

2. Government Practices and Coordination

To the extent disaster risk reduction is identified as a political responsibility, greater sustained commitment to the support of long-term national development objectives can be obtained. Policy direction and operational capabilities must be developed in multiple areas of governance and civil society in order to build a culture of prevention that can be extended to future generations.



Disaster risk reduction as a concept is interpreted differently among the Central Asian countries. However most of governmental institutions concentrate on emergency services associated with post-disaster rescue, relief, reconstruction, and rehabilitation, as well as maintaining public law and order during times of crisis.

Disaster management must be the responsibility of governments. Policies and legal foundations which help assure legitimacy, must be in place in order to root the efficacy of professional and human resources available on the ground. The goal should be to systematically relate local decision-making processes with larger administrative and resource capabilities, such as those devised in provincial or national disaster plans and risk reduction strategies. Capable centralized command can certainly enhance disaster management and response, but effectiveness for both response and risk reduction depends on coordination throughout the governmental hierarchy.

Where the decentralization of power and devolution of governing authority is pursued, risk reduction at the local level also needs to be encouraged and supported. Governments have a vital role to play in disaster risk management, ideally serving as a “central impulse” and coordination body. Government is not only a coordinating body for various governmental institutions; ideally, it should also provide guidelines for international agencies.

The Hyogo Framework for Action: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters, outcome of the World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, suggests that numerous categories of stakeholders participate in the development of any national strategies for disaster risk reduction. This should be the basis of the government’s guidelines for donor agencies. A system for reviewing national progress, including monitoring and cost benefit analyses, would then be the responsibility of the national government. National coordination mechanisms for implementation would also facilitate monitoring of the progress made.

2. Government Practices and Coordination

Local Risk Management in Earthquake Zones of Kazakhstan



United Nations Development Program
(Kazakhstan)



Ministry of Emergencies, Republic of Kazakhstan



National Red Crescent Society of Kazakhstan

Success Story: The project is a vivid example of a joint initiative implemented by the Ministry of Emergencies of the Republic of Kazakhstan with the support of the United Nations Development Program, National Red Crescent Society, and other agencies, including UNICEF, ADRC, UN OCHA, and GEF. The project is aimed at strengthening the capacity of local communities in disaster preparedness and early warning through the development of knowledge and skills required for effective disaster mitigation.

In one of the biggest cities in Central Asia, Almaty, 200,000 residents, at least, live in buildings that are recognized as vulnerable to seismic hazards, which most probably would be destroyed in an earthquake over 9 in magnitude. Social infrastructure, including schools, hospitals, and other facilities are similarly vulnerable. Considering the scale of the expected seismic danger and the unknown timing, it was logical to focus on building the capacity of local organizations. Schools came first. Therefore, besides the increased awareness of the decision-makers and the general public, the project paid utmost attention to schools and developed specific training materials for school children in several grades. Thus, special brochures were developed for primary, secondary and high school students. These were supplemented by four documentaries in Russian, Kazakh, and English languages devoted to earthquakes, mudflows, and floods. Physical training took place in summer camps, orphanages, and other institutions. Small children could both enjoy and learn from specially developed cartoons based on computer animation, and from posters and coloring books.

Most importantly, these activities were coordinated jointly by the Ministry of Education, which is responsible for approving educational modules for high school students based on an interactive methodology. Pilot training took place in August 2005 in four schools in Almaty and 6 schools in southern areas of Kazakhstan. This proved to be a real commitment on behalf of the Government represented by the Ministry of Education. Everyone knows how difficult it is to find time in a “packed” school curricula. Still, child survival was given priority. This is probably the most precious part of the present success story.



2. Government Practices and Coordination



United Nations Development Program (Tajikistan)



REACT — Rapid Emergency Assessment and Coordination Team (Tajikistan)

Project Goal: Facilitate increased coordination and information sharing between agencies working in the field of disaster risk management.

Success Story: Since 2001, Tajikistan's Ministry of Emergency Situations (MoECD) has chaired the Rapid Emergency Assessment and Coordination Team (REACT), with support from the United Nations Disaster Risk Management Project (UNDRMP). REACT partners, including UN Agencies, donor organizations, and international and national NGOs operating in the area of disaster response, prevention, mitigation, and preparedness. REACT coordinates various organizations that support MoECD in assessing needs for disaster relief, and it facilitates timely and appropriate responses by the numerous assistance organizations.



REACT uses a cluster approach with 5 sector groups (food, shelter and non-food items, water and sanitation, education, health). It also has a network of regional teams. Coordination and information sharing is performed through regular and emergency meetings as well as through the www.untj.org web-site, where relevant information is available.

In addition to assessment and response, REACT has organized a series of training events in disaster management, and search and rescue methods for Government Officials. It has also successfully coordinated efforts in broader areas, including community-based mitigation and hazard mapping. It regularly promotes the participation of 50 agency representatives including donors.

REACT is unique in the Central Asian Region in its ability to rapidly coordinate timely and equitable assistance to disaster-affected communities. Poor coordination in the past had resulted in situations where a few communities received all the humanitarian aid from international agencies, while others were left alone with their problems.

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Lake Sarez Risk Mitigation Project (LSRMP)



The World Bank (Tajikistan)



Ministry of Emergencies and Civil Defense
of the Republic of Tajikistan

Success Story: The overall goal of the project is to reduce vulnerability to natural disasters in the valleys of the Bartang and Panj rivers. The dangers include the possibility of an outburst flood from Lake Sarez, which threatens four countries of Central Asia: Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan.



LSRMP is a unique project initiated by the Government of Tajikistan and implemented under the auspices of the World Bank. It aims to address both the high-impact low-probability risk of an outburst from Lake Sarez and the local-impact high-probability risk of earthquakes, debris flows, floods, avalanches, and other hazards in the same mountainous region.

The project has four components:

- Design and installation of a monitoring and warning system
- Social training and safety-related supplies
- Studies to assess possible long-term solutions
- Institutional strengthening



The LSRMP is an excellent example of expertise and ownership within a governmental institution in this case the Ministry of Emergencies and Civil Defense. The project supported extensive capacity building in the Ministry's Usoy Department, which now bears full responsibility for operation and maintenance of a technologically sophisticated Monitoring and Early Warning System

(M&EWS). The department is quite capable to take care of the system in the future. Since LSRMP is one of the first projects of this kind, it can serve an example and proof that it is not only possible but also advisable to base donor-funded projects within a government institution on the condition that it really involves its best and most capable personnel.

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Knowledge Network in Central Asia



European Commission Humanitarian Aid (ECHO)



United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (Central Asia)

Success Story: UN/ISDR Central Asia established a knowledge network between Central Asian countries supported by DIPECHO. During the Soviet times, experts from the different states used to meet on a regular basis. These meetings contributed substantially to the quality of research and development of knowledge. There still exists tremendous knowledge of disaster risk reduction in the region. However, due in part to a limited exchange during the past 15 years, this knowledge is not fully utilized.



The DIPECHO III Program included three workshops on safer building strategies and natural hazards. These workshops in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan were co-organized by UN/ISDR Central Asia, the Ministries of Education, and several universities with leading programs on building and construction in the region. The Focal Point of this knowledge network cooperated not only in preparing the workshop contents but also in writing booklets on the workshop topics.

These booklets will be used by architecture and engineering students all over the Central Asian region.

The knowledge network participants have shown great pleasure and a lot of enthusiasm in working together and keeping in touch between workshops. Now, several countries would like to include disaster risk reduction in their formal educational curricula, and to continue working together under the newly established knowledge network. Particular success has been achieved in establishing a new forum which is the basis for the project sustainability and joint efforts toward reducing disaster risk.

Lessons Learned and Practical Advice

Lessons Learned

- Disaster Risk Reduction should become part of all development strategies, including National Development Strategies (NDS) and Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRS).
- Regarding investment projects, sustainability is evidenced by true government ownership and should not depend ultimately on external funding.
- Every partner must have a voice at the negotiation table, especially in partnerships between the government, civil society, and private sector.
- It is important to ensure stakeholders' early involvement in environmental and social assessment prior to launching projects.



Practical Advice / Recommendations

- Government and non-government organizations should cooperate to develop national disaster risk reduction strategies, since the perspectives of the various stakeholders will differ significantly, and those whose perspective is missing may not be able to cooperate in implementation of the strategy.
- Disaster management agencies can enhance cooperation in risk reduction by disseminating basic information about the most likely hazards affecting a district or community.
- Understanding of building standards and codes aimed at protecting important infrastructure and other private and public assets against seismic hazards.

