

Disasters Research Group – Terms of Reference (2013-2015)

Background

1. The Disasters Research Group (DRG) has been regularly convened informally since 2009 for members to share information on research and investment plans or policy interests and to gain an update on international research initiatives. It mostly comprises UK research funders or experts linked to international initiatives to promote coordination, networking and collaboration opportunities at the UK and international level.
2. The 2012 '*Use of Science in Humanitarian Emergencies and Disasters (SHED) report*¹', called for a more effective approach towards engagement between Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) researchers and research users, both in the UK and internationally. It recommended that '*the Department for International Development (DFID), UK Research Councils and other UK funders of science should further strengthen and improve cross disciplinary working [...and...] establish a more effective approach towards engagement between researchers and research users, both in the UK and internationally*'.
3. The Government Office for Science has approached the UK Collaborative for Development Sciences (UKCDS) to assist with addressing the above recommendation and to follow up the recommendations of the Foresight report '*Reducing Risks of Future Disasters*²'. Moreover, the DRG has been requested to look at how it can help take forward the above recommendations.
4. This paper sets out the formal Terms of Reference for the DRG for the period 1 January 2013 – 31 December 2015.

Terms of Reference

5. To enhance research and technology based disaster risk reduction (DRR) through improved coordination of UK and international funders, research providers and users.
6. In doing this, the DRG will:
 - a. share information on UK funding activities and encourage collaboration between its members and others, where appropriate;
 - b. provide funders, research providers and users with readily available and relevant information on research gaps and foci;
 - c. develop and recommend processes to facilitate and sustain research uptake across multiple user communities;
 - d. provide funders, research providers and users with readily accessible and relevant knowledge resources and tools for DRR; and
 - e. influence the international research and innovation agenda for DRR.

1 1 GO-Science 2012, The Use of Science in Humanitarian Emergencies and Disasters. URN12/848, London - produced in response to Paddy Ashdown's Humanitarian Emergency Response Review: <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Documents/publications1/HERR.pdf>

2 <http://www.bis.gov.uk/foresight/our-work/policy-futures/disasters/reports-documents>

Organisation

Membership

7. Members of the DRG will consist of senior representation from organisations supporting DRR research, either through direct funding, collaborative support, provision of service in kind, or other indirect means. It is proposed that primary DRR research providers (e.g. university groups or consultancies) are excluded from membership to encourage competition between science suppliers, and to avoid conflicts of interest. However, active interaction with them and other members of the DRR community is critical to DRG success and it is anticipated there will be engagement through DRG related activities.
8. The group is chaired by the RCUK Risk and Hazard Coordinator. This position will be reviewed in March 2015.
9. The core organisations represented on the DRG are currently:
 - RCUK Risk and Hazard Coordinator (Chair)
 - Department for International Development
 - Foreign and Commonwealth Office
 - Economic and Social Research Council
 - Engineering and Physical Science Research Council
 - Natural Environment Research Council
 - Enhancing Learning and Research for Humanitarian Assistance
 - Confederation of British Humanitarian Agencies
 - Wellcome Trust
 - UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction
 - Integrated research on Disaster Risk
 - Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
 - Humanitarian Futures Programme
10. Additional organisations may be invited to attend particular meetings at the discretion of the Chair.

Secretariat

11. The secretariat for the group is provided by UKCDS. The role of the secretariat will be to support the DRG in achieving its objectives.

Meetings

12. The primary business will be conducted within DRG member meetings. In order for meetings to go ahead and actions to be agreed, the minimum number of members attending a meeting will be four. In principle, there is no maximum number of attendees, but to maintain efficiency some items may be considered by Sub-Groups (see below). The secretariat will ensure that minutes are recorded.
13. The frequency of meetings will be as agreed by the group to achieve its objectives in a timely manner. In general, meetings will be held on a quarterly basis.
14. Meetings will identify and agree actions for which implementation will be undertaken individually or jointly by member organisations to enhance DRR delivery. Individual

member organisations may, on occasion, be asked to commit to joint actions decided by the DRG, however, the decision to do so will remain with the member organisation. Some actions may be taken-up by the secretariat, or will require additional resource to deliver. In these cases the DRG will recommend how resources should be apportioned.

Sub Groups

15. There may be occasions when it will be necessary to establish ad hoc Sub-Groups to complete a specific piece of work, or where data or preparation needs to be undertaken by a specific sector or named partners. These Sub-Groups will only exist for the duration of the piece of work around which they were set up. The DRG will usually agree and lead on the strategic direction of the activity being undertaken by a Sub-Group, however, ad hoc Sub-Groups may be arranged by the Chair or Secretariat to address short-term issues. Where actions are recommended by a Sub-Group, these must be ratified by the main DRG.

DRG activities

16. The main functions of the DRG will be defined in point 6 of this document. The DRG will be responsible for the ownership and oversight of activities undertaken by the DRG secretariat (current DRG secretariat activities are listed in the Annex 1). When relevant DRG members may be involved in the generation and implementation of DRG activities.
17. The DRG requires a good understanding of DRR science and policy needs, barriers to research and uptake, as well as opportunities for improved science-based DRR delivery. DRG activities will thus determine the means and extent of interaction with research users (e.g. policy makers) and research providers (e.g. university researchers) under plans for DRR community engagement.

Governance and resource

18. The DRG is both multi-institutional and non-Departmental; members support the group because they anticipate the benefits of improved DRR delivery that will accrue through collaboration facilitated by the DRG. The DRG is thus self-governing. Whilst the secretariat is provided by UKCDS, and the Chair is provided by RCUK, through NERC, the DRG has no primary sponsoring organisation or department. All members are expected to support the participation of their representatives on the DRG.
19. A review of the Terms of Reference will be undertaken at least every three years to ensure continuing relevance. At this point an end of period report outlining the group's successes over the previous three years and progress in achieving its objectives will be developed and published. The next review is due in March 2015. A DRG Chair election will occur at the same time.



Annex 1 Disaster Research Group Secretariat – proposed current and future activities

Activity	Output	Due date	Possible longer-term outcome	Relevant Objectives
DRR Science Prioritisation exercise	Report identifying key research priorities (target audience – RCUK Risk Research Network and DFID)	24 May 2013	Collaborative DRR research programme	<i>a, b</i>
Promoting dialogue between DRG members and supporting shared agendas	Regular meetings between research funders and a web presence of current and upcoming activities; improving efficiency of collaborative working (target audience – DRG)	Quarterly meetings and on-going	Minimise the risks of duplication and enhance opportunities for collaborative investments in multi- and inter-disciplinary science relevant to DRR	<i>a, b</i>
Support Risk and Horizon Scanning Expert Group	Provide timely support and evidence on request (target audience – RHEG)	Quarterly	Ensure research gaps and evidence needs identified by the RHEG are filled to support the risk forward look and disaster preparedness across UK government	<i>b</i>
Integrating Science in DRM decision making – KE event	Multi-stakeholder workshop (target audience – Disaster Risk Managers)	02 July 2013	BOND accredited guidelines to support the use of science in DRM decision-making	<i>c, d</i>
Developing approaches to provide rapid and good-enough risk assessment – Science and Innovation Network event	Multi-stakeholder workshop (target audience – Disaster Risk Managers)	Winter 2014	TBC (e.g. principals and best practice guide for good enough risk assessment)	<i>c, d</i>
Input into Cabinet Office post-2015 HFA consultation	Formal submission into consultation and/or support of consultation process (target audience – Cabinet Office)	Summer 2014	HFA recognises the importance of science and evidence to DRR	<i>e</i>
Formalising role within IRDR	Proposal for UK IRDR National Platform (target audience – IRDR)	TBC	More strategic engagement with IRDR community	<i>e</i>