



420 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10018-2702
T 212 869 8500
Fax 212 764 3468
www.rockfound.org

United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR)
The Administrator of the Sasakawa Award
9-11 Rue de Varembe
CH1202
Geneva
Switzerland

7th October 2014

Dear Sir or Madam

**2015 United Nations Sasakawa Award for Disaster Risk Reduction
Nomination letter for The Institute for Social and Environmental Transition-International**

I am delighted to nominate The Institute for Social and Environmental Transition-International for the 2015 United Nations Sasakawa Award for Disaster Risk Reduction and believe that they would make worthy recipients of the Award. I am making this nomination as Senior Associate Director with the Rockefeller Foundation, a US-based philanthropic foundation, with regional offices in Africa and Asia.

For more than 100 years, The Rockefeller Foundation's mission has been to promote the well-being of humanity throughout the world. Today, we pursue this mission through dual goals: advancing inclusive economies that expand opportunities for more broadly shared prosperity, and building resilience by helping people, communities and institutions prepare for, withstand, and emerge stronger from acute shocks and chronic stresses. To achieve these goals, The Rockefeller Foundation works at the intersection of four focus areas – advance health, revalue ecosystems, secure livelihoods, and transform cities – to address the root causes of emerging challenges and create systemic change. Together with partners and grantees, we strive to catalyze and scale transformative innovations, create unlikely partnerships that span sectors, and take risks others cannot – or will not.


One of our extremely successful partnerships of the past 6 years has been with The Institute for Social and Environmental Transition-International (ISET). ISET is a non-profit that has been at the forefront of catalyzing transformative changes in social-ecological systems toward more resilient and equitable outcomes through action and research for the last 17 years. As an organization, ISET has influence and resources that are far reaching. The organization has offices in the USA, Thailand, Vietnam, and India, and has independent 'sister' organizations, ISET-Nepal in Kathmandu and ISET-Pakistan in Islamabad. ISET's broader network includes partner organizations and locally based associates in each of these locations, enabling them to work across disciplinary and contextual boundaries, and collaborate on complex systems issues relating to climate and disaster resilience.

ISSET's particular focus is on strategies to address the fundamental challenges that dynamic change processes pose for marginalized populations and those who lack the resources to adapt. ISET's work brings together theoretical and scientific insights with social engagement, local knowledge, and shared learning to identify practical strategies at the local level and to foster the growth of applied knowledge. Through enlisting the participation of relevant stakeholders — local people, local policy makers, private sector organizations, and governments — ISET builds tangible community capacity. Shared learning is not only key within individual projects, but also between projects within the network so that information and experiences are also shared internationally, especially as regions integrate globally.

As an example, ISET collaborated with the Women's Union in Da Nang, Vietnam to build their capacities to support adaptation by vulnerable low-income and women-headed households to more intense typhoon storms. Together, ISET and the Women's Union designed an innovative revolving loan fund, and packaged this together with low-cost design technologies to finance structural improvements to low quality housing. Through judicious selection of eligible households and rigorous technical standards, the Women's Union upgraded 244 households with local partners in the first two years of the program. On October 15, 2013 Typhoon Nari struck Da Nang with winds of over 130 km / hr and heavy rains. Thousands of homes and infrastructure were damaged, with local losses estimated at well over \$USD 40 million. But the upgraded houses suffered no damage at all, in comparison to the perilous position these households would have found themselves in previously. The financial and technical tools, along with the community engagement and oversight mechanisms needed to deliver the program, are now embedded in local organizations and the program continues.

We hope you will be as excited by the visionary and collaborative work that ISET-International are undertaking to reduce disaster risk reduction and build resilience as we are. If you would like further details of any aspect of this nomination, please do not hesitate to contact me. Please refer to Annex 1 for our completed 'Questionnaire for those submitting nominations' and note that ISET will submit a package of supporting documentation in due course.

Yours faithfully,



Cristina Rumbaitis del Rio, PhD
Senior Associate Director

Annex 1

Questionnaire for those submitting nominations (institution)

Nominee Institution Details:

Institution name: The Institute for Social and Environmental Transition–International.

Address of headquarters: 948 North Street, Suite 7, Boulder, CO 80304, USA.

Address of nominated institution if different from headquarters: Not applicable.

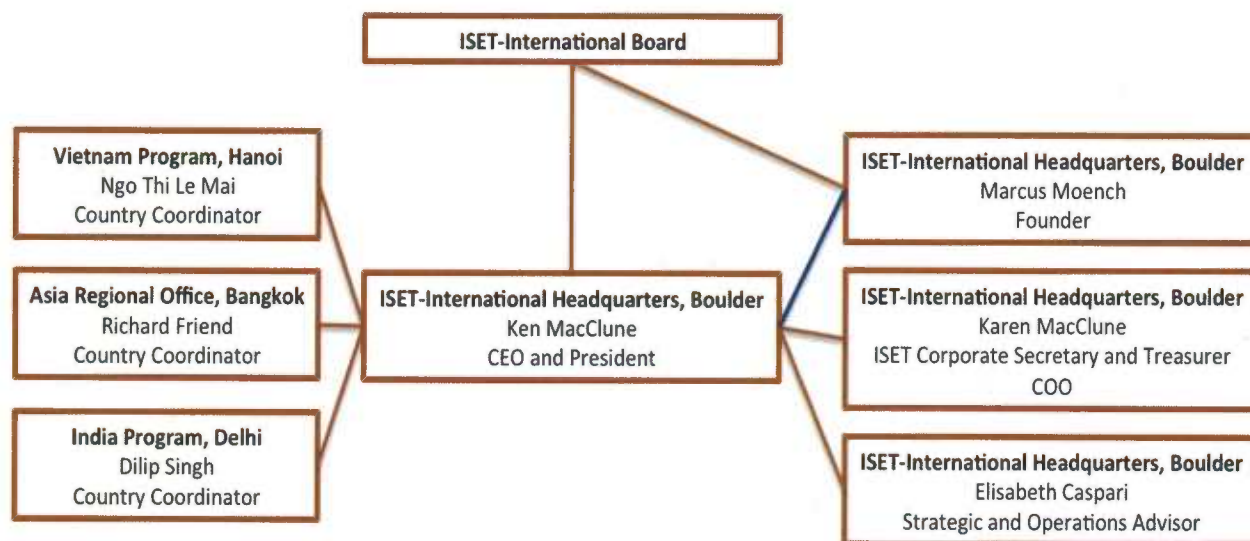
Date of creation: 5th June 1997.

Main fields of activity: Research on dynamic change processes (e.g. urbanization, climate change) and associated resilience planning, training, and implementation.

Size: Staff: 23 full and part time staff and 14 associates.

Organization structure:

ISET-International: Organizational Chart (effective October 2014)



Annual Budget and sources of income: US\$4 million for the fiscal year 2013-14 in the form of grant and contract support from The Rockefeller Foundation, Climate and Development Knowledge Network (CDKN), USAID, American Red Cross, International Development Research Centre, International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) and British Geological Survey.

Name and title of chief executive officer: Ken MacClune, Chief Executive Officer and President.

Nominator's Details:

Nominator's name: Dr Cristina Rumbaitis del Rio.

Address: The Rockefeller Foundation, 420 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10018, United States.

Email: CRumbaitisdelRio@rockfound.org

Present position: Senior Associate Director. Dr Rumbaitis del Rio helps develop the Foundation's initiatives regarding building resilience for poor and vulnerable people who will be affected by climate change. She is also currently leading the Rockefeller Foundation's exploratory work on oceans and fisheries conservation.

Previous posts and functions: Prior to joining the Foundation, Dr Rumbaitis del Rio was a post-doctoral fellow conducting research on sustainable development at Columbia University's Earth Institute. She has also conducted policy research for the United Nations Environmental Program, the US Department of State, and other institutions

In less than 400 words, please describe the remarkable and innovative effort carried out by the nominee to reduce the impact of disasters and build disaster resilience under the theme "Shaping the Future."

ISSET's work focuses on some of humanity's most "wicked" problems—complex, messy, and with no easy or obvious solutions. These include:

- Adaptation to and resilience in the face of urbanization and climate change;
- Issues surrounding water and energy, and the impacts climate change and rapid growth have on both;
- Identifying vulnerability beyond equating it with poverty; and
- How to gain traction in alleviation of these problems.

Disaster risk reduction links all these issues. Natural hazards contribute greatly to endemic poverty. Socially and economically marginalized families often have no option other than to live in areas highly exposed to hazards and struggle to reconstruct livelihoods following disasters. Climate change is increasing the frequency and intensity of major climate-related hazards such as floods, droughts and heat waves, and is causing slow-onset seasonal changes and increased variation in temperatures and rainfall. For poverty reduction and positive development gains, it is necessary to consider both current and likely changes in the nature of hazards.

ISSET was founded on the ideal of fostering North-South communication and collaboration and focus on learning across contexts, disciplines and scales, sharing knowledge locally to globally. They are actively engaging in Vietnam, Thailand, India and the USA, with work starting in Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar. Projects include:

- Two programs funded by the Rockefeller Foundation and USAID working with citizen groups and local governments in over 15 second-tier cities to build their capacity to understand, plan for and respond to likely climate change impacts;
- A National Engagement Project to strengthen the national government's capacity on adaptation and resilience efforts being implemented by Vietnamese cities. This has already influenced national guidelines for local Climate Action Plans, led to collaborative efforts to draft national

guidelines for urban DRR based on city experiences, trained urban planning teaching faculty and practitioners, and led to widespread recognition of innovative ISET-designed city-level Climate Change Coordination Offices;

- With CDKN support, ISET designed and hosted a design competition to develop affordable, culturally appropriate and acceptable storm-resilient housing designed to weather future climate impacts between now and 2050.
- ISET has worked with Danang Women's Union to build storm-resilient housing for poor, women-headed households. All 220 homes withstood typhoon Nari in 2013.
- Identifying and researching cutting-edge issues not yet on the radar of most DRR and development groups, such as the potential impacts of combined heat and humidity under climate change.

In less than 100 words, please describe how the nominee's work is funded.

ISET has been able to raise funds from multiple donors who recognize the achievements of the organization and its ability to successfully implement climate change resilience projects that are impactful and accountable. ISET's main donors include The Rockefeller Foundation, USAID, the Climate and Development Knowledge Network, the US Army Corp of Engineers, the American Red Cross, the International Development Research Centre, the Department for International Development (DFID), and Mercy Corp, among others.