

Multilateral Aid Review: Assessment for the United Nation's International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR)

Summary	
Organisation: United Nation's International Strategy for Disaster Reduction	Date: February 2011
Description of Organisation	
<p>The United Nation's International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) is a strategic framework, adopted by United Nations Member States in 2000, aiming to guide and co-ordinate the efforts of a wide range of partners to achieve substantive reduction in disaster losses and build resilient nations and communities as an essential condition for sustainable development.</p> <p>UNISDR is recognised as the global co-ordinator for Disaster Risk Reduction. It leads on co-ordinating the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA), which was signed up to by 168 member states and sets out how Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) will be implemented from 2005-2015. The Global Platform on Disaster Risk Reduction, organised by UNISDR and held in June 2009, brought together key stakeholders to discuss progress on the HFA and future steps. The Global Platform is held biennially, and the next meeting is scheduled for May 2011.</p> <p>UNISDR's main role includes co-ordination amongst UNISDR system partners, policy guidance, and provision of strategic information on disaster risk. It has a world wide staff of 90 (which includes 48 in regional offices of Asia and Pacific, Africa, Arab States, Europe and Central Asia and Americas). Its overall annual budget is approximately US\$ 28 million. It works in partnership with national and local governments, the World Bank, the UN system, civil society, the private sector and regional Inter Governmental Organizations (IGOs), to promote the implementation of the HFA.</p> <p>DFID was a strong advocate for the establishment of UNISDR in 2000, and has been one of the lead donors to the UNISDR Secretariat. From 2006-2009 DFID provided £4.4m direct to the Secretariat in Geneva. DFID's share of the income for 2009-2010 was 9% of the total received, reducing to 7% if pledges to date are included.</p>	

Contribution to UK Development Objectives	Score (1-4)
<p>1a. Critical role in meeting International Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + UNISDR plays a unique role as a coordinator of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR). + It is the only organisation filling this role within the system. + The establishment of the Global Platform has been instrumental for increasing awareness and the understanding of DRR. 	<p>Weak (2)</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + UNISDR has also provided support to regional platforms and organisations. – However, UNISDR has not performed its international co-ordination role particularly well. – Over the years its work has focussed more at the national level, despite its global mandate. – Its mandate remains broad and work plans and other relevant documents have not sufficiently specified UNISDR’s roles and responsibilities. = UNISDR has not demonstrated sufficient leadership or ability to coordinate global efforts on DRR, despite a strong mandate for these roles. 	
<p>1b. Critical role in meeting UK Aid Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + UNISDR has a unique mandate which is closely aligned to DFID and HMG priority objectives, particularly on climate change. + It is also aligned to DFID objectives on reducing risks and vulnerabilities of the poorest, which are crucial to achieving the MDGs. – However, UNISDR has been unable to carry out its mandate well. – It has given little attention to high level strategic considerations resulting in UNISDR not clearly choosing priorities in line with an overall strategy and allocating aid accordingly. This has resulted in UNISDR having limited effectiveness in DFID priority areas. = Although UNISDR has a good strategic fit with UK priority objectives, it has, to date, been unable to effectively outline a clear strategic direction for itself. 	<p>Weak (2)</p>
<p>2. Attention to Cross-cutting Issues:</p> <p>2a. Fragile Contexts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + The impact of disasters in fragile states can often be more severe, and UNISDR has recognised this by supporting activities in some fragile states including with partners in Nepal, Haiti and Yemen. – UNISDR’s mandate is to work regionally and internationally and therefore does not focus its activities specifically in fragile states. – There is no evidence that UNISDR has any specific guidelines or policies relating to working in fragile states. = UNISDR does not have a specific focus on fragile states or guidelines/policies for working in these states, but it has supported activities in some fragile states, recognising the more severe impact of disasters on these states. 	<p>Weak (2)</p>

<p>2b. Gender Equality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + UNISDR led a joint publication with other agencies on 'Making disaster risk reduction gender-sensitive: policy and practical guidelines'. It included a policy guideline on gender mainstreaming, and guidelines on how to institutionalize gender-sensitive risk assessments. - We do not yet have evidence of how these gender policies have been incorporated into UNISDR's work or the impact they might have. = Although UNISDR has worked with other agencies to think about the linkages between DRR and gender, there is little evidence of a gender sensitive approach in operational policy or information on the implementation of gender policies. 	<p>Weak (2)</p>
<p>2c. Climate Change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + UNISDR has a good track record in climate change, especially adaptation into DRR policy and practice. + The 2010-2011 Biennial Work Programme provides a good framework for further continued action in this area. - UNISDR needs to better balance the focus and resources spent on DRR in climate change with the broader DRR concept. = UNISDR has contributed significantly to mainstreaming DRR into the climate change debate, but needs to ensure that this work is balanced with successes in other areas. 	<p>Satisfactory (3)</p>
<p>3. Focus on Poor Countries¹</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - UNISDR's work at the national level has been expanding, deflecting resources away from its core mandate in international co-ordination - UNISDR should concentrate on co-ordination at the strategic/international level as mandated, with a focus on preparing other organisations to deliver at the national level. = UNISDR risks producing parallel co-ordination structures at the national level, resulting in duplication and confusion amongst partners in country. 	<p>Unsatisfactory (1)</p>
<p>4. Contribution to Results</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - UNISDR's reporting has focussed mainly at the activity level and has not been linked to impacts or outcomes. This has made it difficult to understand how it has contributed to any real DRR outcomes - UNISDR has been hampered by work plans that are not based on realistic income levels. It needs to move towards a clearer and narrower strategy that is more 	<p>Unsatisfactory (1)</p>

¹ Humanitarian agencies have been assessed according to their focus on countries with the greatest humanitarian need

<p>deliverable with the resources that it is likely to have access to.</p> <p>= UNISDR cannot demonstrate effective delivery against its main objectives including on co-ordination at the global level.</p>	
<p>Organisational Strengths</p>	<p>Score (1-4)</p>
<p>5. Strategic & Performance Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - UNISDR has no clear line of sight from its mandate, to a strategy to an implementation plan. The middle is missing, resulting in a lack of strategic direction for the organisation - UNISDR has been weak in driving forward improvements in performance based on evaluation findings and recommendations. - The 2010 evaluation reiterated many of the key recommendations made in the 2005 evaluation as they had still not been implemented. - UNISDR has no results based framework in place, making it difficult to measure results from inputs through to impact. This framework is now in the process of being developed <p>= Too little attention is given to strategic considerations. This has resulted in UNISDR not clearly choosing priorities in line with an overall strategy and allocating resources accordingly. This limits the effectiveness and sustainability of many activities and of UNISDR overall.</p>	<p>Unsatisfactory (1)</p>
<p>6. Financial Resources Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + UNISDR is part of the UN Secretariat and as such is subject to UN controls and measures including risk management practices and internal and external audits. + The UNISDR secretariat uses the UN system accountability framework, a system of checks and balances that ensures fiscal responsibility. - UNISDR's inability to secure sufficient long-term funding commitments has made it difficult to establish predictable financing to its partners. Some progress has been made in this area, but further improvements remain necessary. <p>= Although UNISDR has strong policies and processes for financial accountability, it has shown very little flexibility in how it funds partners.</p>	<p>Weak (2)</p>
<p>7. Cost and Value Consciousness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + UNISDR challenges all system partners to consider Value for Money (VFM). This is a key component of the forthcoming 2011 Global Assessment Report, and UNISDR has commissioned research that examines DRR policies and programmes in relation to this concept. 	<p>Weak (2)</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – UNISDR’s internal cost effectiveness is questionable. – Its cost plans and actual expenditures have not been fully linked to strategic objectives, outcomes and deliverables. – Its internal accounting system also does not reflect expenditures against deliverables. = This lack of data and adequate accounting systems has meant that UNISDR has been unable to monitor ongoing cost effectiveness of its activities. It has also prevented a comprehensive assessment of UNISDR’s overall cost effectiveness. 	
<p>8. Partnership Behaviour</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + UNISDR is itself a system of partnerships. Its partners include governments, inter-governmental and non-governmental organisations, international financial institutions, scientific and technical bodies and specialised networks as well as civil society and the private sector. – Questions have been raised regarding the efficiency, coordination and strategic direction of the Secretariat to perform its partnership functions. – Lack of clarity on how UNISDR should best engage with civil society and the private sector. – The lack of guidelines and consistency in UNISDR’s work across thematic platforms has led to confusion amongst partners of its exact role with regard to this area of work, and a lack of connection between these platforms and work at the regional and national levels. = UNISDR’s partnership behaviour is disappointingly weak given its structure as a system of partnerships. There is a lack of efficiency and strategy in UNISDRs engagement with partners and this is leading to confusion amongst partners and stakeholders. 	<p>Weak (2)</p>
<p>9. Transparency and Accountability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + UNISDR’s audited financial statements are publicly available via the UN website. + All official publications produced by the UNISDR secretariat remain in the public domain, and are available online. – UNISDR’s Management Overview Board (MOB) is not wholly representative of its stakeholders, thus limiting its accountability to many partners working on DRR issues. – Donors have remained frustrated with UNISDR’s opaqueness and lack of communication. DFID, in particular, has been disappointed with the lack of progress updates received. = Opaqueness and a lack of communication has affected UNISDR’s overall accountability to stakeholders, 	<p>Weak (2)</p>

including to donors	
Likelihood of Positive Change	Score (1-4)
<p>10. Likelihood of Positive Change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + The upcoming DRR Global Platform Event in May 2011 and the Global Assessment Report will provide opportunities to promote reform. – UNISDR has been poor in addressing weaknesses within its system, and particularly in following-up on recommendations from evaluation reports. = DFID believes that there needs to be significant changes made for satisfactory improvements to emerge from the current UNISDR set up. 	<p>Uncertain (2)</p>