**Nomination Letter**

**Submitted in conjunction with nomination of Prof. Ali Ardalan for the 2015 Sasakawa Award**

Dear Madam/Sir

It is a pleasure to nominate Prof. Ali Ardalan for the 2015 Sasakawa Award based on his outstanding innovation on “design and establishment of a metrics system for disaster risk management (DRM) in the health system of I.R.Iran”. This system not only has a comprehensive approach considering both health facilities and population at risk, but also provides the policy and decision makers with quantitative estimations of DRM indicators on an annual basis.

Ali Ardalan, M.D, Ph.D. is an associate professor of disaster epidemiology, founder, and director of the Disaster and Emergencies Health Academy (http://nihr.tums.ac.ir/disaster), a joint collaboration initiative between Iran’s National Institute of Health Research (NIHR) and School of Public Health of Tehran University of Medical Sciences (TUMS). He is a pioneer in disaster risk management in Iran who was the driving force behind the creation of the MPH and PhD training programs in health disaster risk management in Iran – and the first such program in the entire Middle East region. He is author and co-author of 69 articles in English and Persian peer reviewed journals.

Dr. Ardalan is a distinguished scientist in the MENA region and serves WHO/EMR as a temporary adviser, and technical coordinator of a regional working group on institutionalization of health emergency risk assessment in Eastern Mediterranean countries. He is also collaborating with WHO/EMR to promote the concept and practice of community disaster resilience starting with a regional event that is planned to be carried out in Tehran early 2015. He is a Visiting Scientist at Department of Global Health and Population at Harvard School of Public Health, and a Senior Fellow at Harvard Humanitarian Initiative where he is working on development of two programs: “Middle East & North Africa Crisis Management” and “Public Health Leadership for Disaster Risk Reduction”.

Dr Ardalan has served in many operational positions outside of academia. His international collaboration began in late 2003 when he worked with WHO as a head of the field mission in the 2003 Bam Earthquake response. In 2008-9, collaborating with UNISDR, he initiated the national campaign of “Hospitals safe from disasters”. In 2009, he served as an adviser to UNDP/Iran and contributed to the UN Global Assessment Report on Disaster Reduction. Dr. Ardalan also contributed to the 2013 World Disaster Report (WDR), published by IFRC, and was a guest researcher at the Karolinska Institute and remains an active contributor to the Disaster Supercourse through the WHO collaborative center at the University of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Dr. Ardalan has a deep interest and belief in people-centered disaster resilience. On this important theme, he has recently joined the International Board of Global Network of Disaster Reduction (GNDR). He also has collaborated with UNDP/Iran, the National Disaster Management Organization, and Ministry of Health to design and implement community-based disaster management programs in several provinces of Iran. The effectiveness of these programs has been measured through scientific research methods, i.e., community intervention trails. Furthermore, following the 2013 International Day of Disaster reduction, he has established a national working group on “disability and disasters” that includes partners from NGOs, civil societies, and governmental organizations. This working group aims to enhance the resilience of people with disabilities and integrate the concept of disability in DRM in the country. Dr. Ardalan has also developed the Iran’s National Framework for Disaster Rehabilitation in collaboration with the National Disaster Management Organization.

Working as an adviser to the Deputy Minister of Health since 2010, Prof. Ardalan has had the lead role in establishing the Disaster Risk Management Office within the Iranian health system. His national assessment, revealed while the Iran’s well-established PHC system is in the front line of response to emergencies; it is vulnerable to disasters; and expends considerable resources to mitigate the risk of disasters, it lacks a metrics system to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of programs.

Accordingly, in line with his passion to quantify the practice of DRM and integrate it into the health information system (HIS) of Iran, he has designed, tested, implemented, and institutionalized a metrics system for DRM. This system aims to monitor and evaluate the progress of DRM program over time and provide quantitative information for policy making, planning, and resource allocation.

As the result of Dr. Ardalan initiative, today, the Iran Ministry of Health and Medical Education has an established DRM metrics system integrated to national HIS including quantitative indicators related to functional capacity; structural and non-structural safety of hospitals and primary health care facilities; and household disaster preparedness. The system that is run throughout the country includes measurement tools, and protocols for data collection, data analysis, reporting, and feedback at national, provincial, districts and local levels. According to this system, the 2012 national estimations of DRM indicators are:

* Hospitals: functional capacity (27.3%), structural safety (36.0%), non-structural safety (36.0%), overall safety (32.4%), safety level (4 out of 10).
* Primary health facilities: functional capacity (20.9%), structural safety (14.1%), non-structural safety (31.1%), overall safety (22.0%), safety level (3 out of 10).
* Household disaster preparedness: 8.5-12.5%

The system is being continued in 2015 to provide the corresponding estimates. Because of Dr. Ardalan’s initiated DRM metrics system and indicators, the Iranian health policy makers now are able to measure effectiveness of DRM interventions on an annual basis. This process also provided a training model for next generation of health and DRM scientists and administrators.

I strongly recommend Dr. Ardalan for a Sasakawa award. If he is honored by this award, he will find a unique opportunity to promote the concept and practice of DRM metrics beyond the health system not only in Iran but also worldwide.