

Results of Reflective Survey on the Experiences of National Committees within the Integrated Research on Disaster Risk (IRDR) Programme



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1.0 Background

A cornerstone of the implementation strategy of the IRDR programme since its beginning in 2010 has been the formation of National Committees (NCs). These bodies were designed to assist in establishing and/or developing crucial links between national disaster risk reduction (DRR) programmes and activities within an international framework thereby grounding IRDR’s global objectives into local contexts. A total of 13 NCs have been established to date to support IRDR’s research initiatives.

While the intended design of NCs was robust, their practical implementation and operational reality have revealed a complex landscape of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

2.0 SWOT Analysis of IRDR NCs

The previous review of the IRDR programme, as well as the **IRDR Compilation: A Ten-Year Science Quest for Disaster Risk Reduction** (2021) also examined the overall position and roles of NCs within the wider IRDR programme. The following strengths, opportunities and weaknesses were identified.

2.1 Strengths and Opportunities

The key strengths of IRDR NCs lie in their ability to provide geographical reach, grant access to local policymakers, and act as national focal points for interdisciplinary collaboration. They were envisioned as the primary mechanism for translating IRDR's global science agenda into nationally relevant research and policy advice.

2.2 Weaknesses

The identified weaknesses largely systemic, stemming from the relationship between the NCs and the central IRDR governance structure. These weaknesses have severely constrained the ability of the NCs to realise their key strengths.

2.2.1 Lack of strategic engagement and support

It was noted that the level of exchange between IRDR NCs, the Scientific Committee (SC) and the International Programme Office (IPO) were limited, resulting in NCs often being left to operate in isolation, without clear guidance, priorities or support from the programme's leadership.

2.2.2 Inconsistent Performance and dynamism

A direct consequence of the lack of central support was highly variable performance across the network, with the programme's impact often depending on a few particularly active NCs, implying that many were not operating at full capacity.

2.2.3 Poor branding and integration

A tangible symptom of the disconnect was the lack of a coherent branding and acknowledgment system with almost no acknowledgement of IRDR in the publications and products of the NCs. This not only diluted the IRDR brand but also signified a weak sense of a unified network identity, hindering the potential for collective impact. Additionally, there were no regular mechanisms for IRDR NCs to meet and exchange amongst themselves, which has also led, or at least partially contributed to, the relatively low visibility of NCs in the international IRDR community, with perhaps a few exceptions.

2.2.4 Under-activated linkages

While the network of NCs existed on paper, it was found that many of the linkages still had to be activated to make substantive contributions. This pointed to a passive network that had not been mobilised for collective action or collaborative projects, leaving its potential largely untapped. The reporting mechanism for NCs was also ineffective in facilitating the flow of information between NCs, the SC and the IPO.

IRDR NCs were therefore designed with significant structural strengths, but their effectiveness was severely hampered by a lack of strategic support and integration from the programme's governance

structure. Their weaknesses are less about internal failings and more a consequence of being an underutilised asset.

3.0 The Reflective Survey

In the light of the above considerations and the continued lack of engagement on the part of IRDR NCs with the overall programme, in December 2025, the IPO developed a reflective survey to better understand the current experiences of NCs within the wider IRDR community to improve the effectiveness and value of IRDR as a collaborative network (Appendix I).

The survey was distributed to all 13 NCs via email on Monday, 4 December 2025, with a submission deadline of 15 December 2025. No responses were received by the deadline. A reminder email was sent to all NCs with an extended deadline of Friday, 19 December 2025. By the extended deadline, only one completed survey was received. Two other completed surveys were received on 21 and 30 December 2025, respectively. No other completed surveys have since been received. Therefore, only three respondents (23%) of the 13 IRDR NCs responded to the survey.

The three completed surveys were received from IRDR NC China, IRDR NC Iran, and IRDR NC Japan.

3.1 Overall Summary

All three respondents indicated that:

- their respective organisations have been designated IRDR NCs for more than five years;
- they did not encounter any barriers to joining the IRDR network; and
- they were either very satisfied (one) or satisfied (two) with their organisations' membership in the IRDR network and would recommend membership to another similar organisation.

As it concerns motivating factors for expressing an interest in being designated IRDR NCs, the host institutes of IRDR NC China and IRDR NC Iran indicated that they were interested to align their respective missions, objectives and activities to those of the IRDR programme.

IRDR Japan indicated that it was a natural progression for the host institute, the National Research Institute for Earth Science and Disaster Resilience (NIED), as its President, Prof. Kaoru Takara, being a member of the IRDR SC is also the Chairperson of the IRDR sub-committee within the Science Council of Japan (SCJ).

The following were additional factors cited by IRDR NC China:

- To strengthen international cooperation and exchange in DRR.
- To contribute China's experience and technology in disaster mitigation to the global IRDR community.
- To address the urgent need for integrated disaster risk research and science-policy interfaces following major events like the 2008 Wenchuan Earthquake in China.
- To align national DRR research with the Sendai Framework and the UN 2030 Agenda, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration between the natural and social sciences.

Interestingly, when asked to provide suggestions on how IRDR can improve its communication, resource sharing and overall value, IRDR Japan indicated that there needs to be opportunities for IRDR International Centres of Excellence (IRDR ICoEs) to gather, including IRDR ICoE symposia. **None of the three respondents provided suggestions specific to IRDR NCs.**

3.2 Assessment Areas

The core of the survey assessed the following areas:

1. Network engagement
2. Communication
3. Resource sharing
4. Perceived benefits
5. Challenges and Suggestions

3.2.1 Network Engagement (Section 2 of the Survey)

2.1 Frequency of participation in IRDR’s activities (e.g., meetings, events, collaborative projects)			
	IRDR NC China	IRDR NC Iran	IRDR NC Japan
Daily			
Weekly			
Monthly			
Quarterly			
Rarely			

IRDR NC Japan indicated that they participate in IRDR’s activities monthly, compared to IRDR NC China and IRDR NC Iran. It has been observed that IRDR NC Japan is much more actively involved in the IRDR programme than other NCs. Several factors account for this, including that the NC’s activities are officially recognised and supported by the Science Council of Japan (SCJ), being a sub-committee within the Council, chaired by SC member Prof. Takara.

2.2 Level of agreement with the following statements:			
	IRDR NC China	IRDR NC Iran	IRDR NC Japan
We actively contribute to IRDR’s various activities and initiatives.	5 <i>(strongly agree)</i>	4 <i>(agree)</i>	4 <i>(agree)</i>
We feel a strong sense of belonging to the IRDR programme.	5 <i>(strongly agree)</i>	5 <i>(strongly agree)</i>	5 <i>(strongly agree)</i>
IRDR provides ample opportunities for meaningful engagement.	5 <i>(strongly agree)</i>	4 <i>(agree)</i>	* 3 <i>(neutral)</i>
Our organisation has dedicated sufficient time and resources to IRDR participation.	5 <i>(strongly agree)</i>	4 <i>(agree)</i>	5 <i>(strongly agree)</i>

** There needs to be a better understanding of the types of opportunities for meaningful engagement that IRDR NC Japan would like to see.*

3.2.2 Communication (Section 3 of the Survey)

3.1 Effectiveness of the IPO’s communication channels:			
	IRDR NC China	IRDR NC Iran	IRDR NC Japan
a) Email newsletters	4 <i>(effective)</i>	4 <i>(effective)</i>	4 <i>(effective)</i>
b) Network-wide meetings (in-person or virtual)	4 <i>(effective)</i>	3 <i>(neutral)</i>	5 <i>(very effective)</i>
c) Online forums or discussion boards	3 <i>(neutral)</i>	3 <i>(neutral)</i>	4 <i>(effective)</i>

d) Social media groups	3 <i>(neutral)</i>	4 <i>(effective)</i>	3 <i>(neutral)</i>
e) Direct communication from IRDR’s leadership	4 <i>(effective)</i>	5 <i>(very effective)</i>	5 <i>(very effective)</i>
<p><i>All three respondents indicated “effective” for IRDR’s use of email newsletters. However, the effectiveness levels indicated by the three respondents for c) and d) show a definite need for improvement in the IPO’s utilisation of virtual communication mechanisms to better engage with all NCs and, by extension, the wider network.</i></p> <p><i>It is curious that IRDR NC Iran indicated “effective” for IRDR’s utilization of social media groups; however, the IPO currently does not utilize social media as a result of limitations to their usage from within China.</i></p>			

3.2 Clarity and timeliness of the information shared within the IRDR network:			
	IRDR NC China	IRDR NC Iran	IRDR NC Japan
Excellent			
Good			
Fair			
Poor			
Very Poor			

3.3 Do you want a voice in IRDR’s decision-making processes?			
	IRDR NC China	IRDR NC Iran	IRDR NC Japan
Yes, always			
Most of the time			
Sometimes			
Rarely			
Never			

3.2.3 Resource Sharing (Section 4 of the Survey)

4.1 Sharing resources (e.g., knowledge, tools, contacts, funding) with other network members:			
	IRDR NC China	IRDR NC Iran	IRDR NC Japan
To a very large extent			
To a large extent			
To a moderate extent			
To a small extent			
Not at all			
4.2 Accessing or benefiting from resources shared by other network members:			
	IRDR NC China	IRDR NC Iran	IRDR NC Japan
To a very large extent			
To a large extent			
To a moderate extent			
To a small extent			
Not at all			

4.3 Ease of access to shared resources within the IRDR network:			
	IRDR NC China	IRDR NC Iran	IRDR NC Japan
Very Easy			
Easy			
Neutral			
Difficult			
Very Difficult			

3.2.4 Perceived Benefits (Section 5 of the Survey)

5.1 Extent to which your organisation has benefited from being designated an IRDR NC in the following areas:			
	IRDR NC China	IRDR NC Iran	IRDR NC Japan
Gaining new knowledge and insights	4 <i>(significant benefit)</i>	3 <i>(moderate benefit)</i>	4 <i>(significant benefit)</i>
Developing new partnerships or collaborations	4 <i>(significant benefit)</i>	3 <i>(moderate benefit)</i>	3 <i>(moderate benefit)</i>
Accessing new funding or business opportunities	3 <i>(moderate benefit)</i>	2 <i>(minor benefit)</i>	2 <i>(minor benefit)</i>
Improving our organisation's visibility and reputation	4 <i>(significant benefit)</i>	3 <i>(moderate benefit)</i>	3 <i>(moderate benefit)</i>
Enhancing our capacity and skills	4 <i>(significant benefit)</i>	3 <i>(moderate benefit)</i>	3 <i>(moderate benefit)</i>
Achieving our strategic goals more effectively	4 <i>(significant benefit)</i>	3 <i>(moderate benefit)</i>	4 <i>(significant benefit)</i>
<p><i>The highlighted responses align with the weaknesses identified above. These weaknesses are largely systemic, stemming from the relationship between the NCs and the central IRDR governance structure, resulting in somewhat of a disconnect between the NCs and the overall programme.</i></p> <p><i>The next logical question then is whether the other 10 NCs no longer see the benefit of being members of the IRDR network, hence their lack of response to any of the IPO’s communication.</i></p>			

5.2 Example(s) of a positive outcome(s) from being designated an IRDR NC:
<p>IRDR NC China</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established a robust structure consisting of 42 experts from diverse backgrounds (natural and social sciences) and six working groups. • Led the following high-impact international actions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) <u>Emergency response</u>: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Following the 2015 Nepal Earthquake, we rapidly organised experts to identify 32 hidden landslides and shared this critical data with ICIMOD to support local relief efforts. 2) <u>International network</u>: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ We successfully established a disaster reduction working group involving 13 countries, facilitating joint research like the Jakarta subsidence study and flood monitoring systems. 3) <u>Policy influence</u>: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ We have published influential reports such as the "Disaster Risks in China's Urbanization Process" and strategic white papers, directly contributing to national policy formulation.

<p>4) <u>Capacity Building</u>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ We have hosted more than 10 international training workshops on space-based disaster reduction for young scientists from 40+ countries.
<p>IRDR NC Iran</p> <p>It has helped us to promote the Regional Education and Research Center on Earthquake Management (RCECWA) within neighbouring countries, and to better define joint projects.</p>
<p>IRDR NC Japan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Completed a Recommendation Document, “Science, Technology and Innovation to Strengthen Disaster Resilience in Megacities Facing Catastrophic Disaster Risks”, which is to be approved by the Science Council of Japan. ● Based on this Recommendation Document, organised the Academic Forum “The Future of Global Disaster Risk Reduction: Strengthening the Resilience of Megacities through Science, Technology and Innovation” held in Tokyo on the 9 of December 2025. ● IRDR ICoE-Coherence’s IAB meeting was also held on the 8 December 2025.

3.2.5 *Challenges and Suggestions (Section 6 of the Survey)*

6.1 Biggest challenges faced in participating in the IRDR programme:		
IRDR NC China	IRDR NC Iran	IRDR NC Japan
Addressing the "implementation gap" where scientific findings are not effectively translated into policy or practice due to disconnected stakeholders (policymakers vs. scientists) remains a challenge, as highlighted in the IRDR Phase II framework discussions.	The imposed sanction on Iran has significantly affected our ability to participate in IRDR’s activities.	Nothing special.

6.2 Suggestions for the improvement of IRDR's communication, resource sharing, and overall value:		
IRDR NC China	IRDR NC Iran	IRDR NC Japan
We suggest prioritising the implementation of the new research agenda identified in A Framework for Global Science in Support of Risk-informed Sustainable Development and Planetary Health . Specifically, focus on Priority 5: Harnessing technologies, innovation, data, and knowledge for risk reduction. Furthermore, consistent with the IRDR Phase II mission, we recommend increasing support for Priority 6: Supporting regional and	IRDR is doing a great job, nothing to add. The International Institute of Earthquake Engineering and Seismology and RCECWA can be a great resource for IRDR's activities in the region. It can act as an IRDR hub for the West and Central Asia.	We need opportunities of gathering by ICoEs: IRDR ICoE symposium, etc.

national science and knowledge for policy and action, to ensure global research effectively informs local decision-making.		
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6.3 Additional comments on experiences with the IRDR programme:		
IRDR NC China	IRDR NC Iran	IRDR NC Japan
Under the leadership of CAST and with the strong support of CAS, IRDR NC China aims to consolidate strategic resources to support the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Planetary Health. Through deepened cooperation with the IPO and other NCs, we will strive to advance risk-informed decision-making for a world that is inclusive, safe, and sustainable.	Nothing	Announcement of YSP application (when and how) was not effectively done.

4.0 Conclusion

The reflective survey received responses from only three of the 13 IRDR National Committees (23%), a statistically insignificant return rate that renders the quantitative data indicative rather than conclusive. While the three respondents—China, Iran, and Japan—report satisfaction with their membership and a strong sense of belonging, their feedback, combined with the silence of the other ten NCs, underscores a persistent and systemic disconnect between the NCs and the central IRDR governance structure. This silence is not a neutral data point; it is a critical signal of disengagement that validates the weaknesses identified in the previous review of the IRDR programme.

The responses from the active NCs reveal that where strong personal or institutional links exist (e.g., Japan's linkage to the SCJ), engagement is higher. However, even these active committees indicate room for improvement in communication tools (e.g., online forums, social media) and in the tangible benefits derived from the network, particularly in accessing new funding and developing partnerships. The lack of suggestions specific to NCs from any respondent further suggests that the role and value proposition of the NCs within the broader IRDR ecosystem (ICoEs, SC, IPO) remain unclear.

To address these challenges and reshape/reform the NC mechanism in IRDR Phase II, the following specific recommendations are proposed for consideration:

- **Recommendation 1: Redefine and Formalise the NC Value Proposition**
 - **Action:** Co-develop revised Terms of Reference (ToR) for NCs that clearly define their roles, responsibilities, and expected deliverables in Phase II, or consider renaming the current NCs to better articulate their value proposition or remove the mechanism of NCs from the IRDR structure to better consolidate the work of the programme. The ToR should move beyond vague concepts of "linkages" to specify how NCs contribute to IRDR's three core functions: coordinating research, serving as a science-policy interface, and acting as hubs.
- **Recommendation 2: Establish Structured Engagement Mechanisms**
 - **Action:** Mandate an annual, dedicated NC Forum, held either in-person alongside a major IRDR conference or as a focused virtual event; and invite NC directors to participate in SC meetings as

observers. The purpose would be explicit: to facilitate peer-to-peer exchange, share best practices, foster collaborative project development, and engage decision-making processes.

- **Recommendation 3: Enhance Strategic Communication and Resource Mobilisation**
 - **Action:** Revitalise the IPO's communication strategy to specifically target NC engagement, including but not limited to:
 - Actively utilising virtual platforms (online forums, potentially social media) for thematic discussions, as current usage was rated neutral or ineffective by most respondents.
 - Creating a "NC Showcase" series in IRDR's newsletter or on the website to highlight national successes, thereby improving visibility and peer learning.
 - Establishing an "Opportunities" section on the website to disseminate funding opportunities for research projects, collaborative initiatives, and young scientists exchanges.

In conclusion, the current NC network is an underutilised asset. The near-total non-response to the survey is a clear call for a fundamental reset of the relationship. By implementing these targeted recommendations—focusing on formalisation and structural evolution, structured engagement and strategic communication—IRDR may transform its NCs from a passive network into a dynamic engine for localising global science and achieving the ambitious goals of its Phase II framework.

Appendix – Survey Instrument

Reflective Survey: The Experiences of National Committees within the Integrated Research on Disaster Risk (IRDR) Network

Section 1: National Committee Information

1.1 Name of your National Committee:

1.2 Name of your Host Institution:

1.3 Your Role/Position in the IRDR NC:

1.4 Your Role/Position in the Host Institution (if different):

1.5 How long has your organisation been an IRDR NC?

- Less than 6 months
- 6 months to 1 year
- 1-3 years
- 3-5 years
- More than 5 years

1.6 What factors motivated the Host Institution to express an interest in being designated an IRDR NC?

1.7 Did your organisation encounter any barriers when attempting to join the IRDR network?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure
- Prefer not to say

1.8 If yes, please describe the barriers that were encountered?

Section 2: Network Engagement

2.1 On average, how frequently does your organisation participate in IRDR activities (e.g., meetings, events, collaborative projects)?

- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly
- Quarterly
- Rarely

2.2 Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements regarding your organisation's engagement with the IRDR programme.

(1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

- We actively contribute to IRDR's various activities and initiatives.
- We feel a strong sense of belonging to the IRDR programme.
- IRDR provides ample opportunities for meaningful engagement.
- Our organisation has dedicated sufficient time and resources to IRDR participation.

Section 3: Communication

3.1 How effective are the following communication channels for receiving information from the IRDR IPO?

(Scale: 1 = Very Ineffective, 2 = Ineffective, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Effective, 5 = Very Effective)

- Email newsletters
- Network-wide meetings (in-person or virtual)
- Online forums or discussion boards
- Social media groups
- Direct communication from IRDR's leadership

3.2 How would you rate the clarity and timeliness of the information shared within the IRDR network?

- Excellent
- Good
- Fair
- Poor
- Very Poor

3.3 Do you want a voice in IRDR's decision-making processes?

- Yes, always
- Most of the time
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

Section 4: Resource Sharing

4.1 To what extent has your organisation shared resources (e.g., knowledge, tools, contacts, funding) with other network members?

- To a very large extent
- To a large extent

- To a moderate extent
- To a small extent
- Not at all

4.2 To what extent has your organisation accessed or benefited from resources shared by other network members?

- To a very large extent
- To a large extent
- To a moderate extent
- To a small extent
- Not at all

4.3 How easy or difficult is it to access shared resources within the network?

- Very Easy
- Easy
- Neutral
- Difficult
- Very Difficult

Section 5: Perceived Benefits

1.1 Please rate the extent to which your organisation has benefited from being designated an IRDR NC in the following areas:

(Scale: 1 = No Benefit, 2 = Minor Benefit, 3 = Moderate Benefit, 4 = Significant Benefit, 5 = Very Significant Benefit)

- Gaining new knowledge and insights
- Developing new partnerships or collaborations
- Accessing new funding or business opportunities
- Improving our organisation's visibility and reputation
- Enhancing our capacity and skills
- Achieving our strategic goals more effectively

1.2 Could you provide a specific example of a positive outcome or benefit your organisation has experienced as a result of it being designated an IRDR NC?

Section 6: Challenges and Suggestions

6.1 What are the biggest challenges your organisation has faced in participating in the IRDR programme?

6.2 What suggestions do you have for improving IRDR's communication, resource sharing, and overall value?

6.3 Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience with the IRDR programme?

Section 7: Overall Satisfaction

7.1 Overall, how satisfied is your organisation with its membership in the IRDR network?

- Very Satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neutral
- Dissatisfied
- Very Dissatisfied

7.2 How likely are you to recommend membership in this network to another organisation?

(Scale: 0 = Not at all likely, 10 = Extremely likely)

- 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Thank you for completing our survey! Your feedback is invaluable to us.