

International Workshop The role of science in good-enough, disaster risk assessment

Background

1. To reduce the risks from future disasters, evidence based Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) interventions should be underpinned by a robust and rigorous assessment of the risk to natural hazards. However, there are occasions where response time, as well as access to financial resources and/or technical capacity are constrained, limiting the ability to undertake such robust and rigorous assessments.
2. Therefore, the UK Science and Innovation Network, in collaboration with the UK Collaborative on Development Sciences (UKCDS), the Research Councils UK Risk Research Champion and La Salle University, is organising an international and interdisciplinary workshop to explore this issue. The workshop will be held at La Salle University in Bogotá, Colombia, on 24-26 February 2014.

Aims and objectives

3. The workshop will explore how robust disaster risk assessments can be undertaken that ensure scientific rigour but can be delivered when there are limitations in some, or all, of time, knowledge and materials with the aim of highlighting best practice. It will focus on extreme events rather than 'everyday disasters' and will consider disaster risk assessments undertaken in the following scenarios:
 - a. Where the risk environment is rapidly changing, for instance, as a result of emerging hazards or changes in vulnerability, prior to the occurrence of a natural hazard event:
 - i. Where it is expected that communities have days to months to respond
 - ii. Where it is expected that communities have minutes to days to respond
 - b. Where the risk environment has rapidly changed, for instance, following the occurrence of a natural hazard event:
 - i. In the hours to days following the event
 - ii. In the weeks to years following the event.
4. Four well documented case studies (where disasters have occurred in the past) will be explored from a range of perspectives. The case studies will be selected because they provide examples of when either one or more of time, knowledge or resources were limited across the four different scenarios outlined above.
5. In examining these case studies, the workshop will aim to:
 - a. Explore how to get a rapid picture of hazards, vulnerability and exposure across a range of resources and capacity contexts;
 - b. Explore the appropriate limits of data needed to make reasonable and defensible decisions for disaster risk management in a range of settings; and
 - c. Investigate how to combine hazard, vulnerability and exposure data, again across a range of contexts to provide rapid, good enough risk assessments.
6. Understanding what is 'good-enough' will depend highly on local circumstances; it touches upon value systems, risk cultures and behavioural approaches. Therefore, a key objective of this workshop will be the inclusion, participation and input of user groups who are often required to undertake disaster risk assessments in resource, capacity and time limiting situations.

Outputs

7. A report pulling out principles of good practice and identifying how to better integrate science into 'good-enough' disaster risk assessments will be produced as a product of the workshop. In addition, the workshop will deliver the following:
 - a. Identify the circumstances in which rapid and 'good-enough' scientific risk assessments are needed.
 - b. Increase the researcher understanding of practitioner needs and therefore best practice in access to data and how it is presented for ease of use.
 - c. Guidance on scientific methodologies that can be adopted in situations when it is necessary to produce a rapid or 'good enough' risk assessment.
 - d. Develop a recommendation on what constitutes a 'good enough' scientific risk assessment and what science is still needed to achieve this. This recommendation will be supported by case studies of what has previously constituted a good enough risk assessment, and thoughts for improvement.
 - e. Greater networking of the researchers and practitioners of scientific disaster risk assessment and the establishment of an initial network of DRR practitioners willing to engage in pilot risk assessment (hazard, exposure and vulnerability) activities.
 - f. A roadmap for research and discussion for future conferences on DRR.

Outcomes

8. This workshop is timely not only for the benefits it could bring the DRR community. With the revision of both the Hyogo Framework for Action and the Millennium Development Goals taking place in 2015 there is a unique opportunity to show leadership around the issue of DRR and constructively contribute to the developing international policy landscape.