

Forensic Investigations of Disasters (FORIN) Project Work Plan 2012-2017

The FORIN project is an activity of the Integrated Research on Disaster Risk (IRDR) programme, co-sponsored by ICSU, ISSC, and UNISDR. Details of the IRDR and of the FORIN projects may be found at <http://www.irdrinternational.org>.

The fundamental aim of FORIN is to develop, disseminate and implement a radical new approach in disaster research that will seek to identify and explain the underlying causes of disasters, including the growth in magnitude and frequency of very large disaster events. It is intended that this research paradigm will lead to greater in-depth understanding and more enlightened and effective disaster risk reduction practices and policies.

The methodology is built around case studies and, in keeping with the objectives of IRDR, the FORIN case studies will be “integrated,” that is more than an assembly of different disciplinary approaches.

Many of the attributes of FORIN have already been described by a small ad-hoc working group, and published in the first IRDR FORIN project report, [Forensic Investigations of Disasters: The FORIN Project \(IRDR FORIN Publication No. 1\)](#).

This work plan is organised into four sections. The first simply states the list of proposed activities. The second provides an elaboration of activities, and the third sets out a preliminary schedule and budget. In the fourth and final section some of the longer term aims are briefly described.

A. List of Proposed Activities over a five- year period:

1. Integrated research projects:
 - a. Core sponsored case studies
 - b. Contributed case studies

2. Fellowships, trainings and workshops:
 - a. Orienting, training and development workshops (Advanced Institutes)
 - b. Fellowship programme
 - c. Research workshops.

3. Publications and reports:
 - a. Journal articles
 - b. Working papers
 - c. Book length reports
4. Synthesis and publication of results, and international conference.
5. FORIN project management.

B. Elaboration of Activities

1. Integrated Research Projects

a. Core Sponsored Case Studies

At the centre of the FORIN project it is proposed to develop a small number of major or core projects to examine a selection of recent disasters through the FORIN lens. Candidates could include such recent (last 10 years) events as earthquakes in Haiti, Chile and Christchurch in New Zealand, tropical cyclones (Katrina), floods in Thailand and Pakistan, and also the earthquake, tsunami and nuclear event in North East Japan (Fukushima), and others.

Each project would be conducted over a period of approximately three years and would require an overall project director and an interdisciplinary and integrated team of research staff, some of whom might be supported on fellowships (see 2b below).

It would be advantageous if the director and research team could be based at a research institution preferably with a reputation and recognised capacity for research in disasters.

The estimated cost for each core project is US\$250,000. The selection of core projects would be made by donor or sponsoring organisations working in collaboration with the IRDR and the FORIN project, as well as a home institution and country. While these core projects would form the centrepiece of the FORIN project, they would not be established at the outset but would be preceded by a number of preparatory activities described below.

b. Contributed Case Studies

A number of research individuals and groups have expressed their interest in pursuing the application of the FORIN approach. It is therefore proposed that such researchers be collectively organised into groups providing contributed case studies. Such case studies would, in some instances, precede the core projects and produce some further input into their design. It is anticipated that much of the cost of the contributed case studies would come from their own sponsors.

2. Fellowships, Trainings and Workshops

a. Orienting, Training and Development Workshops (Advanced Institutes)

In order to engage more of the disaster research community (from many disciplines and specialities) it would be helpful to organise a series of workshops at which the elements of the FORIN approach could be presented, debated and further elaborated. Initially such workshops would be required to orient research groups to the central concepts of FORIN, including the essential notion of “integrated” studies. One such workshop to be held in Taipei (March 2012) is now in preparation. There should be at least one such workshop associated with each of the core case studies and initially with the contributed case studies as well. One initiating or “launch” workshop will be held once the preparatory steps have been taken.

b. Fellowship Programme

To support the research projects and their staff, and to help contribute to the costs of workshops, a fellowship programme will be established. The number and value of individual fellowships will depend upon the rate of development of the FORIN project and initial funding.

c. Research Workshops

Once the workshops for core and contributed case studies are completed it is important that they be followed up with meetings and reports to monitor progress and ensure that the integrated nature of the FORIN approach is being effectively followed. Such mechanisms are required both within and between (across) projects. The number and cost of individual workshops remains to be worked out, and will depend upon the timing of the case studies.

3. Publications and Reports

a. Journal Articles

One important product of the FORIN project will be a series of articles in refereed journals, reporting on results and the development of theory and methodology. One such proposed article under consideration is a refinement and elaboration of the [IRDR FORIN Publication No. 1](#) (authors to be determined).

b. Working Papers

In addition to journal articles the FORIN project should sponsor a series of working papers that report on the work in progress and to facilitate the exchange of ideas and methods. These could be posted on the IRDR website as in the case of the [IRDR FORIN Publication No. 1](#).

c. Book length Documents and Reports.

It is anticipated that each of the core case studies and some of the contributed case

studies would lead to the production of book length reports. These might be stand-alone reports or managed as part of a FORIN series. One publisher has expressed interest in such a series.

The [IRDR FORIN Publication No. 1](#) itself has the potential to be elaborated into a book. This would involve, for example, the preparation of expanded text on specific research methodologies that are described very briefly in the document. Such a volume could be designed to serve as a guide for subsequent case studies adopting the FORIN approach. Authors and/or editors are to be identified.

4. Synthesis and Publication of Results and International Conference

At the close of the approximately five year period of this project it is anticipated that a synthesis volume would be produced. This would include reports from specific projects and an overall synthesis aimed at both the policy and the scientific communities. It would carry a “Summary for Policy Makers” in the IPCC style. If this pattern were to be followed the Summary could become the centrepiece of an international conference, perhaps attached to or associated with an established international disaster platform. An interim report could be presented at an expected conference in 2015, when it will be time for the renewal or revision of the Hyogo Framework.

5. FORIN Project Management.

A project of this length and scale requires considerable management. This should involve an overall project director or manager with support staff to be determined. Such a capacity might be co-located with the existing IRDR IPO in Beijing, or at an alternative host institution.

C. Preliminary Schedule and Budget.

- **Year 1:**

This is a “setting up” year. It requires more detailed budget preparation and a more detailed work plan. An essential early step would be the selection and appointment of an overall FORIN director, perhaps initially on half salary and potentially shared with the Assessment of Integrated Research and Disaster Risk (AIRDR) and Risk Assessment and Action (RIA) projects. The project management office and staff would be established. Year 1 would also require at least one workshop (see 2a above) and the establishment of a fellowship programme.

 - Preliminary cost estimate: US\$150,000.

- **Year 2:**
This would require a number of the activities listed and described above to be continued and strengthened and the case studies to be initiated. This process could begin at any time with contributed case studies and with the core case studies to follow.
 - Preliminary cost estimate: US\$250,000.
- **Year 3:**
At this stage the FORIN project would reach its peak level of activities with a worldwide distribution of contributed and core case studies underway, and a full range of fellowships, publications and workshops.

Costs at this stage would depend heavily upon the number of core case studies, plus the shared cost contributions and contributions in kind.

- Preliminary cost estimate: US\$500,000.
- **Year 4:**
Year 4 would be the second year of full activities, and core and contributed case studies would be approaching completion, with associated report writing, “outreach” and communications.
- **Year 5:**
It is projected that Year 5 would be the final year of the FORIN project, and would be devoted to the synthesis of results and publications, an international conference and related communications.

Costs at this stage would depend on the scale of these activities.

Total costs for the 5 year FORIN project would be in the order of US\$1 million plus additional, shared and in-kind contributions.

D. Longer-Term Plans and Objectives

The fundamental aim of FORIN, as stated at the outset, is to develop, disseminate and implement a radical new approach in disaster research. The purpose of FORIN also extends well beyond the domains of research. The intent is that the FORIN approach will give rise to a new mode of practice in disaster risk management and policy. The precise nature of this change cannot begin to be specified until the FORIN project is well underway and results are beginning to take shape. The intent, however, is that it will advance the understanding of the root causes of disasters at all levels of governance—from local to national, regional, international and global—and in the private sector and civil society. The extent to which such institutions become engaged in the

FORIN enterprise and make use of its findings will be an important measure of the project's success.

The growing number of major disasters can no longer be seen as a series of independent events having consequences largely confined to their location. The underlying causes of disasters are linked to each other in ways that are not yet clearly visible, and the consequences of major disasters are increasingly felt in remote locations far from their place of occurrence. Sooner or later disasters will be recognised as a common human responsibility, and the FORIN project aims to be a step in that direction.

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