**Implementing the SHED recommendations**

In June 2012, the Government Chief Scientific Adviser (GCSA) published a report on the ‘Use of Science in Humanitarian Emergencies and Disasters’ ([the SHED report](http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/goscience/docs/u/12-848-use-of-science-in-humanitarian-emergencies-disasters.pdf)).  The report identified six recommendations on how UK Government could improve its use of science advice in predicting and preparing for disasters.

At the request of the GCSA, UKCDS was asked to provide a secretariat to take forward the recommendations from this report.

So what progress has been made?

**Identifying risks**

In July 2012, a Risk and Horizon Scanning Expert Group (RHEG), chaired by the GCSA, was established to provide advice to UK Ministers on emerging international risks and the uncertainties in assessing those risks. This group now meets on a quarterly basis and uses a system of horizon scanning to identify emerging natural hazard risks with the potential to cause international humanitarian disasters over a three to six month timeframe.

The output from these meetings is a report summarising those risks that are thought to be of potential significance. In future, these summary reports will be published online on the Government Office for Science website alongside the meeting minutes.

**Responding to emergencies**

In the event of a rapid onset international humanitarian emergency there may be a requirement for scientific and technical advice to support the UK Government response. Previously, a Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE), chaired by the GCSA, would provide this advice. However, this group would only be convened in emergencies where COBR (Cabinet Office Briefing Room) was coordinating the central government response.

Following the publication of the SHED report, the secretariat at UKCDS developed a response protocol for a Humanitarian Emergency Expert Group (HEEG) to be convened during an international emergency when COBR has not been activated. This group aims to ensure that coordinated, timely scientific and technical advice is made available to decision makers to support the UK response.

To date a HEEG has not been convened. An exercise to test these arrangements, including the provision of real time scientific advice, will be held in 2013.

**Accessing the right experts**

To ensure that the HEEG has access to the best scientific advice available, UKCDS is working with Cabinet Office and the Government Office for Science to develop a list of experts who can be approached to provide advice on specific hazards and their impacts. An interim list with 24/7 contact numbers for all Government departments, science agencies, and selected experts who may be able to provide science advice rapidly in an emergency has been developed. UKCDS is planning to expand this database further during 2013.

A more detailed update on implementing the SHED recommendations can be found in the recent [progress report](http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/goscience/docs/u/12-1325-use-science-in-humanitarian-emergencies-disasters-progress-november-2012) for the Government Office for Science.

**Informing future DRR research programmes**

As a follow-up to the recent Foresight report on ‘[Reducing Risks of Future Disasters](http://www.bis.gov.uk/foresight/our-work/policy-futures/disasters/reports-documents)’ UKCDS is working with its Disasters Research Group to develop a multidisciplinary science road map with the intention to inform future research programmes. Initial work is focussing on a ‘review of reviews’ to identify science research gaps and priorities.