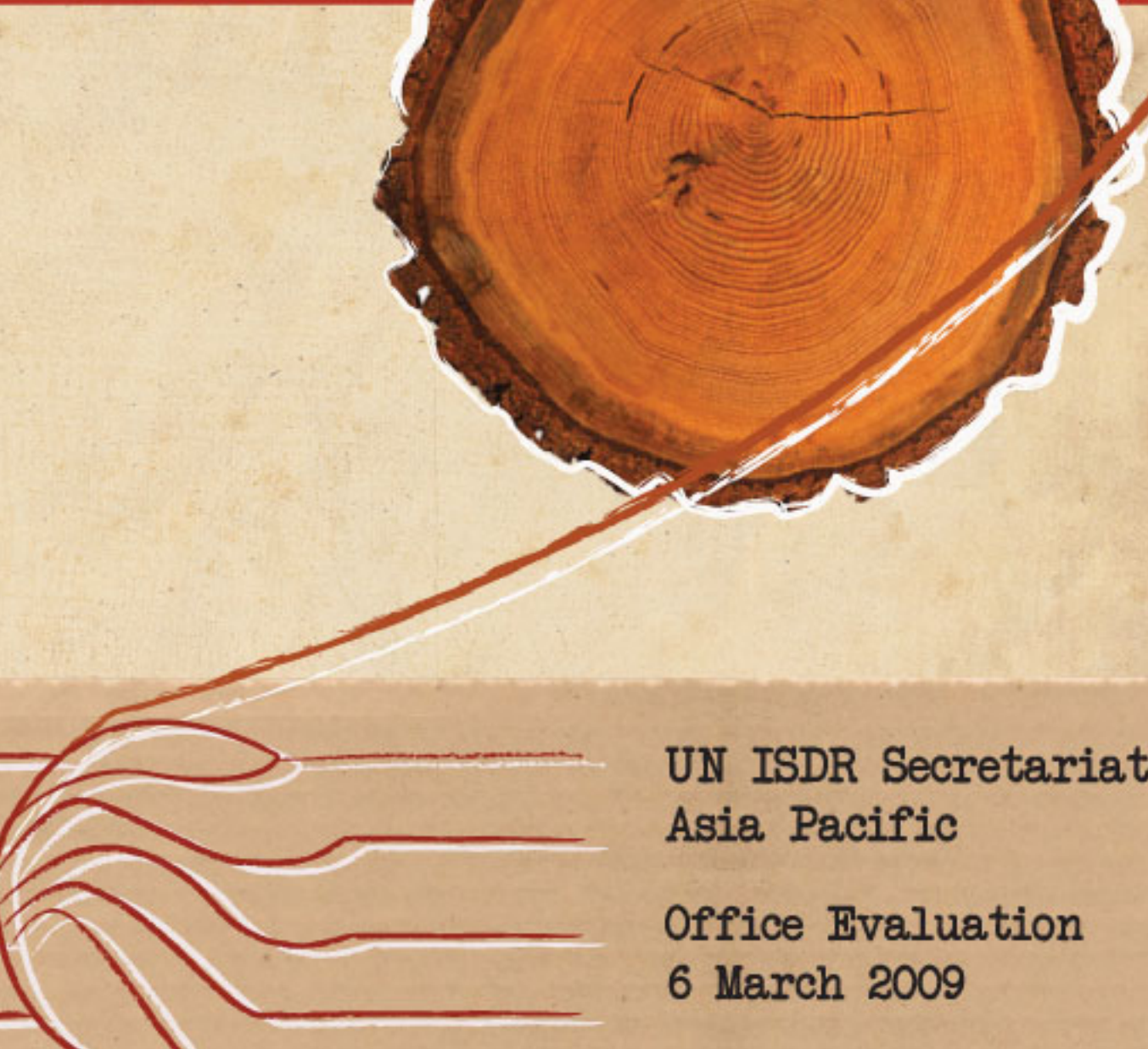


Evaluation Brief



UN ISDR Secretariat
Asia Pacific

Office Evaluation
6 March 2009

**UN ISDR Secretariat
Asia and the Pacific**

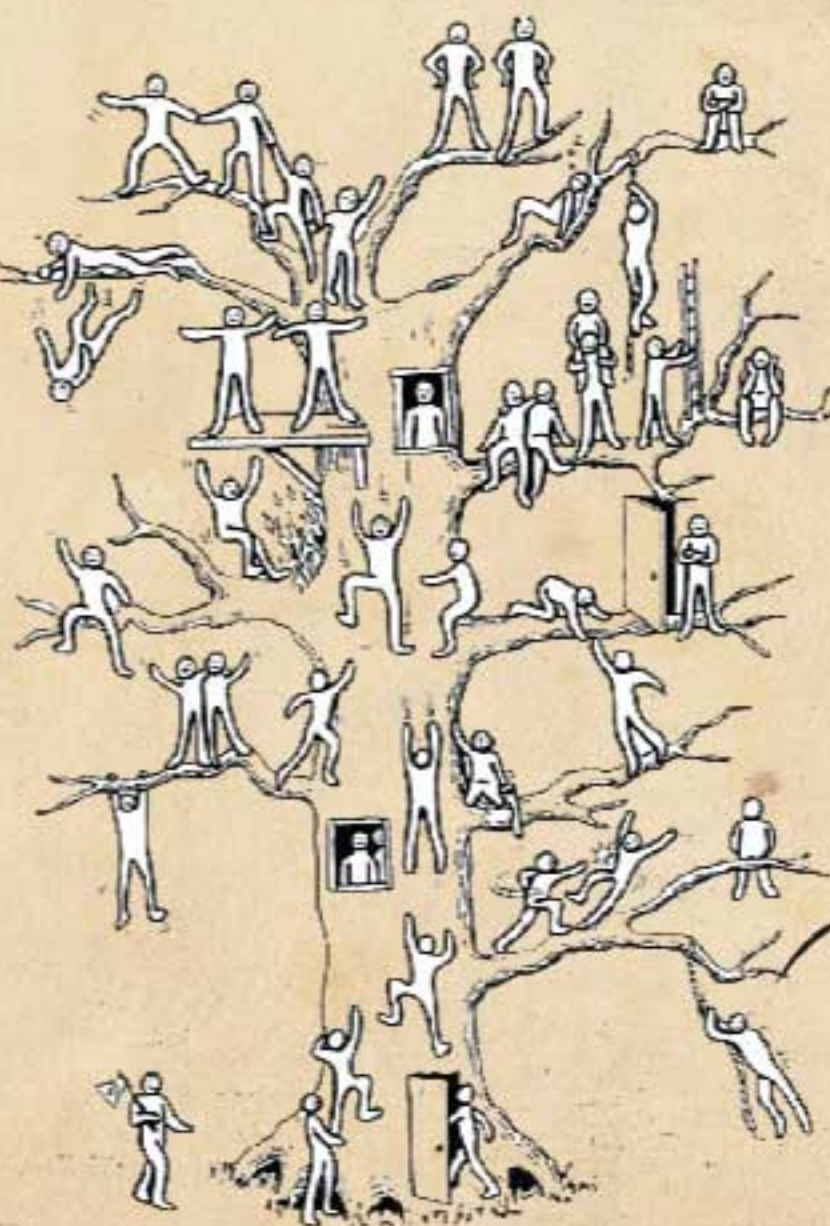
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"Evaluation Tree"
Source: Evaluation Support Scotland
<http://www.evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk>
Accessed 4 February 2009

Summary and Overview



The central purpose of the evaluation is to report on progress in achieving results relating to outputs and outcomes. It is essentially an organizational assessment of the relevance, performance and impact of the regional ISDR Secretariat in Asia and Pacific.

The evaluation has found a strong functioning office of individuals dedicated to their work and proud to be with ISDR. It is a small office; working closely together is a matter of course. Overall the feedback is very positive. The office maintains a good profile in the region, however there is much to be done to further raise awareness, build capacity and make best use of the HFA as a resource and strategy in itself.

The region fully expects ISDR to maintain the role of strong advocate and to champion of the Hyogo Framework, with the support to maintain the momentum on disaster risk reduction. Advocacy is the key role.

The suggestions from partners and collaborators that have come from the evaluation, through interviews, observation and the stakeholder survey, have also been very positive, showing insight, vision and support for a key regional player.

The future is bright for ISDR with the streamlining of some operational and functional processes to boost efficiency; some increased advocacy and outreach tasks to boost effectiveness; and systematic measuring and reporting on impacts and the value added of the organization. Simplifying work planning processes, strategically planning for HFA support and monitoring, for communications and knowledge management and for establishing a strong monitoring capability and plan are a few key recommendations for the office. Other comments below capture these major results of the evaluation.

Four core functions and capabilities

Over the course of the evaluation (twenty-three working days) and important conceptual and practical planning framework emerged around which the report and recommendations are now structured. The basic premise of the report is that there are four primary functions for which in-house capability is seen to be central to the ability of the office to carry out the five priority areas of the Hyogo Framework for Action.

These four core functions and capabilities capture all five HFA priorities, and could be considered as a basis of a 'core team'. The same four functions can act as criteria against which project and programme proposals can be tested; can guide work planning to ensure planned activities are not outside of the capabilities of the core team (or if so, what external expertise will be required), and can help to define the lingering questions of "who we are?", "what it is that we do?", and "how we do it".

As a means of concentrating effort and bringing more focus to the activities of the regional office, it is suggested that the work plan and future projects and programmes reflect a focus on these core functions.

The recommendations are therefore structured in the same way. The Stakeholder Survey indicated strong support for more concentrated effort on advocacy and partnership building, less diversity of projects, and a clear need to boost this key role; advocacy (and partnerships). The four core functions and needed capabilities to service the regional DRR needs are:

- i) Advocacy and Partnerships
- ii) Monitoring and Evaluation
- iii) Knowledge Management and Communications, and
- iv) Operations, Coordination and Management

Work Plan coordination

This is possibly the most important documentation for the regional office. All planning, actions and achievements should be guided by the work plan. It should also be the selling point of ISDR, the document used to attract donor and partner support; the document that encapsulates the regional and national priorities of the region and communicates these priorities to the Global Work Planning process.

Many of the recommendations in Part Two come from an understanding and appreciation of the relevance of current and planned activities in accordance with the 2008-2009 Work Plan, and recognition of the opportunities to improve office performance with this instrument.

A comprehensive approach

It is hoped that given that this is the first evaluation of the office, that sufficient baseline data has been collected to allow future evaluations to use this data for both qualitative and quantitative comparison and progress monitoring purposes. The extensive Resource Text is a collection of all electronic resources, and has been designed for this purpose.

Global outreach via the regions

Initially, the regional offices were termed "Outreach Offices", a term that remains applicable and one that captures something of what the regional office probably should continue to be doing; i) in the region and ii) as a liaison office or connection to headquarters of ISDR in Geneva.

A number of recommendations are aimed at streamlining the outreach process by:

- i) offering a more limited number of clearly defined goods and services,
- ii) focusing on four primary or 'core' functions and capabilities (see below), and
- iii) reigning in the tendency to be all things to all comers; i.e. i) saying no to certain types of project proposals and ii) selling the work plan to donors rather than retrospectively fitting project and program components to objectives and outputs.

Systematic operations

Systematic operational procedures, rules of engagement, strategic planning for communications and knowledge management, standard procedures for monitoring and evaluation are a few such issues that are considered in the recommendations to follow. Clearly, there is room for more "bottom-up" information exchanges, to allow the regions (Asia and Pacific in this discussion) some level of autonomy, and an increased level of influence and contribution to work planning.

✓ Evaluation Methodology

As is typical of evaluations of this nature, it is convenient to describe the process in three distinct phases:

- Phase I. **Information and situation**
documentary collection and review
initial interviews (telephone and in person)
draft survey
(attending the office Team Building Retreat)
final survey
staff brainstorming
- Phase II. **Analysis and Overview**
survey analysis
interview summaries
observation notes, performance assessment
comprehensive overview
preliminary reporting needs and outline
verification of preliminary findings
- Phase III. **Reporting and recommendations**
preliminary recommendations
staff review and response to recommendations
partner and stakeholder feedback (survey)
survey results analysis
draft recommendations, discussion, approval
final evaluation report
(Evaluation Brief 8pp. and Evaluation Guidelines 8pp.)



✓ Progress in achieving results

The recommendations in the section describe the primary results of the evaluation.

The following is a brief summary of the four areas or criteria against which the performance of the regional office can be gauged, namely; relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and impact and sustainability.

Although the lengthy stakeholder contributions address all of these aspects of how the office is perceived to have achieved what is set out to do, the following links these perceptions to the work plan outcomes in particular. The following discussion should be prefaced by a recognition that the evaluator was not able to interview all possible partners and collaborators, but rather a representative sample was chosen.

Relevance

How relevant is ISDR AP to the regional stakeholders?

Efficiency

How efficiently is ISDR AP converting its resources to achieving its objectives?

Effectiveness

How effective is ISDR AP in working towards achieving the Mission and stakeholder expectations?

Impact and Sustainability

Is ISDR AP financially sustainable? Are work plan outcomes and outputs being adequately achieved?



Stakeholder Survey

The anonymous on-line survey is at the very heart of the evaluation. The collective opinion and contributions of a range of field-based stakeholders is quite reliable data when considered collectively. The survey results have proven to be most effective in addressing the key purpose of the evaluation.

It was agreed that the most effective means of gathering inputs from the widest possible representation of partners and stakeholders was to initiate an **on-line survey** that would not be an arduous task for respondents. This was undertaken in two phases:

Stage I. (2 February to 14 February)

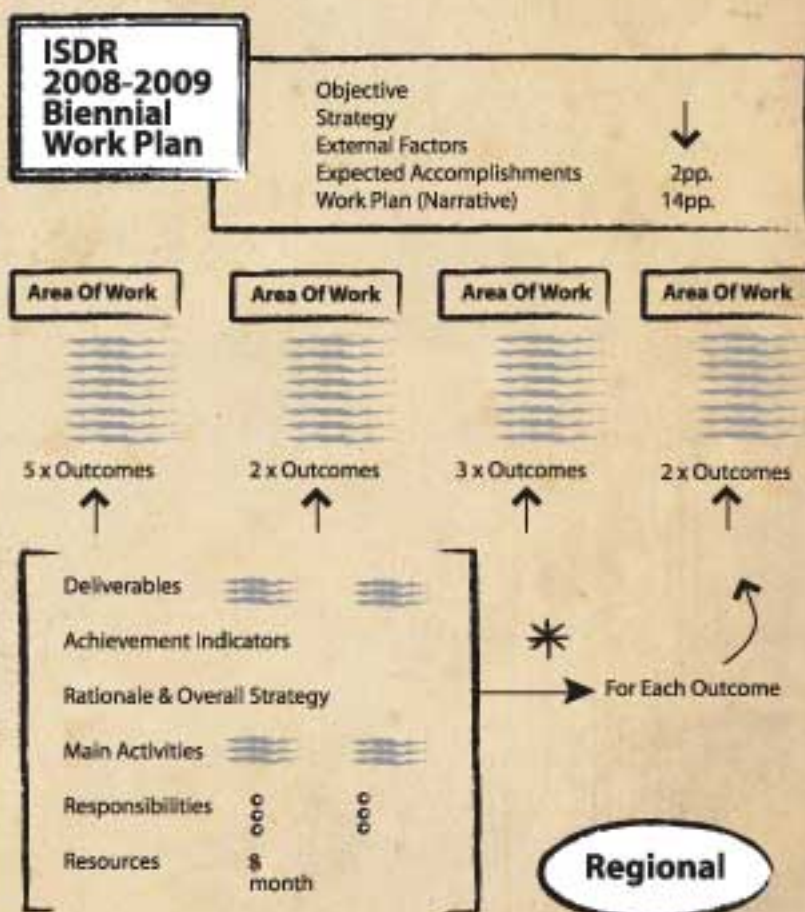
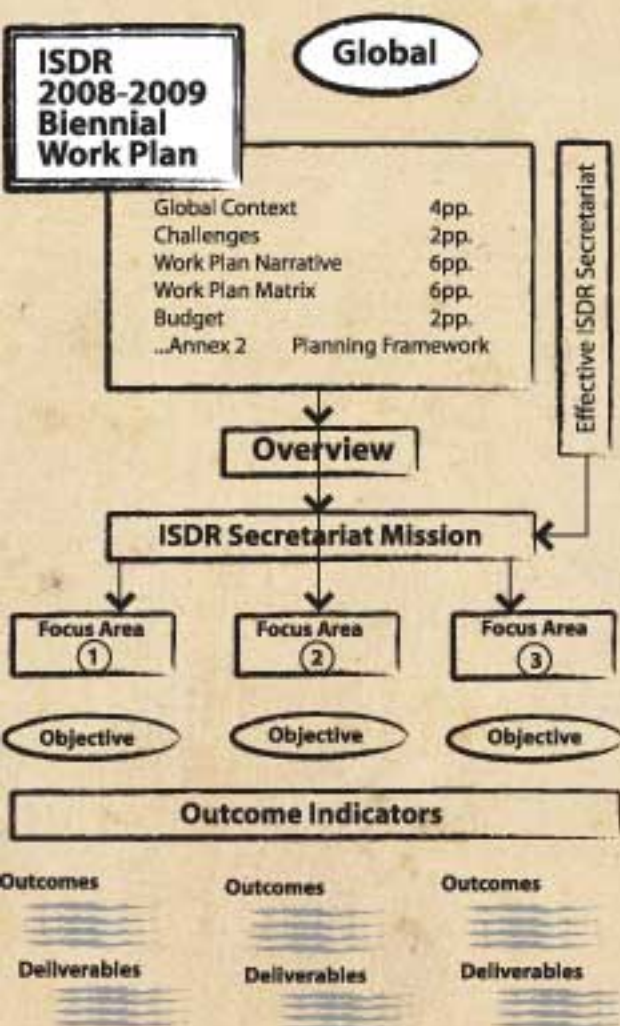
Design, formulate, pre-test and undertake a sample testing with at least ten respondents.
Revise the survey based on that feedback, derive preliminary results for presentation at an interim reporting stage (presented to staff at the Team Building Retreat 16-19 February)

Stage II. (16 February to 6 March)

Finalize survey questions, determine data analysis methods, create mailing list, distribute with seven-day turn-around, analyze and summarize results for inclusion in the Evaluation Report and the Evaluation Guidelines, prepare presentation on survey results.

There were six questions that emerged as the key questions based on the sheer volume of response. These questions dealt with the following topics:

- Has ISDR been successful in strengthening regional coordination, cooperation...?
- HFA reporting
- Impacts of ISDR
- Existing knowledge tools
- Climate change adaptation and the link to DRR
- A vision for ISDR



Recommendations: Core Functions and Capabilities

Note: The following are a selection of recommendations only, not the complete list in the full report.

Recommendation: ISDR Secretariat Asia Pacific Information package

Develop a full package of descriptive, technical and organizational information should be prepared for use by all staff and for distribution to partners and potential partners, that describes the mandate, the experience and the vision for the Asia Pacific office 2009-2010. This could be done in conjunction with other regional offices and HQ.

Recommendation: Linking climate change adaptation to disaster risk reduction

Undertake an initial investigation on the demand for additional expertise from ISDR in the field of climate change and climate adaptation and the linkages to disaster risk reduction. This investigation should result in an understanding of likely future needs to say 2015, inventory existing expertise with other DRR organizations at present, and confirm the need for such in-house expertise.

Consider the establishment of in-house technical expertise in the disciplines of climate change adaptation and (the link to/with) disaster risk management. This should be for the express purpose of the development of regional cooperation for the development of action plans to deal with this hazard, specifically with respect to the interface with disaster risk reduction.

Recommendation: Active Country Team Engagement

In close collaboration with one or two selected offices of the Resident Coordinator, develop a time bound strategy to establish an on-going role in providing the Country Team with motivation and planning, and for developing practical actions for disaster risk reduction with collaboration of the entire Country Team. This should be developed in close collaboration with the UNDP Country Office and the national offices of other key partners in that country.

Recommendation: Capacity building and mainstreaming

Consider the preparation of a comprehensive mainstreaming strategy incorporating: i) UN Country Team initiatives, ii) investigations of opportunities to support those who engage with local governments, and iii) capacity building initiatives developed for a more sustainable HFA reporting body of expertise in the region.

Mainstreaming strategy: Evaluate progress in mainstreaming disaster risk reduction, develop performance targets and indicators to assess progress in integrating disaster risk reduction into both humanitarian and development policies and programming.

Recommendation: Basic terminology explained

Consider the preparation of a simple set of thesaurus definitions of key terms in no nonsense; plain English that will lend itself to translation, easily and without confusion. Demand for such a tool should first be determined adequately of course.

Advocacy and Partnerships

Recommendation: Disaster risk reduction in the field

An outline should be prepared that describes in 'no nonsense' English basic DRR principles and practices (that is easily translatable), precisely what disaster risk reduction is for this region, for communities in this sub region. This should speak to a non-technical audience, aimed at promotion and mainstreaming of DRR principles and practices.

Recommendation: Communications and knowledge management (CKM) strategy

Consider the appointment of a Communications and Knowledge Management Programme Officer at P3-P4 level.

Consider the establishment of a "DRR Lessons Learned Clearing House" to provide regional organizations and Governments with access to valuable examples of how DRR has worked elsewhere in the region. Practical experience and examples from the region are often a most valuable tool to build knowledge and experience.

Linked to the DRR Lessons Learned Clearing House above, develop a Plan of Action for the development and support for sharing South-South experiences in collaboration with other potential partners supporting South-South cooperation in the Region (e.g. UNDP Regional Centre S-S Cooperation in DRR).

Communications and Knowledge Management

Recommendation: Demand for DRR technical guidelines

Design, develop and conduct a thorough demand study, utilizing all existing partners and collaborators throughout the region, to determine the priorities for knowledge products, information, guidelines etc. so as to guide the preparation of a communications and knowledge management strategy for the regional office.

Simultaneously, a framework to monitor and evaluate each and every publication in terms of its impact, the quality and effectiveness of the messages contained in the publication etc. No publication should be considered without a plan to gather information on the effect the publication has had on the intended audience.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Recommendation: Establish a monitoring and evaluation framework
Prepare project appraisal and evaluation guidelines for inclusion of monitoring and evaluation actions throughout output and activity actions.

Plan for basic M+E training for key staff with in-depth training for senior staff

Consider the appointment of a Monitoring and Evaluation Programme Officer at P3 level.

Prepare an office-wide M+E Framework to plan and implement the building of this core function and capacity in the office over the course of the next 12 months.

Recommendation: HFA Strategy Plan for Asia and the Pacific
In accordance with recommendations presented in the Lessons Learned document, prepare a plan of action for HFA Reporting in 2009, including capacity development, resource mobilization and partnership collaboration with UNDP Country Offices throughout the region.

Recommendation: Roving HFA monitor and trainer
Design a regional roving HFA monitor and trainer Terms of Reference in accordance with recommendations arising from the recent reporting exercise and lessons learned to date.



Recommendation: Coordinated Work Planning – Regional and Global

Consider the appointment of a dedicated "Regional Coordinator" in Geneva to build a continuous process of exchange and dialogue with all available tools, media, technologies and an inter- and intra-regional strategy for collaboration, coordination and support amongst the regional office and between Headquarters and the regional offices.

Consider the development of a set of standardized deliverables' wording or description, for which standardized indicators can also be developed, these could be utilized across all regions and HQ.

There is an opportunity to develop some common financial planning and budgeting processes across the Secretariat. This could be undertaken as an initiative and a component to the regional work plan. Similarly, a common format for reporting should be investigated.

Operations, Coordination and Management



Recommendation: Staff skills development

Provide regular and targeted skills and knowledge development and training opportunities for office staff including basic skills in: Project management, DRR, vulnerability assessment, capacity assessment, risk assessment.

Recommendation: Regional Work Plan

Consider reformatting and restructuring the Work Plan into more of a matrix format with supplementary details on scheduling, persons responsible and resource allocation. This supplementary data can be updated; the Plan should remain the same until the mid-term review.

Recommendation: agreements with UNDP Country Offices

Through appropriate channels, develop a system of mutual understanding and mutual support for mutually shared development objectives that would usher in a renewed and closer relationship with UNDP Country Offices, to the benefit of both parties. This should be undertaken simultaneously with initiatives to develop a package of support and awareness building for the UN Country Team.

Recommendation: Maintain and strengthen current roles

Review the effectiveness and impact of the national level staffing to determine if indeed this is an appropriate role for ISDR to be either expanded or phased out in favor of other advocacy and management systems.

List of the main report table of contents

Organization of the Evaluation Reports

There are three separate reports arising from the evaluation:



- Report I **Summary Evaluation**
(8pp. brief summary of findings and recommendations for wide distribution);
- Report II **Evaluation Report**
(48pp. full report for internal use, baseline information contained in the Resource Text document under separate cover, including a CD for all electronic files), and
- Report III **Outline Structure of an Annual Evaluation**
(8pp. description of basic approach and methodology for the proposed annual evaluation of a regional office).

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Resource Text separate CD contains all reference materials mentioned in the Report).

Resource Book

(separate CD)

PART 1

Baseline and Background Materials

1. Terms of Reference for the Assignment (9pp.)
2. Staff Meeting 3 February 2009 (3pp.)
3. Checklist for Evaluating Incorporation of DRR into the CCA/UNDAF Process (7pp.)
4. Asian Partnership on Disaster Reduction (IAP) (2pp.)
5. Disaster Risk Management Networks & Communities (1p.)
6. Checklist for Integrating Disaster Risk Reduction into Long Term Recovery (1p.)
7. ISDR Asian Partnership on Disaster Reduction (IAP) (2pp.)
8. LOGICAL FRAMEWORK APPROACH (1p.)
9. UNISDR Asia Pacific mandate (1p.)
10. List of Key Individuals interviewed (2pp.)
11. List of Documents Reviewed
12. ISDR mandate History (2pp.)
13. Reporting and Monitoring Requirements - Programmes & Projects (4pp.)
14. RIN Fact Sheet (1pp.)
15. ISDR Secretariat Asia and Pacific Organigram - draft (1pp.)

PART 2

Stakeholder Survey

Design, Preparations, Management and Results

- I. UNISDR Internal Office Evaluation (Survey) (10pp.)
- II. Design, Approach and Methodology
- III. Key Communications with Survey Participants
- IV. Draft survey recipients (1p.)
- V. Final Survey Recipients (3pp.)
- VI. Quick Summary of Initial Feedback on the DRAFT Survey (2pp.)
- VII. Interim Results of the Office Evaluation (1p.)
- VIII. All Results - All Responses - All Histograms (Excel file)
- IX. All Text Only Responses (28pp.)
- X. Results: Survey Data Analysis (PowerPoint slides)