

REVIEW OF ISDR SECRETARIAT'S REGIONAL OFFICES

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Department for International Development (DFID) has committed a total of £3 million un-earmarked funding to the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) for the period 2002 - 2005. To date DFID monitoring and evaluation of our support has taken place in Geneva through structures such as the ISDR Support Group and an Annual Review conducted jointly with the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.

2. This is the first DFID review of the ISDR's regional offices which are based in Africa (Nairobi) and Latin America and the Caribbean (Costa Rica). The main purpose of the review was to evaluate: a) what impact and value-added the Strategy and Secretariat is having in the regions and how this impact is monitored; b) the relevance and appropriateness of the Secretariat's objectives at the regional level; c) how effectively the Secretariat's Workplan is being rolled out into the regions; and d) the effectiveness of mechanisms for coordination between the regions and the Secretariat in Geneva.

3. The review was particularly timely as it took place four months prior to the World Conference on Disaster Reduction (WCDR). As such it provided a useful opportunity to assess the ISDR Secretariat's engagement with and support to the Less Developed Countries (LDCs) as they prepare for the Conference. It will also be useful for the findings of this review to be fed into the independent evaluation, which is due to take place after the WCDR.

4. The two regional offices were established in order to facilitate the ISDR Secretariat's approach of maintaining a global impact of the Strategy through forging links and alliances with relevant regional and national stakeholders. This supports one of the ISDR's objectives for 2004-2005 which is to expand impact at the regional level, particularly through National Platforms and strengthened ISDR regional presence. The outreach programme for LAC was opened in 1992 at PAHO's request during the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR) and is largely funded through a contribution by SIDA. The Africa programme was established in 2002 and is hosted by UNEP, it is largely funded through a contribution from Germany. Plans are now underway to set up a new regional outreach office in Central Asia.

5. Both regional programmes seek to advance disaster risk reduction (DRR) and its integration into sustainable development in the regions and also to enhance leadership and ownership of disaster reduction initiatives. It is evident however that both regional outreach offices have been careful not to adopt a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to their programming but instead to tailor their approaches and activities to the perceived needs of the regions in which they work. This is important as while both regions are prone to a wide range of disasters, there is inevitably a vast degree of difference in both regions with regards to approaches to DRR and what vulnerabilities each region is subject to.

6. The review was extremely useful. Overall we were impressed with the work which is being carried out by ISDR regional offices. While there remain areas for improvement, both regions have succeeded in engaging with a wide range of partners and regional stakeholders and raising the profile of DRR in their region.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

7. We are grateful to the ISDR regional teams in both Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean for all their assistance prior to and during our visits. We are conscious of the heavy burden that review visits of this kind can place on those concerned. We are grateful

for the time given to us by all those with whom we met. Our particular thanks go to Feng Min Kan, Pamela Mubuta and Noroarisoa Rakotondrandria in Africa; and Elina Palm, Margarita Villalobos and Ana Luisa Garcia in Latin America.

PROCESS & CONSTRAINTS

8. The mission took place over two weeks from the 9th – 21st August, 2004, with one week spent in each region. Given the time available, we were only able to visit two countries in each region and hence we appreciate that we were only able to see a snapshot of these vast and hugely complex areas. In Africa we visited two sub-regions - East Africa (Kenya) and Southern Africa (South Africa). In Latin America and the Caribbean, we visited Central America where we spent four days in the ISDR regional office in Costa Rica and one day in Panama.

9. The mission approach consisted of a review of relevant programme material, including a number of written outputs. During the review we had face-to-face meetings, and where these were not possible, telephone interviews, with government officials, UN agencies, the Red Cross and some civil society actors. In Latin America we were also able to visit a school to review the application of the 'Riskland' activity. In both regions the ISDR Head of Office attended a number of meetings with us. The agendas for each visit are attached at Annex A.

10. Following the regional visits, we had meetings in Geneva and a feedback session. We shared the draft report with ISDR Secretariat staff and as much as possible tried to incorporate their views. However, the final responsibility for the views expressed in the report rest with the review team alone.

BACKGROUND

Purpose of Review

11. The purpose of the review was to gain a clearer understanding of how ISDR Secretariat's work is being carried out at a regional level. The TORs for the review are attached at Annex B.

12. The review aimed to assess and enhance understanding of the following:-

- a. the role, impact and value-added of the ISDR Secretariat – Regional Outreach Programme;
- b. how its impact is monitored;
- c. the relevance and appropriateness of the Secretariat's objectives at the regional level;
- d. how effectively the Secretariat's work plan is being rolled out in both regions; and
- e. what mechanisms for coordination exist between the regions and the Secretariat in Geneva.

13. The review also provided a useful opportunity to assess the ISDR Secretariat's engagement with and support to Less Developed Countries (LDCs) as they prepare for the World Conference on Disaster Reduction (WCDR) in January 2005.

DFID Support

14. DFID is the largest donor to the ISDR Secretariat. It has committed a total of £3million to ISDR from 2002-2006. The annual commitment in 2003 was £750,000. To date DFID monitoring and evaluation of our support to the ISDR Secretariat has taken place only in Geneva through structures such as the ISDR Support Group and an Annual Review conducted jointly with the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. There has so far not been any review of the regional offices and it is important that this was carried out in order to evaluate what impact the Strategy and Secretariat is having in the regions. We are aware that the findings of this review will be fed into the independent evaluation of the ISDR that is due to take place in the spring of 2005.

Regional Overview

15. There is a vast degree of difference between the two regions both in terms of how approaches to DRR are developed and what vulnerabilities and disasters each region is subject to. Africa has many countries with poorly or virtually non-existent DRR structures where as Latin America and the Caribbean has a far more crowded institutional landscape with many agencies which have been working in this area for some time. Equally while both regions are highly disaster prone, they are vulnerable to a wide range of different disasters which do not necessarily occur in both regions or with equal frequency. Therefore, while there is the opportunity for South-South learning and regional knowledge sharing, for example in National Platform development and government reform, we have been careful not to over generalise between the two regions when drawing conclusions and making recommendations.

Africa

16. Africa is a region prone to a wide variety of disasters, especially large-scale floods, drought, tropical storms and volcanic eruptions. Wide-spread poverty and high HIV/AIDS prevalence leave a large number of Africans even more vulnerable to disasters. According to the Southern Africa Flood and Drought Network, rainfall totals during the 2002-2003 wet season were less than half normal levels across much of the region. The risk from drought and other hazards exacerbate high levels of underlying stress powered by the regional health crisis of HIV/AIDS. In 2003, 28 million people in Sub Saharan Africa were living with AIDS (UNDP). To protect lives and livelihoods from the threat of disasters African authorities have established some disaster management mechanisms, but with limited results. However, it is also important to stress that Africa is a region of diversity as its sub-regions have very different characteristics and disaster profiles.

17. With 43 of the total of 53 African countries heavily in foreign debt, disaster reduction is a relatively low priority for decision and policy makers across the continent. Disaster reduction is often still dealt with in isolation to the overall socio-economic development process, and is often seen to pale into insignificance alongside other pressing issues such as poverty and HIV/AIDS. However, there was an overwhelming consensus amongst those we spoke to of the importance of disaster issues in Africa given the way they impact upon the highly vulnerable population of the region.

18. Prior to 2002, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) concerned itself primarily with post-disaster responses. Only during the 1990s did the OAU make any real attempt to address the issue of disaster and disaster risk management (preparedness and prevention). Though these attempts did not result in concrete mechanisms, they laid the foundation for the activities of the successor African Union and its programme - the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). NEPAD's remit includes supporting its member states in the area of disaster reduction.

19. Whilst in principle NEPAD has the co-ordinating role for DRR in the region, the reality is that poor national capacity means they cannot do it alone. As a result there is a major role to be played at the sub-regional level. This work is undertaken by the relevant economic commissions: the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS); the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD - East Africa); Southern African Development Community (SADC); the Maghreb Arab Union (UMA) and the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC).

Latin America & Caribbean (LAC)

20. Latin America and the Caribbean is also a region which is highly vulnerable to many different types of disasters, particularly earthquakes, hurricanes, landslides, volcanic eruptions, large-scale floods, forest fires and El Nino Phenomenon. In the last three decades in the LAC region, hundreds of millions of people have been affected by natural disasters. In addition, damage to the region caused by disasters is estimated to be 65 million dollars, although this figure is by no means exhaustive (UNDP Report, 2004). Among the social, economic and governmental factors that have increased the vulnerability of the region are poverty, political instability, socio-economic exclusion, accelerated population growth and rapid urbanisation, environmental degradation, inadequate housing, infrastructure and services.

21. Unlike in the Africa region, disaster management is relatively high on the agenda for many countries in LAC. This is reflected by the fact that each sub-region has its own inter-governmental body, which is responsible specifically for disaster risk reduction and response. These are: a) the Coordination Centre for the Prevention of Natural Disasters (CEPRENAC) in Central America; b) the Andean Committee for Disaster Prevention and Response (CAPRADE) in South America which so far covers five Andean countries (Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia). There are discussions to initiate an intergovernmental body for the Mercosur countries (Chile, Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay and Brazil) and ISDR has been contacted initially to be involved in this process; c) the political body of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) and the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency (CDERA). The high degree of variation between the three sub-regions and particularly between Central/South America and the Caribbean is highlighted by the work and priorities of these three different bodies. The Caribbean is particularly distinct from the rest of the region (partly as a result of language) and therefore requires a very different approach, although ISDR has had the least collaboration with this sub-region to date.

22. At the national level, governments are organised to tackle aspects of Disaster Management. However, the way in which this is approached, and the extent to which governments take on board a holistic approach varies – with Civil Defence dominating the agenda in a number of countries. Senior Civil Servants occupying the higher technical positions, are often at the mercy of changes in government and this can often result in the setting back of priorities and changes in approach. This is particularly challenging in an area like disaster risk reduction where forging good relationships across line ministries is crucial to achieving a truly inter-sectoral approach.

23. While the level of awareness and degree to which risk reduction is incorporated inevitably varies widely on a sub-regional, national and local level, there is overall a great deal of work being done in the region, both within government ministries and at the grassroots level within civil society. However, there was a general consensus that civil society is not being effectively integrated into national level policy discussions, even though they may have a recognised role at the grassroots level.

24. As well as national government and civil society, there are several well-established international agencies in the region which incorporate disaster reduction and preparedness into their work. Of these PAHO has been established longest and has been seen as central to the development of this area.

Establishment of ISDR's Regional Outreach

25. The ISDR Secretariat's approach to ensuring and maintaining a global impact of the Strategy is done through establishing links/alliances with relevant regional and national stakeholders, for example: the Asian Disaster Reduction Centre and the Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre in South Asia; and the South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission (SOPAC) in the Pacific. In addition, it has established the two ISDR Regional Outreach Offices in Africa and Latin American and the Caribbean. This supports one of ISDR's objectives for 2004-2005 which is to 'expand' impact at the regional level, particularly through national platforms and strengthened ISDR regional presence. At the time of this visit, it also emerged that plans are afoot to set up a new regional outreach office in Central Asia – is being set up by the Head of the Africa Outreach office and will subsequently be run by a Junior Professional Officer funded through the Norwegian Government. The ninth session of the Inter-Agency Task Force and the first session of the WCDR Preparatory Committee emphasized the importance of regional mechanisms to support and motivate effective disaster risk reduction policies and practices.

26. The main rationale for setting up the regional offices originally was that despite the efforts which took place during the IDNDR in various regions, there remained a great need for regional level co-ordination and networking mechanisms aimed at strengthening disaster reduction policies and strategies. Both programmes seek to advance disaster risk reduction and its integration into sustainable development in the regions and also to enhance leadership and ownership of disaster reduction initiatives. It is evident however that both regional outreach offices have been careful not to adopt a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to their programming but instead to tailor their approaches and activities to the perceived needs of the region. Flexibility, and a relatively 'hands off' approach from ISDR HQ has enabled them to do this to a greater extent. An internal draft strategy for the regional outreach offices was produced in 2001 prior to the offices being set up, however this has never been finalised.

27. The outreach programme for LAC which is based in Costa Rica in joint offices with the Pan-American Health Organisation (PAHO), was opened in 1992 at PAHO's request during IDNDR and is largely funded by SIDA. The office consists of an international Head of Office who is assisted by two local staff – an Information Officer and a Secretary.

28. The ISDR African outreach programme, which is based in Nairobi, was established in 2002 and is hosted by UNEP. In August 2002, the UN/ISDR Secretariat recruited a Senior Regional Officer to act as Head of Office. Her position was complemented by the recruitment of an Assistant and a Secretary, who was provided by UNEP. The programme is funded through a three-year grant of \$320,000 from the German government, which finishes in 2004. The government of Norway has agreed to provide an additional member of staff (JPO) to help boost the programme.

PLANNING, PRIORITISATION & CO-ORDINATION

29. Planning and prioritisation of the regional offices takes place mainly at the regional level although both offices have regular email contact with ISDR HQ and monthly teleconferences. This is carried out by the regional Heads of Offices. It was unclear what involvement the other team members have. There is also a biannual meeting in Geneva which the Heads of Offices attend and give presentations of recent work and achievements. It was clear that both offices work extremely long hours in order to cope with the demands and expectations placed on them from all angles, both within the region and from ISDR HQ.

Africa

30. The main thrust of ISDR Africa's work is to influence regional and government institutions at a fairly senior/high political level. ISDR's Africa office has been pragmatic as to how they prioritise their work geographically. For example, because OCHA and UNDP and other donor countries have already worked with the SADC region for several years, and it is therefore much more advanced in DRR than other sub-regions in many ways, the decision was made to focus on other regions where more immediate gains were likely to be made. Likewise, at the country level the Head of Office's initial plan was to do a comprehensive regional assessment which was intended to help inform her forward approach. However, she subsequently realised that this would take up a disproportionate amount of time. As a result, there was a change in approach and the decision was taken to start working with three countries which represent a cross section of disaster management capacity. These were: (i) Djibouti: poorly organised (ii) Uganda: moderately well organised; and (iii) Madagascar: well organised. Since then prioritisation has been based on clear demand from country governments. With the scarcity of human resources available to the office and the high workload, this sort of pragmatic approach seems eminently sensible. The Africa offices activities are organized in line with their overall approach as referred to in paragraph 37.

Latin America & Caribbean (LAC)

31. The stated overall goal and long term strategy of ISDR LAC is to incorporate DRR into sustainable development at all levels, through the following mechanisms: subregional processes (CAPRADE, CEPREDENAC, CDERA, ACS, developing regional strategies etc.); national platforms; and through other partners such as UN agencies, networks, civil society. By working through these mechanisms ISDR LAC is working at the high political level and influencing political agendas as well as participating at ministerial meetings such as MINURVI, CAPRADE, ACS etc. The office has tried, in its biennial plan (2004-2005), to link its activities up to the ISDR HQ's broader objectives by focussing on four areas in its work plan: policy and strategy; advocacy; information and networks; and partnerships for application. However, with regards to strategic planning and long-term prioritisation, there remains a sense that work is often oriented around individually chosen activity areas. While we recognise that each activity is contributing to the overall goal of ISDR, it is important for these to be strategically linked to the broader objectives and for these links to be clearly articulated. Equally, it was sometimes unclear as to how well-sighted other agencies were as to the office's forward plan and approach. This could be more an issue of poor communication rather than poor planning on ISDR's part, which highlights the need for clear articulation.

Coordination within the Secretariat

32. Both regional offices felt that the majority of their day-to-day support/input came from the ISDR Deputy Director in Geneva. The ISDR Director also provides general policy support and guidance. The regional offices also have regular contact with other ISDR HQ staff on specific issues e.g. public awareness, climate-change related issues and the

National Platforms. ISDR HQ also have one specific backstopping officer per region who spends between 10-15% of their time with regional matters depending on needs. However, the specific responsibilities of the backstopping officers vis-a-vis their regional counterparts does not appear to be well understood throughout the entire organisation resulting in these roles being perhaps less effective than otherwise might be the case.

33. The main 'formal' opportunities for joint planning and co-ordination are provided through biannual meetings held in Geneva. Both Heads of the regional offices attend these. These meetings provided an opportunity for the regional offices to meet with the ISDR HQ and to get feedback on their work. However, to date the extent to which these meetings provide a forum for ISDR-wide planning has been mixed. This is partly because of the pressure (including from donors) to place other issues (e.g. team reform) on the agenda of the meetings. As a result there is often not enough time for the regional offices to discuss their concerns or for regional perspectives to be given proper attention and to be followed up. In addition to the bi-annual meetings, the ISDR HQ hold regular teleconferences with the individual regional offices.

34. As with many agencies, ensuring effective understanding of priorities and pressures between HQ and the regional offices is a challenging area. This has manifested itself in the ISDR regional offices when new issues have been placed on their agenda by Geneva which do not always fit clearly into the regional offices workplans. Equally, challenges occur when HQ and the regional offices view priorities differently. For example, for the LAC office the International Day for Disaster Reduction and the Annual Campaign are seen as high priorities. However, the ins and outs of these activities are managed from ISDR HQ, where they are seen as lower priorities. Thus there have been occasions when progress on these annual events has been delayed and this has caused difficulties for the regional offices in their forward planning with the regional governments.

35. In terms of cross-regional office learning, prior to the Africa office being set up, there were lengthy face-to-face discussions in Geneva between the two Heads of Offices on approach. Two tools from LAC: 'ISDR Informs' (a regular magazine) and the radio soap opera have been adapted to the Africa region. Since then however, there have been limited opportunities for coordination between the two regions apart from the biannual meetings.

APPROACH & ACTIVITIES

Overview of approach

36. Both regional offices emphasised that their value added is in working as a catalyst for disaster risk reduction initiatives at the regional level. In practical terms this means that the focus is on raising awareness of, and initiating multi-agency activities/policy development in areas where there are perceived gaps. The onus is then on letting other actors (e.g. UN agencies or country governments) pick them up and run with them. Both regions stressed strongly the fact that they do not view themselves as an implementing agency. However, there is a strong feeling, particularly in LAC that in order to prove their value added and convince others of the benefit of work in a given area it is important, where appropriate, to support practical initiatives like, for example, the Riskland game. The main purpose of producing these public information materials is so that other actors can reproduce, adapt and implement them at the governmental, regional and community levels. The end aim is to feed disaster risk reduction into the agendas of the ministries of education in LAC.

Africa

37. The Africa office has a clear vision of how its activities contribute towards their wider objectives. The office plans its activities in four areas:

- a. support to development of strategies, policies and co-ordination frameworks;
- b. advocacy;
- c. public awareness; and
- d. information sharing and knowledge exchange.

LAC

38. As mentioned above the LAC office's biennial plan articulates how their activities contribute to ISDR's higher level objectives – the activities are organised in the overarching areas of:

- a. policy and Strategy;
- b. advocacy;
- c. information and Networks; and
- d. partnerships for Application.

The sub-objectives are outlined in the 2004-2005 biennial plan and are as follows:-

- Increase the disaster reduction capacity at national level, through the strengthening of **national platforms** and creation of new ones;
- Design and conduct **public awareness strategies and campaigns** with regional partner organizations to enhance stronger culture of resilience;
- Increase **access to disaster information**, exchange and networking among countries and organizations and reinforcing the Regional Disaster Information System, through CRID;
- Contribute to the **early warning** agenda in the region;
- Enhance disaster reduction agenda in different sectors, in particular **urban and education sectors**;
- Facilitate the information exchange through disaster reduction **networks** and exchange between the countries;
- Contribute to the **Yokohama Strategy** review process.

Policy & Strategy support

Africa

39. The Africa office supports policy and strategy development at three levels: regional and sub-regional – through support to the development of strategies amongst the regional and sub-regional mechanisms; and national – through support to the setting-up of National Platforms. In the first instance it has prioritised its support to the regional and national levels. Africa particularly recognises the importance of identifying where political will exists and then translating that into action and legislation.

40. A major focus of their work has been helping to facilitate the development of a new strategy on disaster risk management for Africa by NEPAD. The process of this has been to support the development of a baseline study on disaster risk management in the region. The draft strategy was subsequently developed in full consultation with the sub-regional economic communities. This was adopted at a recent AU Heads of State summit. The emphasis now is on ensuring that it is properly implemented (i.e. through technical, financial, advocacy and awareness building support).

LAC

41. ISDR LAC's most successful involvement at the regional policy level has been in the Andean region where it has been involved in the processes linked to the creation of

CAPRADE. In January 2002, in collaboration with PAHO and OFDA, ISDR organized the sub-regional meeting with the participation of Civil Defence agencies, planning ministries as well as the foreign ministries from the five Andean countries. This meeting was a platform from which CAPRADE was started. Since December 2003, the General Secretariat for the Andean Community, with the support of UNDP and CAF, has been working on the formulation of the Andean Strategy for Disaster Prevention and Response. One of the main purposes of this strategy is to advance the working agendas for development sectors, such as agriculture, energy, water, health and sanitation. The Andean Strategy endorses ISDR as an international framework and guiding mechanism and they are currently participating at the fourth CAPRADE meeting in which the MOU with ISDR will be discussed.

42. In Central America, ISDR has been involved in consolidating the objectives and strategic framework of CEPREDENAC. In December 2003, CEPREDENAC and UNDP organised the Forum Mitch +5 in collaboration with the ISDR Secretariat and several other agencies. The objective of the Forum was to analyse the progress made in the field of disaster reduction since Hurricane Mitch in 1998. ISDR was invited to help in the following aspects: a) make links to the WCDR process; b) help in the logistics; c) participate in the steering committee; and d) sponsor participants. It should be noted that the progress of CEPREDENAC has recently been challenged by the organisation being moved to Guatemala which according to those we met has seriously impacted on its work.

43. ISDR is participating in meetings and initiatives with the ACS. They signed an MOU with them recently to try and influence them in the decision making of those countries in this way. These meetings are attended by the Ministries of Foreign affairs and high level disaster management agencies. The most recent and concrete activity with CDERA is the Caribbean audio soap opera, which was started early this year, and is expected to be ready at the end of October. They have also been very supportive in promoting the ISDR campaigns at the subregional level. Most recently CDERA contacted CRID to ask advice on how to set up an information centre. There have also been discussions around the possibility of a more formal agreement between ISDR and CDERA, but this has not yet been finalised. The biennial plan for 2004-2005 refers to the fact that more attention and focus should be given to the Caribbean region in the coming months.

44. ISDR has also been involved in supporting a number of thematic areas of policy development. The most active has been in the area of education working with agencies such as UNICEF and UNESCO on introducing activities such as the Riskland game. Other areas include urban planning. ISDR participated at the Meeting of the Ministers and High Authorities of Urban development and Housing in LAC (MINURVI). The ISDR Secretariat participated in the discussions and made a presentation on the importance of incorporating risk reduction into urban planning. As a result of these discussions, the Ministers endorsed ISDR as a global framework for DRR and agreed to promote the implementation of the objectives of ISDR, particularly in the context of urban development and human settlements.

National Platforms

45. Both offices are actively pursuing the creation and recognition of new ISDR National Platforms. In both regions national government are seen as the backbone to the National Platform process. As a result the onus has been on ensuring government buy in to the process. For example, the Africa office insists on receiving a formal written request from a senior minister of the government before agreeing to help set up a National Platform. Equally, their emphasis has been on stressing the importance of government co-financing

launch events in accordance with the ISDR policy of co-funding – for example in Uganda, Ghana and Gabonne the launch was jointly cost shared between ISDR and the government.

46. The main difference in approach between the two regions in this area has been on involvement of non-governmental actors in the process. Whereas in LAC there have been limited attempts to date to ensure participation of non-governmental actors, in Africa, in addition to the line ministries, there has been an emphasis on ensuring participation of other actors including the Red Cross, the private sector, media and NGOs. However, it should be borne in mind that it is difficult to compare LAC to Africa in the sense that Africa is virgin ground for the coordination of DRR at different levels and it is therefore easier to involve civil society when starting from scratch. In LAC, many countries have their national disaster offices, or civil defence offices and they are legally responsible for disaster management. It is therefore inherently difficult, even impossible for an entity like ISDR to change the law. That is why the approach in LAC has to be on building on existing structures rather than setting up new ones.

47. It is important to note that at present there is no strong prescriptive guidance from Geneva as to what a National Platform should look like other than that it should be supported by the national government. Whilst some government stakeholders we met with appeared to appreciate the need to support the process, others, particularly in LAC where they view their work in this area as being highly developed, are reluctant to establish an additional national platform. ISDR-LAC are clear that they do not wish to sell the idea of a National Platform as a 'new entity' as it would be negative and counterproductive for a UN entity to set up any 'parallel structures'. In the Andean region, ISDR has been influencing at the CAPRADE level, to ensure that the 'capraditos', the national committees in the context of CAPRADE would also be the official ISDR platforms.

Advocacy

Africa

48. The African office sees itself as having two main advocacy roles: (a) supporting the mainstreaming of DRR into sustainable development; and (b) promoting a greater understanding of a disaster risk management framework (which spells out clearly the links between all elements of the disaster cycle). Its main activities in this area have been to: (a) producing a series of advocacy materials articulating the links between different elements of development and disaster reduction e.g. on Disaster Reduction and Water Resources and Disaster Reduction and Governance. In all there are seven different issue papers currently developed/in the process of being developed. (b) To be engaged in relevant meetings and general promotion activities.

LAC

49. ISDR LAC places special emphasis on the strengthening of regional strategies in partnerships with existing regional and sub-regional organizations such as CEPREDENAC, CDERA, CAPRADE, as well as with regional offices of the UN agencies and NGOs. In addition to the support to regional strategies, this includes work done at the sectoral level, for example, ISDR LAC has engaged in discussions with BCIE and the Central American Bank for Economic Integration, about the possibility to influence the finance ministers to understand the benefit of disaster reduction. There are plans to incorporate the topic of DRR in one of the ministerial level meetings organized by BCIE with ISDR support. Another similar approach has been discussed with CORECA (Central American Council of Agriculture Ministers) to include the topic of DRR in the agenda of the Ministers.

Public Awareness and Education

50. The main global public awareness events that are actively pursued by the regional office are the Annual Disaster Reduction Campaigns and an International Day on Disaster Reduction. Both of these events are managed from Geneva. Given that the Africa office has only been set up for two years it was not clear how useful this tool is for that region. However, the team in LAC saw both events as being extremely important tools that are actively utilised by the governments they work with (including at sub-national level). The level of consultation with the regional offices in deciding the annual theme is not fully clear. One of the challenges identified in this area is ensuring that topics chosen at the HQ level are of relevance to concerns at the regional level.

Africa

51. ISDR Africa have undertaken three main outputs in this area, largely targeted at school children and local communities. The first, "Safari's Encounters" series, is aimed at educating and enabling children aged 8-12. There are currently three editions of this, these being tackling landslides, floods and droughts (which is in the process of being produced). The second is a set of school guides looking at the areas of: water and risk; environmental protection; and land-use planning. There has also been a publication produced which targets both schools and communities on earthquakes. Whilst these outputs look quite good, it was not clear to what extent communities/local education structures were involved in their development.

52. The original idea for dissemination by the Africa office had been to systematically distribute copies of the document to selected countries in the region. However, a big challenge for the regional programme in Africa is the cost and unreliability of the regional postal service. As a result, their process for distribution of their publications (both 'ISDR Informs' and the education material) is to hand them out whenever they attend appropriate meetings, for example at the Regional Economic Summit. To date they have primarily targeted their distribution of materials to the countries of East and Southern Africa. ISDR is also using the UNDP internal mail network to distribute at least one copy of each document to every Resident Representative and National Government focal point in each country in the region.

53. Drawing on the success of the LAC radio soap operas, ISDR Africa has also produced a version of its own. This was produced using the services of a volunteer doing a Masters in DM in co-operation with a local church network. It was targeted at rural illiterate people. It has subsequently been translated into Swahili, French and English.

LAC

54. The main achievement has been the development of several inter-agency products as joint ventures, such as the new radio soap opera on earthquakes and volcanic eruptions and the Riskland game. Riskland, which was originally produced with UNICEF in Spanish and English in 2002, has now been translated into four other languages including Nepalese and is mainly targeted at primary school children. It is clear that the education kit has become a popular tool in LAC as several national, regional and local institutions are reproducing, adapting and translating it for their own use. In Costa Rica it is already being incorporated into the National Curriculum in a number of districts.

55. A radio soap opera is now being transmitted by twice the original number of radio stations in order to satisfy the huge region-wide demand. It is important to note that where as in many instances radio stations charge UN agencies and NGOs for the distribution of

'public service' broadcasting activities of this type this is not the case for the ISDR radio soaps. This is a clear demonstration of not only their technical interest but also local relevance and thus commercial viability. A new radio programme on floods and hurricanes is currently being produced for the English-speaking Caribbean in collaboration with CDERA. IFRC has requested authorization to make a reproduction of the series and PAHO and UNDP offices in Ecuador are promoting the program among the UN system as an innovative training tool. Everyone we met, without exception, praised this activity as having had a positive impact throughout the region.

56. In addition to Riskland and the radio soap operas, there are many other public awareness materials which have been developed by partners with ISDR collaboration and support. These include the interactive CD on forest fire prevention which was originally a national initiative of the ministry for Environment of Costa Rica, but which, with the involvement of ISDR, has become a regional tool for Central America. Also, very popular materials have been the leaflets: 'Who are you Mr Volcano?', jointly developed by PAHO, and 'How to make community Risk Maps'. The latter one has been translated into Hindi by UNDP office in New Delhi.

Information, Knowledge Sharing & Networks

ISDR Informs

57. Both regions produce a regional edition of the 'ISDR Informs' magazine – contributions to this are made by both regional technical experts and UN agencies (e.g. UNDP and UNICEF). UN agencies and governments also use it as an opportunity to disseminate information on the work they are doing. The 'ISDR Informs' magazine and electronic newsletter has become a popular networking and information dissemination tool in the LAC region over the past years. It is primarily read by technical practitioners in both government and development organisations. All those we spoke to read the magazine on a regular basis and found it a useful and informative tool for their work. At present the magazine is only written in Spanish and English. While the possibility of having a Brazilian version has been discussed, funds have not yet been available to follow this through.

58. In Africa there have been three editions of 'Informs' produced to date – the first in English only; the second in English and French and the third in English, French and Portuguese. Discussions are currently ongoing with the University of Algeria regarding the possibility of producing an Arabic version. At present the approach is to attempt to target as wide an audience as possible. The magazine is dependent on a local journalist working as a volunteer editor.

Website

59. The Africa regional website is user friendly and informative making good use of drop down menus and a wealth of documentation. Some elements of the site are incomplete and the impression is that more could be done if the office had more time and resources. One element with particularly strong potential for helping practitioners is an African Experts Database, covering experience and contact details.

60. The LAC regional website is an informative and well laid-out website for the region. The office has contracted an external consultant to run the website on an hourly rate in order to keep it updated. One section, which is yet to be launched called 'Country Profiles', will be particularly useful to a wide audience, within and outside the region and for a diverse range of agencies, as it provides access to key contacts, links, reports and

country information. The Africa website already has a similar, although much 'lighter' version of this resource.

CRID

61. The Regional Disaster Information Centre (CRID) is coordinated by ISDR LAC and supported by PAHO, ISDR, CEPREDENAC, MSF, IFRC and the Costa Rican National Commission for Emergencies (CNE). During the last two years CRID has carried out a large variety of activities in the area of information management and dissemination in the region and has provided accessible information and training in many countries in the region. CRID has been able to reduce its technical and technological dependency and instead has evolved towards a capacity to develop many products in-house. Both users and partners have a positive view of CRID and as a result have substantially increased requests for information, technical assistance and cooperation. The resource is considered easy to use and inexpensive. However the challenge was recognised as bringing the service to the local level, to those who do not have easy access to the Internet and to the very poorest who are most vulnerable to disasters. CRID is also strongly engaged in training activities in the region. It is currently receiving many requests for training but can only fulfil a fraction of them due to limited resources.

Training

62. There are several training courses in LAC in which ISDR has been involved. These include the PAHO lideres course for example. ISDR-LAC also initiated a fellowship programme in 2003 with the financial support of the UNOCHA. The aim of this initiative was to support the participation of potential future decision-makers from developing countries in short-term training courses on DRR and management. Since it started, ISDR-LAC has been involved in the initiative in two ways: a) by promoting the program and the selected training courses at the LAC through website, magazine, electronic newsletter etc; and b) participating in the selection committee of the candidates that will receive the grants.

A word on dissemination – the challenge in Africa

63. The ISDR Africa office also has an e-mail network of approximately 850 people. This is made up of all the people that the office meets and information is sent out as and when it is felt useful (usually on a daily basis). Approximately 2000 copies of each public information publication has been made. These have not been systematically disseminated as the cost is considered prohibitive and the mailing system in Africa is neither prompt nor particularly reliable. The challenge is further exacerbated by the fact that few institutions in Africa have access to computers and web-based material.

Partnerships

64. The vast majority of agencies we met with were overwhelmingly positive about the work of ISDR in the two regions. Many viewed their outputs as being extremely useful. There was also an acceptance that some areas of their work would take time to deliver, for example national reform. However, some did flag up a couple of areas where they thought more focus might be merited:

- a. there was a view that one of ISDR's key value added is to strengthen the link between government action and the international policy setting;
- b. it was felt that ISDR could play a more active role in focusing on the incorporation of disaster risk reduction into the UNDAF process;

- c. it was considered that ISDR could play a bigger role in coordination amongst and between UN agencies; and
- d. a key gap identified for potential future involvement by ISDR was that of promoting the need for good training for delivery in DRR – particularly at government middle-management level.

65. Some agencies felt that the ISDR in Geneva, including the IATF process, needs to ensure it is really relevant to national governments and their practical needs. All agreed that the regional offices were a good way of starting to address this issue.

66. Both offices try as much as possible to cost-share activities with others, where the main input is in a catalysing and mobilising role. The main purpose for this approach is to ensure that activities have as broad an ownership as possible. It also has the positive spin off of helping the regional offices finances go further. It is important to note that cost-sharing between UN agencies is not a straightforward process and often requires complex arrangements to be made. The reason for this is that one UN agency cannot transfer funds into the bank account of another. This is particularly difficult when setting up small-scale 'start up' advocacy projects of the type supported by ISDR.

Links with specialist experts

67. Both offices have links with specialised experts from universities and the private sector in order to help use their information to help meet the needs of the region. In general both regional offices try as much as possible to use existing regional mechanisms and the networks of other agencies to help promote their work.

UNEP

68. As previously mentioned ISDR Africa has a partnership (MOU) with UNEP. In addition to supporting the ISDR regional office, UNEP also supported the production of several of ISDR Africa's publications including a school and community leader's guide on environmental protection. UNEP is also helping ISDR Africa with advocacy, for example through: (a) providing comments on the NEPAD/AU strategy for the region; and (b) supporting the development of the 'Safari Encounter' to drought.

69. In LAC, the programme has not yet had collaboration with UNEP, not for want of trying. Although contact was made with the UNEP office in Mexico a couple of years ago and a great deal of interest was expressed, this came to nothing of substance. No contact has been made since.

PAHO

70. In addition to providing administrative support to ISDR, PAHO is also a close partner in a number of areas of work. Both agencies appear to view their partnership as being mutually beneficial. An example of the value added of their partnership is CRID. This was originally a PAHO project focused primarily on the health sector. Thanks to ISDR's involvement it has now broadened its focus to look at all aspects pertaining to disaster issues in the region. PAHO has also been involved in the development of the radio soap operas with ISDR LAC.

UNDP

71. UNDP has two regional Disaster Reduction Advisors in Africa (supported through the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (BCPR)). The ISDR has strongest links with the advisor in Africa and it is clear that their relationship is extremely productive and mutually beneficial. Their approach is broadly speaking for ISDR to identify potential areas of interest and then for UNDP to step in with funding/programmatic support. For example,

they collaborated in Ghana to help the government re-evaluate its disaster risk management framework (the existing mechanism having been viewed as inappropriately large and unwieldy). ISDR initially led the process and dialogue with the Government, which was aimed at mobilising political will and raising awareness of the need for change. Subsequently, UNDP in collaboration with its country office discussed practical activities/areas of support which could be supported to move the process forward. UNDP also sees ISDR as having a potentially valuable role to play in information sharing and dissemination. Other areas of collaboration include: work on the National Platforms; support to the development of national reports for the WCDR; and support to regional and sub-regional policy development.

72. In ISDR LAC works in collaboration with UNDP to promote educational campaigns and regional public awareness through activities such as Riskland and the soap operas. ISDR LAC has also worked with UNDP on national advocacy through creating and strengthening National Platforms and focal points. UNDP has also been involved, since 2003, in the formulation of the Andean Strategy for disaster prevention and response. One of the main characteristics of this strategy is the advancement of working agendas for development sectors, such as agriculture, energy, water, health and sanitation, land use planning etc. UNDP was also involved in organising the Forum Mitch +5 (as explained in paragraph 42).

UN-Habitat

73. ISDR Africa has a partnership with UN-Habitat. This was developed by building on the already existing partnership between ISDR and UN-Habitat in Latin America. In LAC the most recent initiative was the co-supporting of a consultation on urban disaster risk, which brought together the ministries for urban development and housing, the national institutions in charge of risk management and the association of local authorities from 8 countries, as well as other relevant UN organisations. The consultation resulted in a set of recommendations and a strategy for follow up activities.

74. In Africa, this partnership has been slow to start but they are now collaborating on looking at the issues of gender and disaster risk in regional governments. The objective of this is to: review the status of gender concerns in existing disaster risk management; to develop an African strategy for mainstreaming gender concerns in disaster risk management based on the results of the review; and to make policy recommendations which will be used as input to the Second Conference on Disaster Reduction to be held in Kobe, Japan in January 2005.

UNESCO

75. ISDR has established a strong relationship with UNESCO in LAC. They have been greatly involved in two important undertakings: the regional meeting on Communications and Public Information, as well as the regional meeting on Education for Disaster Reduction. Both these meetings took place recently in Guatemala and El Salvador. Unfortunately we were unable to meet with UNESCO whilst in the region.

UNICEF

76. ISDR LAC has a good relationship with UNICEF focusing on incorporating DRR into the education sector. The Riskland education kit, which was originally produced with UNICEF in Spanish and English in 2002, has now been translated into Portuguese, Creole (Haiti), Maya Kachiquel (Guatemalan indigenous people) and Nepalese. UNICEF along with other organizations such as IFRC co-funded most of these translations and adaptations. No such partnership exists in Africa.

OCHA

77. There is need for more clarity as to how OCHA and ISDR can work together in both regions. In meetings in both regions there was a sense that they felt they 'should' work together but there was no clear understanding as to how this should happen more effectively.

IFRC

78. ISDR LAC has a strong partnership with the IFRC. The partnership has been particularly fruitful in disseminating both the Riskland game and the radio soap. With Riskland, for example, ISDR has permitted IFRC to replicate the game and disseminate it – meaning that the tool reaches a far broader audience than ISDR would have achieved on its own. ISDR also contributes to the Red Cross's community level training in this area in the region by helping them to develop training modules and disseminate them to as wide an audience as possible.

79. ISDR in Africa does not yet have a formal relationship with IFRC. However, the review was beneficial in providing the opportunity to bring both agencies together for a meeting. It is clear that there is mutual interest and there are opportunities for joint collaboration.

Regional Technical Bodies

80. ISDR has a number of productive links with technical bodies in both regions. In Africa these include the regional Drought Monitoring Centre in Nairobi. The centre is represented with the collaboration of 26 countries in IGAD and SADC. It focuses on monitoring and early warning with a particular focus on exploring how best to ensure that information reaches the masses in a user friendly and accessible format. For the Centre the value added of working in partnership with ISDR is to better incorporate the policy component into their work so that when predictive information is provided there is a policy component to back it up.

81. In Latin America ISDR is involved with a number of regional technical institutes. ISDR has financially and technically supported the International Centre for Research on El Niño (CIIFEN) in Ecuador, on politics for prevention and mitigation. CIIFEN is an international institute, designed to transform scientific information into practical and accessible information. It is mostly dealt with from Geneva, and the regional office does not have a budget for it. However, over the past year, ISDR LAC has invited the director of CIIFEN to their meetings dealing with Early Warning or communications and has sponsored his trip. Discussion is also underway concerning the possibility of collaborating with CRID on information management and dissemination. ISDR has offered to facilitate their trip to Costa Rica to meet with CRID and visit ISDR LAC's office. They also had an interagency mission together with UNDP and CAF to visit CIIFEN last year to discuss the joint activities.

NGOs

82. Consultations in which ISDR-LAC has promoted civil society participation include, the hemispheric meeting on Early Warning, the regional meeting on Risk Reduction in Human Settlements (local level, municipalities) and recent meetings on Communication and Public Information Strategies and Education for Disaster Reduction. In addition, ISDR-LAC is working with specific NGOs for example Prociv in Brazil and La Red Comunitaria in Central America which both work on disaster prevention and risk reduction at the community level. In Africa we met with a women's NGO Soroptimist International which is working on a project to sensitise women on how the risks of disasters can be reduced, for example through the use of drought resistant plants, such as yams and cassava.

LAC – the challenge of location

83. An apparent challenge for co-ordination with other UN agencies in the LAC region is location. Many relevant organisations (particularly those working on disaster issues) are based in Panama. Equally, Panama is in a more convenient position for access to the wider region. It is worth noting that in our meeting with UNICEF they volunteered to host ISDR should they decide to make this move.

WORLD CONFERENCE on DISASTER REDUCTION (WCDR)

84. Both regional offices have been actively engaged in trying to bring on board countries in the regions in order to incorporate their views and suggestions into preparations for the Conference. In both regions there have been a series of consultations at the sub-regional level aimed at feeding into the process. In some instances the offices have used existing or recent consultations to feed in.

85. In LAC there have been two major consultations that were mostly organised by ISDR. The first was on Communications and Public Information for Disaster Reduction 24-26 August in Guatemala, co-organized with UNESCO, PAHO and IFRC. Several tangible recommendations were made, both for the region as well as for the WCDR process. The second was on Education for Disaster Risk Reduction, which was organized together with UNESCO, OEA, UNICEF, FUSAI (NGO) with the support of JICA, GTZ, Swiss Cooperation, SIDA and others. A set of recommendations was made linked to Kobe as well. ISDR LAC is also currently involved in the Regional Political meeting for WCDR that will take place this week in Quito. ISDR plays an important role at these meetings in coordination amongst the various agencies which often have diverse views and interests. The findings of a regional forum Mitch +5 in December 2003 have also been used to contribute to the preparatory process of WCDR by producing several tangible recommendations for the future.

86. In Africa, to facilitate active participation of representative of African governments in the Conference and carry out further consultations on disaster reduction in Africa, AU/NEPAD and UN/ISDR organized an African Regional Consultation with support from the UNDP and IAESCO, in cooperation with sub-regional institutions and UN agencies in Johannesburg, South Africa, June 2004.

87. Both regional offices have also been actively engaged in encouraging their national counterparts to produce national reports in line with national preparation for Kobe. It is worth noting that the onus at the regional level has been on the value of the process. This perhaps varies from Geneva where there was more emphasis on pushing countries to produce the reports in a short space of time regardless of the quality of the output.

RESOURCES

Funding

88. The outreach office/programme in Africa is heavily dependent on the contribution of the German Government which has an annual budget of \$320,000 over three years. This contract finishes at the end of 2004. In addition it receives support through its partnership with UNEP – which provides the office services and the cost of the office Secretary.

89. A challenge for the Africa office is that the German funds have been agreed on an annual basis. As a result there has been a lack of clarity as to exactly what budget they would have each year. This has been a challenge in terms of forward planning.

90. Germany has made it clear that they will not be providing any new funding to the region beyond the end of their current grant which they very much saw as a start up fund. ISDR Geneva has presented proposals to Norway, Belgium and France for future funding for the region.

91. Sweden has been the main donor to the LAC programme since the time of IDNDR and it has approved roughly USD 450,000 for 2004-2005 covering little more than half of the budget requirements. The project guarantees core activities including the international staff (Head of Office) and local staff (Information Officer and Secretary). Office space and operational costs are being shared with PAHO.

92. As already highlighted there is a strong emphasis on cost-sharing in the work of both regional offices. In LAC, for example, most of the planned activities in 2004-2005 are based on cost-sharing with other UN or regional organizations (such as PAHO, UNICEF, WFP, UNDP, CEPREDENAC, CDERA, IOM) or donors and Development Banks (DFID, BCIE, CAF).

Volunteers/Interns

93. Both offices have sought to address the challenge of limited human resources through the use of interns/volunteers. Using interns/volunteers does not always have positive results, especially if they are only available for a short period of time i.e. the staff resources spent in appraising them of the work to do can sometime outweigh the gains made from their input. What was noticeable in both regions was how well interns are being used. For example, in LAC they used a six-week intern to tackle the lack of funding available to undertake evaluations. He was tasked to carry out an evaluation of the Riskland game and the radio soap opera – helping the team with their understanding of the successes and challenges of the programmes..

Fundraising

94. Although fundraising is in the TORs of both regional offices there is a difference in perception between the two regions as to where the responsibility for it actually lies. In Africa the office is very clear that their role is one of implementation/adoption of the strategy to the regional level but that the responsibility for fundraising should rest first and foremost with Geneva. The Head of the LAC office, on the other hand, stressed that because it was in her TORs she felt duty bound to undertake work in this area, further adding to her workload. The key issue here seems to be that all agree (Geneva and the regions) that to date efforts to identify funds at the regional level have not been that successful. Equally, at the regional level both Heads of Offices stressed that in their view fundraising is a specialised task which requires devotion of sufficient time. Equally, because in many instances fundraising decisions are made at donor capitals the regional offices are not necessarily that well placed to influence them.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

95. Both regions felt strongly that access to external monitoring and evaluation (whether from HQ or donors) are areas for improvement. To date there has been no M&E carried out by any donor or independent consultant of the ISDR regional offices. Equally recent efforts at helping ISDR to reassess its forward approach e.g. the Wayne McDonald report, largely focused on HQ.

96. Both offices felt that effective M&E would add significantly to the value of their work. They stressed that in addition to M&E of their general approach and programme (as has been undertaken by this review) they would also value evaluations of specific components of their work.

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

97. The review was extremely useful. Although the length of time available meant we were only able to gain a snapshot of ISDR's work in the two regions, we nonetheless feel far better aware of the role and work of the offices. The review was also useful in terms of giving us a broader perspective as to how ISDR is perceived by its regional counterparts, including crucially developing country governments. We recommend that DFID ensures that M&E of any further support to ISDR incorporates visits to the regions as appropriate.

Overall impressions of work undertaken

98. Overall we were very impressed with the work that is being carried out in both the regions. They have both achieved a great deal since they were set up both in terms of raising the profile of disaster risk reduction in their region and engaging important partners and regional stakeholders. This is particularly impressive considering their limited resources, both in terms of staff and funding in both regions. The majority of those we talked to spoke positively of their work.

99. ISDR's main perceived role and value added is a catalytic one i.e. bringing together and mobilising other actors, including national governments, to more effectively tackle disaster risk reduction. Having said this, the role, impact and value-added of the ISDR Secretariat in the regions varies throughout both regions, but overall we felt that ISDR were having a positive and fairly widespread impact. Broadly speaking the Africa office have tended to focus on influencing higher level debates whilst the LAC office has chosen to follow a more hands on approach i.e. demonstrating their worth through pilot projects. Whilst each approach has had useful impact it will be important when moving forward with opening new offices, and reflecting on existing programming, that ISDR collectively reflect on the most appropriate approach to take forward their message.

100. As mentioned above the more hands-on engagement with other agencies through the support of 'pilot projects' has had positive spin-offs. We were particularly impressed by the educational tools which had seemed at first to be outside ISDR's remit, for example the 'Informs magazine' and the radio soap operas. The success of these products and the resultant support they have given to ISDR clearly demonstrates their value in providing opportunities for more strategic engagement with new partners. However, it is also of great importance that ISDR is not seen as a local level implementer – which has been the risk in LAC. Equally it is important that ISDR regional offices have clearly identified exit strategies from individual activities of this kind i.e. to re-emphasise their catalytic vs. implementing role.

Resource Mobilisation

101. Ironically, it actually appears to be a positive advantage to ISDR that it is not overly endowed with resources at the regional level. This was particularly evident in Africa where the challenge of limited resources has forced them to forge active partnerships in areas such as cost and human-resource sharing. This includes co-funding by the government. The clear consequence is that activities have a greater chance of being owned at the national level. We recommend that this style of work is replicated in the WCDR process. In developing post conference partnerships the emphasis should be on 50/50 funding with regional institutions and their government.

102. There is a lack of sustainability which is an inherent risk of having offices so dependent on individual donors – namely the Swedes in Latin America and the Germans in Africa. We recommend that both regions try to diversify their donor base by continuing to lobby to other donors. This is a responsibility, which ISDR HQ should also undertake. It is recognised that the regularity of funding is equally important as the amount given.

103. We were impressed by the creative ways that the ISDR regional offices have sought to boost their capacities including through the use of volunteers and joint funding arrangements. The strategic use of volunteers has not only helped to boost overall staffing numbers but also helped to increase their skill mix.

Planning Priorities and Roles/Responsibilities, Co-ordination and Inter-ISDR Learning

104. It is positive that each region should have the freedom from Geneva to decide on its own work-plan in order to avoid a ‘cookie-cutter’ approach to the region. However, it is important for ISDR’s overall planning an approach that there is a good sense of how the work of the regions contribute to its overarching goals. Equally good planning at the regional level is particularly important given the heavy demands and workloads requested of them but both the partners they serve in the region and ISDR HQ. Ultimately having a clear articulation of what is and is not a priority will help the regional offices to more effectively draw the line under what they can and cannot do.

105. While good coordination tools exist between the regions and the ISDR HQ, there remains room for improvement in this area. The bi-annual meetings could be used as an opportunity for greater inter-regional knowledge sharing and clearer joint planning and prioritising with ISDR HQ. This would enhance: (a) mutual understanding of priorities and pressures between regions and HQ and reduce the likelihood of ‘last minute’ planning of events such as the Annual Campaigns. (b) It would also help to ensure that ISDR HQ and the regional offices learn from each other e.g. on how to collaborate effectively with national governments. We recommend that: (i) the ISDR explore how it might more effectively use events such as the bi-annual meeting for planning; (ii) ISDR HQ clearly plans and prioritises in collaboration with the regional offices well in advance of important dates and event e.g. Annual campaigns; and (iii) ISDR HQ staff consider undertaking more targeted visits to the regions for specific areas of work e.g. National Platforms. It would also be efficient if both offices had the opportunity of visiting the other regional offices to understand better the work and the context to encourage South-South learning.

106. We recognise the challenge of ensuring effective co-ordination between the regional offices. Clearly there are strong differences between the two regions which means that activities will not always be jointly applicable across the regions. Equally, other priorities and pressures which are placed on the regional offices mean that they will not always have the space to pursue co-ordination. However, we feel that this is an area where further work could be done e.g. by ISDR in Geneva ensuring that the bi-annual meetings provide an opportunity for cross-regional office learning. It is important to note that we feel that this is just as valid for the LAC office to learn from the Africa office’s approach as visa-versa.

107. It would be useful for the ISDR Secretariat to: (a) reassess where certain roles should sit, for example in the area of fundraising; and (b) ensure that there is clarity as to specific roles and responsibilities e.g. the role of the regional backstopping officers. We recommend that ISDR again reconsider the need for having a full time Geneva-based Fundraising Officer. It is important to note here that this is not a case of simply identifying

an individual to be 'nominated' for this role – it requires the identification of an individual with clear expertise/experience in this area.

Monitoring and Evaluation

108. M&E at the regional level has been limited to date. Recent analysis of ISDR's approach e.g. undertaken by Wayne MacDonald and Manet have primarily focused on Geneva. We recommend that there is increased M&E of the regional offices: a) by ISDR HQ to increase understanding of needs and priorities of the regions; b) by donors to enhance understanding of full work of ISDR; and c) by evaluations of specific programme components which would help ISDR regional offices to better understand their successes and challenges of their work. NOTE: Ultimately ensuring that sufficient resources are identified for M&E is the job of ISDR HQ i.e. donors generally assume disbursement of their funding will factor in an element of M&E. Thus the onus is for Geneva to factor this area in as a priority – and if necessary raise additional funds for this area.

109. We recommend that the forthcoming independent evaluation of ISDR following the WCDR includes a visit to the (by then three) regional offices as this will give a broader and fuller perspective of the work of the ISDR Secretariat. The findings of this review will also be fed into the evaluation.

National Platforms

110. It is positive to note the extent to which both Regional Offices are actively stressing the importance of government ownership in the setting up of National Platforms. In particular we were impressed by the way that the Africa office have managed to obtain government funding for this area. However, there is a need for greater clarity as to the minimum requirements for a National Platform, particularly with regards to civil society participation and inter-ministerial participation. We recommend that ISDR HQ give clearer guidance to the regions as to what they require in order that the regional offices have greater leverage when dealing with national governments.

WCDR

111. A key role is being played at the regional level in preparation for the WCDR. However, it is important for there to be more clarity as to the follow-up to the Conference (ie the Outcomes Document) at the regional level. This includes ensuring that the knowledge of regional offices is fed into developing this process. This is necessary, both for the offices themselves and for the regions in which they are working so that national mechanisms and partnerships have a clear vision of what they are aiming for. We recommend that ISDR HQ look to the regional offices for specific guidance on what needs exist in each of the regions and how this can inform the WCDR outcomes document. Government buy-in in post-Kobe mechanisms must also be ensured which could be done by encouraging joint funding.

Possible areas for future/enhanced work

112. A number of areas emerged during the mission in which ISDR (both at the regional and HQ level) might become more involved:

- a. UNDAF – many felt that ISDR might better engage itself in ensuring DRR is better incorporated into the UNDAF process. At our debrief we learnt from ISDR Geneva that they have agreed the transfer of a UNDP BCPR staff member – his role will include looking at this area. We view this as being very positive.
- b. Training – there is a clear gap, internationally, in this area – particularly vis-à-vis training for middle management. This is an area where ISDR could further act as a catalyst to ensure that enough appropriate training courses

are available internationally. We understand that ISDR Geneva have begun to look into this and we would encourage them to explore this further e.g. in co-ordination with UNDP BCPR.

- c. Co-ordination of DRR – whilst there is strong, positive emphasis of bilateral linkages at the regional level in our view there is room for improvement in the area of co-ordination. To put it simplistically to have an 'OCHA' for DRR. This was explicitly expressed to us as a gap in both Africa and LAC.

Africa specific recommendations

113. It is excellent that ISDR has been willing to provide resources for other agencies in the regions for replication. However, in the area of public awareness we have some concerns regarding the development and dissemination of some of the tools developed e.g. the Safari series. It will be important for the office to reflect carefully as to how it might forge new partnerships (e.g. with the IFRC) to ensure that these useful products are utilised and further developed in the most appropriate manner possible. We view ISDR's suggestion of using UNDP's internal mail service to distribute key documents as an extremely sensible approach.

114. It is positive to observe the close and synergistic relationship between UNDP and ISDR in East Africa. We appreciate that given time and resources available it has been eminently sensible in the first instance to develop a close partnership with the Nairobi office. However, with the current plans to place the regional SURF in Johannesburg it will be particularly important for ISDR to continue to proactively work to strengthen relationships in that office.

Latin America & Caribbean specific recommendations

115. From discussions with the LAC office we understand that they are planning to review their office location. This is positive. Whilst we can see that benefits of the office continue to be local in Costa Rica e.g. due to their close relations with UNESCO and PAHO, there are also positive reasons for considering moving. A number of regional agencies and partners dealing with disasters e.g. UNICEF, IFRC etc are located in Panama.

116. It is sometimes unclear as to what the LAC regional office's overall goal is with regards to certain activities and objectives set. While each activity is clearly contributing to the overall goal of ISDR, a clear articulation of how each activity fits into each area of work is important not only for the offices themselves but also for their regional partners and their target audience. We recommend that the LAC regional office clearly articulates its objectives and strategy for wider work. This could be improved through more coordinated planning with ISDR HQ and by making sure the overarching objectives are made clear to other partners.

117. It was recognised that civil society has relatively little voice at the policy level in the region. However, this is an area which ISDR could engage with further by encouraging governments more forcefully to include civil society in their decision/policy making. We recommend that ISDR try to encourage further the interaction between civil society and national governments which could be done by pushing the inclusion of CS in the National Platforms. This will give them the opportunity to add meaningful input to inform government policy which is currently significantly lacking throughout the region. Better forward planning and coordination from the ISDR HQ would also ensure that civil society are informed well in advance of forthcoming events. We also recommend that UNDP

should collaborate more with ISDR in this area, as in this way ISDR may have better results in engaging civil society into the national platforms.

