



“ Consultation Paper on
**Promoting
Disaster Risk
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through capacity
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4 December 2014

Consultation Paper on “Promoting Disaster Risk Management through capacity building in the OSCE area”

The Government of Switzerland, the 2014 Chair of the OSCE, funded Strengthening the Capacity of Coordination Mechanisms for Disaster Risk Reduction in the OSCE Region, a project aiming to build long-term institutional capacities for disaster risk reduction in selected beneficiary countries in South Eastern Europe (Serbia), Eastern Europe (Belarus) and Central Asia (Kyrgyzstan). The first phase of the Project calls for the identification of needs and gaps in disaster resilience capacity for the beneficiary countries and their National Platforms for Disaster Risk Reduction (NPs). The second phase of the Project call for country-level activities to strengthen institutional capabilities for disaster risk reduction governance. The third phase of the Project aims to increase the involvement of the Beneficiary Countries in the OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum activities through the production of a consultation paper reflecting their policy views.

The outcomes of the Project assumed greater urgency following the devastating floods that struck the region, particularly Serbia, in May. In July 2014, the European Commission, France and Slovenia convened an International Donors’ Conference in Brussels to respond to the consequences of the flooding and recognized the need to develop and strengthen policies to implement flood prevention and flood risk management, and to promote regional cooperation for basin river management.

A follow-up meeting on flood prevention and management took place in Brussels on 24 November at which time the participants determined that the basis for regional action on flood prevention is established in the necessary regional structures and mechanisms: a) the European Union’s two macro-regional strategies, the Danube and Adriatic-Ionian, are the appropriate frameworks for coordinated financial support to such type of actions; b) the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) and the International Sava River Basin Commission (ISRBC) are platforms to coordinate regional action in floods and river management and have developed a range of activities for this purpose. However, the participants concluded that substantial work remains to be done before sound flood risk management is in place and called for a gap analysis to be carried out to identify areas for improvement.

Furthermore, the Twenty-Second Economic and Environmental Forum “Responding to Environmental Challenges With a View to Promoting Cooperation and Security in the OSCE Area”, held in Prague on 10-12 September 2014, which was attended by representatives of the Beneficiary Countries of the Project, reviewed the OSCE’s further engagement in the field of disaster risk reduction, particularly as regards the flooding disaster in South Eastern Europe and the role of the OSCE in responding to such environmental challenges.

The need for a common approach in developing a comprehensive disaster risk reduction strategy in the Beneficiary Countries emerged from a gap analysis undertaken by UNISDR in consultation with the Beneficiary Countries. This paper reflects the outputs of the gap analysis and consultations and summarizes the activities that must be carried out in synergy to develop an effective disaster risk reduction strategy, which work requires a coordination mechanism best performed by the National Platforms for Disaster Risk Reduction.

This document was developed from survey questionnaires prepared by UNISDR and completed by the Beneficiary Countries to assess the gaps for capacity building. The capacity building focus on specific activities (as discussed in the next paragraph) supports both the development and implementation of national disaster risk reduction strategies and, as such, is reliant on a strong coordination mechanism.

Global considerations must also inform the development of comprehensive disaster risk reduction strategies, including the incorporation of a holistic consideration to ensure risk resilience, a multi-hazard approach to risk assessments and aligning disaster risk reduction strategies with both climate change adaptation strategies and sustainable development goals. In particular, the Zero Draft submitted by the Co-Chairs of the Preparatory Committee, a document developed to serve as the basis for negotiations for a Post-2015 Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, calls for four priorities for action:

1. Understanding disaster risk
2. Strengthening the governance and institutions to manage disaster risk
3. Investing in economic, social, cultural and environmental resilience
4. Enhancing preparedness for effective response, and building back better in recovery and reconstruction

Particular emphasis must be placed on strengthening disaster risk reduction coordination mechanisms within the OSCE Beneficiary Countries, as lessons learned from the recent past events, specifically the severe flooding in the Balkans, should promote a new commitment, even at political levels, in order to address disaster risk reduction with a comprehensive approach,

sustainable over the long-term. Planning and implementation of prevention measures are crucial to achieving this outcome. Indeed, the fourth priority for action set forth in the Zero Draft assumes particular importance in view of the recent flooding in the OSCE Region as the Zero Draft takes note that

“The steady growth of disaster risk, including the increase of people and assets exposure, combined with the learning from past disasters, indicate the need to further strengthen preparedness for response at all levels. Disasters have demonstrated that the recovery and reconstruction phase needs to be planned ahead of the disaster and is critical to building back better and making nations and communities more resilient to disasters.”

Elements of a Comprehensive Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy

The Beneficiary Countries acknowledge the need to develop a comprehensive strategy on disaster risk reduction based on:

- *Implementation of multi-hazard risk assessment and mapping.* At present, a multi-risk assessment approach does not exist in Belarus. Situational analysis of risks takes into consideration cascade effects, but does not yet embrace a comprehensive view of multi-hazard risks. In Kyrgyzstan, the National Platform supports DRR initiatives and activities in local risk assessment and facilitated the introduction of the local government self-assessment tool. The National Platform also cooperated with UNISDR in a pilot program for urban risk assessment in collaboration with the Red Crescent Societies. Efforts are underway to integrate the results of the risk assessments at local level into the national assessment (the HFA Monitor) or other instruments, to ensure more thorough consideration of all relevant risks.

In Serbia, national risk assessments and emergency management plans are under development at both local and national levels. Risk maps identify areas prone to earthquakes, floods, flash floods, landslides and open land fires. However, these maps are not yet based on a common standardized methodology. In addition, certain of the risk maps that are available are not yet systematically consulted for land use planning.

The Beneficiary Countries have substantial technical talent in the form of Institutes of Seismology, Universities, Hydro meteorological Services and research institutes. Integrating the expertise of these institutions into the National Platforms will enhance the capacity of the NPs to serve as the coordinating mechanisms to carry out the activities required to develop comprehensive disaster risk reduction strategies.

- *Engaging the public about risks population is exposed to by living/working in the area.* In its most submission to the HFA Monitor on progress made towards the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action, Belarus reported that strong legal frameworks exist for disaster risk reduction, however, public organizations are insufficiently involved in this work. In particular, within the Beneficiary Countries, the methodology for needs assessments for community resilience is not always well defined. Gender perspectives on disaster risk reduction are often not taken into consideration. Monitoring of environmental hazards to which the public is exposed in certain residential areas is often not performed consistently, often for lack of trained personnel. Raising public awareness on the potential risks of disasters, including slow-onset disasters and promoting community-based DRR are acknowledged as priorities for the Beneficiary Countries.

- *Development of a national strategy for DRR aimed at:*
 - a. Planning and implementation of DRR measures sustainable in the medium-long term;*
 - b. Involvement of the technical-scientific community in the definition of above mentioned measures; and*
 - c. Definition of mechanism for the active participation of the civil society in identification of strategic priorities.*

The gap analysis undertaken in consultation with the Beneficiary Countries found that disaster risk reduction measures are often undertaken in an informal, ad hoc manner with no integrated national strategies to ensure their sustainability over the medium- to long-term. Programmes for social and economic development and use of natural resources do not cover all of the areas within each of the Beneficiary Countries and many of the programmes that do exist in certain areas do not have adequate funding.

- *Planning prevention measures to reduce the current risks and to avoid the generation of new risks, in particular including climate change adaptation policy in the urban planning.* The consultations process and gap analysis

found that standardized techniques in risk assessment are often lacking in the Beneficiary Countries, particularly at local levels. Climate change adaptation measures have not been fully mainstreamed into urban planning.

The gap analysis also identified the importance of multi-stakeholder engagement for more effective inclusion of climate change adaptation policies in national and local planning.

- *Development of an adequate Multi-Hazard Early Warning System, in cooperation with technical-scientific community and with a Trans-Boundary/Regional approach.* Each of the Beneficiary Countries is actively engaged with its neighbouring countries in managing trans-boundary risks; however, the gap analysis found inadequate funding for early warning systems has delayed the necessary upgrades and improvements needed to ensure public safety. Certain of the automated systems to broadcast emergency warnings to the public were deemed obsolete and in need of immediate investment.

In addition, representatives of the Beneficiary Countries participated in the Twenty-Second Economic and Environmental Forum “Responding to Environmental Challenges With a View to Promoting Cooperation and Security in the OSCE Area”, where it was proposed that disaster risk reduction and management be incorporated into the agenda of future OSCE Economic and Environmental Fora. In particular, the Twenty-Third Economic and Environmental Forum to be held in 2015 will focus on “Water Governance in the OSCE Area: Increasing Security and Stability Through Cooperation”.

- *Support to the development of voluntary organizations from the civil society engaged with DRR.* The Beneficiary Countries are engaged in intensive cooperation with National Platforms for Disaster Risk Reduction in other countries; in particular, Armenia, Italy and Russia. The cooperation aims to facilitate peer-to-peer learning and capacity building. More work remains to be done in capacity building for voluntary organizations engaged with DRR.

- *Improvement of the response capacity strongly linked to the Early Warning system and to volunteer organizations.* The gap analysis identified significant areas for improvement, such as the need for consistency in training students in elementary schools in the means to respond to early warnings and alerts. The analysis also found substantial resources to be engaged in DRR. Service, for example, is actively participating in the UN’s Resilient Cities campaign and has effectively engaged volunteer organizations to address local risks.

- *Support to the development of Public Private Partnership on DRR and in particular in the sector of Risk Transfer (insurance and reinsurance).* The consultations and gap analysis found that while the Beneficiary Countries have certain mechanisms for funding reserves for disaster response, there is little capacity for contingent finance from private sources of capital. More work needs to be done to deepen capacity in the insurance and reinsurance sectors, including ensuring that representatives of those sectors are part of the National Platforms. Serbia, for example, reported that while a coordination mechanism does not yet exist for DRR funds, the government established the Office for Reconstruction and Flood Relief following the devastating floods last May. Pre-financing risk, in the form of risk transfer through insurance and reinsurance, remains a critical need.

- *Aligning with the Priorities for Action set forth as the basis for the Post-2015 Disaster Risk Reduction Framework.* In preparation for the World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, to be held in Sendai, Japan in 2015, the Co-Chairs of the Preparatory Committee developed a Zero Draft reflecting the views of the Member States and the input gathered from stakeholder consultations. The first priority set by the World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction is to avoid the creation of new risks by the adoption of appropriate measures as regards land use planning, controlled and sustainable urbanization, industrial settlement and other means.

Coordination Mechanisms For Implementation

The elements of a comprehensive disaster risk reduction strategy are diverse, ranging from modernizing early warning systems to developing capacity in civil society institutions. The National Platforms are best suited to coordinate the necessary activities and work streams, particularly within the identified activities (implementation of multi-hazard risk assessments, engaging the public, etc.) as listed in the previous section of this document. The implementation of HFA has shown the impact of NPs toward leading in identifying priority areas for action, formulate conceptual documents and projects, mobilize and engage relevant national and international stakeholders and their human, information and financial resources, formulate projects and lead the implementation of DRR. Successful performance of such functions requires focused capacity building in needs assessment, project management, identification of partners, etc.

In particular, the bi-annual reporting of advances and challenges in implementing the Hyogo Framework for Action in Europe has consistently substantiated the effectiveness of National Platforms as a coordination mechanism for Disaster Risk Reduction. During the post-2015 discussion, the EFDRR meeting in Madrid, in its declaration, emphasized the need for effective coordination and communication mechanisms such as National Platforms for Disaster Risk Reduction to bring together governments and different stakeholders at all levels towards resilience efforts and support the post-2015 framework implementation in particular by

- *Improving the coordination of work and knowledge on prevention and mitigation of hazards and disasters*
- *Better understanding for the protection of critical infrastructure and societal vital functions.*
- *Increasing understanding of other stakeholders operating in the field.*
- *Better coordinated development and dissemination of knowledge, data, methods and experience*
- *More effective use of resources within society, civilians, private business and government*
- *Increased collaboration locally, nationally and internationally.*
- *Support local level implementation and collaboration to prevent and mitigate disaster consequences.*

In particular, the research has shown that countries with National Platforms in place were as much as 100 per cent more likely to implement five key approaches (Multi-Hazard Risk Approaches, Gender-Based Risk Approaches, Capacities Building Risk Approaches, Security/Social Equity Risk Approaches and Engagement/Partnership Risk Approaches) all proven effective to address cross cutting challenges to disaster risk reduction. Given the demonstrated effectiveness of National Platforms in coordinating the very activities identified in this paper as key elements to DRR strategies in the OSCE Beneficiary Countries, it is crucial that adequate support be given to strengthen the capacity of those NP's.

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Pictures in the cover page are kindly provided by the Governments of Belarus, Kyrgyzstan and Serbia.



UNISDR

The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction

UNISDR Europe

UN House
Rue Montoyer 14
1000 Brussels
Belgium

Tel: +32 (0) 22 902 588
Fax: +32 (0) 22 904 950
isdreurope@un.org
www.unisdr.org/europe/



OSCE Secretariat

Wallnerstrasse 6
1010 Vienna
Austria

Tel: +43 (0) 1 514 360
Fax: +43 (0) 1 514 36 6996
pm@osce.org
<http://www.osce.org>