**IRDR International Centre of Excellence in Risk Interpretation and Action - London**

**Expression of Interest**

**Introducing London**

London is a global hub for science, policy innovation and coordination in disaster risk reduction. It is home to 4 of the World’s top 50 Universities (Imperial, King’s College London, London School of Economics and University College London) and specialist research institutions such as the London School for Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, all with active research interests in disaster risk and its management. The UK government and in particular its Department for International Development (DFID) is a global leader shaping the international architecture, as well as being an active partner for many low and middle income countries in building resilience to, disaster risk, climate change and conflict. Many international humanitarian non-governmental organisations have global headquarters and coordinating offices in London or close by providing access to policy making and project management for example through the networked BOND group of NGOs. Interacting with DFID, the humanitarian sector and academic institutions are a number of think tanks including the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) and International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) which provide additional research and policy advocacy functions for disaster risk and its management.

London is also a focal point for research and policy innovation in risk interpretation and reduction. The city is at risk from temperature extremes, it is situated in a global water scare region and exposed to pluvial, fluvial and coastal flood hazard, its international transport links are vulnerable to atmospheric volcanic ash as well as local weather extremes. As a global city London is also exposed to terrorism and has a widely dynamic and heterogeneous population. City-wide risk and resilience planning is coordinated by the Greater London Authority London Resilience Partnership, while local administration is carried out by 33 London Boroughs.

**IRDR ICoE-RIA (London) Vision and Priorities**

The London ICoE will provide a focal point for integrated research on disaster risk and resilience. While there is a wealth of internationally excellent research undertaken in London and a rich policy community that interacts with this, there is limited consolidation. The ICoE will provide a convening space through which currently fragmented research initiatives across the spectrum of disaster risk reduction (DRR) and climate change adaptation (CCA) interests can be connected to enhance the quality of research and it policy relevance impact on practice.

The London ICoE will be interested in science and its policy partners engaged in risk and resilience work both in the UK and overseas and provide a bridge to exchange approaches and tools across these largely separate domains.

The London ICoE will in particular focus on and support the IRDR project Risk Interpretation and Action (RIA). RIA has four priority areas that will structure the London ICoE priorities:

1. Decision-making for uncertainty;
2. Early warning systems;
3. Adaptive management and resilience; and
4. Individual perceptions and risk behaviour.

**IRDR ICoE-RIA (London) Science Plan**

**Inception Period:** The first 24 months of the ICoE will be an inception period that will build on the core currently located within King’s College London and its Centre for Integrated Research on Risk and Resilience (KIRRR). In addition to existing partnerships focussed on research within KIRRR, in preparation for this Expression of Interest both University College London and the London Schools for Hygiene and Tropical Medicine has agreed to join a London ICoE. These three partners and associated policy networks already represent a considerable body of academic capacity so that an initial period of conversation is envisioned which will allow partners to collectively refine the ICoE priorities and agenda for its first 24 months. A review in month 24 will be undertaken. After this period a staged expansion may be considered.

**Core activity:** These activities are supported by core partners with minimal cost implications that can add value to the work of London ICoE partners. Core activities are expected to be the primary mechanisms for building community and for enhancing the science and policy/practice impact across the ICoE membership. These activities will be initiated immediately during the Inception Period and continued beyond. Examples might include themed science seminars, joint PhD training events, co-convened sessions at international conferences, co-authored journal items or other publications, data sharing.

**Innovations:** These are exceptional, significant activities (grant applications, policy dialogues etc) that partners will aim to undertake in addition to existing work and with dedicated funding or support associated with the London ICoE. Such activity will depend on a successful Inception Period and clear research advantage for partners in collaborating formally, and also on opportunities emerging from the research funding agencies. While innovations will be encouraged from the outset of the London ICoE these will become more important after month 24.

In recognition that there is no additional financial support for the London ICoE from its initial members or from IRDR this plan does not hold the London ICoE to any specific activities, rather activities will be built from the deployment of funding and capacity won from grant finance. The Inception period will be a time for the London ICoE to project its utility and demonstrate the case for financial or other support from existing or future members.

**IRDR ICoE-RIA (London) Organisational Structure and Reporting**

Under the Inception Period the London ICoE will be hosted by KIRRR. This is an interdisciplinary network within King’s College London (see below for a full description) managed by the Department of Geography and Faculty of Social Science and Public Policy. Following the Inception Period it is envisioned that the ICoE host will rotate every three years. The hosting organisation will hold the ICoE London Directorship, undertake any secretariat functions including the facilitation of science core activities and reporting to IRDR and maintain a web presence.

As a part of IRDR, the London ICoE will function independently but seek to work closely with IRDR Regional and National Committees and the IPO. London ICoE will aim to develop close relationships with members of the serving and past IRDR SC. IRDR ICoE will should provide bi-annual reports to the IPO prior to the IRDR SC meetings and submit a work plan and annual report to the IPO for the SC on a yearly basis.

**IRDR ICoE-RIA (London) Host Organisation Description, Professional Activities and Plan for Incorporating IRDR Objectives into its own Missions and its Implementation.**

The proposed initial host for a London ICoE-RIA is King’s Centre for Integrated Research on Risk and Resilience (KIRRR) [http://www.kcl.ac.uk/sspp/research/cirrr/index.aspx]. This provides a flexible host with web presence and an aligned mission and agenda of activities. While KIRRR has been in operation for 18 months a considerable opportunity remains for enhancing science through greater connection and networking across the host institute so that there will be a mutual benefit to KIRRR and the ICoE from hosting. As indicated above while this Expression of Interest is built on KIRRR hosting during the Inception Period it is envisaged that hosting will shift to another ICoE member at the close of this period. This is important in demonstrating the shared ownership of the London ICoE. If no other organisational home is available at the close of the Inception period KIRRR will continue hosting. The following account describes KIRRR and the wider capacities in the Department of Geography and King’s College London.

King’s College London is in the top seven UK universities for research earnings with an overall annual income of nearly £587 million. It has over 26,000 students (including more than 10,600 postgraduates) from 140 countries, and over 7,000 employees. In the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise for British universities, 23 departments were ranked in the top 25 per cent of British universities. Over half of King’s academic staff work in departments that are in the top 10 per cent in the UK.

The Department of Geography at King’s was established independently in 1947, and the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise confirmed its place among the very best internationally, with 70% of research rated as 'internationally excellent' or 'world-leading'. There is a shared belief that high quality research can be undertaken both within (and across) research groups, as teams and through individual scholarly activity, as well as collaboratively with researchers in other departments and institutions. The Department has about £4.5 million of live and a further £4.5 million of awarded research grants for projects yet to start, of which about 80 percent are research council grants, funded by the AHRC, ESRC, NERC, DfID, DEFRA and the EU. It has over 45 academic and research staff, approximately 115 PhD students, over 200 taught masters students and approximately 400 undergraduates. It offers BA and BSc undergraduate pathways, and 12 MA/MSc degrees including MA Disasters Adaptation and development and MSc Risk. Each of our vibrant community of scholars belongs to one or more of four research groups: the Earth and Environmental Dynamics Group, the Risk and Hazards Group, the Cities Group, the Environment, Politics and Development Group. Academic Staff, research staff and PhD students are integral members of these groups and each group runs seminars and other events throughout the year. Research has a strong international focus, so that many staff have significant links with scholars in a diverse range of countries in the world as well as in the UK. The Department has access to the ESRC DTC, the London NERC dtp, an AHRC dtp and the EPSRC Centre for Doctoral Training in Cross-Disciplinary Approaches to Non-Equilibrium Systems (CANES) providing nationally recognised PhD training in social sciences, art and humanities, natural and environmental and engineering sciences in addition to College level Medical and Law School provision.

Of primary relevance to the London ICoE is the Department of Geography Hazards and Risk Research Group. This is a centre of excellence for inter- disciplinary research on risk management, hazards and the mitigation and management of vulnerability. Members have expertise on risk assessment, regulation, compliance and communication within a wide range of risk domains, including the environment, medicine, food, and occupational health and safety. The group particularly benefits from close working relationships with both policy-makers and businesses, and has had a number of projects supported by DFID, DEFRA and the European Commission as well as consultancy across UN organisations, humanitarian NGOs, local authorities and private sector companies. A particular strength of the group is the way it works across the human/physical interface; a number of physical geographers are joint members of the group, working on research projects involving natural hazards.

KIRRR is hosted by the Department of Geography which provides technical support and directed by Mark Pelling, Professor of Geography. KIRRR is a network of researchers organised around five themes: natural hazards, disaster risk management and climate change adaptation; health and disease; governance and policy; socio-ecological and environmental systems and their management, and; conflict and security. Each theme has a dedicated coordinator. It is envisioned that the London ICoE will sit within the natural hazards, disaster risk management and climate change adaptation theme, led by Mark Pelling. This will benefit from a new staff resource currently being recruited at the Senior Lecturer level with specific responsibility for advancing the KIRRR. Additional support comes from capacity enabled through grant income (in particular three DFID funded projects, each 2015-2018 and with a dedicated researcher) and interns from the MA Disasters, Adaptation and Development programme. KIRRR also has a budget from King’s, of £8,000 for management and activity costs up to 2016 and will then need to be self-financing.

A full list of research grants and activity undertaken by KIRRR members would be several pages long. Below in Box 1 we provide a list of recent grants won by Mark Pelling in the last two years and associated with KIRRR, which we hope will provide a sense of the direction and scope of science at King’s:

Box 1: Indicative Grant Income Capacity and Scope

Pelling M and Visman E with Chritian Aid. Linking Preparedness, Response and Resilience in emergency context (LPRR). DFID, DPP/START programme grant £1m (with £75,000 to KCL) 2015-2018.

Pelling M, Johnson, C, Satterthwaite D Parnell S et al. Urban African risk and capacity, ESRC Programme Grant. £4 million (£800k to KCL) 2015-2018.

Pelling M and Visman E with Christian Aid. To develop transformational solutions to climate variability and disasters in Burkina. DFID, Building Resilience and Adaptation to Climate Extremes and Disasters programme, Full Grant £2m (£200,000 to KCL), Project Development Grant, £219,000 (£50,000 to KCL). 2015-2018

Pelling M and Visman E with Christian Aid. Building capacity in Ethiopia to find transformational solutions to climate variability and disasters, DFID, Building Resilience and Adaptation to Climate Extremes and Disasters programme, Full Grant £2m (£150,000 to KCL) Project Development Grant, £221,000 (£50,000 to KCL). 2015-2018

Thomalla, F, Schipper, L., Pelling, M., Howitt., R., Calgaro, E.ISSC Transformations to Sustainability Programme Seed Fund Grant, Transformative Knowledge Network on Context, Culture and Environmental Risk E29.600 2014-15.

Pelling, M, Agboola, J., Birhmann, J, Grimmond, S., Solecki. W., Ramachandran, R., M Yamamuro. Transformation and Resilience on Urand Coasts, Belmont Forum Coastal Vulnerability Grant, £1m (£200k to KCL), 2013-2015

Karger M.; Orsini, J., Pelling., M. (UK PI), Merill, S., Nunes, L., Chou, S., Aragao, S., Grimmond, S., Reynolds, C., Kartez, J., Lockman, J., Vairavamooth, K. Metropole, Belmont Forum Coastal Vulnerability Grant, £1m (£275k to KCL), 2013-2015

Pelling, M (UK PI) PEARL: Preparing for extreme and rare events in coastal regions, EU FP7 Grant, E5m (£280k to KCL), 2013-2016.

Pelling M, Blackburn, S. ‘The Risk Social Contract’, ESRC International PhD Partnering Scheme grant with the University of Manila, £7k, 2013-2015

KIRRR has existing linkages to international disaster risk research networks, as indicated by its hosting of projects on urban resilience (in partnership with the University of Toronto) and climate science communication (in partnership with a range of humanitarian NGOs). Beyond this there are very strong linkages with IRDR, ISDR, IPCC, UN agencies, Future Earth, European Commission, World Bank etc held by individual members of the network.

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Mark Pelling

12 November 2014