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MINISTRY OF EMERGENCY  
SITUATIONS OF ARMENIA



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ԵՐԵՎԱՆ 2014

PUBLIC AWARENESS  
AS A CORNERSTONE FOR  
DISASTER RISK REDUCTION



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ԵՐԵՎԱՆ 2014  
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE  
YEREVAN 2014



World Conference on  
Disaster Risk Reduction  
14-18 March 2015, Sendai, Japan

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# PUBLIC AWARENESS

AS A CORNERSTONE FOR  
DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

*Towards the anniversary of Spitak devastating earthquake, Ministry of Territorial Administration and Emergency Situations of RA and “Emergency Channel” informative NGO within the framework of DRR National Platform of Armenia organized a 2-day International Conference on “Public Awareness as a Cornerstone for Disaster Risk Reduction”, which was held on December 3-4, 2014 in Yerevan.*

*Considering emergency information and communication issues as integral part of DRR in the light of post-2015 DRR developments the Conference aimed to bring together the world best practices in the field of public awareness, emergency communications and work with journalists and to prepare final package of public awareness suggestions for DRR World Conference in Sendai 2015, Japan.*





## STATE OFFICIALS, INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, INFORMATION RESPONSIBLE AND JOURNALISTS FOR RESILIENT PLANET EARTH

### ARMENIA IS THE BEST EXAMPLE OF THE BEST EXPERIENCE

Towards the anniversary of Spitak devastating earthquake, Ministry of Territorial Administration and Emergency Situations of RA and “Emergency Channel” Informative NGO, within the framework of the Armenian National Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction organized a 2-day International Conference on “Public Awareness as a Cornerstone for Disaster Risk Reduction”, which was held on December 3-4, in Matenadaran conference hall, Yerevan.



The aim of the conference was to bring together the world's best practices, attaching importance to public awareness, emergency situations, civil defense media and work with reporters in that field, as well as organize debates on further developments by elaborating and summarizing the final recommendations package of public awareness, which should be presented at the 3rd World Conference on DRR in Sendai in March, 2015.



The Conference was attended by representatives of the ministries and government agencies, international (various UN agencies, NATO, Red Cross, OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe), Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), OXFAM, “Save the Children”, etc.) and non-governmental organizations, experts and journalists arrived from abroad.



**RA Minister of Territorial Administration and Emergency Situations Armen Yeritsyan made the opening remarks, particularly noting:**

-A few days later we will mark the twenty-sixth anniversary of the devastating earthquake in Spitak. The earthquake, that completely had destroyed the north of the country, had taken away tens of thousands of lives and maimed tens of thousands of people. The earthquake in Spitak, which was the most thoroughly studied natural disaster, caused the world to unite in the fight against disasters, to create new structures and to develop new policies. After the Spitak earthquake, the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group of the United Nations (INSARAG) was created, and after passing the qualification in 2015, Armenia will also join it. In 2010, we were the first in the region to announce the creation of the National Platform for DRR, which united almost all the efforts of local, international and non-governmental organizations aimed at reducing disaster risk. Disasters are increasing day by day, and even the rich and developed countries are having big losses. We cooperate with different countries and international organizations in all the directions by developing and walking forward. I hope, this conference will be fruitful, and all of us will achieve greater results.



The participants of the conference were welcomed by the **UN Resident Coordinator, UNDP Resident Representative in Armenia Bradley Busetto**:

-The key objective of this conference is to coordinate disaster risk reduction activities. 95 percent of victims from natural disasters occur in the developing countries, and today the task of disaster risk reduction is a national security issue. I believe, that Armenia is one of the leaders in this sphere, not only in the region, but on a global level as well, Armenia is the best example of the best practice.



**The Head of EU Delegation to Armenia Traian Hristea**, in his speech highlighted, that he was very pleased to attend the conference, as the basic goal of the EU is the assistance to developing countries:

- We have successfully implemented several joint projects with the Ministry, aimed at developing risks electronic maps, at promoting cooperation in the region and raising public awareness.



**The Head of the OSCE Yerevan Office Andrey Sorokin**, in his speech also referred to the effectiveness of the programs carried out jointly with the Ministry:

-I would like to congratulate the Ministry for continuous development and achieved success.



**The representative of UNICEF office in Armenia Henriette Ahrens** in the welcoming speech stressed, that today issues concerning public awareness are in the spotlight:

- Before the disaster, we need an information notification, to know what are the risks and what should we do to prevent them, during the disaster, we need to know where it has occurred, with whom and how we can help them. Awareness saves lives.

**Special Representative to the UN Secretary-General for DRR Margareta Wahlström** had prepared a video speech specifically for this conference, in which she attached importance to the key role of DRR public awareness and urged to keep it in the spotlight.

After the opening ceremony, a report on “The most important lesson of Spitak earthquake: public awareness” was delivered by **HFA National Coordinator, RS Deputy Director, Major-General N. Grigoryan**, who presented the lessons learnt from the disaster, implemented changes and the ongoing activities in the sphere of public awareness:

- The Soviet country's propaganda kept away bad and sad news from the residents. Natural disasters and major accidents occurred only in capitalist countries. No planes fell, no accidents with serious consequences occurred in our country. People were not notified, for not to have fall of mood. Everything was recorded only in official reports and being strictly confidential, disappeared in special archives. But today, we have a strong and developed Ministry, which has brought together all the related departments, and walks forward in all the directions, and Armenia from the country of importing assistance, has become a country of exporting assistance.





**The next speech was delivered by Nelli Charchyan**, a “911” service employee, one of the employees of the Ministry with disabilities:

- Since childhood I know, what an earthquake is. 26 years ago, because of the earthquake in Spitak, I found myself in a wheelchair. 8-9 of my classmates died only, because they were unaware and they didn't know how to act in case of an earthquake. I only remember, that our classroom collapsed, and my father took me out of the ruins. He laid me aside on the ground, and began to help others.... I was not yet 15 years old, and I could not understand why my feet, that had climbed mountains and canyons, could no longer move ... The doctors could do nothing, and in abroad as well. I had always been active, and I thought, that my life had come to an end, but my friend- rescuers had saved me. At first, it was of course difficult, but the work in the Ministry of Emergency Situations brought me back to life and helped me to fulfill my biggest dream- a dream of becoming a mother. I am grateful to my friend- rescuers and very proud, that I have become a member of MES large family.



After the speeches delivered, a documentary film entitled “Living with earthquakes” was shown, which was produced based on the stories told by the earthquake survivors.



On the first working day of the conference presentations were made by experts of NATO, the European Union, the International Organization for Migration, the Red Cross, the World Health Organization; public awareness and crisis communication experience of Japan, the UK, Germany, China and Georgia were also presented.



## **A package of proposals was developed at the Conference**

The 2nd day of the conference was devoted to the risk information, the introduction of public awareness indicators, Hyogo Framework for Action Program 2005-2015 and its duration, as well as issues related to the 3rd World Conference on DRR, which will be held in 2015, in Sendai.

Reports were delivered by UNISDR temporary substitute to director Neil McFarlane, UNISDR Communication Officer Andrew Mcelroy and UNDP leading national expert Ara Nazinyan.

In the course of active discussions, the participants developed a package of proposals on issues related to public awareness, for submitting it to the UN 3rd World Conference on disaster risk reduction and for inclusion in HFA-2.

The Conference participants unanimously confirmed the fact, that Armenia is a leader in a number of many countries in performing activities directed to disaster risk reduction and public awareness, and that, the meeting was a good opportunity to exchange experience and get prepared for the UN Conference..

## OUTCOMES OF INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION FOR EFFECTIVE DRR

### Recommendation 1:

Produce a paper for the World Conference that comprises proposals for:

- Establishment of an international working group to drive forward the agenda of information and communication for effective disaster risk reduction. "Emergency Channel" informative NGO suggests to establish an "Emergency Channel" international association, in which representatives of state bodies, well-known journalists, information responsible will be involved under the auspices of UNISDR
- Terms of Reference for the Working Group
- An Operational Work Plan for the Working Group
- Topics to be addressed by the paper include: easy-to-understand media communication, risk assessments, risk analysis, mapping, and national disaster risk reduction information and data sharing, and role of the private sector and other stakeholders, inclusive sensitive information, knowledge management and dissemination of information etc.
- Links to education institutions on good practice on disaster risk reduction information sharing.
- Promotion of disaster risk reduction in curricula and other forms (like competitions) for students in education institutions (early childhood learning centres, schools, universities, post graduate).
- Measures, examples and case studies to diversify disaster risk reduction information to the public .
- Development of extension certificate courses on disaster risk reduction and general building of capacity of practitioners in-country.

**Recommendation 2:**

Encourage media to be actively engaged in disaster risk reduction education and information sharing through for example dedicated training resource centers for journalists.

**Recommendation 3:**

Encourage government emergency ministries and departments to strengthen their disaster risk reduction information management capacity.

**Recommendation 4:**

Present the outcomes of the 'Second International Conference on Public Awareness as a Cornerstone of Disaster Risk Reduction' and engage in the relevant sessions at the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction.

**Recommendation 5:**

Encourage the development of public awareness indicators aligning with national reporting to a post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction using the experience of public awareness indicators from the pilot countries, including Armenia.

**Recommendation 6:**

Invite governments and other stakeholders to strengthen the partnership to implement information and communication for effective disaster risk reduction and to ensure common approaches. Promote a common approach in the development of disaster risk reduction targeted public awareness/educational materials.

**Recommendation 7:**

Support governments and international organizations in their efforts for HFA1 and post-HFA popularization (making HFA core messages available and understandable for different target groups) and advocacy.

## Some of the guests shared their impressions of the conference

### Neil McFarlane, UNISDR Director a.i.



This is a very important conference because of the public awareness and risk information and education. This is the second year it happens so we are very pleased to participate in this conference. It is very important because as a special representative of the Secretary General has said that without risk awareness and without public awareness we cannot do what we need to do which reduces the risk. So it is important factor in all I think about the reducing the risk and preparing for disasters. Yes, I will say already just in the first day a lot of progress not only in Armenia but in the region, but also bringing now of much more other case studies from around the world, which I think is an excellent initiative to bring in the lessons from China, from Japan, from UN. So I think this is a very exciting opportunity. But I think for us we can see enormous progress particularly in Armenia how you become a world leader in the promotion of public material.

The public awareness is a key factor for self-protection of the population because it is very important that they know about the risks and they know how to protect themselves. When I was invited to the 2nd conference in Armenia I looked at your homepage and saw two films about public awareness for youtube. They are great. They are very, very important and I think that "One is informed is protected" is a very good sentence for all this.



## **Andrew Mcelroy, Communication Officer, UNISDR**

First of all I would like to thank Armenia and the Government and the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Emergency Situations for hosting this conference and taking the leadership in the area of the importance of information and disaster risk reduction. This conference has put this issue to the high point and that is very important. The conference is taking place three months before the third UN conference on DRR in Japan and I think it is a lovely opportunity of all the experienced people from Armenia and around the world to really promote the importance of DRR information in terms of systems they show the right information get to the right people who are vulnerable. Also we shared case studies to show what is possible in protecting communities from disasters. I see here in Armenia you have put a lot of in 911 emergency response system. And I think you should be rightly proud of that. We are here 26 years after from the Spitak earthquake in Northern Armenia that caused such a tragedy. That was a major disaster that would test any country, but I think today Armenians are much better prepared, much better aware of the hazards. The 911 emergency service is a very important part of that. Also I would like to see the positive inclusion approach of people living with disabilities, who have very unique perspective of resilience.



## **Sergej Anagnosti, Team Leader of EU funded programme on Prevention, Preparedness and Response to man-made and natural disasters (PPRD East)**

As we know the public awareness is quite important to share information especially to the general population before, during and after the event. I am glad to announce that public awareness will be one of four components of PPRD East-2 program that we will address in the next four years as we did within the previous 1<sup>st</sup> phase. We will build upon what we achieve during the phase one and we are hoping with close cooperation with national authorities to continue the work in the public awareness area. After the first conference there is achievements in public awareness in DRR in Armenia how it was a year ago and now. In the meantime, it is not only thanks to our program, but I would say that we did in our program we did a public awareness campaign again in the close cooperation with the Ministry of Emergency Situations. We had produced some of the materials especially for children. They were one of the target groups of the program and also we have developed together the documentary about the experience of the people who survived Spitak earthquake. And this is again was done with the close cooperation with the Ministry of Emergency Situations and "Emergency Channel".

## Zarina Nurmukhambetova, Communications Associate, UNOCHA



The main expectation is that with each, every disaster fewer and fewer people are affected and that more and more people know how to behave, how to minimize the losses, how to help their loved ones and then if they are affected how to come back to normalcy as soon as possible. I think that is the key, it is really a key how we are going to help those people if they don't know where to receive the aid, how they can help themselves, whom to trust, what kind of aid they can expect, what kind of aid they cannot expect. So public information, awareness of disasters, in its importance is equal to food, medical care, because all of this item might not even find their recipients, if those recipients are not aware. This is my third time in Armenia, first time I visited Yerevan two years ago and that was already HFA consultations, and that time I was already amazed how prepared Armenia was and how serious the Government is about the DRR. And now what I see is that over the year Armenia really transformed into the regional leader on DRR. I am really happy to see it, and I look forward to other countries including Central Asian countries in learning from Armenian's lessons and really being open to Armenian's experience and may be also becoming more and more serious about DRR. Armenian "Emergency Channel" NGO is unique. I think it is not only unique to this region but probably in the world. When you like that, where the information is being communicated to people and this is very catchy, very easy to understand, easy to make them in a very applicable way. So in that sense Armenia proved to be such a leader and an innovative state.



### **Ian Cameron, Civil Protection Group (CPG) civil expert**

I think public awareness is really important in communications. I came to this conference one year ago and the key things I learnt is that you have twelve seconds during an earthquake to save your life. I think knowing things in advance can help you among preparation, it is just so important - the awareness. I have been really impressed with the way Armenia has responded emergencies and speed with which you reacted. The key things you have done since 1988s is turned around negative situation to a positive situation. The aid you sent to help after earthquakes in Turkey, in Iran, in Russia, it shows how far you have developed. And I think there is a genuine believe that you want to look up the whole population. So that impressed me, I came to conference and heard about what you do with children. I think you have an education program and you are doing so much to educate children, and they will carry out that message through their families, but also through their lives. It is really impressive.



### **Tim McInerny, Danish Red Cross representative**

Public awareness is absolutely vital in reducing the risk for emergency events and communication. Awareness has three stages - before the event, during the event and after the event. But I think the most impact an effect that can have is making the public aware before the events, so they can be properly prepared and that does not means two things: making aware of the risk they might face and when should the event happen, what they can do to meet it and reduce the impact that might have on them. It has been very interesting seeing what Ministry of Emergency Situations has done in Armenia and steps they have taken communicating risks and awareness to the public. It enables the public to be better prepared and then reduce the impact they suffer. It is certainly something that we can take out and learn from.

# ABOUT “EMERGENCY CHANNEL”



## Nikolay Grigoryan

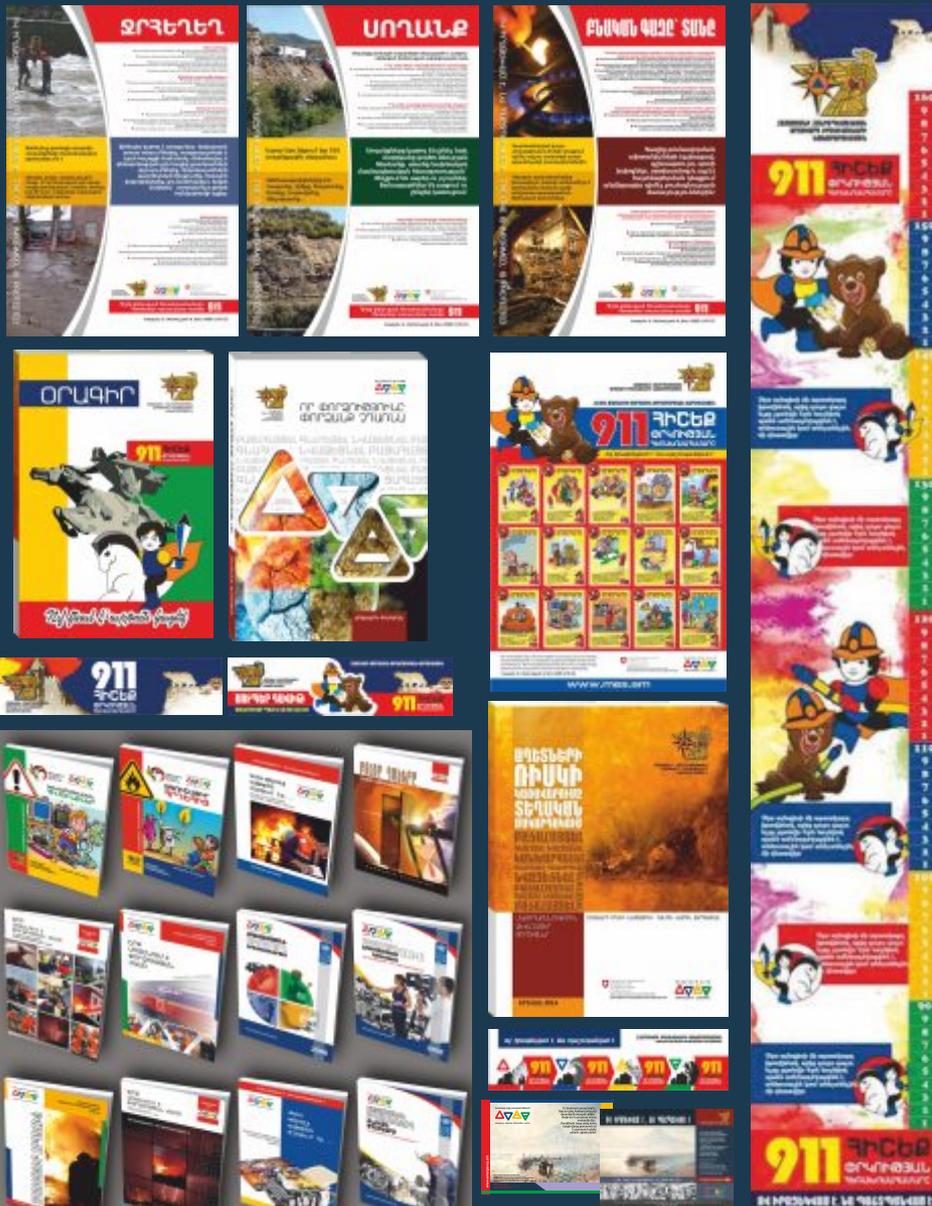
Deputy Head of Rescue Service,  
Ministry of Territorial Administration and  
Emergency Situations of Armenia, Major-General  
Head of “Emergency Channel”  
National Focal Point for HFA and Sendai

Therefore, it is of utmost importance for all the actors involved in public awareness field to bring together their expertise and experience, knowledge, skills and achievements, opinions and suggestions. Those actors are state bodies, prevention and responding organizations, civil society, international organizations and experts, crisis information managers, information responsible, mass media and information agencies.

For this purpose, “Emergency Channel” Information Center proposes to create an “emergency” network of all the actors involved in the field, as well as DRR public awareness best experience electronic library-depository.

## Emergency Channel Information Center

More than 15 years public awareness Emergency Channel Information Center operates in Armenia. The Center develops and implements emergency information state policy through its information channels: information agency, TV/radio company, Emergency weekly, web-sites and Emergency Channel training center, where trainings are conducted for journalists and press-secretaries, response organizations such as fire-fighters, rescuers, police, medicals; governmental and self-governmental bodies, representatives of NGOs and religious organizations. It is already five years “Information in emergencies and crisis PR” discipline is presented at Journalism faculties of Yerevan State and Pedagogical universities. The Center is closely cooperating with various international organizations.



Emergency Channel as public awareness best practice was presented at European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction in Macedonia, where the idea of holding such a Conference was approved.

### Emergency Channel logo

four elements – water, fire, air and earth – which emerge disasters and Emergency Channel Information Center as fifth element trying to prevent disasters, mitigate the consequences by informing people about possible risks and its reduction measures.

“The one who is informed is protected” - motto of Emergency Channel Information Center is on famous artist Ayzavovsky’s “Noah’s descending from Ararat mountain” painting.

The first informed human who saved himself, his family and the humankind in whole, whom God alarmed about the upcoming disaster – when the disaster will be, how long it will be, what consequences it will have, how to compose the salvation plan, how to form the evacuation commission, how to build the ark for salvation, how to preserve biodiversity and gender equality of those who are evacuating, how to organize air investigation and to select evacuation point.

Kids receive all the messages, stories and calls of Emergency Channel through Noah who saved humankind from disaster and hero of Armenian famous epos Sasna David at early age – Super David.

# Presentations

## **The most important lesson of Spitak earthquake: public awareness**

Mr. Nikolay Grigoryan, HFA Focal Point, Major-General

## **From vulnerable group – a partner. People with Disabilities in Disaster Risk Management**

Ms. Nelli Charchyan, 911 service of MES RA

## **Lessons Learned from the Great East Japan Earthquake**

Mr. Kenji Yano, JICA Expert Team Leader for Disaster Management Project

## **PPRD East Programme & Public Awareness**

Mr. Sergej Anagnosti, Team Leader of EU founded programme on Prevention, Preparedness and Response to man-made and natural disasters (PPRD East)

## **NATO information policy: Budapest guidelines**

Mr. Ian Cameron, Civil Protection Group (CPG) civil expert

## **Red Cross Priorities in Information and Communication**

Mr. Tim McInerny, Danish Red Cross representative

## **Information Management in Case of the Crisis with Migration Dimensions**

Ms. Ilona Ter-Minasyan, Head of Office, International Organization for Migration, Mission in Armenia

## **WHO information policy and guidelines**

Mr. Tatoul Hakobyan, WHO representative in Armenia

## **Working in Partnership to Effectively Prepare for Emergency Situations**

Major Dominic Maxwell-Batten, Emergency Planning Officer, Devon County Council, UK

## **Information of the Population - Risk and Crisis Communication**

Ms. Ursula Funch, Head of the division for Public and Press relations and Information of the Population, German Federal office of Civil Protection and Disaster Assistance, Germany

## **Experience of China**

Mr. Li Wang, Chief Strategy Officer, China National Radio

## **Experience of Georgia**

Mr. Giorgi Amashuri, Emergency Department, Georgia

## **DRR and Risk Information**

Mr. Andrew McElroy, Communication Officer, UNISDR

## **Integrations of DRR Indicators and post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals**

Mr. Ara Nazinyan, the UNDP Lead National Expert

## **Towards the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, 14 to 18 March 2015, Sendai, Japan**

Mr. Neil McFarlane, UNISDR Director a.i.

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ARNAP  
DRR NATIONAL PLATFORM



osce



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
Confédération suisse  
Confederazione Svizzera  
Confederaziun svizra  
Federal Department of Foreign Affairs FDFA  
Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC

unicef



1st

INTERNATIONAL  
CONFERENCE  
10-11 March 2015

2nd

INTERNATIONAL  
CONFERENCE  
10-11 March 2014



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