

Minutes

REACT Heads of Agencies (Strategic level) Meeting

Date: 01 August 2023
Time: 10:15 – 11:45
Venue: CoES Training Center

Co-Chairs: Mr. Rustam Nazarzoda, Chairperson of the Committee for Emergency Situations and Civil Defense (CoES)
Ms. Parvathy Ramaswami, UN Resident Coordinator

Agenda of the Meeting:

1. Introduction by Co-Chairs
2. Asian Conference on Disaster Reduction ACDR -2023, 20/10/2023, Dushanbe (CoES)
3. Implementation of the Early Warnings for All Initiative (EW4All) in Tajikistan (CoES/UNDRR)
4. Results of Simulation Exercises in J. Balkhi district in May 2023 and Shahrinav district in July 2023 (UNHCR, UNICEF, CoES)
5. Presentation of the book "Encyclopedia of Emergency Situations" (CoES)
6. Wrap-up by Co-Chairs

Agenda 1: Introduction by Co-Chairs

Mr. Rustam Nazarzoda and Ms. Parvathy Ramaswami opened the meeting by welcoming the participants and thanking them for attending.

Mr. Rustam Nazarzoda made a speech. He reminded everyone that the main task of REACT is to prepare for disasters and provide timely and effective assistance to the affected population. He then informed the group that there have been 475 natural hazard events in the country since the beginning of the year, of which 36 have been natural disasters. These disasters have caused damage to the tune of 30 million Tajik Somoni to the population and the economy. In particular, 470 residential houses were destroyed or damaged in natural disasters. Of these, 28 houses were completely destroyed, 73 were partially damaged, and 369 were slightly damaged. Agriculture, roads, irrigation, and electricity systems were also damaged. Unfortunately, 30 people died as a result of the natural disasters. Mr. Rustam Nazarzoda stressed the importance of speeding up the implementation of the activities under the Medium-Term State Program for the Protection of Population and Territories from Emergencies for 2023-2028, which was approved at the end of 2022. Fourteen organizations have already begun to implement the activities of this program.

Mr. Rustam Nazarzoda informed the participants that one of the main challenges in responding to natural disasters such as floods and mudslides is the lack or insufficient amount of fuel and lubricants for debris removal. He urged REACT partners to consider having an emergency stock of fuel and lubricants in the country. This issue was raised in previous REACT meetings but has not yet been resolved.

Mr. Rustam Nazarzoda also expressed concern over the level of engagement of REACT partners in implementing actions agreed during REACT meetings and he requested that partners be more engaged and active in these efforts.

Mr. Rustam Nazarzoda informed the participants that CoES plans to hold the next Asian Conference on Disaster Reduction (ACDR) in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, on 20 October 2023. This conference will be an opportunity to strengthen regional and international cooperation in disaster risk reduction. He invited the partners to actively participate in ACDR-planned events and contribute to the preparation and holding of the event.

Ms. Parvathy Ramaswami welcomed all the participants and expressed her appreciation of the work of REACT and the leadership of CoES. She emphasized the importance of climate change impact to the country and the increase in the frequency of natural hazards and disasters. She further stressed the importance of early warning, preparedness and response and informed the participants that Tajikistan is one of the 30 countries selected for the UNSGs initiative of Early Warnings for All (EW4All), which will be further elaborated as part of today's meeting. Ms. Parvathy Ramaswami also requested the REACT partners to contribute their expertise, knowledge and resources to strengthen the DRR work in Tajikistan.

Agenda 2: Asian Conference on Disaster Reduction ACDR -2023

Mr. Jamshed Kamolzoda, the Head of the Population and Territory Protection Department of the CoES, presented the program of the upcoming Asian Conference on Disaster Reduction 2023 (ACDR-2023). The ACDR-2023 will be held on 20 October 2023, at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. The conference's main topic is "Efficient implementation of disaster risk reduction through digital transformation." There will be two separate sessions: "Innovative Solutions for Sustainable Societies: DRR Technologies for Earthquakes and Geological Hazards" and "Adapting to Climate Change: Innovative Approaches to Monitoring and Response to Glacial Lake Outburst and Flooding." The organizers of the ACDR-2023 are CoES, the Asian Disaster Reduction Center (ADRC), and the Office of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Government of Japan. 70-100 people are expected to participate in the event, including representatives from ADRC member countries.

Agenda 3: Implementation of the Early Warnings for All Initiative (EW4All) in Tajikistan

Mr. Dilshod Kodirov, UNDRR Programme Officer in Tajikistan, presented the Early Warnings for All (EW4All) Initiative to the participants. EW4All Initiative is focused on 30 countries in its first phase, which includes Tajikistan. Countries were selected based on several factors, including their high exposure to natural hazards, vulnerability to disasters, and commitment to early warnings.

The EW4All initiative is a United Nations-led effort to ensure that everyone on Earth is covered by an early warning system by 2027. The initiative is co-led by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), and a number of other UN agencies and partners support it. EW4All aims to strengthen early warning systems for all hazards, including natural hazards such as floods, storms, and earthquakes, as well as man-made hazards such as chemical spills and nuclear accidents. The initiative also seeks to improve the coordination of early warning systems across different sectors, such as health, agriculture, and transportation.

The EW4All Initiative is built around four fundamental pillars:

1. **Risk knowledge:** Systematically collect risk data and undertake risk assessments to improve risk understanding. In Tajikistan, this pillar will be led by CoES and UNDRR.

2. **Observations and forecasting:** Develop hazard monitoring and early warning services. In Tajikistan, this pillar will be led by Committee on Environmental Protection (CoEP) and WMO.
3. **Dissemination and communication:** Communicate risk information and early warnings. In Tajikistan, this pillar will be led by the Committee of TV and Radio, Communication Service, and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU).
4. **Preparedness and response:** Build national and community response capabilities. In Tajikistan, this pillar will be led by IFRC. The national partner to lead the pillar has not been identified yet. But considering the nature of the pillar, Mr. Dilshod Kodirov (UNDRR) suggested that CoES take the lead on it. Further discussions will be held in this regard.

Mr. Dilshod Kodirov (UNDRR) informed the participants about the upcoming EW4All Launch and Multi-stakeholder Consultation Workshop, which will be held on 29-30 August 2023. The workshop will allow stakeholders to discuss and plan the implementation of the EW4All initiative in Tajikistan. The workshop will have sessions on stakeholders mapping, identifying national coordination mechanisms for inter-pillar collaboration, running gap analysis using the checklist of core capabilities, and developing a roadmap for joint actions.

Agenda 4: Results of Simulation Exercises in J. Balkhi district in May 2023 and Shahrinav district in July 2023

Mr. Khisrav Kholov, Assistant Protection Officer of UNHCR, and Mr. Nangar Soomro, Chief of the Social Policy Section of UNICEF, presented the reflections and lessons learnt from the SimEx in Balkhi district. The SimEX theme was Internal displacement due to a Natural Disaster and Refugee Influx from Neighboring Countries.

The main points are:

- The government took ownership of the response, and government agencies arrived on site in a timely manner.
- There was successful cooperation with local authorities, and all tasks were completed according to the scenarios.
- There was proper coordination between actors and the government, the population was quickly mobilized, and threats in the settlement were rapidly responded to.
- However, there was a lack of proper calculations for water and food supplies, the monitoring and evaluation mechanism was inadequate, and there was a lack of proper crowd control and registration.
- There was also a lack of proper camp management, case management/social workers, and two-way communication (absence of a radio room).

Further, Mr. Khurshed Valizoda (CoES) presented the reflections and lessons learnt from SimEx in Shahrinav district.

The main points are:

- The Emergency Committee was able to manage the forces and means of the Single State System of the Republic of Tajikistan for the prevention and relief of emergency situations and territorial subsystems in emergency situations.
- There was successful interaction between ministries, agencies and local authorities.
- Members of the territorial subsystems of the Single State System of the Republic of Tajikistan knew their tasks and performed them clearly.
- The Headquarter and Crisis Management Center of the Committee responded rapidly to threats in places of temporary evacuation of the population.

- A warehouse with food and water supplies for the evacuated population was organized.
- The issue of control of registration of the evacuated population was adjusted.
- A mechanism for monitoring and assessing damage was established with the help of social structures and international organizations.
- An online demonstration of what is happening (the actions of authorized bodies, international organizations, and NGOs) in the camp was organized with the help of drones and video cameras.
- Two-way reliable communication was established with the Camp Management Center and members of the Single State System of the Republic of Tajikistan in the camp.
- Coordinated cooperation between state bodies, international and non-governmental organizations was established.
- All tasks were practically worked out according to the exercise scenario.
- Lack of video communication from the place of the temporary evacuation of the population with the Crisis Management Center of the CoES.
- Shortcomings in coordinating actions between government agencies, the REACT rapid response team, and international and non-governmental organizations during emergencies.

Mr. Rustam Nazarzoda recommended that at least 3-4 joint exercises be conducted annually to improve coordination and cooperation between government agencies and the REACT Partners during the liquidation of the consequences of an emergency. These exercises should focus on developing a common understanding of roles and responsibilities and testing communication and coordination procedures. They should also be designed to identify and address any potential gaps in the emergency response system.

Agenda 5: Presentation of the book "Encyclopedia of Emergency Situations"

Mr. Shafiev (CoES) presented the Encyclopedia of Emergency Situations. The encyclopedia is a comprehensive resource that provides analytical and scientific articles on emergency situations, natural disasters, and man-made disasters. It was developed at a high scientific level in cooperation with the National Encyclopedia of Tajikistan, the only official and well-known institution for developing encyclopedias in Tajikistan.

The CoES plans to print 1,000 copies of the encyclopedia and distribute them free of charge to popular libraries across Tajikistan and neighboring Uzbekistan. The total cost for publishing the encyclopedia is approximately between USD 26,000 and 27,000. This includes the cost of writing, editing, production, proofreading, printing, and applicable taxes. Mr. Shafiev requested the REACT partners to consider funding the publication of the encyclopedia.

Agenda 6: Wrap-up by Co-Chairs

Mr. Rustam Nazarzoda and Ms. Parvathy Ramasvami (Co-Chairs) thanked the participants for taking the time to attend the meeting and for their active participation.

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