

## **International Recovery Platform A Strategic Framework**

*“...throughout the world, we must work harder in the recovery stage to avoid reinstating unnecessary vulnerability to hazards. ...”building back better” means making sure that, as you rebuild, you leave communities safer than before disaster struck.”*

*Bill Clinton, UN Secretary-General’s Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery, December 2006*

### **Preamble**

The International Recovery Platform (IRP) was conceived at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction in Kobe, Hyogo, Japan, in January 2005. A thematic platform of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) system, the IRP is a key pillar for the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA)<sup>1</sup>, a global plan for disaster risk reduction for the next decade adopted by 168 governments.

The IRP acts to address the gaps and constraints currently experienced in the context of disaster recovery and functions as an international source of knowledge on good recovery practice. Guided by the Millennium Declaration and the UN’s Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Platform’s strategy is to prevent the recurrence of human suffering and loss of hard-won development gains in the wake of natural disasters by advocating for equitable recovery and the elimination of the physical and socio-economic factors that magnify risk and disaster damage. The IRP’s efforts focus on mainstreaming a culture of prevention, mainly by supporting and facilitating the adoption of appropriate recovery practices by disaster-affected populations and their governments with a particular focus on high risk/low capacity countries.

The work of the IRP is manifested in (i) a regular high level event – the International [Kobe] Recovery Forum – bringing together a broad range of senior policy makers and recovery practitioners for an exchange of experience and frank discussion towards the advancement of resilient recovery and achievement of the HFA; (ii) close cooperation with regional organizations and ISDR regional platforms in promoting and building capacity for resilient recovery; and, (iii) development of tools and resources to fill identified gaps in recovery practices and capacities, such as the framework for Post Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) for Recovery. An inter-active web-site (<http://www.recoveryplatform.org>) provides the gateway for a current exchange of knowledge and facilitated dialogue amongst members of the IRP Community of Practice as well as an instrument for close coordination between the IRP Partner Organizations.

The IRP consists of IRP Partner Organizations<sup>2</sup> and a broader IRP Community of Practice. It is governed by a Steering Committee made up of Partner Organizations. Its work is supported by an international Secretariat hosted by the Hyogo Prefecture government in Kobe, Japan. By coordinating its workplan with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Cluster Working Group on Early Recovery (CWGER), the Platform both supports the work of the CWGER and draws on its membership in the establishment of recovery priorities and implementation of activities. The IRP links with the World Bank Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery, in particular its support for pre-disaster development of tools and capacity for the management of disaster recovery.

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<sup>1</sup> The full contents of the Hyogo Framework for Action may be seen at <http://www.unisdr.org/eng/hfa>

<sup>2</sup> Current partner organizations include the governments of Italy, Japan and Switzerland, the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the Asian Disaster Reduction Centre and the Hyogo prefecture government.

## **1. Background**

Experience increasingly affirms that post-disaster recovery provides a critical opportunity to broaden the focus from the initial effort of saving lives in the immediate aftermath of a disaster to restoring livelihoods while in the recovery thrust. It is also a critical time to introduce measures to reduce future disaster risks. Recovery provides an important window of opportunity to narrow the much-discussed gap between relief and development and transform disaster response into opportunities for sustainable development.

Experience also shows however that effective post-disaster recovery is still wrought with challenges. To be effective, disaster recovery needs to be an integral part of the response planning systems. The necessary legislative and institutional systems as well as recovery personnel and resources must be in place well before a disaster occurs. Furthermore, post-disaster recovery needs to be conceptualised and designed to take account of the underlying causes and risks that provoked the disaster in the first place. This will help avoid recreating conditions of risk and preparing the ground for future disasters. This would optimally occur when efforts are made to support local and national recovery processes from the onset – early recovery – and further downstream in the disaster response while ensuring that risk reduction considerations are factored into recovery activities. Synergies between humanitarian and development actors involved in post-disaster relief and recovery have to be catalyzed and properly coordinated for an effective overlap to occur.

Post-disaster recovery is still often conceptualised and designed to return a disaster-struck country to its pre-disaster development conditions. This too often means reconstruction without heeding the pre-existing conditions of disaster risk and thus effectively ignoring the risk of future disasters. Traditional recovery has also been predominantly limited to physical aspects of rebuilding and reconstruction, failing to foster the social and economic recovery of the affected populations. These challenges are confirmed by studies such as the Tsunami Evaluation Coalition (TEC) which identified *inter alia* a need for more comprehensive needs assessments and stressed the importance of both understanding the local context and empowering the affected communities and supporting the realization of their relief and recovery priorities.

A shared concern amongst humanitarian and development actors is that adequate knowledge of the mechanics of effective disaster recovery practices is lacking. Another perception is that not enough is done to support governments of high-risk countries to develop their capacities to effectively manage crucial recovery processes. This led the Government of Japan, together with a consortium of international organizations, to propose the establishment of the International Recovery Platform, based on the strategic objectives and priorities for action of the Hyogo Framework for Action – Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters.

## **2. Mission and Goal**

The **mission** of the IRP is to identify gaps and constraints currently experienced in the context of disaster recovery and to serve as a catalyst for the development of tools, resources and capacity for resilient recovery. IRP strives to be an international source of knowledge on good recovery practice.

The **goals** of the IRP are:

- to ensure that risk reduction approaches are systematically incorporated into the design of emergency preparedness, response and recovery programmes – in accordance with strategic goal (c) of the Hyogo Framework for Action;<sup>3</sup>
- to promote “Build Back Better<sup>4</sup>” approaches and supporting the development of enhanced recovery capacity at a regional, national and sub-national level with a particular focus on high-risk low-capacity countries, the IRP works for the achievement of measurable and visibly positive impact of recovery processes in disaster-affected communities;
- by closely linking its work with the goals of the HFA, to promote a shared vision amongst IRP Partner Organizations and members of the larger IRP Community of Practice, and a common strategic approach for recovery and risk reduction interventions;

<sup>3</sup> HFA (<http://www.unisdr.org/eng/hfa>)

<sup>4</sup> Report by the United Nations Secretary General's Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery, William J. Clinton; Key Propositions for Building Back Better, 2006.

- to serve as an international repository of knowledge and a clearing-house for the development of recovery and risk reduction resource..

### 3. Guiding Principles

The IRP's objectives and activities are guided by principles aiming at catalyzing progress and improving risk reduction in recovery. These principles, having emanated from the HFA, help create a stronger sense of ownership among IRP partners. They include:

- **Focus:** Building a community of practice, conducting advocacy activities and developing tools to be utilized by IRP partners require a global approach building on experiences worldwide. IRP partners are encouraged to focus their activities in their respective areas of expertise to maximize impact and avoid duplication of efforts.
- **Inclusiveness:** Addressing challenges of disaster recovery requires the involvement of a vast array of policy makers and practitioners in national and local governments, international organizations, civil society, the private sector, academia and others. Through its Community of Practice, the IRP is open to the broadest possible participation and works closely with its Partner Organizations to explore and promote innovative solutions and cooperation for effective recovery and risk reduction.
- **Coherence:** The IRP aims to promote greater coherence and joint programming through the work of the IRP Steering Committee. This is achieved through dialogue and common understanding of basic concepts related to relief, recovery and longer-term reconstruction; through clear identification of relevant IRP activities during the workplanning process; and by ensuring that these activities are complementary and well coordinated. By promoting a common vision and approach, the IRP contributes to forging alliances among the different stakeholders involved in recovery planning.
- **Flexibility:** Considering the complexity of the recovery environment and evolving needs of its stakeholders, the IRP has to respond and adapt swiftly to emerging disaster recovery issues. With its light structure and informal decision making process, the IRP is able to adapt its work-plan and set of activities when needed.
- **Equity in recovery:** Inequity as a global challenge is also encountered in the context of disaster recovery, when misguided recovery efforts and resources can inadvertently serve to accentuate inequity within and between affected communities. With this in mind, the overall approach of the IRP aims to reduce disparities in development and encourage the equitable distribution of resources by drawing attention to the challenges of inequity in the recovery process.

### 4. Engagement in the ISDR System

As a thematic platform of the ISDR system, the IRP works to synchronize the disaster recovery agendas at the global, regional, national and sub-national levels towards the fulfillment of the Hyogo Framework for Action.

#### *Global*

At the global level, the IRP supports national and regional efforts to implement the Hyogo Framework for Action with regard to sustainable disaster recovery. The IRP coordinates with and complements other thematic platforms of the ISDR system and related global disaster reduction activities, e.g. in the development of the Global Forum on Disaster Risk. It integrates its global efforts to promote sound disaster recovery into sustainable development policies and planning as well as the implementation of emergency preparedness and response efforts.

In particular, the IRP participates in and takes strategic guidance from the ISDR Global Platform for Disaster Reduction. The IRP contributes to the UN Secretary-General's report on ISDR and the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action to the United Nations General Assembly. The IRP's global work is achieved through support to the principal global functions of the ISDR system namely: (i) coordination; (ii) strategic

information; (iii) advocacy/partnerships; (iv) monitoring progress; and, (v) joint work-programming and resource mobilization.

The following processes contributes to the IRP global functions:

- supporting an active dialogue on disaster recovery practices and risk reduction between its partner organizations and within its Community of Practice. The International [Kobe] Recovery Forum organized by the IRP offers a regular opportunity for senior policy makers and practitioners to get together and exchange experience from recent recovery operations. It also provides the forum to discuss and agree on priorities in addressing gaps in recovery practices and resources.
- coordinating its workplan with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Cluster Working Group on Early Recovery (CWGER), the IRP supports the work of the CWGER and draws on its members for the establishment of priorities and implementation of its workplan.
- linking with the World Bank's Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR) which, *inter alia* aims to foster pre-disaster recovery planning, agreements on tools and co-financing by making available rapid and predictable financing for sustainable recovery operations.
- contributing to global advocacy campaigns of relevance to sustainable disaster recovery.

The IRP, through progress review of sustainable recovery activities, supports global efforts to produce regular updates on disaster risk as well as achievements and gaps in disaster risk reduction.

### ***Regional***

At the regional level, the IRP engages with the ISDR Regional Platforms and supports existing regional organizations and networks in building capacity for resilient disaster recovery. It promotes an **active policy dialogue and raises awareness** of resilient disaster recovery. It participates in and supports recovery capacity building initiatives at the regional level, including the adaptation of recovery tools and resources as appropriate to the regional context.

**South-South cooperation** and the development of regional partnerships for mutual support in pre-disaster planning and post-disaster implementation of recovery programmes is central to the work of the IRP at the regional level. This is manifested through input to the activities of existing disaster management partnerships as well as through active support of the exchange of experiences and lessons learned. IRP supports the development of capacity of regional organizations in the field of disaster recovery.

By working with and through the ISDR regional platforms and existing regional disaster management networks, IRP also contributes to the development of national capacity. This may include the development of knowledge management products adjusted to a regional content as well as support of capacity development through lessons learned exercises and sharing of experience

### ***National***

At the national level, the IRP Community of Practice provides a principal opportunity for national and local actors to access and participate in the work of the IRP. The importance of building awareness and capacity at the level of vulnerable communities before a disaster event. It is also necessary for international organizations to support rather than replace this capacity in post-disaster recovery operations, is a clear focus in this work.

The IRP's work plan includes activities targeted to support the development of national capacity, such as **pre-disaster recovery planning**. Accordingly, IRP Partner Organizations support and engage with **national and community counterparts** in accordance with their respective mandates. Working through their representation on the ground, e.g. in the case of the United Nations the UN Resident Coordinator and the wider Country Team, they support the development of capacity for resilient recovery – “build back better” - before, during and after catastrophic events.

Activities at the national level may include support of the national ISDR platforms when documenting lessons learned; dissemination of knowledge products, tools and methodologies, including needs assessment tools;

facilitation of sharing of local and international experiences on recovery by supporting technical workshops and other learning events related to disaster recovery.

## **5. IRP Thematic Areas of Work**

The IRP workplan is developed around four thematic areas that are central to the achievement of the IRP agenda. These include:

### ***I. Advocacy and development of recovery partnerships***

The IRP develops and pursues a concise and effective advocacy agenda for disaster risk reduction in recovery through the organization of and participation in relevant recovery fora worldwide as well as through the dissemination of relevant publications and the analysis of trends relevant to resilient recovery.

The IRP strives to forge linkages, promote partnerships and serve as a catalyst among stakeholders to facilitate consultation for developing a common agenda for recovery. It provides a forum to generate cutting edge ideas and collaborative initiatives through dialogue, deliberately provoking debate and critical analysis.

### ***II. Knowledge management***

Knowledge on recovery and risk reduction enables disaster-affected communities and governments to understand their risks and effectively manage their own recovery. The IRP connects actors with different fields of expertise on recovery and catalyzes knowledge generation. The IRP, through an agreed comprehensive knowledge sharing and communication strategy, collects, analyzes and shares knowledge generated through evaluation of project activities and makes use of broader exchange and learning fora. This involves stocktaking, and where necessary development of templates that enable national institutions and others to document lessons learnt from major disaster recovery operations that are made available on the IRP website, [www.recoveryplatform.org](http://www.recoveryplatform.org).

### ***III. Capacity Building***

The IRP contributes to the enhancement of post-disaster recovery operations by supporting the development of necessary capacities through training, experience sharing and technical exchanges. The IRP supports the development of recovery and risk-reduction skills and capacities of local, national and international recovery stakeholders.

### ***IV. Effective recovery operations***

The IRP supports more effective recovery operations through the development of relevant tools and resources, such as the framework for Post Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) for Recovery, in close cooperation with the IASC CWGER. It seeks to identify opportunities of coordination and closer cooperation amongst recovery actors and capacities at the national, regional and international levels with a particular focus on South-South cooperation.

## **6. IRP Structure and Membership**

The IRP works across a broad spectrum of actors engaging in disaster recovery. Its efforts target governments, the international community - including the United Nations, the World Bank, regional and inter-governmental organizations, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies - academic institutions, non-governmental organizations, civil society, media and the private sector.

The IRP membership consists of IRP Partner Organizations and a broader IRP Community of Practice. The platform is governed by the IRP Steering Committee and supported by the IRP Secretariat.

***IRP Partner Organizations***

The IRP relies heavily on its Partner Organizations for its success. IRP Partner Organizations are designated by the IRP Steering Committee based on their participation in the consolidated work-plan or otherwise substantial contribution towards the work and objectives of the IRP. The commitment of a broad range of experience and expertise within its Partner Organizations helps the IRP with the identification of gaps in disaster recovery policy and practice, and with the development of the necessary tools and resources in order to address those gaps.

***IRP Community of Practice***

The IRP Community of Practice, a moderated, web-based knowledge network is open to participation by all stakeholders in disaster recovery, be they government organizations, international organizations, civil society, the private sector, academia, or research institutions. Members of the IRP Community of Practice receive regular updates on the work of the IRP and are invited to participate in the discussion of selected topics through the IRP web-site (<http://www.recoveryplatform.org>). A representative selection of organizations in the Community of Practice is invited to participate in a regular high level Recovery Forum together with IRP Partner Organizations.

***IRP Steering Committee***

The IRP Steering Committee oversees and provides guidance and advice on strategy, policy and major programmatic issues related to the work of the IRP. It adopts the IRP annual workplan based on input by the IRP Partner Organizations and approves the annual IRP budget. The Steering Committee oversees and provides strategic guidance to the work of the IRP Secretariat.

The Steering Committee currently consists of representatives of all IRP Partner Organizations. As the number of partners is expected to grow and for reasons of efficacy, the Steering Committee may need to be limited to a representative group of Partner Organizations, ensuring representation of Governments from both donor and high-risk countries, the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Regional Organizations and Civil Society Organizations. The composition and chair of the Steering Committee is decided by consensus amongst the IRP Partner Organizations.

The Steering Committee meets twice a year but can convene extra-ordinarily if required.

***IRP Secretariat***

The IRP Secretariat plays a central role in supporting the IRP Partner Organizations and in actively ensuring the viability and relevance of the IRP Community of Practice. Among its functions, it coordinates the development and oversees the implementation of the IRP annual workplan; it supports the organization of IRP meetings and events such as the International [Kobe] Recovery Forum; it acts as an advocate for resilient recovery; and, through the IRP website, serves as a steward of IRP knowledge and output by promoting and supporting an active dialogue amongst the members of the IRP Community of Practice. The IRP Secretariat is accountable to the IRP Steering Committee and maintains a close dialogue with the Chair of the Steering Committee for strategic advice to guide its work

The IRP Secretariat is located with the ISDR Office in Kobe, hosted by the Hyogo Prefecture Government. It is currently co-staffed by UNDP, ADRC and the Hyogo Prefecture Government. It is led by the Secretary of the IRP Steering Committee - a UNDP Programme Advisor – who manages and provides overall supervision of the day-to-day activities of the IRP Secretariat in close coordination with the Head of the Kobe ISDR Office. The Programme Advisor has a functional reporting line to the UNDP Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (BCPR) in Geneva which provides managerial oversight and day-to-day guidance to the IRP Secretariat.

All partner organizations may second staff to the IRP Secretariat in support of its work. Such secondments can be located within the Secretariat in Kobe or support IRP's work in general – e.g. by assuming functions in the technical or thematic areas of work - from the respective home organization. While deputed to the IRP, seconded staff act on behalf of the IRP Secretariat rather than in a representational role of their respective organization.

## **7. Measuring Success**

Measuring the success of the IRP requires the development of clear indicators for each thematic area and output of the IRP work-plan. This is linked to the development and monitoring of the IRP Workplan and progress towards the achievement of the IRP objectives is reported through the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action

## **8. Resourcing of IRP**

The IRP is resourced through voluntary contributions by its Partner Organizations. Annual resource requirements including funding of the IRP Secretariat, are spelled out in the IRP consolidated workplan and approved by the IRP Steering Committee.

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