

└ United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) Secretariat Evaluation

Executive Summary

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Key messages from the evaluation

1. The majority of stakeholders interviewed viewed UNISDR as particularly relevant in coordination, advocacy and strategic information and as the right organization to globally champion disaster risk reduction in support of the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA). At the same time, to ensure added value within the ISDR partnership, UNISDR should be clear as to its role, and strategic in its support of key focus areas.
2. The role of the newly-created SRSG function is key to accelerating the momentum and creating political space for disaster risk reduction. Based on the functional authority of the SRSG UNISDR can give increased focus to the implementation of the HFA, and foster a higher degree of coherence and commitment to risk reduction globally, nationally, locally and within the UN system. This could be best achieved by fully exploring the potential of the role of the SRSG, the Chair's Summary issuing from the Global Platform, and the role of the Management Oversight Board (MOB) in supporting the development of a truly multi-stakeholder system that supports achievements and addresses challenges in disaster risk reduction.
3. Effective partnerships play a central role in ensuring that disaster risk reduction is mainstreamed to support coherence in the targeting of disaster risk reduction initiatives in development sectors. Though UNISDR is viewed as a good convener, stakeholders maintained that it has not taken a strong enough role in setting the agenda and ensuring appropriate follow-up to the multi-stakeholder meetings it has organized and facilitated. In regards to thematic platforms, a number of thematic platforms have been set up or recognized by UNISDR, but have only to a limited extent served their defined purposes and UNISDR's role has varied. To ensure shared responsibility and ownership, UNISDR should encourage and assist partners to drive initiatives and processes through well-supported and effective global and regional presence.
4. The establishment of the Global Platform has been instrumental for increasing awareness and the understanding of disaster risk reduction. UNISDR has also provided strong support to regional platforms and organizations, which is seen as an effective way for UNISDR to influence and inform national governments. UNISDR's performance at national level has, however, been mixed. UNISDR has been effective at increasing the number of national platforms, but the effectiveness, impact and sustainability vary. Effective coordination with UN Country Teams, the World Bank and other relevant partners at country level was emphasized as essential for ensuring sustainability of national platforms.
5. Advocacy and general awareness building are seen as key achievements across all stakeholder groups. The Global Platform sessions, climate change related activities and the Global Assessment Report (GAR) are among others highlighted as having made important contributions in raising the general awareness of disaster risk reduction. Furthermore, the Global Campaigns are seen as effective tools to increase sector specific awareness and make disaster risk reduction more concrete. UNISDR should continue to provide practical and concrete guidance material and standards for the implementation of the HFA but should limit its involvement in publication development and ensure that its publications are demand and not supply driven.

Context

At the 2005 World Conference on Disaster Reduction, 168 Governments adopted a ten-year strategy to make the world safer from natural disasters. The Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) is a global blueprint for disaster risk reduction efforts to substantially reduce disaster losses by 2015. The United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) secretariat was established by General Assembly Resolution A/RES/54/219 in 2000. Its mission, as determined by the General Assembly Resolution A/RES/56/195, is to serve as the focal point in the United Nations system for the coordination of disaster reduction and to ensure synergies among the disaster-reduction activities of the United Nations system and regional organizations and activities in socio-economic and humanitarian fields. Since the adoption of the HFA, the UNISDR role has included facilitating and monitoring the implementation of the HFA by the ISDR system partners.

In 2008, the UN Secretary-General proposed, and the Advisory Committee on Administrative & Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) concurred with, the creation of the post of UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction (SRSG for DRR). With the arrival of the SRSG for DRR UNISDR has been undergoing significant changes, including a refinement of the organizational set-up and internal responsibilities and strengthening of the work planning and monitoring processes. She has also created leverage for UNISDR in its focus on DRR in a changing climate.

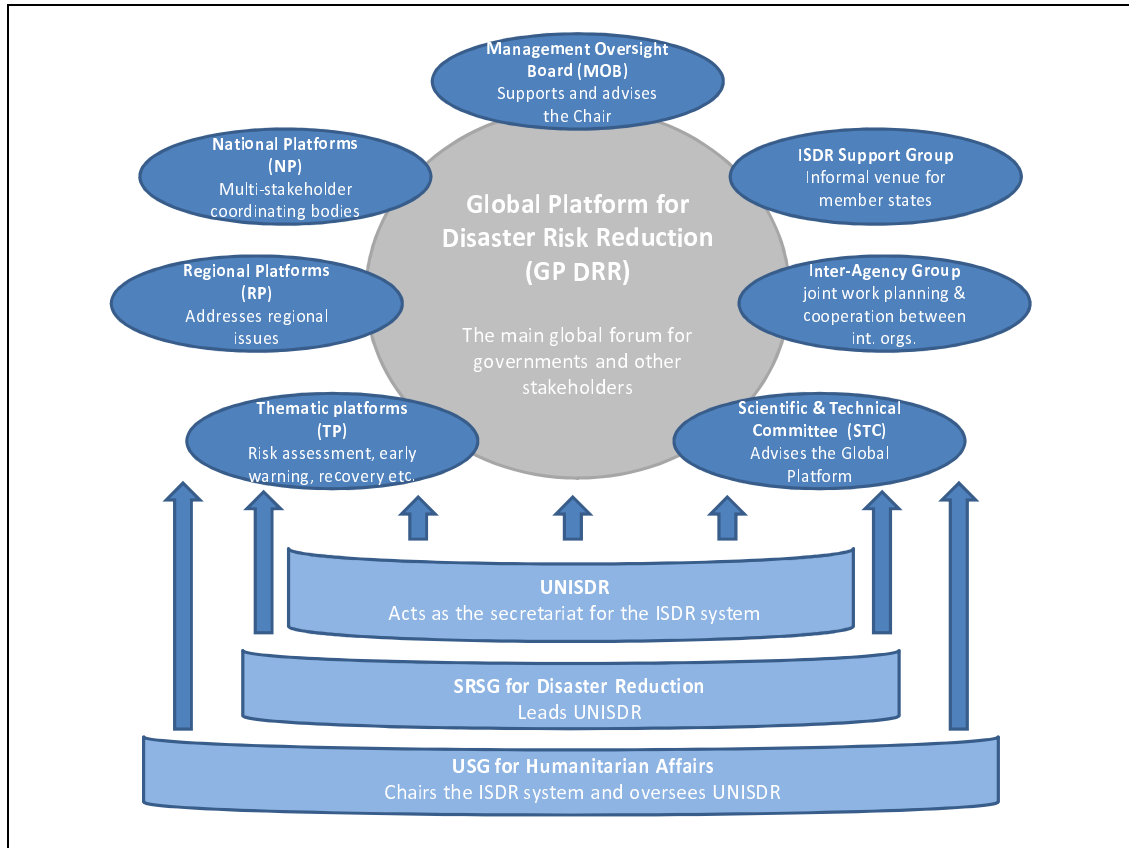
Objectives and scope of the evaluation

Ahead of the mid-term evaluation of the HFA, the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction and the main donors requested an independent evaluation of the performance of the secretariat. This independent evaluation of the UNISDR secretariat is the second evaluation since its inception in 2000.

The first evaluation, conducted in 2005, assessed the effectiveness of UNISDR in the performance of its functions and responsibilities. Key recommendations from this assessment indicated a need for structural and governance reform in order to narrow down and more clearly define strategic tasks and priorities. This was to facilitate more effective use of available resources along with improved transparency and accountability. Added value to member states was emphasized, particularly in relation to policy analysis, communication, and information support in order to facilitate enhanced intra-and inter-regional networking.

The 2005 evaluation resulted in a consultative reform process in 2006. A number of different mechanisms were created or endorsed in order to strengthen the ISDR system. Figure 1 provides an overview of the ISDR system and its mechanism in its current form. The Management Oversight Board, the Scientific and Technical Committee, a revised Inter-Agency Group, a number of thematic, regional and national platforms as well as the Global Platform were created as new mechanisms within the system. The Global Platform is the main forum for the ISDR system and meets biennially, to date in 2007 and 2009. In addition, the creation of the high-level post of Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Disaster Risk Reduction to lead UNISDR in January 2009 presented another major step for UNISDR.

Figure 1 - Overview of ISDR system and mechanisms¹



The objectives of the 2009 independent evaluation of the UNISDR secretariat are to assess UNISDR's performance over the past four years and provide guidance for the future direction of the organization. The results of this evaluation will support UNISDR senior management in strategic planning and positioning of the organization. The evaluation will also assist the members of the evaluation Steering Committee and the wider donor community to take informed decisions on technical cooperation initiatives and financing for disaster reduction.

The biennial work plans 2006-07 and 2008-2009 are the primary point of reference for the evaluation in terms of goals, outputs and activities. The 2008-2009 work plan presented a logical framework for the activities of the organization, along several focus areas. The evaluation framework follows a similar logical framework. Other key reference points are the mandate and core responsibilities as set out in the General Assembly resolutions and the reports of the Secretary-General. The figure 2 below provides an overview of the focus areas and outcomes, which define the specific results that the secretariat aims to achieve, as articulated in the biennial work plan 2008-09.

¹ Based on <http://www.preventionweb.net/english/hyogo/isdr/introduction/>

Figure 2 - 2008-09 Biennial Work Plan

Focus Area	Outcome
1 - ISDR System Coordination and Resource Mobilization	1.1 - ISDR system coordinated and supported at the global level and thematic levels, providing guidance to all stakeholders
	1.2 - Regional Facilitation capacities strengthened to guide and report on implementation of HFA
	1.3 - Action coordinated to guide and support national actors, building on regional and international ISDR system capacities
	1.4 - Increased resources available for DRR and implementation of the HFA
2 - Advocacy and Partnership Building	2.1 - DRR recognized more widely as a development issue, across all sectors and with a gender sensitive approach
	2.2 - DRR and HFA recognized as core feature of policies and programmes for CC adaptation
	2.3 - Expanded understanding of and commitment to HFA by key actors
3 - Strategic Information and Policy Guidance	3.1 - Monitoring and assessment systems in place for risk status and progress in implementing the HFA
	3.2 - Information and knowledge on DRR generated and documented
	3.3 - Existing knowledge on DRR made more widely available
4 – Effective ISDR secretariat	4.1 - ISDR secretariat, both headquarters and regional offices, managed for more effective and efficient delivery and services

Conclusions

The general importance of a body to champion disaster risk reduction is recognized across all stakeholder groups, and UNISDR is increasingly seen as the right organization for this task. UNISDR is considered to be relevant for all stakeholder groups engaged in disaster risk reduction, in particular for coordination, advocacy and strategic information.

At the same time, there remains a lack of clarity regarding UNISDR's roles and responsibilities among stakeholders. The identified reasons for this are that UNISDR's mandate is broad and work plans and other relevant documents have not sufficiently specified UNISDR's roles and responsibilities, in particular towards some stakeholder groups, at the national level and between key ISDR system partners. UNISDR sometimes strays outside of its core mandate, in particular with regards to its operational role at country level.

UNISDR has been effective in setting up new initiatives, but has not been sufficiently strategic about choosing priorities to ensure effectiveness and sustainability in the allocation of resources and implementation of activities. UNISDR needs to move towards a clearer and narrower strategy that is more realistic in terms of how it can respond to growing demands with sustainable capacity, and at the same time use its available resources more effectively. A more focused strategy will also enable UNISDR to more clearly communicate its roles and responsibilities towards different stakeholder groups and at different levels. The new Biennium Work Programme for 2010-2011 goes some distance in taking UNISDR forward towards results-based resource management especially as an example of consultation with ISDR donors and partners.

In terms of its role with ISDR system partnerships, UNISDR needs to develop a strategy that is grounded in a strategic mapping, including a gap and needs analysis of the current activities and

programmes of the ISDR system partners. UNISDR needs to ensure that its strategic focus is on the areas in which it is viewed as most relevant and in which it is best positioned to add value. In order to free up capacity so that it can better focus on key areas and increase its overall effectiveness, UNISDR should align its activities with its strategic objectives and consultation with its partners

UNISDR is still a young organization. While dealing with increasing demand on its services, it has, with limited resources and guidance, tried to find its position and added value for the ISDR system. As described above it has succeeded in some areas, such as advocacy and awareness raising, while it still needs to improve performance in others like coordination in line with its mandated role. The creation of the post of Special Representative for Disaster risk reduction gives UNISDR the possibility to take a stronger lead and provide strategic guidance to the ISDR system. If UNISDR manages to define and implement a focused strategy, it will be able to more effectively serve the ISDR system and facilitate the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action.