought risk governance should strongly address the underlying factors of vulnerability. Particular attention should be paid to strengthening risk governance at the local level by empowering local actors, providing data, involving local organizations in decision-making, developing economic instruments and financial strategies, and focusing on vulnerable groups. Considering the multi-dimensional nature of drought vulnerability, its assessment is highly dependent on available data of sufficient quality and detail to identify vulnerability at the relevant spatial scales. The lack thereof can further hamper an appropriate drought governance focus on vulnerable communities.

## OVERCOME GLOBAL DROUGHT GOVERNANCE FRAGMENTATION

To better deal with the complex systemic nature of drought at international, national, and local levels, a proposal has been made to move towards a new global mechanism. Such a mechanism may facilitate the development of a more unified framework for drought governance, accelerate the transition to systems-based and anticipatory approaches to drought risk management, and improve international dialogue and cooperation on globally interconnected risks and more effective partnerships between the public, private and civil society sectors. The capacity building of all actors on effective drought governance approaches will also be required to overcome drought governance fragmentation.

## GOVERN FOR RESILIENCE: TOWARDS ADAPTIVE AND TRANSFORMATIVE GOVERNANCE OF DROUGHT RISK

Governance that focuses on resilience through a systemic risk management approach requires building the capacity of nations and communities to shape resilience in an integrated manner. Projected climate change impacts should also be streamlined into local and regional drought management plans, considering its inherent uncertainty. This includes strengthening mechanisms to build system adaptiveness while at the same time providing the ability to face complexities and uncertainties by designing institutional processes that function across sectors and scales, based on trust, equality, and inclusivity to engage multiple stakeholders and to promote social learning.

- <sup>1</sup>For a non-exhaustive overview see: Harm D. et al. 2022. [HELP Guiding Principles for Drought Risk Management under a Changing Climate. Catalyzing actions for enhancing climate resilience. HELP report](#)
- <sup>2</sup>WMO/GWP Integrated Drought Management Programme (IDMP). 2014. [National Drought Management Policy Guidelines – A Template for Action](#)
- <sup>3</sup>IDMP n.d. [The Three Pillars of Drought Management](#)
- <sup>4</sup>[Integrated Drought Management Programme](#)
- <sup>5</sup>[Integrated Drought Management Programme](#)
- <sup>6</sup>[UNCCD. N.d. The Drought Initiative](#)

