

INTRODUCTION

Together - against disaster

UNDP's Disaster Risk Management (DRM) in Tajikistan

Every year on the territory of Tajikistan a large number of natural disasters occur that cause the national economy significant economic damage and which often bring to human casualties. Their effects can be prevented or significantly reduced, if necessary measures are undertaken in advance. UNDP's Disaster Risk Management programme deals with this problem. About the activities of DRM / UNDP tells the Programme Manager Khusraw Sharifov.

- Khusraw, which tasks are assigned to DRM in Tajikistan?

- Probably I should start with the geographical features of our republic. The vast majority of natural disasters are linked with the intensification of geological processes such as landslides, mudflows and floods, erosion, rockfalls, avalanches, etc., that are dangerous by their unexpectedness. Due to these factors, Tajikistan is one of the countries that is most prone to natural disasters. However, their effects can be prevented or significantly reduced, if necessary actions are taken in advance - to unite the efforts of existing forces into one unified system.

The problem of disaster risk reduction, which our program is engaged with, has a huge impact on the sustainable development of Tajikistan. Program for Disaster Risk Management, which started in 2003, is the main mechanism through which UNDP is responsible for disaster preparedness, response, and recovery and risk reduction in Tajikistan. Disaster preparedness is, first of all, good management, timely planning, coordination, information sharing, training, prevention, organization of resources and development of response procedures and recovery.

- How DRM is cooperating with the public sector in Tajikistan, who is your partner?

- Firstly, I would like to note that the Government is making every effort to reduce disaster risk and caused damage. This issue has been the focus of the UN World Conference on Disaster Reduction, held in 2005 in Japan, which adopted the Hyogo Framework for Action for 2005-2015. In this regard, in order to improve the lives and welfare in Tajikistan, in March 2010 the government had developed and adopted a national strategy for disaster risk management for 2010-2015. Its primary purpose is to reduce preventable damage from natural and anthropogenic disasters. Relevant state agencies, in particular, our key partner - the Committee for Emergency Situations and Civil Defense under the Government of Tajikistan - participated in



developing this strategy together with UNDP.

- In your opinion, what is the priority for disaster risk reduction?

- In fact, it is very difficult to single out one set of measures as a priority, because disaster risk management is a complex and interrelated system of different components, some of which, at first glance, may seem rather distant from emergency situations. For example, many believe that disaster risk reduction is merely CoES and humanitarian organizations' business. In fact it concerns each of us. It is unwise to invest millions of dollars in construction, such as social infrastructure, schools, hospitals or own house and not spend a relatively small portion of these funds on safety assessment of construction site for erection of additional protective devices, such as mud flow disposal channels or retaining walls. These are trivial examples, but through them I would like to convey the essence of the matter. For disaster

risk reduction it is important to harmonize the efforts of the state and the international community, commercial investors and the public. I would like to acknowledge the significant progress in achieving coherent actions in responding to emergencies in recent years, of various agencies and organizations, including international. In this regards response and recovery examples after the floods in Khuroson District (April-June 2009.), earthquake in Vanj area (January 2010) and floods in the Khatlon region (May 2010) are models. Regarding disaster preparedness and prevention there are still many unsolved problems. Therefore, I think that set of measures on ensuring preparedness, and preventive actions taken at national and local levels are very important. Various economic estimates show that to prevent disasters is much cheaper than react to them and restore the damaged infrastructure, not to mention the possible loss of human lives that are priceless.

- What are the key projects which DRM is realizing at the moment?

- In 2010 we started the implementation of the next, third stage of the "Programme on Disaster Risk Management in Tajikistan", which will last for next six years (2010-2015). Over the past four years DRM has expanded its activities both from the point of thematic coverage of disaster risk reduction spectra and in financial terms. For example, if in 2006 the budget for the Programme was \$ 0.5 million and in 2007 - \$ 0.8 million, in 2008 this figure amounted to \$ 3.9 million in 2009 - \$ 2.8 million and in 2010 - \$ 3.3 million. Funding is provided by the European Community / ECHO, the governments of Switzerland, Sweden, UK, UN Central Fund for emergency response and UNDP's own resources. Within the framework of DRM, currently eight major projects are being implemented in the country, such as Phase II of the project "Improvement of Disaster Management in Tajikistan", phase III of the project "Strengthening capacity in disaster risk management, planning and coordination at the national and local levels", projects "Support of the capacity of urban and regional search and rescue teams", "Supporting national potential to respond to emergency situations in Tajikistan", "Early Recovery Initiative" and others - it is impossible to talk about them in short. In addition, we are mobilizing additional funds for the so-called "emergency" projects to ensure rapid and effective response. Such projects are intended to provide victims of the natural disaster with first-necessity items - tents, clothes, kitchen utensils, transportation, food, and sometimes fuel to support snow removal operations on passes and removing effects of mud torrents - in general, aimed at providing various assistances during emergency situations.

DRM support in "Early Recovery Initiative" funded by the UNDP's Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (BCPR), is an example of collaboration and cooperation of various structures of UNDP in the area of reducing the risk of disasters. This project has brought together key

programmes of UNDP (DRM, Community development Programme and the Mine Action Centre) in solving the post-disaster recovery issues in participatory manner. DRM also manages the resources of UN Emergency Reserve in Tajikistan with the non-food stocks for 1000 families and has a specialist, responsible for coordinating the response of UNDP to emergencies, as well as for coordinating the activities of REACT Rapid Response Team, which assesses the effects of disasters.

- What is planned for the future?

- DRM will continue to develop successful cooperation with our partners in the future. Along with «traditional» projects on supporting the Committee for Emergency Situations in strengthening its potential which I mentioned earlier, in January this year we started quite an ambitious project on climate risk management.

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Disasters of natural character, occurred in the country for the period 1997-2010 years, caused loss of 994 lives and damages for 1 billion and 534 million Somoni, which negatively affected the lives and welfare of the population and slowed the development of the state.

Anticipating trouble ...

The project «Strengthening the coordination of humanitarian assistance and early warning system in Tajikistan» is carried out in Tajikistan with the financial support from the Department for International Development, Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK Aid) and UNDP from April 2009 to March 2011. Soon Monitoring and Prevention Centre will be established in Tajikistan on the basis of the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade. For these purposes the main component of the project – “Risk Monitoring and Early Warning System in Tajikistan» is being implemented.



AFTER Tajikistan experienced energy and food crisis during the cold winter of 2007-08, and drought in the summer of the same year, a group of experts undertook a risk assessment of the Central Asian region. The main purpose of this study was to investigate the main causes of vulnerability of Central Asia to such crisis and assessment of the probability of recurrence of crisis in the future. On the basis of risk assessment it was also proposed to strengthen the work of the international humanitarian community in providing effective support to local authorities in responding to the threats related to water, energy and food security in Central Asia.

It is important to note that Tajikistan has the necessary potentials to create risk monitoring system. However, these potentials within a certain socio-economic sectors (in the area of energy, health, food security and natural disasters) should be consolidated and strengthened. Since the Government of Tajikistan is the key player in taking measures and actions in a crisis, UNDP has expressed its readiness to discuss with the government the opportunity of future development and expanding risk monitoring and

early warning systems in the country by strengthening national capacities in information management with respect to emergencies.

It should be noted that such cross-sectoral risk monitoring system and early warning is entirely a new initiative, as there is no model of such a system in Central Asia and, particularly, in Tajikistan. However, the initial step of a limited pilot initiative should gradually move to a more developed, fully functioning risk monitoring system under the leadership of the government. This system should also be linked to existing monitoring initiatives, such as monitoring of the Poverty reduction strategy and National development strategy to maximize use of existing capacities and reduce additional costs. Close links and partnerships with the international humanitarian community and donors should also be established, as they are an integral part of humanitarian mechanism in case of crisis and emergency situations. It is unquestionable that UNDP, international financial institutions such as the World Bank, IMF, ADB and other donors play a key role in the proposed initiative. After receiving approval from the Office of the President, the Ministry of

Economic Development and Trade was charged to create monitoring and early warning systems to collect and analyze primary data and provide information about potential energy, food, weather and economic risks in the country.

During the implementation of activities to create monitoring and early warning systems in Tajikistan, effective results have been achieved in the structure of the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade in the period from April (start of the transfer of authority to the Ministry of Economic Development – ed.) to December 2010 including establishment of a government working group on monitoring and early warning, which includes representatives from 11 ministries, departments and UNDP. Monthly seminars are held with the participation of members of the working group; in November 2010 a Memorandum of Understanding between the Economic Development and Trade of Tajikistan and UNDP was signed on bilateral cooperation in the framework of the established monitoring and early warning system, information exchange mechanism has been established between Economic Development and Trade, UNDP and the REACT partners in Tajikistan, and it is expected to open the Monitoring and Prevention System based on Ministry of Economic Development and Trade in February 2011.

A significant benefit of an early warning system in Tajikistan is the ability to timely prevent or reduce the impact of threats. The Government of the Republic, donors, the international community will receive regular information about the current situation in the country, which will enable to be better prepared to prevent or reduce the effects of crises at an early stage of their occurrence.

Sadiq HISAYNOV,
Head of Development of real
sectors of the economy MEDT

Successful forecasting

Within the framework of one of the components of the project «Strengthening the coordination of humanitarian assistance and early warning systems in Tajikistan» a number of measures has been carried out to improve warning system in the Meteorology Centre of the Republic. The Head of the Meteorology Center under the State agency on Hydrometeorology of RT, Jamila Baydulloeva informed us about the activities.

CLIMATE change will exacerbate the effects of natural disasters related to hydro-meteorological conditions; and it is especially agriculture that suffers most from the damages caused by disasters. Therefore, in the framework of the project «Strengthening the coordination of humanitarian assistance and early warning systems in Tajikistan» one of the main components was considered - the hydro-meteorological forecasting, data sharing and early warning on natural disasters.

This initiative served as the basis for determining investment priorities in the field of early warning, risk mitigation and financing measures to prevent natural disasters.

The objective of this component was to strengthen the systems of hydro-meteorological researches, data sharing and early warning. This was planned to be achieved by carrying out technical and economic assessment of existing data exchange procedures and identification of the needs - both for specialists and equipment. It should be noted that this project gave its effective results in our center. In the framework of the project a team of specialists – weather forecasters were sent to the Russian Hydro-meteorological Center last year in September. We made there a joint forecast, as in Tajikistan there was no normal technical and information base. For long-term and medium-term forecasts we needed data in the form of abnormal temperature and precipitations across the northern hemisphere, as we can give forecasts only after studying the situation.

The UNDP project helped us to get good results, since our forecasts of a consultative nature proved to be correct. Long-term forecasts had never been given in the history of the Tajik meteorology but due to the project, we have achieved this. The Government has responded well, they positively assessed our work. The project on early warning also helped us to make snow-measuring monitoring in inaccessible mountainous areas. Thanks to the funding we received, our staff participated in international seminars and conferences, and special trainings were carried out in Dushanbe. Attention was also paid to the economic benefits that could be achieved through modernization of the meteorological system. Meteorological stations have been repaired and restored in some areas. Upon completion of this work priorities can be identified for investments in order to create a modern and coordinated weather forecasting system in Tajikistan, as well as throughout Central Asia.

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It can be already said that climate change and global warming - is an accomplished fact, whether we like it or not, Tajikistan, is also prone to its effects the same way as the rest of the world. It is therefore important to start preparing for natural disasters, linked with climate change, as soon as possible. We also intend to work in the area of integration of disaster reduction aspects. In this regard, we will try to interest the so-called «non-traditional» donors such as the Arab countries, China, international financial institutions, banks and the private sector. We need to move away from a model of «humanitarian» resources for development problems but disaster risk reduction is certainly a problem that should largely engage development organizations. This is one of the reasons why the United

Nations Development Programme - the world's largest development agency, is engaged in disaster risk reduction among other things. Unlike many developing countries, Tajikistan has a fairly large scale and effective system of disaster management and it pays much attention to this issue.

At the end, I would like to note that disaster risk management is gaining increasing attention and it appears on the agenda of important international meetings on development, including the World Summit on Sustainable Development and UN Objectives on Millennium Development Goals and of course, the Hyogo Framework for Action. This is obvious, because countries, especially developing ones, will not be able to achieve the Millennium Development Goals without reducing vulnerability to natural disasters.



Life saving is the work of courageous men

Immediate activities on conducting search and rescue initiatives during emergencies is delivering assistance in case of natural disasters or after to save people lives, promptly satisfy the needs to maintain vital activity of population, protection of property and houses. All these tasks laid on Committee of Emergency Situations and Civil Defense and UNDP considerably contributed to implementation of issues related to disaster management.



We went to the Training-methodological centre of the Committee of Emergency Situations which is located in a training ground, engaged in rescuing exercises together with the Head of the Committee of Emergency Situations, General-Major Gaibullo Latifov. The main objective of the centre is to prepare economical facilities, supervisory cadres, commanders, and train the population in civil defense area in case of emergency situations. Also, the Committee's Department for preparing rescuers is situated here, which is supervised by the famous colonel Oleg Vladimirovich Pilevich. We approached a dilapidated building, which was surrounded by the participants of the rescuing courses, who came from all parts of the republic and were busy with practical exercises.

-This building, which was built by the efforts of the Committee, is a "labyrinth" meant for preparing rescuers in case of earthquake and other anthropogenic disasters – said General Latifov H., showing the dilapidated building. In this case I understand that indeed construction material is very new and it could be named "model", that is infrastructure sample.

According to Latifov it's been the third year that the project "Supporting prevention potential to respond to disaster risk reduction in the Republic of Tajikistan" which is directed towards strengthening emergency and rescue measures in the republic. It is implemented by the funding of UNDP, governments of Sweden and Switzerland. In the framework of this project experts from Swiss Agency on search and rescue activities (SRSA)

want to establish search-rescue agency system (USAR) in Tajikistan (Dushanbe). On this basis they will prepare the given training ground in Dushanbe for running practical tasks, and will provide two USAR groups with necessary rescue equipment. Last year with the support of the Project, in Khorog, Kurganteppa and Rasht construction of new buildings started for search and rescue groups of the Committee of Emergency Situations and old buildings were repaired and equipped with modern equipment in Khujand and Kulyab – said the General. It should be noted that the training ground of the national search and rescue team of the CoES "Rescue centre", which was visited, is being rehabilitated at the moment with the support of this project, and special equipment is being procured for the rescuers. Beside this, specialists from the Swiss Agency on Rescue Services (MSB), which is famous under the name of Swiss search and rescue agency, carry out training exercises with the staff from the "Rescue centre" in the field of search and rescue, in city conditions. Equipment specialist, Lars Ekfeld says that he is satisfied with the results of the Tajik rescue team trainings.

- I can see progress in the training activities. I especially liked the team, which participated in the last course. These young people are very skilful and talented, and they are able to do life saving activities.

- Does the assistance that you are providing in the framework of this project, foreseen participation of the Tajik CoES teams at the International Consultants Group on search and rescue activities called "INSARAG" and ensuring

compliance of the Committee rescuers' activity with International standards? In your opinion, are the Tajik rescuers capable of the "INSARAG" group membership?

- I have firm belief that in the future the Tajik national team will be part of this prestigious international rescuing organization. For this, we are ready to provide all conditions for the rescuers so that they can work with modern technology and equipment and be aware of progressive methods.

According to Latifov, they are grateful to UNDP Tajikistan, due to their efforts; other international organizations carry out productive partnership with the Committee of Emergency Situations.

- UNDP draws donors and investors to all the underdeveloped spheres so that Tajikistan is recognized by the world in line with other developed countries. With the help from the Swiss government that bought 4 containers with rescuing equipment for the amount of 400 thousand Euros we can equip 5 rescuing teams. Last year 400 thousand somoni was allocated for the Committee from the state budget for procuring technical equipment.

The humanitarian aid that we receive from developed countries is very useful.

While we were talking to the General, the rescue teams entered the ruined building (as if after earthquake) and rescued "victims" and delivered first aid. It should be mentioned that all the rescue teams have women members. It was found out that they were medical specialists (instructors on first aid delivery) who are active in the subdivisions of the Committee. At the moment, rehabilitation works are carried out in the building of the Training-methodological centre. Now students can learn in spacious and equipped classes. It should be noted that the rescuer profession can be obtained only from the Agency which currently prepares eight types of specialists. In order to teach, the Agency has a licence from the Ministry of Education. Interested persons can get the honourable qualification of RESCUER.



Action plan of DIPECHO VI in Central Asia: Disaster Reduction Capacity Building

This regional project is being implemented by UNDP in Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. The project's budget is 1200000 EURO and it is funded by the European Department of Humanitarian Commission. 600 thousand has been allocated for the project in Tajikistan. We decided to talk about the project with the Project Analyst Shahlo Rahimova.

- Can you please tell us what activities are implemented in the framework of this project?

- In the first place the project foresees establishment of the National Platform on reducing disaster vulnerability in Tajikistan. This is kind of a national mechanism that involves integral coordination and management in reducing risk of disasters, consolidates in this activity the structures and different spheres of national economy with compulsory participation of public and private sectors, civil society, and all the relevant state bodies (as well as mass media agencies). Also in the framework of this project it is envisaged to coordinate activities towards execution of Action plan on implementation of the National Strategy in disaster risk management in Tajikistan for 2010-2015. It should be said that by Order of the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, the Committee of Emergency Situations and Civil Defense has been assigned as a responsible body to coordinate and assess the implementation of this Strategy. UNDP supports the Committee in developing mechanism and necessary tools to assess the

implementation of the Strategy in all the state structures. Also UNDP supports the Committee of emergency situations in attracting funds to implement the National Strategy.

- Can you please give us some information about REACT? What kind of structure and activities it has?

- REACT (Rapid Emergency Assessment and Coordination Team) – is a team of rapid assessment and coordination during emergency situations, whose main task in the sphere of disaster management is to strengthen joint efforts in managing emergency situations in Tajikistan through improving coordination and information sharing between the partners and also strengthening the CoES plan in implementing this activity. The head of REACT is the Committee of Emergency Situations and Civil Defense with UNDP as a secretary of REACT. In the future, in the framework of the project, UNDP will help to enhance the Committee's potential, so that in the future the role of REACT's secretariat also passes to the Committee and through this to put on place national cooperation.

- Which other areas DIPECHO project supports in disaster risk reduction?

- Another aspect is to standardize the Geographic Information System (GIS) in Tajikistan. In the country the number of organizations that use the GIS technology in their everyday activity is increasing every day, however until now there are no standard norms of GIS that would allow all the partners to use. The partners use non-standard and vary documentation that makes their comparison difficult. During the last two years with support from UNDP, National database of information and single techniques were designed for general use. UNDP decided to disseminate the developed techniques that were accepted for individual use, in the future. Also the programme is putting every effort to build capacity of the structure of the State committee on land management and land surveying of the Republic of Tajikistan in full coordination and management of the GIS activity in Tajikistan.

- As it is known, Tajikistan, especially the capital Dushanbe, is located in an earthquake-active area. In this regards, what



activities are carried out in seismological security of the capital?

- Indeed, seismological security of big cities is one of the important tasks and at the same time difficult. Taking into account all these difficulties, with the support of UNDP in the last 2-3 years, assessment of seismic vulnerability of 2200 residential buildings (from second floor onwards) and also 269 administrative and social buildings (hospitals, policlinics, schools and kindergartens)

was carried out in Dushanbe. In the framework of the given project, as a pilot it is planned to enhance two social buildings (schools). These kinds of experiments were also carried in other cities of Central Asia like Tashkent and Almaty. These measures are taken to work out relevant techniques of strengthening buildings, depending on the location's condition, as well as increasing the awareness of public and national administrations about this issue.

Our strategic partner

«Strengthening capacity in disaster risk management, planning and coordination at the national and local levels» project.

During the implementation of the second phase of the project, the disaster risk management programme of UNDP could bring in positive changes in the activity of the Committee of Emergency Situations through introduction of the systems and contemporary certified technology on reducing risks of disasters. One of these achievements is establishment of Information Management and Analytical Centre in the Committee last year.

The idea of establishing this kind of Centre was proposed by the Monitoring and forecasting emergency situations of the Department of population protection already in July 2000. In the framework of approval of the first and second phases of the project the centre was established and equipped with computer technology. In the third phase, through design and proposing intellectual products, IAC strengthened the capacity of personnel and their potential. Currently two departments are functioning in the Centre: Information Analytical Department, which holds different data (meteorological, geophysical, biological, medical and etc) and technical department which is engaged in issues of use and maintenance of technical means (computers, technology on space information, map making and etc), that are supported by UNDP and Swiss agency for Development and Cooperation. The third phase started in 2008 and will phase out in June 2011. During this

period many activities have already been accomplished. For instance, for providing exchange of data between main departments of the Committee's internal network was installed, and currently instalment of regional network is ongoing, through which data exchange will be provided between the Committee's 7 regional and local structures. The regional network of the Committee enables to transmit needed information about different emergency situations to the centre in several minutes. Also, it is planned to design security documents to strengthen the Committee's structure. In the framework of the project in the first half-year of the last year, already in all the cities and districts of the country together with local and regional Departments, security documents for districts and regions were developed and approved by the local governments and for further updating were submitted to the main Department of Committee of Emergency Situations.

Also in the sphere of map making considerable works are being carried out with use of modern geographical information technology activities. For instance, 9 digital maps indicating hazardous processes posing threats to the country were designed, and were put on the website of the Committee for general use. Based on GIS Program and also prompt information received from regions, hazards maps were developed. In the framework of the joint project with the Ministry of economic development and trade and UDNP, specialists from the Information Analytical Centre the personnel of IAC are working to reduce the hazards of disasters and their introduction into development programs of cities and districts. This project has already been developed for 16 districts. Also in the framework of the project in developing the Committee's potential with support from DRM and SDC in Tajikistan, the Institute of Ecology of Bern (Switzerland) developed GIS topographical map of the

republic of Tajikistan. With the purpose of information exchange with the given Centre, partnership agreement was signed between the CoES and 12 relevant ministries and departments. In December 2008 Committee's website was designed with the participation of IAC specialists, where information about the activities of the Centre and of other internal organizational units, as well as about occurred emergency situations can be regularly found. In the section about the activities of IAC, there is information about the results of the staff activities and projects' results, where the centre's specialists took immediate participation. It should also be said that the given centre is considered as one of the trustful state partners in the area of disaster prevention assessment by international organizations. One of the bright examples of this partnership is implementation of the GTZ project on rapid response to disaster risk in 259 villages of Zerafshan valley and 90 villages of Kulyab, of Khatlon

region, which was implemented by the specialists of the IAC of the Committee, State committee on land management and land surveying as well as international organizations like Mission East, Oxfam and Caritas. Beside this, the Centre continues partnership with all the ministries and internal national agencies in collecting and analyzing data and on the basis of this effective partnership, analytical reports including the "Annual state statistical report on emergency situations and damage expenses" and other relevant reports were submitted. We are glad, that thanks to UNDP support we could put in place unique information and analysis management system in the Committee and we hope that in the future we will continue our partnership with this strategic partner.

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