



UK Alliance for Disaster Research Constitution

December 2020

Introduction

1. Disaster risk reduction (DRR) demands an enhanced focus due to its inherently interdisciplinary nature, and the direct influence that science can have on saving lives and livelihoods. UKADR seeks to foster innovative interdisciplinary research, as well as professional applied research structures to be able to predict or respond to slow and rapid onset hazards with relevant scientific advice. UKADR links to international dialogues, such as the UN Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals identifying global research opportunities for reducing disaster risk, as well as articulating the role that science could play.
2. The risk to sustainable societies, economies and environments associated with hazards rarely proves to be an issue that one scientific community can work on independently. The UK mechanism for scientific advice in emergencies, named Science in Humanitarian Emergencies and Disasters (SHED) and other initiatives, have seen an increasing number of scenarios where a multi-disciplinary network would have been useful in providing insight. These include, for example, major emergencies that require involving understanding produced by the convergence of geophysical, medical, social and hydrometeorological sciences.
3. UK Government first called for improved interaction with the disaster science community in its 2011 Humanitarian Emergency Response Review. This was repeated in the 2012 Government Office of Science Foresight Report on Reducing the Risk of Future Disasters. UK Government's responsibilities under: the UNISDR Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030; the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs; 2015); disaster related commitments associated with the International Climate Change negotiations (COP21-26; 2015-2021) and the World Humanitarian Summit (2016) placed renewed emphasis on the need for science and for evidence based policy and practice. The demand for improved interaction and partnership building has been consolidated as a UKADR purpose at each of its annual conferences and AGMs.
4. There has been a steady increase over the last two decades in the prevalence of networks and individual units within the UK research community that focus on various research challenges relating to hazards, disasters, risk and resilience drawing upon multiple traditional and evolving disciplinary areas. These often work independently and in ad hoc collaboration. Consequently, the UKADR will assist to coordinate for a coherent voice from the DRR community and to achieve more than is possible through individual and overly competitive working practices.
5. The UK Disasters Research Group (UK-DRG)¹ proposed the merit of creation of an overarching

¹ The UK Disasters Research Group exists to informally share information on research and investment plans or policy interests and to gain an update on international research initiatives. It mostly comprises UK research funders and users (as opposed to primary researchers), as well as experts linked to international initiatives to promote coordination, networking and collaboration opportunities at the UK and international level.

academic research network. This research network is to not replicate existing efforts, but add value through multi-disciplinary approaches and activities that can best be achieved by working together. Consequently the DRG brought together five experts during the winter of 2014 to assess the added value of a multi-disciplinary research collaboration; the components and activities a national, DRR research collaboration should include; the best model of governance and finance; and resource issues. This group proposed the development of a network. A larger group of researchers met in April 2016 to establish UKADR, and to develop a formal Constitution for the provisional period of UKADR from April 2016, until the appointment of an elected Chair, or Co-Chairs by January 2018. This was all completed leading to a period of UKADR Constitutional review during 2020 leading to this current version. It incorporates minor amendments to the original Constitution to reflect the inputs from its Steering Committee and membership over the initial period to 2020. The Constitution is seen as iterative and should be updated as necessary according to the will of its Steering Committee and membership, and not less than once in every three years.

Scope

6. UKDRR is recognised as spanning universities and other educational institutions, charitable trusts, think tanks and research departments and institutes within government agencies, private business, civil society, NGO, humanitarian organisations and organisations working with or funded by UK Government or UK based institutions.
7. As UKADR understands science on disaster risk and its management to be interdisciplinary. There is an emphasis on integrated and applied dimensions of knowledge production, recognising, however, that applied work rests upon strength in fundamental science. This includes work from the social sciences, engineering and technology, economics, behavioural sciences, medical and health sciences, agricultural science, information technology, arts and humanities, physical and natural sciences.
8. The Alliance is independent and inclusive. Membership is open to individuals employed by or studying at any research and capacity-building institution, as listed in paragraph 6, based in the United Kingdom and active for disaster risk and its management, as reflected in the scope of work listed in paragraph 7 above. Individuals will ordinarily represent their disciplinary focus.
9. The UKADR subject focus is on all contexts and systems of disaster risk, its management and relationship to sustainable development across an interconnected world. This includes, but is not limited to, work on disaster risk reduction, prevention and preparedness, disaster response, reconstruction, recovery and resilience and climate change adaptation.

Aims

10. The UKADR goal is to engage the UK government and other national and international stakeholders in implementation of initiatives designed to minimise the global impact of disasters, particularly through the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. To achieve this, the function of UKADR is to represent the research community at government level in the UK and internationally and to bring researchers and practitioners together to share best practice and improve disaster risk research and its impact.
11. Following a survey of its membership during 2020, its presentation and discussion at the 2020 AGM, members confirmed the need for the UKADR to:

“play a bigger role in facilitating networking and links between researchers worldwide, collaborations with regional and global institutions, creating more spaces for people to come together in person and online to share experiences and learning, maintaining and supporting existing networks and forming new working groups and networks that have representation from people at all stages of their career, advocacy/lobbying around funding, practitioner-led research, implementation of research, inclusion of scientists in policy making, outreach and public education, and career resources for early career researchers”².

12. Specific functions of the UKADR needed to engage the UK government and the UKADR membership in building the research community and strengthening UK science globally therefore include through the following:

Engaging UK Government

- Advocate for UK science to UK Government
- Serve as a contact point for UK Government seeking the best UK science input
- Provide a mechanism for UK Government to communicate emerging needs to the UK science community
- Drive an increase in funding of multi-disciplinary research by providing a forum for multi-disciplinary collaborations;

Community Building

- Provide a platform to interface with international initiatives, for example the Science and Technology Partnership of the UN, Integrated Research for Disaster Risk (IRDR) and Global Alliance of Disaster Research Institutes (GADRI)
- Coordinate members and partners with other associations in response to an emergency/ disaster or call for advice;

Strengthening science

- Identify multi-disciplinary research gaps as well as priorities
- Share information on research and funding opportunities
- Develop and recommend processes to facilitate and sustain uptake and impact of DRR related research;

13. The UKADR commits to be an inclusive alliance with balanced representations across its membership reflecting a wide range of institutional cultures, age, gender regional and professional identities.

Governance

14. Membership of the UKADR is open to all UK-based researchers involved in the provision of disasters focused research.

15. Governance for UKADR was updated in December 2020 to consist of:

- Chair, or two co-chairs

² Sargeant, S. et al. (2020) The impact of COVID-19 on UK-based disaster researchers: summary report for UKADR.

- Steering Committee Members (up to 15 including honorary members)
 - Treasurer (subject to demand)
 - Secretary
 - Website Manager
 - Communications Coordinator/s (up to two)
 - Early Career Research Facilitators (up to three)
 - UKADR Advisory Board
16. The Chair or Co-Chairs will provide overall strategic leadership, convene board meetings, represent UKADR on UK DRG and other bodies.
 17. The Treasurer will have responsibility for budget planning, financial collection and payment, where these activities may become relevant in future (to 2020 UKADR has been voluntary involving no financial transactions).
 18. The Secretary will support other post holders and with the Chair/Co-Chair lead for specific project facilitation as these arise.
 19. The Website Manager will maintain a dedicated website.
 20. The Communications Coordinator/s will facilitate additional communications tools including policy-briefs, blogs and conference planning and routine communication with members.
 21. The Early Career Research Facilitator/s will liaise with and represent UKADR with students, post-doctoral researchers and junior research, policy and practice communities to support the aims of UKADR.
 22. A UKADR Advisory Board will be established as from 2021 to include key additional representations needed in the support of the UKADR purpose. Advisor status will be available to those representing external bodies, and to those who have previously served as UKADR Chair or in its Steering Committee, including academic, government and other groups at the discretion of the Chair/s and following consultation with the Steering Committee.
 23. A UKADR Annual General Meeting open to all its membership, and any additional participants agreed by Chairs and the Steering Group, will take place each year during which members will be invited to provide input on the purpose and progress of the UKADR. This will normally take place at the time of the UKADR Annual Conference.
 24. Posts were appointed or nominated during the inception period. Initial full elected posts were created during the period to 1st January 2018. Election to the Steering Committee will be open to all UKADR members through a call for expressions of interest followed by membership wide election. Steering Committee membership will have a three-year term and can be held for two terms. Elections will take place in each three-year cycle.
 25. The Steering Committee aims to be inclusive of the community it serves and will pay due regard to a balanced inclusion of committee members across gender, regional, early-career and types of institution in the spirit of the inclusivity statement in paragraph 13. Where necessary the Committee will maintain the right to be flexible in the way appointments take place to be able to uphold inclusivity of this Constitution.
 26. The Steering Committee of the outgoing cycle elects up to five of its current committee

members who are willing to continue for a further three-year period, to maintain continuity and due process in the transitioning of committee membership. The remainder of the Steering Committee vacancies are open for membership election. The Steering Committee elects the UKADR Chair/s from those serving in the Steering Committee. Should no member of the Steering Committee be willing to Chair, or there is no member of the Steering Committee who has the majority support, the Steering Committee may seek to appoint a Chair/s from the wider UKADR membership.

27. The UKADR Steering Committee will serve as the decision-making body for UKADR. It will be chaired by a UKADR Chair or two co-Chairs with honorary membership extendable to UKADR post holders as agreed by the UKADR Steering Committee. Decision-making will be by majority vote with the meeting chair holding a casting vote. A quorum will be needed of the chair and four committee members present, excluding those with observer status. Committee meetings will be at least every six months and can be held online or in person. Exceptional meetings can be held if specific decisions are required.
28. There may be occasions when it will be necessary to establish ad hoc Sub-Groups to complete a specific piece of work, including in relation to hosting of the UKADR conference, or where data or preparation needs to be undertaken by a specific sector or named partners. These Sub-Groups will only exist for the duration of the task around which they were established. The UKADR will usually agree and lead on the strategic direction of the activity being undertaken by a Sub-Group, however, ad-hoc Sub-Groups may be arranged by the Chair/s in coordination with the Steering Committee to address short-term issues. Where actions are recommended by a Sub-Group, these must be ratified by the Chair/s and a majority of the UKADR Steering Committee.
29. The UKADR is both multi-institutional and non-departmental; members support the group because they anticipate the benefits of improved DRR delivery that will accrue through collaboration facilitated by the UKADR. The UKADR is thus self-governing. Whilst the Committee and the post-holders will be supported by research institutions, the UKADR has no primary sponsoring organisation or department. All member institutions are expected to support the participation of their representatives in the UKADR.
30. The UKADR and UK Disasters Research Group (UK-DRG) will work together including through observational status for the chairs of each group on their respective boards. This is to provide a direct link between the UK science community, research funders, government and internationally as appropriate.
31. A review of the Constitution will be undertaken at least every three years to ensure continuing relevance. A review is due three years after the election of the UKADR Chair/s and Steering Committee members.