



International Strategy for Disaster Reduction



Guidelines

National Platforms
for Disaster Risk Reduction



United Nations



Guidelines

National Platforms for Disaster Risk Reduction

This document provides guidance to establish or strengthen National Platforms for Disaster Risk Reduction (National Platforms for DRR). Based on previous guidelines¹, this revised version has benefited from the inputs of a group of Government officials from countries with National Platforms for DRR and from a few countries that are planning to establish National Platforms for DRR. This group includes China, France, Germany, Iran, Italy, Japan, Madagascar, Nigeria, Norway, Panama, Peru, Senegal, South Africa and Uganda. The Government officials entrusted the UN/ISDR secretariat to include their inputs, and to shorten the original document to turn it into an easy and useful reference.

1 The Summary Guiding Principles for National Platforms for DRR by the UN Inter-Agency Task Force for Disaster Reduction's "Strategic Directions"



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Summary

The need to systematically reduce the increased impact of disasters is gaining recognition and commitment among Governments worldwide, especially after the December 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami disaster. However, disaster risk reduction (DRR) is a cross-cutting and complex development issue. It requires political and legal commitment, public understanding, scientific knowledge, careful development planning, responsible enforcement of policies and legislation, people-centred early warning systems, and effective disaster preparedness and response mechanisms. A multi-stakeholder National Platform for DRR can help provide and mobilize knowledge, skills and resources required for mainstreaming DRR into development policies, planning and programmes.

What is a National Platform for DRR? In short, it can be defined as a multi-stakeholder national mechanism that serves as an advocate of DRR at different levels. It provides coordination, analysis and advice on areas of priority requiring concerted action. But for a National Platform for DRR to succeed, it should be based on a number of major principles, the cardinal one being national ownership and leadership of the DRR process. The present Guidelines for National Platforms for Disaster Risk Reduction seek to provide some experience-based general orientation on how to form, run and sustain National Platforms for DRR.



Context

The world is witnessing a rapidly increasing impact of disasters caused by the combination of natural hazards and vulnerability, which constantly threatens people's lives and livelihoods. These disasters also derail socio-economic progress, and put millions of people into dire poverty or make the poor even poorer. The need to systematically reduce the increased impact is steadily gaining recognition and commitment among public and private decision makers. To address the complexity of DRR, Member States of the UN Economic and Social Council, through its Resolution 1999/63, called on all Governments to maintain and strengthen established national multi-sectoral platforms for disaster reduction in order to achieve sustainable development goals and objectives, with the full utilization of scientific and technical means.

To pursue the strengthening of established national multi-sectoral platforms, based on gains made in DRR during the 1990-1999 International Decade on Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR)², the Member States of the United Nations adopted the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) and established the UN/ISDR secretariat in 2000. This strategy called for inter-disciplinary involvement to coordinate, guide and implement DRR with development partners working in close coordination with disaster management institutions.

Disaster risk reduction (DRR)

is the conceptual framework of elements considered with the purpose of minimizing vulnerabilities and disaster risks throughout a society in order to avoid (prevention) or to limit (mitigation and preparedness) the adverse impacts of hazards, and facilitate sustainable development.

DRR is a cross-cutting and development issue. The process of DRR is a complex one consisting of political, technical, participatory and resource mobilization components. Therefore, DRR requires collective wisdom and efforts from national policy and decision makers from various government sectors, and representatives from civil society, including academic institutions, the private sector and the media.

² As a major recommendation of the IDNDR, the newly established ISDR dropped the adjective "natural" in front of disasters, based on the increased understanding that disasters, which are the consequence of the combination of natural hazards with social and human vulnerability, are thus not "natural".

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In response, building on existing multi-stakeholder national committees previously established during the IDNDR, the UN/ISDR secretariat has promoted, together with other UN agencies³, the identification of needs for the establishment or further development of National Platforms for DRR. The focus of this effort is to advocate the importance and necessity of DRR and mainstream DRR into development policies, planning and programmes in order to achieve sustainable development.

Subsequently, at the 2005 World Conference of Disaster Reduction, 168 Governments adopted the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters (HFA). One of the HFA's strategic goals is “the development and strengthening of institutions, mechanisms and capacities to build resilience to hazards”. It calls on all nations to “support the creation and strengthening of national integrated mechanisms such as multi-sectoral⁴ National Platforms” to ensure that DRR is a national and a local priority. The HFA also encourages all States to designate a national mechanism for the coordination of and follow-up to the HFA, to communicate DRR information and progress to the UN/ISDR secretariat.

Between 2000 and 2006, 34 countries informed the UN/ISDR secretariat of their National Platforms for DRR. Some of the National Platforms for DRR were built on former IDNDR National Committees for Disaster Management by broadening the scope of their work and that of the participation of development stakeholders in order to better embrace the DRR concept rather than that of disaster management⁵ alone. Others, which started from scratch, were, with few exceptions, established and developed through a nationally led participatory process involving main stakeholders under the guidance of the “Guiding Principles for National Platforms for Disaster Reduction” developed jointly by the UN/ISDR secretariat and the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery of the United Nations Development Programme.

3 A UNDP-led “Thematic Paper on Governance for Disaster Risk Reduction” submitted at the January 2005 World Conference on Disaster Reduction (WCDR II), recommends a multi-stakeholder process to strengthen partnerships across sectors and disciplines, as well as among civil society organisations, volunteer groups and the private sector.

4 Multidisciplinary and multi-sectoral perspectives refer to conventional economic sectors and/or ministerial or departmental divisions within the public sector, such as agriculture, finance, health, education, etc., and disaster management institutions and systems. These vary from one country to another.

5 For definitions of terms used in disaster risk reduction, please see: <http://www.unisdr.org/eng/library/lib-terminology-eng.htm>



National Platforms for DRR: Definition

A National Platform for DRR can be defined as a nationally owned and led forum or committee of multi-stakeholders. It serves as an advocate of DRR at different levels and provides coordination, analysis and advice on areas of priority requiring concerted action through a coordinated and participatory process. A National Platform for DRR should be the coordination mechanism for mainstreaming DRR into development policies, planning and programmes in line with the implementation of the HFA. It should aim to contribute to the establishment and the development of a comprehensive national DRR system, as appropriate to each country.

The Need for National Platforms for DRR

Disaster risk reduction is a cross-cutting and complex issue. It requires political and legal commitment, public understanding, scientific knowledge, careful development planning, responsible enforcement of policies and legislation, people-centred early warning systems, and effective disaster preparedness and response mechanisms. A multi-stakeholder National Platform for DRR can provide or mobilize the combined knowledge, skills and resources required for DRR and its mainstreaming into development policies, planning and programmes. It also can provide the following value-added services:

- Engaging higher-level policy makers through advocating for DRR and for mainstreaming DRR into development policies, planning and programmes as well as humanitarian assistance;
- Stimulating development actors and planners' active participation in mainstreaming DRR into sustainable development agenda, including the Millennium Development Goals,

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Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers and the Common Country Assessment/the UN Development Assistance Framework (CCA/UNDAF). This should be built on previous similar experiences such as integrating environment issues into development;

- Providing opportunities for civil society, especially Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) and Community Based Organizations, to dialogue and contribute to advancing the DRR process in the context of local development;
- Facilitating dialogue and partnership within the international community, including the UN System, regional and national authorities, especially through established National Platforms for DRR;
- Facilitating information sharing, knowledge exchange and technology transfer among members of National Platforms for DRR and between National Platforms for DRR; and
- Increasing access and linkage of existing DRR actors with other relevant bodies at national, regional and global levels.

Objectives of National Platforms for DRR

The overarching goal of a National Platform for DRR is to contribute to the building of its country's resilience to disasters for the sake of sustainable development, by achieving the following key objectives:

- To serve as a [coordination mechanism](#) to enhance multi-stakeholder collaboration and coordination for the sustainability of DRR activities through a consultative and participatory process in line with the implementation of the HFA;
- To foster an enabling environment for developing a culture of prevention, through [advocacy of and awareness-raising](#) on DRR and the necessity and importance of integrating DRR into development policies, planning and programmes; and
- To facilitate the [integration of DRR](#) into national policies, planning and programmes in various development sectors as well as into international or bilateral development aid policies and programmes.



Main Principles for National Platforms for DRR⁶

Disaster risk reduction is a country-specific long-term process that is not only an essential part of each country's development process but also an essential condition to ensure the sustainability of socio-economic development. Its effectiveness relies heavily on strongly supported national ownership and leadership of the DRR process.

A single “blueprint” approach for National Platforms for DRR is neither possible nor desirable. However organized they are, what is important is a consistent application of the main guiding principles and ensuring that all relevant economic, social and environment sectors are addressed. National Platforms for DRR must be flexible and proactive. They must be

⁶ Note: The ways and means by which these main principles are applied will be case-specific and tailored to and by each country, with international or regional support, if needed. Where applicable, the UN Country Team shall support and participate in national platforms for disaster risk reduction.

National Ownership & Leadership

Available information shows that dynamic National Platforms for DRR usually demonstrate strong national ownership and leadership of the DRR process, based on a shared understanding of DRR with its multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary nature. They are active in promoting DRR, policy development, capacity development, raising public awareness and advocating the integration of DRR into development activities such as poverty reduction, education, health, environment, disaster management, and etc.

Good practices emphasize that dynamic National Platforms for DRR should help develop broader national systems for DRR and sustainable development. Their influence on national development and resource mobilization will depend on their capabilities to provide inputs and advices to policy and decision makers in developing institutional frameworks for the integration of disaster risk reduction in various development sectors that either create or reduce vulnerability to natural hazards.

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responsive and adaptable to changes as national situations are dynamic, mainly in terms of political, socio-economic and environmental factors.

The main principles for National Platforms for DRR are:

- National Platforms for DRR should view DRR as a national responsibility and a cross-cutting issue within sustainable development processes;
- National Platforms for DRR should utilize a participatory process to facilitate various sectors engagement, with their diverse perspectives and actions, and build on existing systems and mechanisms;
- National Platforms for DRR should influence positive changes through concerted and coordinated efforts particularly in policies, planning, administration and decision-making processes;
- National Platforms for DRR should encourage national and local implementation, adaptation and ownership of the HFA.

To apply these main principles, National Platforms for DRR need to focus on the following political, technical, participatory and resource mobilization components:

- The political component ensures strong political commitment from the top leadership.
- The technical component involves various activities such as developing knowledge bases on DRR, a methodological framework for the National Platform for DRR, and a set of disaster reduction indicators.
- The participatory component involves relevant groups, including various government bodies, the private sector, NGOs and academic institutions.
- The resource mobilization component obtains resources required for developing National Platforms for DRR and carrying out their planned tasks.



Composition of National Platforms for DRR

National Platforms for DRR should build on any existing systems relevant to DRR. They should facilitate the participation of key players from line ministries, disaster management authorities, scientific and academic institutions, NGOs, the National Society of the Red Cross or Red Crescent, the private sector, opinion shapers and other sectors closely related to the DRR purpose. Whenever possible, National Platforms for DRR may invite the participation of donor agencies and country-based UN organizations.

The Office or Ministry leading the National Platform for DRR should be a permanent structure that is in a sufficiently high position to coordinate the participation of all relevant partners with a national coordination mandate in disaster risk reduction, disaster management, national planning or environment. The leading Office or Ministry should have capacity for strong leadership and capacity to coordinate other sectors and leverage political commitment and mobilize resources for and knowledge on DRR.

Major Functions of National Platforms for DRR

The major functions of National Platforms for DRR can be summarized as follows:

- National Platforms for DRR are national mechanisms by which countries can address inter-related social, economic and environmental problems. They support the identification of urgent needs in the area of DRR, allocating resources, presenting timetables for actions and monitoring and reviewing the implementation of DRR activities in line with the HFA.
- National Platforms for DRR work towards better resourced, effective and integrated DRR efforts amongst national stakeholders⁷ and amongst national, regional and international organizations. They support development goals, by providing a framework for systematic thought and commitment to priority actions across sectors and the territory.
- National Platforms for DRR serve as catalysts for national consultations and consensus building, as well as for DRR priority identification and policy formulation, implementation and monitoring DRR activities. The emphasis should be on managing progress toward DRR objectives rather than producing a “plan” as an end product.
- National Platforms for DRR facilitate the allocation of resources from donors, development banks, and UN agencies that are not represented in their respective countries. This can be advanced by advocating the importance and necessity for UN country offices to support the integration of DRR into UN-backed development programmes.

7 This refers to the following five main stakeholder groups of a national community: (1) The public sector (government and statutory bodies); (2) The private sector (profit-oriented enterprises); (3) NGOs and other civil society bodies (including individual community leaders); (4) Academic and research institutions; and (5) The media. [Conventional definition of “multi-stakeholder” taken from the National Conservation Strategy model of the World Conservation Union].



Primary Activities of National Platforms for DRR⁸

The Hyogo Framework for Action provides a reference for assessing and monitoring achievements on DRR, thus facilitating the work of National Platforms for DRR when undertaking activities such as:

- Establishing baseline information for DRR, including disaster and risk profiles, national policies, strategies, capacities, resources and programmes;
- Identifying trends, gaps, concerns and challenges and setting forth accepted priority areas in DRR;
- Advocating the urgent need for developing or adopting policies and legislations for DRR;
- Benchmarking progress made in promoting DRR and its mainstreaming into development policies, planning and programmes;
- Developing result-oriented work plans of National Platforms for DRR to coordinate the DRR activities in line with the HFA;
- Coordinating joint efforts among members of National Platforms for DRR to reduce the vulnerability of people at relatively high risk;
- Monitoring, recording and reporting of disaster risk reduction actions at national and community levels in line with the HFA;
- Documenting lessons learned and good practices, and share the findings (including promoting twinning of National Platforms for DRR) at national, regional and international levels; and
- Working towards better integration of DRR into national planning, policies and programmes in development and humanitarian assistance.

⁸ More detailed recommendations and specific examples of activities to undertake in each sector and various stakeholders are contained in the HFA Guide "Words into Action, Implementing the Hyogo Framework for Action" (UN/ISDR, 2007), available at <http://www.unisdr.org/hfa>

UN Official Recognition of National Platforms for DRR

National Platforms for DRR, officially designated, express the interests of various national and local stakeholders in DRR. Through the legitimacy conferred upon them by their respective Governments, National Platforms for DRR can serve as effective mechanism for promoting DRR at the international level, accessing and exchanging knowledge and resources based on their individual experience and in cooperation with the ISDR System.

The establishment or strengthening of a National Platform for DRR can be formally announced directly to the head office or regional outreach units of the UN/ISDR secretariat in writing, through an official letter from official and diplomatic channels like the Office/Ministry responsible for DRR, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or a Permanent Mission to the UN in Geneva or New York, with a copy to the UN Resident Coordinator.

Such a notification should include the following information: (a) Name of the National Platform for DRR; (b) Contact information; (c) Composition of the National Platform for DRR; (d) The National Platform focal point and her/his contact information; (e) Any relevant documentation explaining the functioning or status of the National Platform for DRR.

The information should be addressed to:

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Chemin de Balexert 7-9, Châtelaine, CH-1219 Geneva, Switzerland
Tel: +41 (0)22 917 8895 ; Fax: +41 (0)22 917 8983
isdr@un.org
www.unisdr.org



ANNEX 1

Relationship Between National Platforms for DRR and the ISDR System⁹

National Platforms for DRR are recognized as key players in the ISDR System. As the ISDR system develops, the following aspects have been highlighted as relevant to National Platforms for DRR:

- National Platforms for DRR are the recognised formal entry points of the ISDR System at national level. Where National Platforms for DRR exist, the ISDR System will build on them at national level.
- National Platforms for DRR are expected to become engines for facilitating DRR at national level. This includes facilitating actions at community level through mechanisms such as local platforms for DRR, and advocating the integration of DRR into humanitarian assistance and development policies, planning and programmes, as appropriate.
- Members of the ISDR System are expected to provide support to national and local actions that facilitate exchange of knowledge (technical, scientific, institutional, training and others as required). National Governments should also be encouraged, where possible, to frame National Platforms for DRR as a commitment to reduce disaster risk in line with the HFA and as a mechanism for tracking progress and pursuing specific targets and goals in collaboration with other relevant national and local stakeholders.

The Global Platform for DRR is a key mechanism of the ISDR System, which meets on a biennial basis in Geneva. It supersedes the previous Inter-agency Task Force on Disaster Reduction that met on a bi-annual basis from 2000 to 2005. In the Global Platform for DRR, the National Platform for DRR is foreseen as the principal institutional arrangement to:

⁹ The ISDR System comprises numerous Governments, UN organizations, Civil Societies worldwide working together to reduce disaster losses, in lives and in social, economic and environment assets in line with the HFA, as an essential condition for sustainable development.

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- Improve the coherence of international action on DRR at all levels;
- Advocate and share knowledge among practitioners and experts; and
- Provide reviews and evaluations of national progress in DRR.

Additionally, regional platforms for DRR are being developed gradually to address DRR needs in greater detail among neighbouring countries and with greater involvement of regional and sub-regional intergovernmental organizations. Regional processes have started in Africa, Asia Europe, and in the Americas.

The main benefits which National Platforms for DRR gain from the ISDR System include:

- Visibility of national and local experience and expertise in DRR;
- Visibility and recognition of national platforms for DRR in facilitating the implementation of the HFA;
- Access to knowledge and resources at regional and international levels for DRR activities
- Information on the progress of DRR in other countries;
- Reduced risk and vulnerability, and thus disasters in the long term; and
- Contribution to the sustainability of various development sectors and gains.

The main benefits which the ISDR System gains from National Platforms for DRR include:

- Updated information on progress of DRR at local and national levels;
- Better position to guide and coordinate the international implementation of the HFA;
- Capacity to provide an overview of achievements and challenges in DRR to regional platforms and the Global Platform for DRR, which meets biennially in Geneva;
- Capacity to monitor and report on progress made in DRR in line with the HFA on a regular basis;
- Increased political and public support to DRR; and
- Increased financial and technical support to the ISDR System for DRR.



ANNEX 2

The United Nations System's Support to National Platforms for DRR

Support from the wider ISDR System

The ISDR System, primarily through the UN Resident Coordinator system, UN Country Teams and also through individual ISDR System members plays critical advocacy, catalytic and facilitating roles in the process of establishing or strengthening National Platforms for DRR under the principles of national ownership and leadership.

The ISDR System can also support the development of specific activities such as national baseline studies, risk assessments and national programmes or action plans for the implementation of the HFA.

Support from UN Resident Coordinators and UN Country Teams

The UN Resident Coordinator represents the UN/ISDR secretariat at country level. In addition, one of the critical objectives of the UN Country Team, expressed through the CCA/UNDAF, is to strengthen national capacities in line with the principles of national ownership and leadership. The UN Resident Coordinator and the UN Country Team can promote and enhance effective national DRR capacity by supporting the creation or strengthening of National Platforms for DRR.

Specific actions recommended for UN Resident Coordinators include:

- Involving the National Platform for DRR in collaborating in the development of the country's CCA/UNDAF, based on national priorities, programmes and activities related to DRR;
- Ensuring that National Platforms for DRR are consulted for the development of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers;

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- Ensuring that each UN agency – based on its mandate and areas of focus, in coordination with the World Bank country offices – considers, in its every day work, the key role of National Platforms for DRR as main actors to reduce disaster risk in their respective areas of work;
- Strengthening the UN Country Team’s knowledge and understanding of DRR; and
- Contributing towards a “common UN voice” on issues related to DRR at national level.

Specific actions recommended for UN Country Teams include:

- Strengthening awareness of roles and responsibilities among all stakeholders and helping them build the skills and capacities needed to carry out assigned functions;
- Assisting with the assessment of existing capacities, gaps and needs upon request from the country’s government;
- Identifying relevant actions to assist the HFA implementation;
- Assisting with the development of national policies, strategies, action plans and programmes on DRR, and helping develop institutional and technical capacities in the field of DRR - as identified in the HFA;
- Establishing links and exchanges between different levels of actions (local and intermediary as well as national, regional and international) and/or fostering collaboration and dialogue among national platform members;
- Strengthening decentralized local governance systems for DRR and helping to identify roles and responsibilities; and
- Ensuring the link between national needs and UN assistance in DRR at national and community levels in close cooperation with other multilateral and bilateral donors.

Specific support from the UN/ISDR secretariat

Supporting countries in developing multi-stakeholder National Platforms for DRR has been one of the major activities of the UN/ISDR secretariat. The UN/ISDR secretariat



supports National Platforms for DRR mainly through its regional outreach units and programmes by carrying out the following types of activities:

- Advocating the necessity and importance of establishing and developing multi-stakeholder National Platforms for DRR;
- Coordinating and facilitating with ISDR system partners the support of country-level implementation of DRR in line of the HFA through National Platforms for DRR as formal entry points;
- Assisting the process of establishing National Platforms for DRR by providing national authorities with advice, contacts, information and, when relevant, cost-sharing based funding, and by working closely with key collaborating organizations;
- Supporting partners with the development of guiding principles for DRR, including the development of sector-specific policy briefs, guidance for the preparation of baseline studies and risk assessments and indicators for progress reporting, awareness raising and training material as well as the compilation of country experiences and lessons learned, and make them easily available to national authorities, National Platforms for DRR and other interested parties, using the UN System and regional networks;
- Identifying information gaps and outsourcing specific studies and policy briefs to National Platforms for DRR that are capable of preparing them, for regional or global use;
- Facilitating sharing of information, know-how and expertise through the ISDR website and other ISDR information dissemination channels;
- Providing opportunities for and foster collaboration and dialogue among National Platforms for DRR from the same region and among National Platforms for DRR from different regions (promoting bilateral cooperation and broad exchange of experience and information among National Platforms for DRR, and encouraging existing National Platforms for DRR to support the establishment of new ones through “twinning” for instance);

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- Lobbying organizations like the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and World Bank to establish and strengthen National Platforms for DRR in countries where they have offices;
- Advocating the inclusion of National Platforms for DRR (as key national mechanisms for DRR at national level) among international organizations and programmes and reform guidelines;
- Encouraging, when applicable, the participation of UN Country Team in National Platforms for DRR, and encouraging their support to and push for National Platforms for DRR;
- Working in partnership with National Platforms for DRR on resource mobilization for disaster risk reduction at national and regional levels;
- Acting as the designated UN focal point for DRR;
- Serving as a networking hub and liaison within the ISDR System in which the Global Platform for DRR is the main instrument for coordination; and
- Facilitating the development of Regional Platforms for DRR, which are particularly valuable in supporting National Platforms for DRR.



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