REPORT OF THE MEETING OF WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA REGIONAL ADVISORY GROUP

Date: 19 - 20 November 2018,
Place: Douala, Cameroon (Hotel Makepe Palace)

OBJECTIVES:

• Strengthen RAG Members capacities
• Define strategic actions to strengthen the network in the West and Central African regions
1. Introduction

The West and Central Africa Advisory Group (RAG) is formed as management Group to support the functioning and work of the Regional Coordinator and the Board Representative of the Board. The RAG must have physical meeting at least once a year and by skype quarterly to improve its intervention in terms of support to the coordination, to the board member and the national entities.

After Grand Bassam and Bamako, the meeting was to be held in Douala, Cameroon from 19 to 21 November 2018 at MAKEPE PALACE Hotel.

The meeting was chaired by Emmanuel SECK, President of the RAG.

The meeting was attended by 6 members from Cameroon, Senegal, Ivory Coast, Mali, Sierra Leone, the Board representative, the Coordinator and the Coordinator Assistant respectively.

The absence of two members from Nigeria and DRC was noted.

2. Opening Session

The opening session was marked by: the welcoming words of the Honorable Louis Roger ESSOLA ETOA of the host country and then by the presentation of all the participants.

3. Review of the advancements, perspectives and challenges of the RAG

- **Advancements since the previous meeting:**
  - A lot of dynamic (eg: good representation of GNDR at the Regional Workshop in Tunis)
  - Recategorization of members
  - The installation of a new Executive Director at the Secretariat

- **Perspectives and challenges :**
  - Raise the number of the membership at the regional level
  - Highlight the issue of accountability
- Better involve members with a thematic approach and consolidate the network at national level
- Develop the regional platform
- Support coordination and the secretariat
- Integrate challenges into policies

4. Update on the Secretariat – Members

A presentation was made to members on the various ongoing GNDR projects coordinated by the secretariat. These projects are: Frontline, CBDRM, VFL 2019 and membership mapping.

- **Frontline** is a final phase project implemented in 15 countries of the world including 5 from Africa (Nigeria, Cameroon, Senegal, Kenya and Uganda). The objective of the project is to strengthen using inclusive approach, the resilience of communities and civil society through processes of learning, reflection and action but also by contributing to the development of a more comprehensive multi-risk approach and integrated approach to disaster risk reduction / management.

The next step in this project is the publication of the national report prepared by the National Coordinating Organizations (NCOs).

- **CBDRM** (Community Based Disaster Risk Management) is a project that aims to institutionalize sustainable community-based management of disaster risk. It is about managing disaster risk by increasing local capacity and resilience and reducing vulnerability to natural hazards. The approach engages the local community in managing local disaster risks often with the collaboration of external actors from civil society, local government and the private sector.

- **View from Frontline 2019 (VFL 2019)** is a project that aims to strengthen the inclusion and systematic collaboration among governments, at-risk individuals and civil society in the design and implementation of DRR and resilience policies and practices.

The VFL is a project over 3 years structured through 3 components that are the collection, reflection and action. The project is in the implementation stage in 48 countries where the selected national coordinating organizations have been trained to implement the project.
Following the presentation of these projects, the members of the RAG defined an objective to encourage engagement in all regions and balance the participation of RAG members in projects. This would allow a better understanding and information of them on the projects that GNDR executes.

- **Membership Mapping**: is a project that involves identifying members and their areas of expertise. This project is rolled out through strategies such as:
  - Update existing members list
  - Analysis of the national and geographical position of members
  - Encourage new memberships
  - Recategorization
  - Identification of DRR actors / or resilience

This process has provided statistics on the number of members worldwide. However, GNDR’s membership and visibility in the West and Central Africa region remains low, hence the following RAG recommendations:

**What is expected from RAG Members?**

- To join the community platform system (online communication platform set up for members)
- Increase membership at the national level and ensure the monitoring
- See how to pool organizations to create a common framework (regional / African)
- Facilitate organizations to join directly to the GNDR network (it is noticed that several organizations are affiliated and this reduces their visibility),
- Give visibility to members to increase the visibility of GNDR

**Challenges: (Before February 2019)**

- RAG members should recruit 5 organizations per country.
- Reach a membership of 200 members (In Senegal recruit members within AGORA, (with support of Enda Energy)).
- Recruit members in Cape Verde and Gabon (with the support of members: Louis Essola ETOA and Emmanuel SECK)
5. Gender policy in West and Central Africa

What strategy to promote the participation of women and youth in DRR?

This issue of women and youth mainstreaming in DRR and in GNDR network has led to many exchanges between RAG members. It has been proposed:

- To encourage participation of women and young people in the countries where the RAG operates
- To identify more women's and youth organizations to join
- To harmonize the proposals for a better involvement of women and young people by 2020.

Objectives:

- Achieve at least 25 to 30% of women's representativeness rate
- Involve a woman and a youth in governance structures
- Adopt the following formula as part of the representativeness of the board (1/3 woman 1/3 man 1/3 young (-35 years).

6. Presentation of GNDR code of conduct

The GNDR Code of Conduct developed for staff, members and partner organizations was presented to RAG members. This document clearly defines the standards of conduct and performance within the network and reminds the strict respect and the promotion of these standards by the people concerned.

Following the presentation, questions were raised and details clarified by the coordinator.

Finally, Regional Assistant presented her terms of reference to the RAG members so that they can refer to her as needed according to the duties assigned to her.
7. Training on support for a national organization – Planning at a regional level

Training on support for national structuring involves the development of a strategy for pooling civil society organizations in each country in the region to create a consultation framework at the national level. The members of the RAG thus shared several proposals in the direction of the development of a planning that gives voice to communities (community approach).

**It has been proposed:**

- To promote inclusion by considering gender dimension, sector, territories, partnerships
- To be part of the local development financing mechanism for better access to funds
- To adapt to the realities of each country for a performing model

**Short term action plan:** support national organization of Gambia and Benin before the financial year (March 2019).

8. Advancements and recommendations of the Board to the RAG and Members.

The board representative of the RAG (Peter AKANIMOH) updated the board’s advancements and recommendations to the RAG. He informed members that the board’s discussions focused on the evaluation, review, and strengthening of GNDR at the regional level.

**Advancements:**

- Regular information update from the secretariat to the board
- Update of the governance manual (ongoing)
- Ongoing discussions on board members’ management
- As part of the monitoring and evaluation of GNDR, a committee is working on key performance indicators / the work will be amended in February 2019.

Following this update, the members of the RAG made the following recommendations:

- From this RAG meeting see how to create a mechanism that will allow the contribution of the RAG members in decision-making
- Evaluate the performance of the RAG
- See how the RAG can support the regional management of GNDR (perspectives)
- Improve communication between the RAG and the board

9. Online meeting with the Secretariat in London

During the session, the members of the RAG had the opportunity to exchange by video conference with the Executive Director of the secretariat, Bijay KUMAR and the Network Development Manager, Emma KERR.

RAG members were able to introduce themselves, then Director Bijay conveyed recommendations and urged RAG members to mobilize organizations to meet the common goal of disaster risk reduction. In his speech he specified that GNDR is a network where the involvement of all is necessary to build up its strength.

Following these exchanges with London, the members of the RAG asked the Regional Coordinator to transmit to the Executive Director their warm welcome. They also pointed out their commitment and enthusiasm to contribute to the achievement of the common objectives.

10. Accountability towards the membership

The accountability of the RAG to members was an important point on the agenda of the meeting. It consists in communicating the duties and responsibilities of the members of the RAG regarding the mission assigned to them.

The presentation by Emmanuel SECK allowed the members to retain the principles of accountability.

As defined in his presentation: “accountability is the quality of being accountable; liability to give account of, and answer for, discharge of duties of conduct”.

Thus, the accountability of the members of the RAG consists of a set of tasks and responsibilities shared in the attached document.

We also noted that the issue of accountability turns around 3 points:
- Responsibilities
- Transparency in procedures
- Need to improve the relevance and effectiveness of governance as well as the relationships with GNDR members at the regional level.

Finally, the accountability framework has been presented considering the following aspects:

- Leadership
- Representation
- Communication
- Participation
- Feedback
- Learning

Regarding the learning process, RAG members recommended to create frameworks for African dialogue during international events.

11. Evaluation of RAG Members

An Evaluation of RAG members was carried out by the Regional Coordinator considering aspects such as participation in meetings, involvement in actions, group dynamic, and communication.

As part of the participation in meetings, it was noted that out of 8 meetings organized (2 physical meetings (Bamako, Grand Bassam) and 6 meetings online), the participation of the members was not always effective. In addition, the lessons learnt from this observation were:

- Review the constitution and participation of members
- Put in place a more binding process regarding each other's commitments

The limits of the group:

- Communications have not always been friendly
- The commitments made are not always respected
- The activities of the group are mainly carried by the coordinator
- Members were rarely consulted by the RAG
Considering this evaluation, which is very important for the improvement of the group's performance, the members shared many contributions, raising questions that led to specific recommendations.

**Questions raised:**

- Do members of the RAG have the required skills to end the mandate of another RAG member?
- Are members of the RAG qualified to evaluate the coordinator?

**Recommendations:**

- Create an independent group to evaluate the CHAIR and the RAG
- Allow RAG members not to evaluate the coordinator but rather give their opinion on his work
- See how to support the RAG in his autonomy (transfer of skills from coordinator to the members)
- Give more decision-making power to the RAG
- Change the name of RAG (adopt new orientations)
- Improve the governance method of the RAG, see how to manage the members who do not conform to the procedures.
- The Board representative could provide an opportunity for RAG members to convey their concerns for consideration at Board meetings.

**12. Presentation of the Community Platform**

Community Platform (or Community Platform) is an online communication tool accessible via the following link: [https://community.gndr.org](https://community.gndr.org)

It has been set up in order for GNDR members to interact, collaborate on projects and share their experience and expertise in DRR but also to benefit from funding opportunities.

This interactive platform also allows members to create public or private discussion groups and to be involved in GNDR campaigns. It is at the heart of GNDR’s "Stronger Together" ethos.

During the presentation, the Regional Coordinator conducted an exercise with the creation of a temporary focus group so that members become more familiar with the tool.
13. Presentation of the RAG terms of reference

The terms of reference of the RAG presented at the meeting were reviewed in the new governance manual approved at the last GNDR Board meeting.

The board of directors has clarified the role of the RAG through its ToR which define:

- The objective, main tasks and responsibilities on the basis of guidance provided by the secretariat
- The composition and number of national advisors
- Term of office, including rotations and requirements for representation between countries
- Selection criteria and procedures for appointment and election of advisors
- Procedures for the appointment of a chair and a vice-chair
- The internal methods of work of the RAG
- Policies to empower Members of the RAG, including internal complaints mechanisms and disciplinary procedures

It was also mentioned that national members are invited to consult within the region to develop their own regional interpretations of a regional advisory group, by adapting and contextualizing these generic terms of reference according to their own needs and priorities. The RAG is composed of advisors from the countries of the region, a representation of the GNDR secretariat and the board representatives.

Recommendations:

- The extension of the group to all countries.
- Change the name of the RAG
- Give more decision-making power to RAG
- Review punishment measures of the members of the RAG
- Share the document with the members for amendments
14. Agenda of the meeting with Cameroon members

Following the two days of the RAG meeting, a contact meeting was scheduled on 21/11/2018 with the members of GNDR Cameroon to organize their national coordination.

The agenda below was agreed:

- **Presentation session of GNDR** (focus on GNDR and its projects)
  - Presentation of GNDR (Objectives, Mission, Values, Community Platform)
  - Presentation of current projects (CBDRM, Frontline, VFL 2019)
  - Presentation of the RAG (Constitution, Advancements and results, membership and key recommendations)

- **Interactive Session** (in order to discuss the expectations of GNDR and members of Cameroun)
  - Strengthening the national coordination

- **Constructive Session** (in order to consolidate the achievements of the meeting and bring concrete proposals)
  - How the RAG can support organizations in achieving common goals
  - General recommendations and roadmap

15. Election of new Chair for a term of 1 year

The RAG meeting was marked by the election of the new President.

Following the thanks of the outgoing President Emmanuel SECK, debates and divergent opinions were noted before leading to the appointment of Mrs. SISSOKO Fatoumata GOUNDO.

This choice was motivated by:

- Gender policy consideration
- The need to improve the learning process
Also, considering linguistic equity, members of the RAG agreed to appoint Amara John Peter from an English-speaking country (Sierra Leone) as Vice-President.

Finally, Ms SISSOKO thanked the members and renewed her commitment to the RAG before guiding the discussions on the choice of countries to host the next regional activities before the end of March 2019 to support their national coordination, namely the Benin and Gambia.

16. Summary of the main recommendations of the meeting

- Increase membership and reach 200 members by February 2019
- Recruit members in Cape Verde and Gabon before February 2019
- RAG members must recruit 5 organizations per country by February 2019
- Encourage engagement in all regions and balance member participation in GNDR projects
- Develop the regional platform
- Support coordination and the secretariat
- Support national coordination in Benin and the Gambia before March 2019
- Harmonise proposals for better involvement of women and young people by 2020
- Achieve at least 25 to 30% of women’s representativeness rate
- Involve women's and youth in governance as follows: 1/3 women 1/3 men 1/3 youth (-35ans).
- As art of learning and dialogue space, create frameworks for African dialogue at international summits and events
- Create an independent group for the evaluation of the CHAIR, RAG.
- Give more decision-making power to RAG
- Improve the governance method of the RAG
- Strengthen collaboration between RAG and Board members

Attachments

- Presentation of accountability
- Terms de Reference of the RAG
- Code of conduct
- Presentation of VFL 2019
Presentation of CBDRM
Presentation of Frontline
Attendance list Day 1,2