



International Strategy for Disaster Reduction

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# Building a “Global Network of NGOs” for Community Resilience to Disasters

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## Concept Note

(Draft 0 For The Purpose of Discussion)

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United Nations

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## Context

The Second World Conference on Disaster Reduction (WCDR II) was held in January 2005, attended by 168 countries, 78 regional and international organizations and 161 NGOs. The Conference adopted the *Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters* to reduce the increased impact of disasters triggered by natural hazards. The HFA promotes disaster risk reduction (DRR) and its mainstreaming into socio-economic development planning and activities.

Since WCDR II, the world has witnessed growing effort in addressing disaster risks and mainstreaming DRR into development programmes. Such an increased global effort is characterized by increased political commitment and wider participation of development stakeholders. Among other things, disaster risk reduction has slowly, but surely, become an issue of common concern among high-level policy makers and development practitioners, educationalists, scientists and journalists.

Governments have gathered at different forums to maintain their political commitment and start the paradigm shift from disaster response to comprehensive disaster risk reduction. Ministerial conferences on DRR were held in Asia, Africa, the Pacific and Latin America. At least 60 countries have already designated official focal points for the implementation and follow-up of the HFA. More than 35 countries are reported to have established multi-stakeholder national platforms to address the complexity of DRR, and 50 others are reported to have taken concrete action, including the development of policies, legislations, national plans and early warning systems.

In the ongoing process of promoting disaster risk reduction, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), both national and international, have been very active. As disaster risk reduction is a cross-cutting issue that needs to be mainstreamed into development sectors, especially at the community level, the role of NGOs is very crucial.

In recent years, some NGOs have worked hard to advocate for policy changes. Others have been active in mainstreaming disaster risk reduction into rehabilitation and recovery programmes. Many others have engaged actively in capacity building, knowledge transfer and public awareness in communities at risk. In fact, over the last two years of coordination of the implementation and follow-up of the HFA by the ISDR secretariat, some NGOs have accumulated a large number of good DRR practices. They have succeeded in reducing the vulnerability of the poor living in disaster-prone areas and increasing their resilience through educational activities, capacity building and the mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction into their post-disaster recovery programmes, which provided invaluable foundation and insights for accurate policy guidance and for building a culture of disaster prevention.

The ISDR secretariat attaches great importance to NGOs' increased engagement in different fronts of disaster risk reduction and believes that building the resilience of nations and communities to disasters cannot be done without the active participation of NGOs, which often work with poor communities vulnerable to the impact of disasters. The ISDR secretariat is therefore determined to build a network of NGOs,

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including CBOs, under its growing outreach and promotion capacity. The establishment of such a network will also facilitate the development of strategic partnerships with NGOs, aimed at addressing disaster risk reduction issues at the sub-national and community level.

## Goal

The overarching goal for building the “Global Network of NGOs” is to contribute to the growing global effort to reduce the impact of disasters, and build disaster resilient communities.

## Objectives

1. To provide a platform for NGOs to share experience and dialogue for concerted actions to promote disaster risk reduction, especially at the community level.
2. To promote South-South and South-North cooperation among NGOs through information sharing, knowledge exchange and capacity building.
3. To enhance knowledge transfer from local to global levels, and vice versa, in order to build the resilience of communities.
4. To encourage an active role by NGOs in mainstreaming disaster risk reduction into pre-disaster developmental and post-disaster recovery programmes.
5. To increase the voice of NGO concerns and the visibility of NGOs’ contribution to the ongoing global effort to reduce disaster risk.
6. To facilitate NGOs’ access to global resources (knowledge, skills, networks, partnerships, funding, etc.) for disaster reduction and related activities.

## Strategy for Building and Sustaining the Global Network

Disaster risk reduction is a cross-cutting issue and building community resilience requires joint commitment and concerted actions from NGOs working in different areas of development and humanitarian affairs. To promote the required joint commitment and concerted actions, networking and partnership are needed. In the light of this and of the need for South-North cooperation in an “increasingly *global* world with increasingly *global* disaster risk factors”, the ISDR secretariat has decided to build a “Global Network of NGOs”.

The strategy for building and sustaining the Global Network involves the following steps - matched by actions to be taken by the ISDR secretariat to demonstrate its determination:

1. *Taking stock of the existing dynamics and the success and interests of NGOs in DRR - as a starting point.*

Action by the ISDR secretariat: The ISDR secretariat will carry out the above task to produce a short compilation of relevant information and data from various studies, papers, case studies and success stories related to NGOs. The resulting document will also serve as a background paper for Step 2 below.

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- 2. Building ownership and leadership by a small group of NGOs, discussing the way forward and holding initial discussions on the required structure, mechanisms and membership.*

Action by the ISDR secretariat: The ISDR secretariat will facilitate an initial consultation with a small group of NGO networks which have demonstrated strong commitment, accumulated experience in addressing disaster risk reduction issues and established loose partnership with the ISDR secretariat. Building ownership and leadership by a small group of committed actors is a critical step: ownership and leadership are two major ingredients for motivation, responsibility and sustainability, and a small group of committed individuals is the best foundation stone for any major coalition-building venture. The consultation will also discuss the structure, mechanisms and membership required for developing and sustaining the effectiveness of the Global Network and potential partnerships.

- 3. Gaining greater support from NGOs and building wider ownership by NGOs.*

Action by the ISDR secretariat: Based on the achievements of the above two steps, the ISDR secretariat will organize an online discussion for larger consultations among NGOs on the possible structure, mechanisms and membership of the Global Network. The objective is to gain greater support from NGOs for the development of the network, and to build wider ownership by the NGO community.

- 4. Establishing an “Advisory Group” as an initial “driving force”*

Action by the ISDR secretariat: The ISDR secretariat will facilitate the establishment of an NGO Advisory Group to guide the process of developing the Global Network. Members of the proposed Advisory Group shall be representatives of NGO groups or networks which are actively promoting DRR and mainstreaming it into development and disaster recovery, and which have accumulated experience in advocacy for policy changes and programme implementation at the community level. The proposed Advisory Group will serve as the initial “driving force”, until the holding of a second meeting - to be held back to back with the ISDR Global Platform - during which participating NGOs shall discuss the proposed structure and mechanisms and decide on the way forward.

- 5. Holding a broader meeting to discuss the proposed structures and mechanisms and decide on the way forward*

Action by the ISDR secretariat: The ISDR secretariat shall prepare and hold the above-mentioned meeting with support from the NGO Advisory Group established in Step 4 above. The ISDR secretariat shall also seek support from its global partners. The meeting shall discuss the proposed structure and mechanisms and decide on the way forward. The meeting shall also be the venue of the official launching of the “Global Network of NGOs”.

It is to be noted that the ISDR secretariat will designate a focal point to facilitate the establishment and development of the Global Network, under the supervision of the ISDR secretariat Senior Coordinator for Advocacy and Outreach. The focal point will facilitate the process of establishing and developing the Global Network.

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## Proposed Structure

The proposed governance structure of the Global Network shall be based on the NGOs' continued autonomy, and shall consist of the following components: (1) A Global Advisory/Steering Committee; (2) Regional Advisory/Steering Committees; and (3) National NGO Coalitions or Associations.

The Global Advisory/Steering Committee (GASC) shall operate on a rotational basis every two or three years, which shall be determined by consensus reached in the above proposed advisory-group consultations and online consultations.

The proposed GASC will consist of five to seven NGOs. Each member of the GASC should not only be a representative of a NGO network in a region, but also become increasingly active in disaster risk reduction. The GASC's primary responsibility is to provide guidance on how the NGO community can play a leading role in the promotion of a paradigm shift from disaster response to disaster risk reduction, and on how NGOs can take a leading role in the building of community resilience to disasters through concerted and strategic interventions. The GASC will focus on the proposed Regional Advisory/Steering Committees (RASCs) from different regions.

The main responsibility of the RASCs shall be to strengthen their networks of National NGO Coalitions or Associations, acting as an umbrella of country-based NGOs, extending their networks' work with community-based organizations.

## Proposed Mechanisms

The proposed mechanisms for the establishment and development of the Global Network for DRR include four components:

1. The ISDR secretariat will, as mentioned above, establish a focal point to support the development of the Global Network and facilitate information sharing and knowledge exchange among the NGOs concerned.
2. The proposed GASC will provide leadership in guiding the development of the Global Network.
3. The Global Network may meet in Geneva, Switzerland, in a back-to-back meeting with the "ISDR Global Platform", destined mainly to National Governments and governmental and inter-governmental bodies.
4. The ISDR secretariat shall establish mini-grants to reward community-based organizations that have done an excellent job in increasing community resilience to disasters.

## Proposed Membership Criteria

As the overarching goal for this initiative is to contribute to the growing global effort to reduce disaster impact and build disaster resilient communities, the Global Network is open to NGOs that meet the following criteria:

1. Demonstrating at least a general understanding of the concept of DRR, the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (as a strategy) and the HFA.
2. Demonstrating commitment to the implementation of the HFA.

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3. Advocating for DRR and promoting its mainstreaming into development and disaster recovery processes.
  4. Demonstrating commitment to establishing and developing the “Global Network of NGOs”.

### **Note: Inclusion of other non-governmental groups**

The global DRR community’s concern, at this stage, is concrete HFA implementation at the community level, hence the focus on NGOs. However, sooner or later, DRR being everyone’s business, other relevant non-governmental groups (NGGs) should perhaps join the Network, at least to help boost DRR awareness and promotion. These other NGGs include opinion makers/shapers, women, the private sector, etc.

Indeed, the idea of building a network of opinion makers/shapers - separate from ISDR’s governmental one (the ISDR Global Platform) - would not be irrelevant. This Network may also include eminent citizens, religious leaders, community leaders, school teachers, prominent artists, journalists, etc. It would be a very diverse and heterogeneous group whose nature, task(s) and interest(s) are different from those of DRR implementers. Indeed, it might even include “governmentally related” members such as pro-government parliamentarians.

In the light of all the above, and because the other NGGs’ work can also benefit - directly or indirectly - the NGOs, all discussions and consultations on how to build the “Global Network of NGOs” should consider the possible role(s) of other relevant NGGs, and determine whether the Network should accommodate them (partially or not, immediately or in the future) or should not accommodate them.