

REACT Meeting Minutes

7 August 2020 (10.00 – 12.00)

Telecommuting: Zoom meeting

In-person: Dushanbe Plaza Conference Hall (4th floor)

Co-Chairs: Mr. Rustam Nazarzoda, Chairman of the Committee of Emergency Situations and Civil Defense under the Government of Tajikistan (CoES)

Ms. Sezin Sinanoglu, UN Resident Coordinator in Tajikistan

Participants: Annex I

Summary of discussion:

Welcome remarks:

The co-chairs opened the meeting by welcoming the participants.

Mr. Rustam Nazarzoda, CoES Chairman expressed his appreciation to all REACT partners for their support and cooperation, which led to tangible support and assistance to disaster affected populations. However, he mentioned that lately most of the response activities were initiated and managed bilaterally and not collectively through REACT partnership.

Ms. Sezin Sinanoglu, UNRC in Tajikistan welcomed and expressed gratitude to the Chairman of CoES for active leadership in REACT partnership. She highlighted that in times of COVID-19 pandemic, when resources are stretched globally, the existence of such a firm and functioning partnerships as REACT significantly contributes to ensuring effective and rapid response to other disasters and emergencies. Ms. Sinanoglu reported about the COVID Response Group (CRG), which was established by the international community in Tajikistan to ensure the coordination of response to COVID and highlighted that this group is strongly interconnected with the REACT partnership. She also reiterated that activities of the CRG could be significantly improved, if clearer and more predictable interface with larger national COVID response coordination structures would be established.

The co-chairs proceeded with introducing the agenda and participants.

Recent emergencies in Tajikistan – Colonel Ummatullo Fayzullozoda, the Head of Main Department on Civil Defense, CoES

- For the period of January – July 2020, 190 natural disasters of different scale occurred, which is 3,4 times less than the number of disasters that occurred during the same period of 2019 (total 654 disasters have been reported). The reported disasters resulted in 21 fatalities and economic damage of around 58 million Tajik Somoni.
- The most frequent types of disasters occurred during the reporting period were avalanches, mudflows and earthquakes.
- The largest number of disasters have been registered in the Districts of Direct Subordination (117 disasters).
- CoES has registered 56 cases of drowning during the reporting period. Almost 50% (26 cases) of drowned people, were at the age between 17-35 years old.
- Relief assistance, as well as recovery assistance provided to disaster affected populations included food and non-food items and construction materials. Resources were allocated by different state entities, as well as by international humanitarian and development partners.

- Up to date, 42 houses have been constructed in Khuroson district for those households whose houses were completely destroyed by a mudflow in May 2020 and the construction of another 25 houses is planned to be completed by August 15, 2020.

Mr. Nazarzoda the CoES Chairman summarizing the presentation highlighted that recovery operations following a mudflow in Khuroson district has been quite effective and efficient, due to strong support and collaboration between state agencies and international partners and expressed his gratitude to all the stakeholders for their strong cooperation.

Ms. Sezin Sinanoglu, UN RC, acknowledged noticeable increase in state authorities' capacities to manage and respond to disasters and reiterated readiness of international partners to support the Government in disaster risk reduction and response.

Anti-epidemiological activities of CoES in response to COVID-19 pandemic – Colonel Jamshed Kamolov, the Head of Main Department of Protection of Populations and Territories

- CoES has established an internal Commission on COVID-19 back in February 2020.
- As a member of the State Inter-Agency Task Force on COVID-19 chaired by the Prime Minister, CoES has been tasked to undertake a number of measures, including:
 - o Transportation of over 6000 people arriving to the country to the quarantine areas;
 - o Awareness raising activities, including dissemination through CoES website, brochures, videoclips and cartoons, etc;
 - o Consultation services to the population through '112' emergency hotline;
 - o Disinfection of over 1 mln m² in public places in the cities and districts of the country.
 - o Transportation of over 300 dead bodies from the hospitals by the special team of CoES staff in Dushanbe, DDS and GBAO;
 - o And etc.
- CoES requires to replenish stocks of suppliers, to ensure its preparedness in case of a potential second wave, including PPEs, disinfection equipment, disinfectants, food stocks, as well as vehicles for transportation of dead bodies.

During the discussion, participants commended the important role and activities undertaken by the CoES and agreed that Risk Communication should be further increased and improved, as it proved to be one of the few effective preventive measures. Furthermore, discussing the preparedness of schools, it was agreed that safety of the schoolchildren is of utmost importance and it was suggested that admission of schoolchildren to schools should fully rely on readiness of each separate school. School safety certification should be strongly followed. Talking about the disinfection of public places, everybody agreed that the availability of chlorine stocks for treatment of drinking water should be prioritized, to avoid rise of new emergencies – such as water borne diseases.

CoES/REACT COVID-19 Humanitarian Emergency Response Strategy – Mr. Azam Rahimzoda, the Deputy Head of International Department, CoES

To ensure joint and coordinated preparedness of the REACT partnership, in April 2020, CoES has prepared a draft CoES/REACT COVID-19 Humanitarian Emergency Response Strategy, which outlines the four key objectives for the Committee of Emergencies and Civil Defence, including: support to the Ministry of Health Medical Response, support disease surveillance and economic emergency reporting, provision of humanitarian assistance and support to ensure social distancing.

Following usual consultative and coordinated approach applied in REACT, CoES initiated and facilitated the following consultations:

- Initial review of the document by REACT partners, including representatives of relevant Ministries and Agencies during extraordinary REACT meeting, on April 15, 2020;
- On-line review and endorsement of the Strategy by REACT partners in early June 2020;
- Submission of the Strategy by the CoES to the Prime Minister of the Republic of Tajikistan through a formal letter, in mid-June 2020;

- Following advise/instructions of the Prime Minister, submission of the Strategy to the relevant Ministries and Agencies for review and feedbacks by end of June 2020.
- Up to date, CoES has received “supportive” official feedbacks from: Ministry of Health and Social Protection, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Education and science, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, State Committee on National Security, State Committee on Investments and state property.

It was pointed that implementation of the Strategy has been started by CoES and number of REACT partners. AKAH has been one of the key partners, which continues implementation of the Strategy throughout the country. Mr. Najib Yaminov, the Head of Emergency Management Department of AKAH provided a brief overview of the joint CoES – AKAH COVID response activities, including (but not limited to):

- Involving top Tajikistan influencers and community based volunteers to awareness raising campaigns;
- Provision of supplies and equipment to Departments of Health in GBAO, Khatlon and Sughd oblasts and establishment of emergency field hospitals in GBAO districts;
- Building the capacities and improving the knowledge of frontline responders to respond rapidly & efficiently to the threat of Covid while also protecting their own lives;
- Provision of food assistance to the most vulnerable population;

AKAH continues its support and apart from other on-going initiatives, plans to launch cash and food for work initiatives and further supporting regional REACT platform in GBAO.

Ms. Sezin Sinanoglu summarizing the presentation, underlined the role of the volunteers during the COVID crisis and pointed out that the great work undertaken by the volunteers is well acknowledged.

Mr. Rustam Nazarzoda suggested to call an extraordinary REACT meeting, inviting relevant REACT partners and state agencies to discuss implementation Action Plan of the Strategy, once it is fully endorsed by the Government (Prime Minister’s office).

Overview of COVID-19 response projects of development and humanitarian – Ms. Shahlo Rahimova, National Disaster Response Adviser, OCHA/REACT Secretariat

In efforts to improve coordination and information sharing among the partners, OCHA has started the compilation of “Who, What, Where” (3W) database of COVID-19 response projects funded by international development and humanitarian partners. Up to date around 22 organizations (Governmental Organizations, IFIs, UN Agencies, International NGOs and Red Cross and Red Crescent movement) have provided information on allocated funding and reported in total 147 projects with a total budget of over 250 mln USD.

The majority of the reported projects are implemented in the Health Sector (over 50% of total quantity and cost) and the remaining projects are implemented by the sectors of: agriculture, food security and nutrition, education, WASH, social protection, risk communication and community engagement, coordination and logistics.

Reported projects/interventions include those, which were launched and allocated specifically for COVID response, as well as those development projects, which have been repurposed/reprogrammed to address COVID related needs.

All REACT partners were invited to provide information to be integrated into the database, to ensure full coverage. It was also mentioned that the database will be regularly updated and once information is fully cleared and agreed by contributing agencies will be publicly shared (hosting web-platforms to identified and confirmed at later stage).

Closing remarks

The co-chairs adjourned the meeting by thanking the participants and highlighting the following:

- Considering many uncertainties ahead in times of COVID pandemic, each of us should be vigilant and supportive of each other;
- Risk communication, community and victims engagements should be strengthened, especially considering upcoming winter season posing additional risks, as well as opening of the schools;

- As pandemic caused not only a health crisis, but caused strong negative socio-economic implications, partners are invited to embrace “build back better” concept into all the response interventions.s