



Public Health
England

Protecting and improving the nation's health

PHE Board Paper

Title of meeting PHE Board
Date Friday, 26 June 2015
Board sponsor Sian Griffiths
Executive sponsor Paul Cosford
Title of paper **PHE's work on global disaster risk reduction**

1 Purpose of the paper

- 1.1 The purpose of the paper is to present recent PHE work and international achievements around the United Nations Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030.¹ The high level implications and opportunities for PHE are described.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Board is asked:

a) To **NOTE** the high level of engagement, influence and visibility achieved by PHE, through work with the United Nations' International Strategy for Disaster Reduction Scientific and Technical Advisory Group (UNISDR STAG)^{2,3} on the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, around:

- (i) strengthening the role of science and health in global disaster risk reduction policy;⁴ and
- (ii) articulating the scientific and policy remit of disaster risk reduction in areas relevant to PHE such as emergency preparedness and response, outbreak and epidemic management, climate change adaptation, and cross-cutting functions such as evidence synthesis and capacity development.

b) To **NOTE** – the ongoing work in global disaster risk reduction of PHE, in particular through PHE's contribution to the leadership of the United Nations' science and technology conference on disaster risk reduction 2016 which will bring the global science and technology community together for implementation planning across the science, policy and civil society community within the UK and between the UK and international partners.

3 Background

- 3.1 Disaster risk arises when hazards that are either natural (geological, hydrometeorological or biological) or induced by human processes (environmental degradation or technological hazards)⁵ interact with the physical, social, economic

and environmental vulnerabilities and exposures of populations.⁶ Reducing disaster risk, therefore, requires concerted action across a wide range of sectors, institutions and disciplines.

- 3.2 The Sendai Framework was adopted on Wednesday, 18 March 2015 by 187 United Nations (UN) Member States and is the first of the three United Nations landmark agreements of the post-2015 agenda to be adopted (the remaining two agreements will address sustainable development (September 2015) and climate change (December 2015)).^{7,8} It is the successor to the Hyogo Framework for Action on Disaster Risk Reduction 2005. Of note, the Sendai Framework has a much greater emphasis on people's health than its predecessor.
- 3.3 The Sendai Framework gives a clear mandate to scientists [Annex 1], public health professionals, policy makers and practitioners of disaster risk reduction to develop the evidence-informed policy needed to save lives and reduce disaster losses through a multisectoral, transdisciplinary approach across institutions and organisations.^{1,4}

4 Implications for PHE

- 4.1 The following paragraphs include actions required by public health in partnership with UNISDR, WHO and other UN organisations as well as local, national, regional and global partners as relevant. Examples of the scope of public health activities mandated by the Sendai Framework include:

- **To enhance health system resilience** through enhanced cooperation between health authorities and other relevant stakeholders as well as implementing the International Health Regulations (2005). The UK has shown considerable global leadership on relevant policy areas such as antimicrobial resistance.
- **To build on PHE's field epidemiology capacity for monitoring and surveillance** by establishing a mechanism for case registry and a database of mortality caused by disaster in order to improve the prevention of morbidity and mortality.
- **To build on PHE's efforts in climate change adaptation and sustainability** by promoting the resilience of new and existing critical infrastructure, including telecommunications and health facilities, to ensure that they remain safe, effective and operational during and after disasters in order to provide life-saving and essential services. PHE has an important role in the UK's National Adaptation Plan and provided leadership in the development of the UK's heat wave and cold weather plans.
- **To clarify PHE's role in addressing non-communicable diseases** by enhancing recovery and response schemes to provide psychosocial support and mental health services for all; and supporting people with life-threatening and chronic disease in line with work of the Health and Wellbeing Directorate.
- **To expand on PHE activities in capacity development and training of health workers in the UK and in low- and middle-income countries** by better understanding disaster risk and applying and implementing disaster risk reduction approaches in health work; and promoting and enhancing the training capacities in the field of disaster medicine. PHE has made significant contributions to the development of microbiology laboratory capacity and training around the world.

5 Opportunities for PHE

- 5.1 A new phase has begun in disaster risk reduction policy and implementation, which provides a real opportunity to strengthen PHE's relationship with cross-government partners through leadership at the local, national and international levels.
- 5.2 PHE is continuously examining the benefits of updating, linking and concentrating UK expertise to promote the development and sharing of vital knowledge with national and international stakeholders. This, in turn, will facilitate the planned reduction in disaster losses to support the Sendai outcome by 2030.
- 5.3 Specifically, PHE through the vice-chairmanship of the UNISDR STAG is leading on:
 - a) The development of an international partnership for science and technology in DRR to support the implementation of the Sendai Framework
 - b) The organisation of UNISDR science and technology global conference on disaster risk reduction to be held at the United Nations' Palais des Nations in February 2016

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Glossary:

DRR: Disaster Risk Reduction

STAG UNISDR: Scientific and Technical Advisory Group of the UNISDR

UNISDR: United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction

References

¹ The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015 – 2030.

<http://www.preventionweb.net/files/resolutions/N1514318.pdf>

² UNISDR Scientific and Technical Advisory Group webpage.

<http://www.preventionweb.net/english/professional/contacts/v.php?id=4862>

³ In 2014, Virginia Murray was appointed as the PHE Consultant in Global Disaster Risk Reduction to fulfil her remit as the Vice-Chair of the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) Science and Technical Advisory Group (STAG), helping to bring UK influence and its considerable public health science expertise to bear on the post-2015 policy agenda.

⁴ The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015) *Science is used for disaster risk reduction: UNISDR Science and Technical Advisory Group report 2015*. Available from

<http://www.unisdr.org/we/inform/publications/42848>

⁵ UNISDR. 2009. Terminology on Disaster Risk Reduction. Available at

<http://www.unisdr.org/we/inform/publications/7817>

⁶ UNISDR. 2013. Proposed Elements for Consideration in the Post-2015 Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction: By the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction.

Available at http://www.preventionweb.net/files/35888_srsgelements.pdf

⁷ International Panel on Climate Change (2012) Special Report: Managing the Risks of Extreme Events and Disasters to Advance Climate Change Adaptation. A Special Report of Working Groups I and II of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [Field, C.B., V. Barros, T.F. Stocker, D. Qin, D.J. Dokken, K.L. Ebi, M.D. Mastrandrea, K.J. Mach, G.-K. Plattner, S.K. Allen, M. Tignor, and P.M. Midgley (eds.)]. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, and New York, NY, USA, 582 pp. Available from <http://www.ipcc-wg2.gov/SREX/>

⁸ Aitsi-Selmi A, Murray V. Review of SDG 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all. In ICSU, ISSC (2015): Review of the Sustainable Development Goals: The Science Perspective. Paris: International Council for Science (ICSU).pp 23-26. <http://www.icsu.org/publications/reports-and-reviews/review-of-targets-for-the-sustainable-development-goals-the-science-perspective-2015/SDG-Report.pdf>

Annex 1: Scientific paragraph defining the role of the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction's Scientific and Technical Advisory Group.

Para 25 (g) Enhance the scientific and technical work on disaster risk reduction and its mobilization through the coordination of existing networks and scientific research institutions at all levels and all regions with the support of the **UNISDR Scientific and Technical Advisory Group** in order to:

- strengthen the evidence-base in support of the implementation of this framework;
- promote scientific research of disaster risk patterns, causes and effects;
- disseminate risk information with the best use of geospatial information technology;
- provide guidance on methodologies and standards for risk assessments, disaster risk modelling and the use of data;
- identify research and technology gaps and set recommendations for research priority areas in disaster risk reduction;
- promote and support the availability and application of science and technology to decision-making;
- contribute to the update of the 2009 UNISDR Terminology on Disaster Risk Reduction;
- use post-disaster reviews as opportunities to enhance learning and public policy; and
- disseminate studies;