

**Towards an IRDR Communication Plan**

*Dec.2014 – Dec.2015*

 **Contents Page**

1. About IRDR ------------------------------------------ 3
2. Background of IRDR Communications Plan and Strategy ------------ 4
3. Function, Format, Goals -------------------------------- 5
4. SWOT Analysis -------------------------------------------------- 7
5. Rationale for Communications Strategy -------------------- 14
6. Audiences -------------------------------------------- 15
7. Existing / Planned Communication Tools ------------------------- 19
8. Communications Plan -------------------------------------- 22
9. Activities and Timelines ---------------------------------------------------- 28
10. Monitoring and Evaluation -------------------------------------------- 29
11. Funding and Human Resources ---------------------------------- 30

1. **About IRDR**

The International Council for Science (ICSU), the International Social Science Council (ISSC), and the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR)—the Co-Sponsors—created the Integrated Research on Disaster Risk (IRDR) programme as a global, trans-disciplinary research programme to address major challenges of natural and human-induced environmental hazards. The complexity of the task is such that the full integration of research expertise from the natural, socio-economic, health and engineering sciences is required, as well as the involvement of areas of practice as policy-making, community leadership and communications.

A ICSU-drafted Science Plan for IRDR (dated 2008, and covering a ten-year period, de facto: 2010-2020), a Strategic Plan (dated 2013 and covering, in principle, the years 2013-2017), multiannual workplans of IRDR projects and working groups (continuously updated) and Memoranda of Understanding (supported by guidance notes on implementation) with a variety of programme-related bodies and partner initiatives, as well as ad hoc agreements on joint activities offer parameters for the complex web of activities and hence for the external communications of IRDR.

The ICSU-led Science Plan had suggested three research objectives:

1. Characterising hazards, vulnerability and risk.
2. Understanding decision-making in complex and changing risk contexts.
3. Reducing risk and curbing losses through knowledge-based actions.

The three crosscutting themes:

1. Capacity building, including mapping capacity for disaster reduction and building self-sustaining capacity at various levels and for different hazards.
2. Development and compilation of case studies and demonstration projects.
3. Assessment, data management, and monitoring of hazards, risks and disasters.

Attainment of these objectives through successful projects is expected to lead to (1) a better understanding of hazards, vulnerability and risk; (2) an enhanced capacity to model and project risk into the future; (3) a better insight into decision-making that may increase or decrease risk exposure, as well as how choices may be influenced; and (4) a better understanding of how new knowledge can guide disaster risk reduction efforts at all levels.

It is understood that in a period of momentous changes in intergovernmental, socio-economic and scientific frameworks, a multi-annual plan may need to be adjusted, with priorities being revisited at critical milestones. One such milestone will be the year 2015, with the internal ICSU evaluation of the programme, and the sequence of intergovernmental agreements expected to address sustainable development goals, climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction.

1. **Background to IRDR Communications Plan and Strategy**

A previous IPO Communications document, drafted in 2012 by one of the previous Communications Officers, had outlined communications needed for a 2-year communications plan (2012-2013). Some of the elements listed now exist, others have been added (*see below*), but many of the proposals were unrealistic due to restrictions imposed by local rules, regulations and practices, and due to the fact that the document did not address the wider IRDR network. The plan was neither informed nor backed up by clear targets, lacked references to a programme-wide messaging effort, and did not factor in different levels of commitment among IRDR bodies.

Communications activities had been discussed at SC meetings, but the envisaged objectives of the impact of local restrictions were not analysed, measures to address them were neither proposed nor taken, and in the absence of targets any monitoring of progress remained illusory.

The current Communications Plan (CP) 2014-2015 is strongly predicated on activating resources (both communication tools and intellectual resources) in the network of IRDR bodies and associated institutions, in order to realistically address

* The current absence of a clear messaging and impact strategy, involving all IRDR bodies, which would allow IRDR to respond to and shape more effectively expectations in the societal, political and scientific domains, operate more successfully in influencing funding frameworks, and exploit more proactively those opportunities that are bound to arise in the new constellation of new intergovernmental agreements;
* The current constraints at the International Programme Office (IPO) (legal, insufficient level of staffing, ICT and linguistic skills) in the IPO, wherever they impact negatively the communications efforts needed;
* The currently low level of identification of IRDR bodies with the programme.

The CP proposes targets and suggests to share tasks and resources as well as to allocate responsibilities across the full range of IRDR bodies, but relies implicitly and critically for leadership in implementation on the Science Committee (SC) and its Executive, working closely with the IPO.

The CP is cognizant of the three categories of goals of the Strategic Plan, leadership for which has been divided between the IRDR working groups (WG) (1-4) and SC-cum-IPO (5-6) as follows:

1: Map, analyse and promote integrated research (AIRDR).

2-4: Characterize hazards, vulnerability and risk; understand decision-making; reduce risk and curb losses (DATA, RIA, FORIN).

5-6: Networking, partnership-building and supporting science and science-policy dialogue.

Rather than identifying specifics for each of these goals, the CP seeks to identify crosscutting communications challenges in an effort to address programme-wide needs equitably.

1. **Function, Format and Goals**

The CP is deliberately not written as a strategy, but as an operational document that describes roles, allocates responsibilities, seeks to offer guidance (by proposing actions, timelines and measures) and sets targets so as to assess progress and improve performance.

In the most generic terms, a communications strategy should reflect and enhance four characteristics that help multi-agency programme demonstrate the added value they provide to all actors concerned. Such dimensions can also be identified for IRDR, and they could include the ability to convey convincingly the message that IRDR, in the domain of DRR science, stands for:

* **Dynamism**: positively proactive and rapidly responsive in offering new approaches.
* **Inclusiveness**: resolutely international, interdisciplinary, intersectorial involvement of all relevant creators and users of new DRR knowledge.
* **Thought-leadership**: actively proposing innovative, forward-looking and mold breaking approaches, methodologies and formats for doing and applying research, including co-design.
* **Impact**: demonstrably beneficial for the ultimate users of new DRR knowledge in communities and decision-making environments across all sectors.

As the short-term CP morphs into a communications strategy for the programme, the IPO will rely on the SC and all IRDR bodies and stakeholders to help shape key messages (and decide, opportunistically, on key message campaigns) to address these dimensions.

It is expected that there will be feedback on shortcomings in Phase 1 of the programme cycle and suggestions for improvements under Phase 2, in the course of the ICSU-led evaluation to be kicked off later in 2015. Furthermore, new opportunities and expectations will arise from the centrality of the programme co-sponsors and IRDR itself in the domain “Science and Technology” in the process leading towards new intergovernmental agreements on sustainable development goals, climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction. A third factor to influence a post-2015 communications strategy will be the structured interactions with academic and non-academic stakeholders during the IRDR Consultative Forum (conceived of as both an annual event and a multi-annual process kicking off in the period after the 3rd World Conference).

The CP therefore proposes a blueprint that would allow to highlight in a more effective, inclusive and targeted fashion the achievements of IRDR and all its bodies in advancing innovative and impactful integrated research into disaster risk, and their role in incorporating such insights into political, corporate and community decision-making on mitigation and prevention measures. It focuses on specific measures to be taken and practices to be introduced and tested in the remainder of 2014 and throughout 2015 that can prepare the foundations for a more effective communications strategy for the post-2015 period (Phase 2 of the programme).

Such a post-2015 Communications Strategy will have to take into full account the developments sketched above, as they may also lead to an adjustment or reformulation of the IRDR Strategic Plan, which currently straddles, somewhat uncomfortably, the 2015 watershed.

This CP – with its proposals to confederate, focus, enhance and slight expand efforts already underway - aims at strengthening IRDR’s external (1/2) and internal (3/4) communications. It defines its proposed actions with a view to:

1 Promote integrated research on disaster risk and expand the community of practice that is committed to this approach.

2 Promote a positive and fact-based perception of the (potential) centrality of IRDR as being able to provide relevant knowledge and network provider for dealing with the disaster education cycle (policy-making, prevention, recovery / relief) and for enhancing risk literacy.

3 Support information and knowledge flows within the wider IRDR network at all levels (global, regional, inter-national, national, local; across relevant sectors and disciplines).

4 Support fundraising and impact-enhancing efforts by highlighting success stories (usefulness/usability/utilization of findings) and targeted key message campaigns (KMC).

**For the CP to be meaningful, an action list for the IPO and the CO is not sufficient. This will also be proposed, but for the CP to become a success endeavor, it will require**

1. **An agreement by all IRDR bodies, proposed and subscribed to by SC and WGs, on a select few strong key messages that can be recognized as distinctly IRDR, as well as**
2. **A commitment by all IRDR bodies to actively support and advance them.**

**This is why the following SWOT analysis highlights in particular current weaknesses and threats in terms of engagement and identification, and emphasizes, especially among the strengths and opportunities, those where IRDR bodies have the power to influence the perception of the programme and the use made of its resources and products.**

1. **SWOT Analysis**

The following table is an effort to summarise the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and strengths (SWOT) of IRDR from a communications point of view.

SWOT elements are descriptive, the analysis is based on behavioural observations (not self-perception collected through surveys or similar tools), recommendations refer to the principles set out in sections I to III and are translated into specific actions, roles and responsibilities in a later section of the CPP.

**Strengths**

* IRDR co-sponsors (ICSU, ISSC, UNISDR), as well as some programme partners, are among the key actors at the interface of science, science policy, DRM/DRR practice and intergovernmental activities. Reputational gains have accrued to IRDR, which has been perceived to successfully support, through its activities and network of expertise, the centrality of the co-sponsors in ongoing political processes *(e.g. OWG SDG New York, IPCC SREX, 3rd WCDRR STMG Geneva, ISDR Asian Partnership).*

Analysis (towards further improvement): some of these activities are not communicated internally as strong as desirable to ensure stronger buy-in (trade—off effects of low staffing level at IPO and uneven engagement of leadership of IRDR bodies)

*Recommendation (uncertain uptake): use of social media for extremely short updates (useful, both internally and externally, for drawing attention to longer pieces on the website).*

* IRDR has a built an unrivalled network of international experts with a unique and globally recognized leadership profile in integrated research on disaster risk (Science Plan WG; SC, NCs and RCs science committees, ICoEs, WG’s, etc). Reporting on their achievements can support the claim that IRDR offers access to cutting-edge DRR/DRM-related, scientific knowledge, providing independent, authoritative agenda setting services to funders, governments / intergovernmental bodies and other stakeholders, thereby heightening the visibility and reinforcing a positive perception of IRDR in public fora.

Analysis (towards further improvement): some of the scientific achievements and central network functions of leaders of IRDR bodies are not shared (and hence not communicated through the programme) as proactively as desirable

*Recommendation: reporting on scientific achievements could be clustered and linked to key message campaigns, enlisting the help of science writers (provided a budget is available at key institutions for KMC – see below)*

**Weaknesses**

* IRDR has, so far, failed to translate its strengths into a compelling narrative that points to demonstrable results; however, the trajectory over time seems to be that actual results and expectations are beginning to converge.
* The IRDR network is not actively engaged in contributing to regular, results-focused and targeted messaging through the IPO hub.
* The IPO therefore struggles to identify and highlight, in a timely and goal-oriented fashion, the successes and the impact of IRDR-related research and its benefits for communities. This is a serious shortcoming, especially in the light of HFA-II expectations.

Analysis: Uncertainty about key messages, suboptimal information flow between IRDR bodies and IPO and a low level of identification with the Programme among even centrally placed members of the IRDR community. There is, so far, a close to non-existing identification among communication officers at IRDR bodies with the programme. In both cases this is probably due to a poor appreciation of the global multiplying potential of the IPO communications hub, which offers a wide range of messaging and influencing options.

*Recommendation: This multiplying potential must be visualized (mapping both activities and links to a multitude of other networks across sectors worldwide, such as science, policy-making, practice, civil society etc).*

*The leadership of IRDR bodies should make a one-off effort to help identify the IPO’s communications counterparts in their institutions and task both parties to ensure better flow of information. No additional work is required, but with the activities of the IRDR bodies broadcast they will contribute to building a confederated messaging for IRDR while ensuring a global audience for their institution’s achievements.*

* Due to its location, only a very limited use of globally used social media can me made for purposes of community- and network-building if locally applicable regulations and practices are to be respected. Restrictions are particularly severe for interactive social media that could be put to innovative use for real-time engagement with stakeholders, possibly even for experimental forms of co-design of research. Currently the only partial circumvention of the de facto ban on Twitter (one-way traffic: announcements) defies the purpose and annihilates the potential of the interactive social media. Private solutions, as practiced elsewhere, are not acceptable in terms of due care for staff.

Analysis: there is a real risk that 21st century social communications tools remain out of reach for IRDR Communications, thereby placing the programme at a very significant disadvantage; it is to be examined to what extent this would contravene the MoU that had established the IPO.

*Recommendation: Either engage, at the level of co-sponsors, with the host organisations to create a framework for full access to information and communication tools as required for an IPO; or seek to assign this function to one among the IRDR bodies that can operate free from these restrictions, without abandoning, however, the central messaging role exercised by the IPO communications hub.*

* The absence of clear key messages to be conveyed has prevented the IPO from building a strong relationship with the local and international media (whether print, traditional non-print or online). Yet, media play a vital role in educating the public about disasters and disaster risk – from an engagement point of view this is an unused channel to showcase the usefulness of the IRDR methodologies and approaches.

Analysis: only a very modest and generic list of potential outlets exists, largely at very high level and without personal links; specific contacts (e.g.: reporters, editors, news directors, etc.) to reach out to still need to be identified.

*Recommendation: all IRDR bodies to share media contacts; involve NC/RCs, ICoE and other localized IRDR bodies to manage local / regional media relations (personal contacts), including also community newspapers and talk radio in relevant locations, in order to regularly promote KMCs.*

**Opportunities**

* IRDR’s involvement in the process leading towards new intergovernmental agreements for the 2015 can positively influence the global perceptions of IRDR:

- HFA II: preparatory and open meetings in Geneva: July-Nov 2014 as co-leader Science and Technology Major Group; critical involvement in the conferences in Tokyo and 3rd WCDRR at Sendai: co-leading multi-stakeholder event with UN agencies and champion governments; constructive engagement with other Major Groups.

* Initiative to establish an international scientific advisory mechanism on DRR (London statement): IRDR as key actor helping to bridge perceived opposing interests between parties (STEP4DRR: Science and Technology Engagement Partnership for DRR);
* Offering DRR science as implementation oriented aspect of political and scientific dilemmas in SDG and CCA processes (Sustainability Development Goals; Climate Change Adaptation): Open Working Group SDG New York; IPCC SREX etc.
* Integrating and connecting with global, regional, national and local initiatives and actions (linking IRDR NC and RC and other bodies to National and Regional Platforms; e.g. ISDR Asian Partnership). Despite this centrality, no clear messages or key messages campaigns (KMC) were developed.

Analysis (towards further improvement): the relative centrality gained for IRDR is real, but tenuous and contested. It must be backed up with follow-up. The opportunity to capture media attention during 2015 with targeted messages about novel science and society relations arising from IRDR science (development; resilience; transformation and justice; risk literacy etc) must not be squandered.

*Recommendation: demonstrating alignment with possible commitments under HFA II, e.g. celebrating input to and output from processes linked to STEP4DRR (e.g.: synthesis report; consultative for a and Major Group engagement); high level engagement of IRDR bodies leadership in and reporting on follow-up / implementation meetings and activities (IAP; WSF; etc); highlighting the DRR dimensions of research engagement with CCA topics; seeking, for activities at regional, national and local level, with the help of IPO, input from next “higher” and “lower” levels to demonstrate linkages between global programme and local action and impact. None of this need to add any work-load on top of the regular ongoing research, teaching and outreach of IRDR body leadership, but rather should be an exercise of framing and communicating those ongoing activities with the help of the network of communications officers (see above).*

* A more visible engagement of the next generations of leaders in IRDR researchers at all levels, including SC and WGs, could open up new avenues of scientific endeavor, but also of communications and network building.

Analysis: Very positive reactions to activities and reporting on achievements of, for example, the WSSF seminar New Zealand;

*Recommendation: design and generate support for similar events, possibly in association with other academic or also non-academic stakeholders (and their capacity building efforts), creating cross-sectorial cohorts of IRDR-inspired leaders.*

* Co-ordinated branding of IRDR communications across all IRDR bodies (visual signals) can anchor the “brand” IRDR, and will help ensure that IRDR-related key messages (including temporary KMCs) issued from those bodies are multiplied in different venues and are indeed seen as being linked to IRDR.

Analysis: initial elements of “corporate identity” supplied by the CO for the use of mainly NCs and ICoEs in mid-2014 have been used unevenly by those IRDR bodies; SC members, RC, and the wider network (APs and other partners) are largely not using IRDR “branding”.

*Recommendation: seek commitment from all IRDR bodies to use elements of IRDR “branding” (chiefly logo and link to website) in online presence (only possibility for systematic and economically feasible verification), including current and former SC members and WG members (e.g.: for posters, presentations, reports).*

**Threats**

* Appropriate staffing of the CO role has proven difficult in the past. Working conditions at the location of the IPO remain a serious challenge for communications professionals. At the same time, a multitude of skills is required from the post-holder and a wide range of tasks needs to be fulfilled (which, due the absence of appropriate services on the part of the host institute, includes, for internal communications, an IT maintenance and security) by a single person;

Analysis: staff turnover and incompletely qualified staff have led to underperformance of the communications function; more attention must be paid, in the future, to filling the position;

*Recommendations: higher level intervention by co-sponsors to remind host institute of their responsibility in terms of IT maintenance and security (if not available in-house, then to be paid out of the office administration budget withheld by the host institute); activate support for the CO out of the IRDR communications network (see above).*

* Locally, the novelty of hosting the IPO is wearing off and the host institute may have less incentive in providing resources for the necessary support services which have not been claimed in the past; this can be exacerbated by more restrictive internal rules (that mirror country-wide concerns) regarding operations considered as “foreign”.

Analysis: a constant stream of novel rules / regulations potentially further restricts some of the IPO’s vital operations; this will make finding solutions to the identified long-standing restrictions (see above) even more of a challenge;

*Recommendations: it may be advisable to try and strike a better balance between global and local (China-related) engagement; this cannot be achieved through communications or by the IPO alone: any activities by IRDR bodies that are related to China must receive higher visibility, and must be connected visibly to the programme. This includes, wherever possible, pursuing bilateral funding opportunities that would involve members of the Chinese DRR / IRDR community.*

* Frequent changes (and a tendency towards further restrictions) in local laws, rules and regulations affect information and communications functions; they include technology constraints (restrictive public purchasing lists for hardware, software, network solutions), censorship of search engines, information sources and network resources, and a potential for travel restrictions for IPO staff that would make an international programme office untenable.

Analysis: it appears that no “Plan B” has been prepared in case restrictions reach the level that a meaningful communications function is no longer guaranteed.

*Recommendation: it is urgent that a “Plan B” be devised that would allow for the continuation of the communications functions within the network in case local operating conditions for that function further deteriorate.*

* Co-sponsors ICSU and ISSC are focusing much of their attention on the new and attractively named programme “Future Earth” (FE); a political decision to maintain IRDR as an independent programme has lead to instances of confusion in the messaging also from the two co-sponsors, who do so far fail to send clear signals as to the rationale for maintaining a range of research programmes addressing different aspects of human-nature interactions.

Analysis: the very aggressive marketing by the FE leadership (and slowly growing identification of predecessor programmes with FE) poses a threat to IRDR visibility in co-sponsor events. The fact that the growing profile of the IRDR key theme “risk” as lead theme also in Global Change research is being picked up also by FE, risks undermining a distinguishing element of IRDR research;

*Recommendations: co-sponsors must develop clear messaging surrounding their different programmes, and the issues they address; it is necessary for IRDR and FE to identify areas of shared interest and pool resources to make decisive progress in those areas, showing in the process the co-sponsors’ wisdom of maintaining distinctly profiled global research programmes. IRDR should engage positively with the Belmont Forum and request its co-sponsors to create a positive perception in the “Alliance”. Funding opportunities created by the funders’ network behind FE should be actively advertised and used by IRDR-related researchers for DRR science.*

This SWOT analysis is not meant to be comprehensive; and the recommendations are not exhaustive. Both are, however, informing the implementation and action plans in later sections.

It seems appropriate in this context also to mention that the competitive position of IRDR (and hence the challenges to messaging as part of the communications plan and future strategy) also

needs to factor in competition from outside the programme:

* The long gestation period for IRDR has led to many of the ideas and practices being picked up by other actors.
* Some co-sponsors may be shifting their attention to the challenges of new programmes (ICSU/ISSC: focus on Future Earth) or show signs of weariness with the progress of some components under the programme (UNISDR comments on FORIN).
* The relationship between IRDR NC and RC and ISDR National and Regional Platforms still needs to be resolved (different levels of interaction and divisions of tasks achieved).
* The IRDR conferences, while recognized as a novel and important contribution to the spectrum of DRR science conferences, still needs to find its clear profile vis-à-vis other more established and even broader fora (IDRC, GFDRR, Understanding Risk etc).

Within the programme there is a danger of unevenly dealing with different disaster and hazard types and with the different levels of maturity of “integrated” methodologies across regions:

* Communicating the strong linkages between DRR and CCA should not go to the disadvantage of other non-CCA related disaster risks.
* Some of the work on hazards and disasters conducted as part of ICSU’s regional programmes has not, as yet, fully adopted the “integrated” approaches advocated and practices under IRDR, as recognize din the recent report on a capacity building project funded by the Swedish development agency SIDA. This poses communication dilemmas if geographically balanced reporting is to be achieved.
1. **Rationale for a Communications Strategy**

The future communications strategy should reflect and enhance four strategically defined characteristics that drive the programme (see above): (1) Dynamism (2) Inclusiveness (3) Thought-leadership (4) Impact.

It should help to (1) promote integrated research on disaster risk and expand the community of practice committed to this approach; (2) promote the positive perception and value proposition of IRDR for all stages of the disaster reduction cycle; (3) support information and knowledge flows within the wider IRDR network; (4) support fundraising and impact-enhancing efforts by highlighting success stories.

Overall, we need to be more proactive in our communication and lend a stronger voice to speak IRDR achievements and has done and is doing consistently during events wherein IRDR participates.

This entails the following high-level action points for IRDR (=“we”):

* We need to promote and showcase the novelty and potential of IRDR methodologies and approaches, including the outcomes and impact of the programme.
	+ For this, we need to develop and agree on shared key messages.
	+ LEAD: SC and ED;
	+ Implement: CO and IRDR bodies
* We need to identify key turning-points on the external (political, societal, scientific) agenda and launch key message campaigns that target the contextual environment, and can, as appropriate, influence specific audiences.
	+ For this we need to identify the turning points and KMC leads.
	+ LEAD: SC and ED; input: IRDR bodies for national/regional needs/opportunities
	+ Implement: CO and IRDR bodies

At the operational level, a realistic assessment of the abilities of the programme (in terms of resources “time” and ”funding”) imposes a certain opportunistic modesty with ensuing communication parameters, which should showcase:

* **Leadership in partnerships**: Strike a balance between presenting potential contributions of IRDR, the wider context of competition and the reality of programme resources:
* **Leverage co-sponsors ambiguity:** co-sponsors’imperative of multi-stakeholder satisfaction opens windows of opportunity for messages that accommodate multiple expectations and highlight multi-stakeholder benefit of scientific results;
* **Coordination of the asset “diversity”**: acknowledge the range of diverse interests and high level of autonomy of IRDR bodies (whose ambition IRDR should support).

This specific constellation entails that prior to identifying distinct audiences (and perhaps even more important than that standard activity under any communications strategy), the complex relationships between co-sponsors and their membership and IRDR bodies needs to be acknowledged and factored in. If IRDR is seen to contribute to the co-sponsors objectives (or, indeed, leading their work in the area of its remit – integrated DRR research and action), the communication effort at all levels can draw on the likely reputational gains.

1. **Audiences**

*The following reflections on audiences are predicated on the need to formulate and, if necessary, revise, in the course of 2014/15, clear and unmistakable key messages, and to identify some of them in order to launch more specific and opportunistic KMCs (see also the “rationales” above).*

Target audiences of an innovative international and intersectorial programme such as IRDR will necessarily be diverse. As their role as primary or secondary audience may shift depending on context-specific and outcome-oriented communication efforts, the following lists propose some key communication contexts and possible communication objectives.

In what follows, (1) science, (2) science policy, (3) funding environments, (4) non-academic stakeholders, including political and policy-making environments, (5) media and (6) programme internal communication are addressed in some detail.

Within the scientific community IRDR should be

* Seen as providing access to and dissemination of cutting-edge DRR science and of new perspectives on integrated research on disaster risk (scientific publications; ICoE’s etc);
* Appreciated as platform for interdisciplinary exchanges on advanced DRR science (conferences; workshops; activities of NC/RC; generically: networking);
* Perceived as providing access to an authoritative knowledge hub in key areas of integrated DRR science (Working Groups; etc).

In the context of Science Policy, IRDR should be

* Perceived as being able to advocate, position and strengthen new interdisciplinary and intersectoral approaches to scientific inquiry in the field of DRR science;
* Appreciated as offering access to resources for agenda setting;
* Used as key expert resource for reviewing and renewing opinions on the framework conditions for DRR science.

Vis-à-vis funders and donors, IRDR should be:

* Able to showcase results and demonstrate impact of integrated research, so as to prepare positive funding decisions in their respective forward planning.

To non-academic stakeholders / society at large / and policy-making environments in particular, IRDR should be known as:

* Key partner for co-design of research;
* Being respectful of user needs and advancing inclusiveness and diversity of the potential user (and co-creator) base of new IRDR knowledge;
* Having the ability to tailor innovative scientific content in a user-centered fashion, in ways that positively reflect and influence policy-making choices;
* Key provider of assessment expertise or relevance to decision-makers and communities

Among possible audiences, a special place must be given to multipliers in the media domain, who should see IRDR as:

* Provider of relevant news on the nexus between scientific insights and advances and practice (incl. policy practice).

In principle, therefore, audiences comprise the following classes and sub-classes, here listed together with possible key communication objectives:

* Science:
	+ Establish integrated research in disaster risk as key innovative approach among the individuals making up the international scientific community, comprising members of the IRDR bodies and network, members of the contact database, partner organizations and networks, other relevant research centers (*credibility*);
	+ Influence the appreciation for the emerging field among institutions that make up the membership of the scientific co-sponsoring organisations (Academies, Unions and scientific subject associations, some funders), both globally and locally (ICSU; ISSC; CAST; CAS; RADI) (*credibility*, *visibility, networking*).
* Science Policy:
	+ Have co-sponsors (to the extent that they are involved in the setting of science agendas also beyond DRR) committed to *anchoring IRDR in SDG/CCA dominated debates;*
	+ Ensure their partners at regional, national, disciplinary and sectorial level, who operate often also in a funding role, *understand DRR related research, and notably its co-design and integrated aspects, as reflecting societal needs*;
* Funders / donors
	+ Let public and private (foundations) science funders see and *value the scientific results and the consequences of the integrated approach*;
	+ Have donors (incl. NGOs) recognize the usefulness of the integrated approach to *advance internal learning and impact* and more generally improve the living conditions of the specific communities (or types of communities) research is concerned with;

Influencing funders and donors, in order to be successful, requires very targeted messaging and expert background research on organizational structures / interests; these groups should be targeted as distinct audiences only when concrete opportunities render this a meaningful exercise. Demonstrating the value of co-design and highlighting impact and success stories on the other hand, is in the general interest of the programme.

Given the cross-cutting nature of DRR research, diverging interests and foci of investment must be considered: sustainable development (and development aid); climate change adaptation (incl. in prosperous countries); humanitarian intervention; risk-sensitive investment (business); risk literacy and community resilience (local government) etc.

* Non-academic stakeholders / society at large / and policy-making environments:

Specific messaging for would be too dispersive a task for this very diverse class, which includes, fundamentally, all people who are believed to benefit from understanding integrated approaches (or, out differently, all people who shape the environment in which IRDR’s more specific target audiences operate). This class includes therefore civil society organisations, international NGOs, government officials at all levels, elected representatives at all levels and the general public. Some informed assumptions about (and understanding of) key needs and expectations would help generic messaging to prepare receptiveness to this vast range of sub-classes.

Elements to be regular reflected in messages are: co-design and co-creation of knowledge; active acknowledgement of user needs and of client diversity; emphasis on tailoring innovative scientific content in a user-centered fashion (including community level).

Given the recent (2nd half of 2014) successful expansion of exchanges with policy-making and practice environments, it will be advantageous if IRDR continues to be seen as provider of relevant news on the nexus between scientific insights, policy and practice (including policy practice).

* Media:

This CP assigns a special place to multipliers of messages in the media domain; provided that a broad (or very highly focused and active) network of media contacts can be created, tailored texts (press releases) and contact opportunities (interviews) and events can be created around selected highlights (conferences; project synthesis; publications; successful partnership products).

* Programme-internal communication:

It has been observed with some concern that there is some uncertainty as to the core objectives of the IRDR programme (and the direction the programme is taking or needs to take) even among centrally placed individuals (such as SC and WG members) and institutions (ICoEs, NC/RCs, co-sponsors and their regional offices). While they fall into the classes listed above, it is clearly necessary that they be more actively involved.

For this purpose it is recommended that they

* Be alerted, by weekly simple e-mails message, on all News Items or other items added to the website on a weekly basis;
* Be alerted, by monthly simple e-mail message, on broadly programme-related activities of the Chair, Executive Group, and Executive Director;

All individuals that are part of IRDR bodies should help ensure that also the IRDR contact persons at their institutions are recipient of these messages.

The table that follows lists the existing communication tools used by the IPO, as well as some critical changes proposed for the immediate future as covered by this Plan.

1. **Existing / Planned Communication Tools**

|  |
| --- |
| **External Communications** |
| *Online Tools* |  |
| Website: News in focus: daily | <http://www.irdrinternational.org/> |
| Blogs: monthly |  |
| Online banners: one-off | IRDR in RADI, CAS, NCs, RCs, ICoEs pages and co-sponsors and partners pages.  |
| *Mapping activities: regular* | *IRDR related activities* |
| Events calendar: regular  | IRDR related events: <http://www.irdrinternational.org/events/upcoming-events/>) |
|  Network list: one-off  |  |
| Conference Website: One-off | 2011 and 2014 (registration, programme, abstracts, presentation)  |
| Newsletter: Quarterly | Vol. 5 (28 Jan; 30 Apr; 18 July; 31 Oct 14)Vol. 6 (scheduled for end of January: Tokyo Conf.) |
| Social Media: IrregularRegular | Twitter / LinkedIn  |
| E-mail marketing: Ad Hoc | Mail Chimp <http://mailchimp.com/> (2,476 combined subscribers) |
| Press Releases: RarelyRegular | Related to events (e.g.: 2014 conference: <http://www.irdrinternational.org/conference-2014/> |
| Contact database: ongoing | Rapid expansion needed |
| Photo Library: Very irregular | <http://www.irdrinternational.org/irdrphotos/> |
| Analytics: Inactive | Mailchimp (opening), website (reading);  |
| *Print*  |  |
| Annual Reports: Regular | 2011, 2012, 2013  |
| WG Reports: IrregularRegular and scheduled | Very low frequency (DATA: 2014; RIA: 2012; FORIN 2011)  |
| Other: Irregular/one-off  | Strategic Plan 2013-2017; translations (e.g.: bilingual science plan in English / Chinese) |
| Brochure: One-off | IRDR brochure |
| Conference Publications: One-off | 2011 and 2014 IRDR Conference Programme Book; e.g. IRDR Peril Classification and Hazard Glossary, FORIN, RIA), Conference Abstract (e.g. IRDR Conference 2011) |
| Posters: One-off | Programme and project posters (AIRDR, FORIN, RIA, DATA) |
| Letters: Ad Hoc Regular | Invitations to events (e.g. Conferences, SC Meetings, Expert workshops)Appointment letters to SC and WG |
| Flyers: Ad Hoc | e.g.: Save the Date Cards |
| Branding: Minimal | Logos; VIA guidelines; templates (letters; meeting docs; ppt; publications) |
| *Events:* |  |
| IRDR Conferences | Websites, PR material, abstracts, follow-up publications |
| IRDR Events | Programmes, working website, reports IRDR events and IRDR related events  |
| IRDR related presentations | Templates, illustrations, basic slides  |
| Partner events | Corporate presence (checklist for PR material; stall equipment) |
| Media: Ad Hoc | Interviews; press releases |
| **Internal Communications:****IRDR bodies** |  |
| Community of Practice/COP:Very irregular | AIRDR, DATA, FORIN |
| Email (listserves): Ad Hoc | IAP, RIA; groups (e.g. SC members) |
| Updating IRDR bodies:WeeklyMonthly | Summary of additions to website IPO-coordinated updates from SC Chair, Executive Group, ED |
| Conference calls:Calendar bi-weeklyAs scheduled  | Skype Calls: typically SC Chair / EDCo-sponsors and partners (ad hoc) |
| **Internal Communications:****IPO** |  |
| Staff meetings: calendar bi-weekly | Updates; planning (notes)  |
| Staff retreat: regular | Typically end of year (possibly after SC) |
| E-mail: ongoing  | Regularly: synched mobile access (ED)Occasionally (all staff): private laptops when off-duty or network down (replacement days) |
| SMS (and related): ongoing | (ED: use of office mobile; all staff: use of private mobiles: reimbursed) |
| Internal calendar: ongoing | <http://calendar.live.com> |
| Shared Drive (Z folder) | Repository drive for all IRDR files (found *de facto* empty upon arrival) |
| RADI (organizational, scientific and cooperation planning): As scheduled | 2-3 monthly meetings: Director: Quarterly: Heads of International Programmes; Ad hoc: International Cooperation Office;Irregular (on average: weekly) : guided visits |
| Chinese host / IRDR-related organisations: as scheduled | Half-yearly: CAST, CAS, CASS (Notes)Quarterly: IRDR China (formalized; notes)  |

Note: Planned

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| **Online Communication Tools (website)** |
| **Activity** | **Strategic Elements** |  | **Resources** |  | **Evaluation** |  |
|  | Expected Outcome | Timing | IPO Lead(s) | Input | Risks | Target / Measure |
| **Website**:Revamp/redesignKey message campaignsImpact / success storiesDaily NewsBlog entryInteractive MapEvent calendarConference Website | Reflect 4 strategic dimensions (dynamism; inclusiveness; impact; thought-leadership)Thought-leadership and impactHighlight impact of S&T intervention to advance DRRDemonstrate dynamicsDemonstrate inclusiveness, thought leadership, impactShow geographic spread (inclusiveness); impactDemonstrate dynamism; inclusivenessInclusiveness, thought-leadership | 13/01/15QuarterlyQuarterlyDailyMonthly(fr. XI 14)13/01/1528/02/1515/04/15OngoingOne-Off | CO ED / COCO / ED CO / ED ED / JSO/ COCO/EDCOCO / IPO | JSO / ED / design servicesSC Executive / ED (format: blog entry)All IRDR bodies and partners All IRDR bodies and partnersAll IRDR bodies and partnersJSO / EDAll IRDR bodiesIRDR partners / JSO / EDJSO / ED / All IRDR bodiesHost organisations | Legal restrictionsContract complianceManual adjustment Insufficient engagementLack of timelinessInsufficient engagementNo impact to showInsufficient engagementInsufficient engagementDiscordant messagesTime pressure Insufficient engagementCompetitionLowIncomplete functionalityPoor uptake | Basis for use of analytics and simple stats: higher uptake, fewer rejections / cancellations (M)1 KMC per quarter (aligned with programme objectives and policy context) (T)3 stories to select from (M/T)1 item per month delivered (T)1 text per month published(including quarterly KMC) (T)SC, SP, WG, AP, IC, NC, RC, RO (T)Case studies mapped (T)IRDR related activities5 IRDR-related events per month (T)Complete documentation online (T) |

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| **Online Communication Tools (Social and other interactive media)** |
| **Activity** | **Strategic Elements** |  | **Resources** |  | **Evaluation** |  |
|  | Expected Outcome | Timing | IPO Lead(s) | Input | Risks | Target / Measure |
| **Newsletter****Social Media**Linked-InTwitter**E-mail marketing** **Press releases**Contact databasePhoto libraryAnalytics | Growing understanding for programme dynamicsInteractive client engagementProfessional network News AlertsPush Alerts / KMC, blog, announcementsIn traditional format:Demonstrate impact(operational)(operational)(operational) | QuarterlyOngoing / linked to KMC’sAd HocDaily/KMCAd HocEvent- centeredOngoingOngoingOngoing | CO (revisions by JSO / ED)COCOCOCOCO / EDCOCO | All IRDR bodies (content largely based on News Items)Based on KMC / blog, news, events, announcementsAnnouncements (bodies et al.)Based on KMC / blog, news events, announcementsBased on existing messaging for critical event, outcomeAll IRDR bodies and partners, ED (events, members etc)None | Insufficient engagementLegal restrictionsDisconnected from CMCPoor interactive useLowInsufficient uptake Inaccurate capturingLow | Increase number of clicks (M)Uploaded by IRDR bodies (M)Basis for user metricsNetwork requests Interactivity increased/retweet: MPositive / increased feedback function (uptake metrics) (M)Tokyo; Sendai; CF; WG reports (T)By mid. Jan.: + 1000 (T)Bid mid-March: +1500 (T)All website items with photo/ill.: T Narrative by SC XIII/XIV (T) |

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| **Print and other outreach and community building material** |
| **Activity** | **Strategic Elements** |  | **Resources** |  | **Evaluation** |  |
|  | Expected Outcome | Timing | IPO Lead(s) | Input | Risks | Target / Measure |
| Annual ReportWG / Project ReportsOther (revised brochure, posters)3rd IRDR ConferenceAppointment Letters WG membersBranding | Demonstrate progress on all 4 objectives (feature centrality in HFA-II process)Thought-leadershipImpact: Flagship reportReflect4 strategic dimension(dynamism; inclusiveness; impact; thought-leadership)<Impact: combine with consultative forum?>Inclusiveness; thought-leadershipCohesion of programme(VIA guidelines, templates etc) | Mid-Dec(R: mid-I)F: <IIID: <VIDFR: <SC (draft)Mid-III(Sendai)<prepare for 2016>< XII//14 | JSO (write) / CO (design) / ED (review)JSO: (edit) / CO: (design)COCOJSOCO | Based on KMC, blogs, News items, reportsEditorial SC ChairWG Co-Chairs (lead authors) WG Co-Chairs / EDED (messaging)SC / ED conceptualise / prioritise / KMWG chairs / ED / bodiesTo be proposed for use by all IRDR bodies | Time pressure (late SC meeting; end-of-year holidays; outsourcing)Delays (D: lack of funding for WG meetings;F: writing processFR: insuff. engagementInsufficient engagement“Change of guard”Poor interest to expand and to demonstrate inclusiveness Poor uptake due to poor identification with programme | Hardcopy ready for Tokyo (T)Circulation begin 2015 / 16 (T)Distribution by IRDR bodies: M R: Circulation: Tokyo (T)F: Launch: Sendai (T)D: Publication < end of term (T)Flagship: Discussion of 1st draft at SC (T)Circulation SendaiConcept cleared: after Sendai (T)Call for papers: Q2, after SC XIII: T; Registration page up: Q3: TAll letters sent in time for inclusion of all members in AR 2014 (mid-Dec. 2014)Delivery Febr. 2015 (T)Usage (one per month documented: M)  |
| **Outreach and community building activities**  |
| **Activity** | **Strategic Elements** |  | **Resources** |  | **Evaluation** |  |
|  | Expected Outcome | Timing | IPO Lead(s) | Input | Risks | Target / Measure |
| <Conference> See aboveIRDR and IRDR-related eventsPresentations(ppt templates)Partner eventsMedia**Local organisations**:RADIIRDR ChinaCAS/CASS/CAST | Reflect all 4 objectivesReflect all 4 objectives; programme cohesionThought-leadership, inclusiveness, impact., dynamismDemonstrate progress on all 4 objectivesAdded value for host org.:Directors MeetingHead of Programme MeetingInternational Cooperation OfficeInternational VisitsReflect all for objectivesAdded value for host organisations | D: Q1CF: tbcMid-Jan. 2015Ongoing1 per Q (linked to events, launches)2-3 mthsQuarterlyAd HocAd HocQuarterly2 x yearly | ED/JSO/COCO/JSOEDCO (contacts)EDED/JSOEDED | D/F/R: WG co-chairs,CF: SC Chair, Exec, and EDED / WG co-Chairs / SCSC (proposals) / partner network (invitations)ED / SC Exec for selection(global, local, sectoral)EDEDED/All StaffED/JSOED / JSOCo-Sponsors / SC Exec as appropriate  | Funding of events; lack of interestLack of uptake/useLack of priorities and strategic approachIneffective contactsLack of interest / of compelling storySchedulingShort NoticeSchedulingScheduling | Outcome: reports as scheduled per work plan (T)Use of IRDR slides in presentations (M)Presence at key partner events (M)1 per Q (T)Better mutual understanding (M)Emphasising commitment to international cooperationTowards closer collaboration (M) Awareness raising in local organisations |
| **Internal Communication** |
| **Activity** | **Strategic Elements** |  | **Resources** |  | **Evaluation** |  |
|  | Expected Outcome | Timing | IPO Lead(s) | Input | Risks | Target / Measure |
| **Internal Communi-cations:IRDR bodies** |  |  |  | <See also previous sections > |  | *Consider transferring COP and listserv to social media if useful for interactivity is needed* |
| Communities of Practice/COP | Inclusiveness, thought leadership, impact: exchanges between academic and non-academic experts | Ongoing | JSO | WG co-chairs; WG members; COP members | Insufficient engagement | Launch COP specific discussions around KMC and blog (M) |
| Email list serves:  | Inclusiveness, thought leadership, impact: exchanges between academic and non-academic experts | Ongoing | JSO / ED | Partners  | Insufficient uptakeOne-way traffic | Feedback received on specific campaigns (M) |
| E-mail update for IRDR bodies | Dynamism, inclusiveness:News Updates Opinion Updates | WeeklyMonthly | COED | Summary of additions to websiteSC Chair, Executive ED: opinion pieces on website; updates on higher-level external engagement | LowTime pressure | Feedback (M)Quality of feedback when requested (M) |
| Conference CallsStaff meetingsStaff retreatE-mail / sms / calendar / Z-drive E-mail and ICT security  | Alignment of activitiesFundamentals of IPO operationsAccess to all vital resources to enable IPO to fulfil its hub role  | Bi-weekly2 x yearlyOngoingOngoing | ED/SC ChairIPO StaffIPO StaffIPO StaffCO | Real-time adjustments in day-to-day managementShare all documents and corr.ICT, assets and finance depts. of host org.  | Time pressureTime pressureLowTime pressureAssisting IPO is not No routine task; lack of incentivesRestrictions on use of resources; uncertainty about use of VPN | Shared forward looking vision and agree on activities and messages (M)Safe, adequately fast and functioning ICT (M) |

1. **Activities and Timeline (December 2014 - December 2015)**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **ACTIVITIES** | **XII 14** | **I****15** | **II****15**  | **III****15** | **IV****15** | **V****15** | **VI****15** | **VII****15** | **VIII****15** | **IX****15** | **X****15** | **XI****15** | **XII****15** | **Target**  |
|  |  | **Tk** |  | **Sd** |  |  | **Ka** | **SC** |  | **Ch** |  |  |  |  |
| Redesign of website – face-lifted homepage, restructured categories. |  | 14 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | Ready by Tokyo Conference |
| Updating website: news (daily); others as needed (esp. prior to & during evaluation) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | Daily News ItemOthers as Needed |
| Interactive map of IRDR-related activities (information from projects and partners) |  | **14** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | Ready by Tokyo Conference |
| Social media / Mail Chimp: announcements or interactive |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | Ongoing |
| IRDR Annual Report(AR 2014 and preparation of AR 2015) | **15** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | **15** | 2014 V1 before Xmas; V2 as appropriate 2015 V1 before Xmas |
| Scheduled WG and Project Reports(WG / project workplans)  | Based on AIRDR, DATA, RIA and FORIN modified workplans |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Targeted products for Sendai (one off) Extraordinary WG and Project Reports for Sendai |  |  |  | **13** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | Ready for Sendai |
| Quarterly Newsletters(Jan (post Tokyo) – April (post Sendai) – Summer – Autumn |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | Quarterly |
| Network of Comm contacts in IRDR bodies, co-sponsors, partners (com-pilation routines; list on website)  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | Ready for Sendai |
| Expansion of contact database: harvesting of lists of participants, incl. network partners etc  |  | **13** |  | **10** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | + 1000 for Tokyo messaging (+ intern)+ 2500 for Sendai messaging (+ intern) |
| Media: expand / maintain media database: press releases; schedule speakers, dates press conferences  | Press conferences and Press releases based on IRDR events |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | First use for Tokyo |
| Branding: VIA guidelines – templates (letters, meeting docs, ppt presentations, etc.) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | Distributed before Sendai |
| Photo/Video documentation of outcomes / IRDR related events |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Security (antivirus; vpn; stable & synch-able e-mail; soft-/hardware); backup files, website *(weekly)* |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | Purchases in 2014; First maintenance after return from SC |

*AO- Administrative Officer, CO- Communications Officer, ED – Executive Director, ICoEs – International Centres of Excellence, ICSU- International Council for Science, IPO- International Programme Office, ISSC- International Social Science Council, JSO – Junior Science Officer, NC- National Committees, OA – Office Assistant, RADI,CAS- Institute of Remote Sensing and Digital Earth, Chinese Academy of Sciences, RC – Regional Committees, SC- Science Committee, UNISDR – United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, WG – Working Groups*

1. **Monitoring and Evaluation**

This communications is a working document that is meant to build an understanding, among all parties concerned, for the centrality of Communications as a tool to increase the value and meaning of the programme.

It should serve to energise and involve all IRDR bodies and allow them to rise to the challenge to fulfill their role in making the programme a success. For this reason, it seeks to be explicit as to the observed current shortcomings (structural and otherwise) and requirements and roles for the near future.

Targets are spelled out where it is possible to set them – and while they are ambitious, they do not seem unrealistic. Reaching these targets will depend on all parties to work together more closely and in a more goal-oriented fashion than has been the case so far. Measures and other proxies and analytics for progress are proposed, where targets cannot realistically be set.

Progress towards targets and monitoring of measures will be conducted fundamentally by the CO, reporting to the ED. Overall reporting will be at the bi-annual SC meetings. It seems important that as these measurements are taken also the structural shortcoming of having the communications hub based in a restrictive communications environment (geographical location of the IPO) is addressed in solutions-bound ways.

A review of the Plan will occur in the light of the expectations and opportunities that will arise from the 3rd World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction and from the internal ICSU Review of the programme. It is also hoped that the Consultative Forum 2015 will provide new impetus to partnership activities, and that IRDR bodies themselves may creatively participate in the design of a programme-wide Communications Strategy for Phase 2 of the programme (2016-2020).

1. **Human Resources and Funding**

This communication plan (and any future communications strategy for the programme) needs to draw on the resources the programme connects through its networking building function in the form of its various IRDR bodies.

The IPO currently has one full-time Communications Officer. With responsibilities including all aspects of ICT management, all technical aspects of producing IRDR publications, as well as many content dimensions, especially when it comes to website and other online based news and updating services as well as the lay-out of much of the print material, the role is unusually challenging, especially in the current restrictive environment, which poses severe limitations on the use of familiar services.

Some support can occasionally be expected from other members of staff (for example: OA and/or interns for contact database; JSO lead on providing the first draft of the text for the Annual Report; ED for overall review as well as for strategy and policy-related elements of content). The proposed tasks and roles of IRDR bodies have been highlighted throughout the text. This following section provides an overview over the existing IRDR bodies and partners who need to be involved in the implementation of this plan (and, in the future, in the design of the communications strategy).

1. WG leaders and members (and their home institutions), IRDR National Committees, Regional Committees and ICSU Regional Offices, IRDR International Centres of Excellence, as well as local and global co-sponsors all have communications officers (or members of staff with equivalent functions) who need to be identified, mobilized and brought into the network as multipliers and suppliers of IRDR-related knowledge flows.
2. Given the constellation of the current range of ICoE’s and NC’s, a special responsibility for taking the lead on this rests with the current SC members and with co-chairs of the projects;
3. IRDR Host Institution and Sponsors must ensure that the IPO operates under working conditions that allow for communications strategy to function in the service of the programme; at a practical level, they can help deliver communications activities on the ground and provide access to media.
4. Local hosts have facilitated for events (and should facilitate also for the communication effort) the temporary recruitment of contractors and interns and other support staff and resources (website design; IT tasks, such as migration for managing website content; populating databases).