Looking forward to 2021

The new year is already in full-swing and I would be remiss not to start by acknowledging that we are starting off the year on a difficult note. We are on the cusp of the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic that is wreaking havoc across the globe, threat-ening lives and livelihoods alike and dampening people’s spirits. This is indeed a trying time for all of us where numbers have become names, with many experiencing sickness and even loss of life too close to home. We continue to urge you all to be vig-ilant in protecting yourselves and your loved ones and in taking extra care to minimise the risk of contracting the coronavirus.

Nonetheless, I know that most of you are already deep into the tasks at hand, ready to make a meaningful contribution. As we look forward to 2021, we can’t afford to lose sight of our goals. Despite the challenging operating environment, we have an opportunity to make the most of the months ahead and make a difference in Disaster Risk Management.

For ARC, we’ve just entered the second year of implementing the ARC Group Strategy 2020 – 2024 that we recently refreshed to ensure its suitability to respond to the needs of Member States under the current conditions. Granted, our plans are ambitious and at times even overwhelming, but so is our resolve to fulfil our mandate. Speaking to colleagues and attending various meetings, I feel encouraged and am confident that we are ready to tackle this plan head-on.

Looking forward to 2021, we have a number of defining priorities that will really give us good results. I’d like to take a moment to take you through a select few of these.

Implementing the 2021 Programme of Work

We are excited at the prospect of bringing the 2021 Programme of Work (derived from the refreshed Group strategy) to life. In 2020, we solidified our new way of working under lockdown conditions to minimise delays to the ARC programme due to travel restrictions. We will be working closely with partners to ensure that, as much as possible, planned workstreams make use of available technologies, starting with the design of a virtual working strategy to find the most suitable way of working with implementation partners, Member States, donor partners and other stakeholders.

The ARC programme is the sum of many parts coming together in a deliberate way. Much effort will be directed towards strengthening the many relationships that enable the delivery of service to Member States. The good news is some meetings with donor partners and other stakeholders have already been initiated to explore opportunities for collaboration and develop suitable solutions to the tasks at hand, and we are committed to ensure this is ongoing.

2021 will see an intensified focus on product diversification to ensure the ARC offering is able to meet the needs of Member States. Improvements to our drought product and the supporting forecasting tool, Africa RiskView will continue, while the development of the flood product and the Extreme Climate Facility is ongoing. Our eye is also on the development of other complimentary tools to enhance the ARC offering. That said, I’d like to share our excitement on two products in particular that we have been working really hard on:

Tropical Cyclone: In November 2020, we introduced the Tropical Cyclone product into the market and are thrilled at the value this product will bring to countries prone to this hazard. Madagascar became the first country to take up the policy, adding to our excitement. Country engagement to entrench this product as part of the ARC offering continues while development work to ensure that world-class stands are upheld will be ongoing.

Outbreaks and Epidemics: We are particularly looking forward to the launch of the Outbreaks and Epidemic offering, a product designed to strengthen AU Member States’ preparedness and response capacities to high-impact infections disease outbreaks through the provision of epidemic risk management tools and innovative ex ante risk finance instruments. All hands are on deck to ensure that all the requirements for launch are met. Amidst the prevailing threat of the coronavirus, this product falls squarely into the ARC mandate and we couldn’t be more proud. The institution continues to be heavily involved with other projects to enable a continental response the COVID-19 pandemic.

Positioning the ARC Group

The strategy refresh process at the end of 2020 emphasised the need to optimally position ARC within the Disaster Risk Management & Finance (DRMF) space. The 2021 work programme is designed to ensure that the organisation is appropriately positioned, and we will be working very hard to strengthen ARC’s voice at policy and political level by working with regional and continental bodies. The upcoming Conference of the Parties will be an opportunity to make a more meaningful contribution.

The new country engagement framework supports this and drives for high-level engagement led by ARC executives.

Our list of priorities is comprehensive, and we will be sharing more of them as the year progresses. We must make 2021 a success – even in the face of adversity!
In 2020, the world as we knew it changed and our lives have not been the same. Who would have thought that our world would be turned upside down by a virus we knew absolutely nothing about? The COVID-19 pandemic has made it difficult, if not impossible, to do simple routine things like going to the office, visiting loved ones, or even going out to the restaurants with family and friends. Just a year ago, this virus seemed very far from our reality, but today, the situation is quite different. All of us know of a friend or relative who has been infected with this virus, with devastating loss of life in some instances. Communities are overwhelmed and fear has become the order of the day.

To date, it is estimated that nearly 96,000,000 (1) people around the world have been infected with coronavirus and 2,000,000 (2) people have unfortunately lost their lives. In Africa, a total of more than 3,3 million COVID-19 infections and 2,8 million recoveries have been reported in 55 African Union Member States (3).

Since the beginning of the year, a new variant of the virus called SARS-CoV-2 has been identified in South Africa, Great Britain and several other countries, raising fears of a second wave of infections. Unfortunately, these fears have now been confirmed and there is a sharp increase in cases of contamination around the world.

In South Africa, home to the headquarters of the ARC Group and the 15th most affected country globally, further restrictions have been put in place in an attempt to lower the infection curve. The opening of schools, originally scheduled for 15 January 2021, has been postponed to 15 February 2021 while the sale of alcohol has been prohibited, land borders are now closed again and thousands of employees who had hoped to return to work will now have to continue working from home.

To help African Union Member States in evaluating the potential magnitude of COVID-19 in their countries and in making a decision on appropriate response to mitigate the risks, the ARC Group and the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) have launched two COVID-19 modelling tools for Africa: COVID-19 Potential Outcomes Scenarios and COVID-19 Spread Simulation Tool for Africa. Specifically, COVID-19 Potential Outcomes Scenarios will help in modelling the potential impact of the outbreak using specific sets of scenarios and assumptions and COVID-19 Spread Simulation Tool for Africa will enable simulations of different scenarios of COVID-19 spread for each country.

At this point, all hope is on the use of the recently-developed vaccines. Some countries have started large-scale vaccination campaigns with an objective to vaccinate at least 70% of their population to reach “hearth immunity” and stop the spread of the virus. “In Africa, the goal is to vaccinate 60% of the population within the next two to three years,” says Africa CDC Director, Mr. John Nkengasong.

While we wait for the vaccine to be available to all, we have no choice but to remain vigilant in our attempts to stop the spread of the virus. We have to continue to respect the health measures decreed by our governments and take all precautions to preserve our health and that of our families.
This week, the ARC Group was profoundly saddened by the death of a valuable colleague, friend and brother, Mr. Timothy Gotora. A Zimbabwean national, Timothy joined ARC in July 2016, with over 12 years working experience in environment and sustainable development sector, specialising in climate change and variability resilience, adaptation and mitigation planning and programming. As a Country Engagement Manager, Timothy managed the in-country processes for several ARC member states. Timothy will be deeply missed, leaving with us only fond memories of his hardworking spirit, humility, his friendliness and the lunch hour chess moments with colleagues in the canteen. His absence will be felt by all of us, the disaster risk management community, especially in the SADC region where he has spent most of his working life and built very strong ties with our member countries.

"I found Timothy to be brilliant but yet humble, a very rare commodity these days. His greatest qualities were building relationships and the love of people which made him perfectly suitable for his work at ARC. His achievements as Country Engagement Manager will be felt for years to come in the countries he covered.”

(Ibrahima Cheikh Diong, UN ASG and ARC Group DG)

“Right now sorrow fills our hearts at this sad moment, a sorrow that is deep and personal - personal because we each had a piece of Timothy’s life in various ways. Now Timothy has silently closed the door of life and departed from us. Our lives will be empty in the areas that he had brightened for us. Timothy was living proof of how fine a person can be. He was good with people, a loving husband to his wife, and a devoted father to his children. He was also a good friend to many of us and a great colleague. Our sorrow is lessened only slightly with the comforting thought that we had the privilege to know him. We will all miss him dearly.

Au revoir Timothy.”

(Lucy Nyirenda, Programme Coordinator and Head of Government Services for East and Southern Africa, ARC Group)

**NEWS FLASH**

1st Quarter O&E Product Launch Monitoring Meeting with Swiss Development Cooperation and the Rockefeller Foundation

On January 18th, a meeting was held between the Swiss Development Cooperation, the Rockefeller Foundation and the ARC Group to kick off the ARC O&E donor/partners quarterly meeting series and provide an update on the progress made towards the O&E product launch.
CEO of ARC Ltd, chosen to be part of the Choiseul 100 for Africa

Mr. Lesley Ndlovu, ARC Ltd CEO, is part of this year’s Choiseul 100 for Africa. The Choiseul 100 Africa is an annual study independently carried out by the Institut Choiseul. It identifies and ranks the young African leaders of 40 years old and below, who will play a major role in the continent’s economic development in the near future. Congratulations Lesley!

ARC Ltd Head of Legal publishes a book on Public–Private Partnerships in Global Development

Mr. Timothy E. Nielander has published a book called: Public–Private Partnerships in Global Development: Supporting Sustainable Development Goals. You can purchase your copy [here](#). Kudos Timothy!