

Best Practice in Disaster Preparedness and Response from DIPECHO Partners in Tajikistan

July 2013



Puppets are used to explain how to react during a disaster.
Photo credit: Eraj Asaduloev

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INTRODUCTION

Tajikistan is highly vulnerable to natural disasters - often resulting in human and economic loss. The country is affected by seismic activity and relatively frequent earthquakes, mudslides, and floods. There are also non-seismic hazards such as landslides caused by the erosion of ravines.

The country is already feeling the impact of climate change, with increasing incidences of extreme weather such as floods and droughts. Temperatures have risen by around 1 °C and Tajikistan's glaciers are melting at an alarming rate. Thousands of glaciers (20 per cent) have already melted and thousands more will melt (another 20-30 per cent) in the next few decades. Other issues impacting on incidences and severity of natural disasters include inadequate land use planning and poor natural resource management. Badly maintained infrastructure, loss of traditional knowledge and environmental degradation also add significantly to the increasing risk of disasters.

The Government of Tajikistan has worked in partnership with international organisations to help people prepare for and respond to disasters. This magazine showcases examples of good practice from projects funded by DIPECHO VII in Tajikistan. The following organizations have contributed to the magazine: Oxfam, UNICEF, WHO, Mercy Corps and Welthungerhilfe, ACTED, and Focus.

CONTRIBUTERS

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Oxfam - Village Disaster Management Groups (VDMG)

VDMGs provide essential assistance during the initial aftermath of a disaster. The groups are particularly important as it often takes a few hours before external assistance arrives.

The Committee of Emergency Situations and Civil Defense (CoES) in Kulyab zone and Oxfam have established Village Disaster Management Groups (VDMG). In 2010 the Kulyab groups successfully evacuated people in a neighbouring village, which was hit by floods.

Members are elected based on their knowledge and experience. VDMG members are assigned roles to carry out in the event of a disaster. Typical roles include providing transportation, drinking water, and evacuating people and animals. Rescuing livestock helps protect peoples' livelihoods in the difficult time following a disaster. VDMG members also participate in simulation exercises to ensure people are confident in their roles.

Nematulloev Nazrishoh and his wife are both teachers. Nazrishoh has been a member of the VDMG in Momandiyon village in Muminabad district for one year. The area is particularly vulnerable to disasters such as floods and mudflows. Nazrishoh explains why the VDMG is important for his village.

'The VDMG is very important for us as our village is under risk – at risk from fire, flood and other disasters. The worst thing that happened was in 1976, there was a flood, many people lost their animals. Even I saved one person from the water. So we should always be prepared, and ready for preventing and responding to disasters.'



'Coordination and clear roles can save lives during a disaster. Everybody in our group has a role and they know their responsibilities.'

Oxfam and the CoES supported the VDMG to organise a simulation exercise. But Nazrishoh has taken the initiative of organising additional simulation exercises.

'People in the village are keen to participate in the simulation exercises as they understand the very real risks they face.'

'Me and my wife are teachers. School children need to be ready for disasters, so I decided to organise a simulation exercise in school, it's not in Oxfam's target area, but I organised a simulation exercise.'

Nazrishoh liked Oxfam's approach to community mobilisation.

'I know from my own experience that it isn't easy to gather people and conduct meetings. Oxfam started with very small groups, and slowly slowly more people started coming. When we invite people to meetings now, people want to go, there's interest in village life and meetings.'

COMMUNITY MOBILISATION



A young gypsy girl attending an Oxfam disaster preparedness training in Sari Parom village, Kulyab.
Photo credit: Ruby Wright

Oxfam - Women Disaster Preparedness Groups (WDPG)

Women play a key role in their community's resilience to disasters, as they are often responsible for their family's health and have connections to social networks. Therefore, the role of women needs to be acknowledged and enhanced.

Oxfam first established WDPGs in early 2008 and we have continued to establish groups in the current phase of DIPECHO. The purpose of the WDPGs is to build the capacity of women on disaster awareness issues so they can disseminate this knowledge to the wider community. The groups also receive training from the Red Crescent Society on how to provide psychological support. The groups help minimise the anxiety caused by disasters as it's important that people aren't isolated during an emergency.

In certain villages, there is a strong conservative element which prohibits interaction between men and women. The WDPG helps bridge the information gap by specifically targeting women.

The WDPGs receive first aid training from the Red Crescent Society, and sanitation training from Kulyab's Regional CoES and the Head of Population and Territory Protection Department.

Each group has around ten members, including a head of the group. The groups consist of women from different areas of the community and varied professional backgrounds.

Zaynab Rahmonova is 60 years old and has five daughters and five sons. Three of her sons have left to find work in Russia as there are few employment opportunities in Laghmon Village, Kulyab.



Zaynab is a member of a WDPG. The group recently received training on disaster reduction and preparedness. The main disasters faced by the community are mudflows and floods. As an active member of the WDPG, Zaynab has also been provided with a first aid kit. Zaynab says that she now knows what to do when such disasters happen.

'First we evacuate our own family to a safer place. We use a megaphone given to us by Oxfam. We warn the other villagers. We carry our documents like passports, birth certificates with us.'

'There are a number of villagers who have been given specific roles. My role is to provide clean and safe drinking water.'

Zaynab is also responsible for training people. She says,



‘Training people is always difficult. I manage to convince them that this is not a game and that disasters can affect anybody.’

Zaynab was an active speaker at Oxfam’s conference ‘Improving the Working Methods of Women’s Groups Amongst Communities in the Framework of DRR’ on the 24th of April 2013. The conference was well attended and had the additional benefit of bringing the gypsy and Tajik communities together. Zaynab says,

‘We would like to thank Oxfam for inviting representatives from the gypsy community. We learnt that they are going through a lot of hardship. The gypsies mentioned that they had no school, no hospitals, and that bridges are broken. It was really sad for me to learn about their conditions.’

Zaynab’s observations reinforce the importance of working with women and ethnic minorities. When people meet minority groups (such as gypsies) on an equal footing, such as at this meeting, there’s an opportunity to challenge prejudices.



Zaynab and her first aid kit. Photo credit: Ruby Wright.

Oxfam – Working with Ethnic Minorities

Natural disasters are devastating for any group, but vulnerable groups of people, including ethnic minorities, are at even greater risk. Therefore, it's essential that DRR programmes work with ethnic minorities.

Tajikistan is host to ethnic minorities from Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan. There is also a gypsy population - a recognised ethnic minority in Tajikistan. People from ethnic minority groups are generally vulnerable to discrimination and are often excluded from fully taking part in the economic, political and social life of their countries.

Oxfam's DRR community mobilisation work involves gypsy communities: a group which faces discrimination and marginalisation in Tajikistan.

In May 2010, Oxfam in cooperation with the Committee of Emergency Situations and Civil Defense (CoES) of Vose district, established and trained Village Disaster Management Groups (VDMG).

A VDMG was established in Sari Parom village—a community with a large gypsy population. The village's location on the Surkhob river makes it vulnerable to floods and mudflows.



Fotima and her family outside her home. Photo credit: Ruby Wright.



Puppets are used to demonstrate what to do in the event of a disaster.
Photo credit: Ruby Wright.

Fotima Rosimova is 23 years old, she is married and has five children aged from five months to seven years old. Fotima is from the gypsy community. She lives in Sari Parom village. Fotima is a member of a VDMG and trains other villagers about disaster preparedness and risk reduction. Fotima says,

‘Thanks to the trainings I can assist the villagers with basic first aid, for example nose bleeds, minor burns or cuts. Even when someone has fractured leg or arm I can do basic first aid before they take him or her to the hospital.’

Oxfam has trained communities how to react to disasters through conducting puppet shows. Fotima says,

‘Now I know what to do when there is a flood. I will take my children, important documents, clothes and basic food and go up to the hills and during earthquakes we should not stand near walls, we need to be outside and look for a safe place.’

‘Oxfam has given loud speakers to my father in law which is used to make announcement or warn the villagers when there are any flood or any disasters.’

‘Since I have never been to a school I did not know any of those things. Now I’m happy that we have learnt a lot from Oxfam.’

Focus - Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)

CERTs receive basic first aid and search and rescue training, and are equipped to play a vital role not only in the prevention of any threats during a disaster, but also assist their neighbours in their daily lives.

On the 15th of March 2012, heavy snowfall began and continued throughout the night. Focus sent a Community Emergency Response Team (CERT), advising communities to stock food for at least five days, to ensure that 'go-bags' were ready, to review the evacuation routes and safe havens identified in the Village Disaster Management Plans (VDMPs) and to ensure that the Codan radios were working.

The next morning, CERTs in all districts of the Gorno-Badakhshan province (GBAO) were contacted via phone and Codan radio, and were requested to stay on alert. The CERTs advised all individuals living in possible avalanche zones to evacuate their homes and move to a safer location for four to five days. Within two hours, the first avalanche hit Khorog, a town of 30,000 residents high up in the Pamir mountains. Over the next four days, 52 avalanches struck across GBAO - 19 of them in residential areas, damaging and destroying several houses, footbridges and other infrastructure and resulting in one death. The subsequent snow-melt resulted in multiple mudflows.

CERTs were on standby during the avalanches and mudflows. In total, 300 CERT volunteers responded to the disasters. Qayosov's house was partially damaged during the disasters. He expressed his gratitude the FOCUS trained CERTs.

'It would have been impossible to cope with that amount of snow without Focus and its teams. The CERTs helped clear up the snow and assisted with the rehabilitation of my house too.'

One neighbourhood managed to avoid the avalanches altogether due to the CERT warnings and a €9,000 mitigation initiative carried out in 2009 under the DIPECHO V project. The terracing of the hill slope and construction of a protective wall sheltered homes which were directly in the path of the avalanche. This allowed the community to escape unscathed and saved assets worth over €330,000: a significant impact for a small investment.

The seven DIPECHO projects have built the capacity of communities, government officials and Focus staff. This capacity building has resulted in communities which are more resilient and able to response to natural hazards - protecting lives, livelihoods and assets.

These stories highlight the positive impact of the various DIPECHO projects, which include mitigation projects, distribution of Codan radios, identification of escape routes and safe havens, development of VDMPs and awareness techniques for communities.

The Disaster Response Team which was first tried under DIPECHO I is the glue which links all of this work together. The idea was





Villagers are diverting the water and clearing the blockage. Photo credit: Focus.

to establish a group of 10 active members who would assist in any emergency situation at village level before external help arrives. The group provides basic first aid, search and rescue, evacuation, crowd control and organises

spontaneous volunteers. Although the initial team did not receive any formal training on hazard preparedness and response, they

used what they had learnt during Focus's VDMP training to prepare before, and respond during and after the disaster. The initial disaster response teams evolved into today's CERTs

Today, there are 59 fully trained CERTs across Tajikistan with a total of 1,770 volunteers working closely with the CoES.

Focus – Preparing Communities for Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs)

Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs) occur when a dam containing a glacial lake fails leading to sudden and potentially catastrophic flooding. Outbursts from lakes have repeatedly caused loss of human life as well as severe damage to property and infrastructure. GLOFs are significant hazards in Gorno-Badakhshan (GBAO).

Villagers of Baroj noticed that a lake had formed above their village on 29th of March 2012. They immediately contacted Focus for assistance as they recalled a GLOF wiping out an entire neighbouring village in 2002.

A local Focus senior geologist, trained through DIPECHO projects, assessed the situation and determined the threats arising from the lake. Based on the village risk assessment, hazard mapping, and disaster awareness training conducted under DIPECHO, Focus with the help of the local Community Emergency Response Team

(CERT) evacuated the community to a safe haven as identified in the Village Disaster Management Plan. When the lake started to overflow, washing away the heavy rocks and sand in its path and creating a mudflow, the CERT, guided by the geologist, drained the lake by diverting the water and clearing the blockage. The villagers were able to return home a week later once the Focus geologist and Response Manager had declared it was safe to do so.

As Alimamad Imomyorov, the village head, said,

'If Focus hadn't provided them with awareness trainings and tools to cope with disasters then it is likely that the village would have been washed away like the nearby village of Dasht, where 24 people lost their lives in 2002.'

During the eight days of mudflow and draining of the lake nobody panicked as there was a high level of awareness and understanding of how to evacuate and how to respond in a disaster. As a result of this knowledge and the CERT training there was no injuries or damage to property.



A glacial lake. Photo credit: Focus.



PUBLIC AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS



Welthungerhilfe (WHH) and Mercy Corps (MC)– Raising Public Awareness

Public awareness campaigns are a key component of disaster preparedness. The most effective public education efforts are often built around widespread campaigns. Such campaigns combine a series of messages which are distributed through a wide variety of materials, including print, radio, and television. Public awareness campaigns often run in conjunction with other community mobilisation activities.

WHH and MC's base-line Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices (KAP) survey showed that more than 80 per cent of respondents do not know how to react in case of disaster.

Almost 65 per cent of respondents don't know if their village is cooperating with other villages for disaster preparations nor whether there are community coalitions in place to coordinate disaster response.

The awareness campaigns spread key messages to large numbers of the community, thereby reinforcing the programme's dedicated training sessions which focus on reducing negative impact of natural disasters. Trainings cover family disaster planning and Solar Water Disinfection (SODIS) - low cost clean drinking water after a natural disaster.

The campaign mobilises a network of Child-to-Child (CtC) peer educators and dedicated teachers to lead the awareness campaigns in close collaboration with the programme's field staff.

Campaigns take place in teahouses or schools. Representatives from the Committee on Emergency Situations and Civil Defense (CoES) and Jamoat officials



Photo credit: Welthungerhilfe.

give speeches encouraging community member to adopt messages spread during the activity.

The campaigns combine information and entertainment to convey important messages. CtC students provide information on various topics through role-playing, lectures, and songs.

An important message is:

'Preparing for disaster starts with you!'

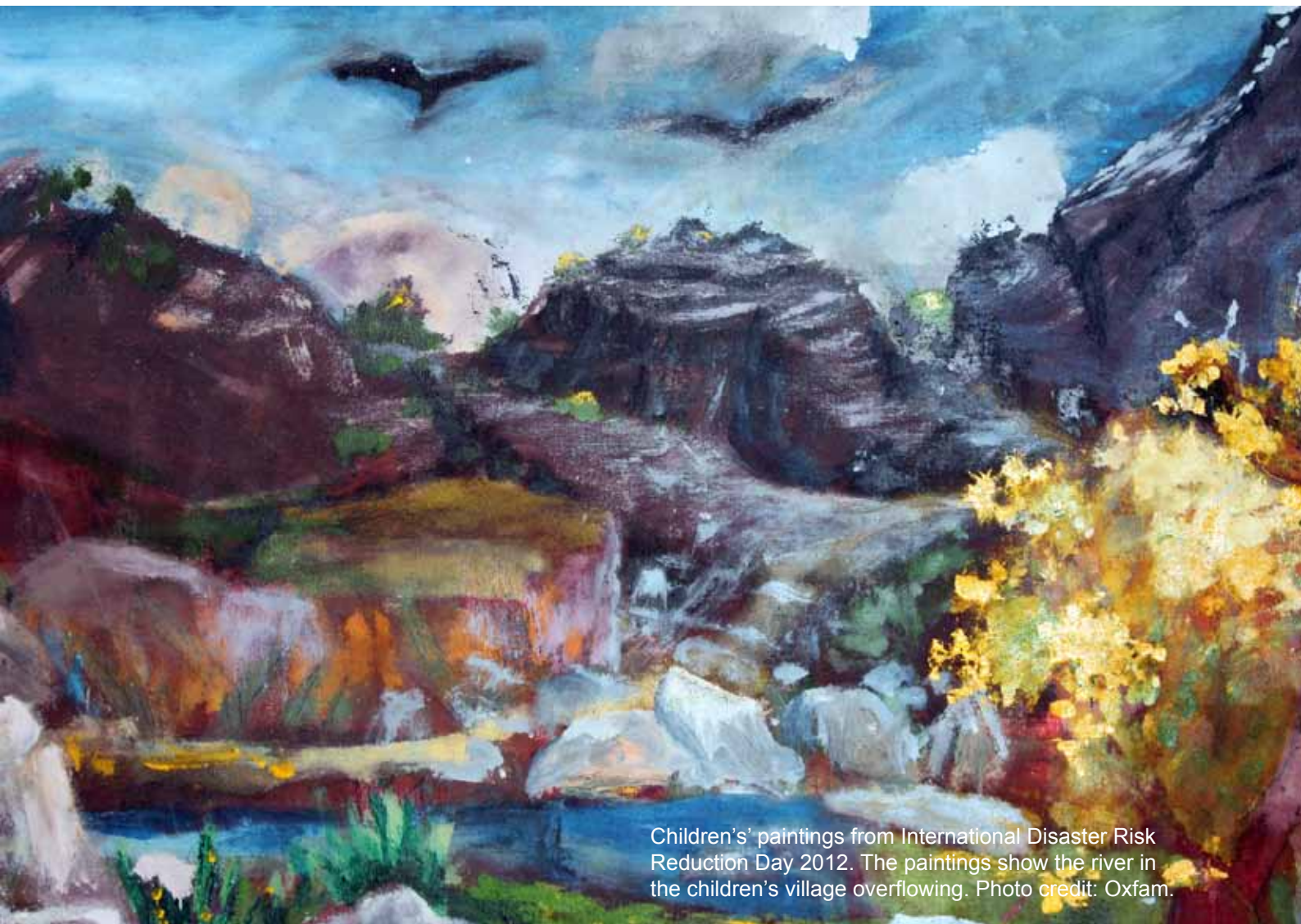
Oxfam— International Day for Disaster Preparedness

Public awareness campaigns are important for raising awareness about disaster preparedness of a large group of people. Oxfam uses posters and brochures to raise awareness of disaster preparedness and response. The messages used in Oxfam's campaigns compliment our community mobilisation work.

Oxfam and the Committee of Emergency Services and Civil Defense (CoES) in Kulyab zone celebrated the International Day for Disaster Reduction on 13 October 2012. This is a good example of Oxfam and CoES's public campaigning.

The theme of 2012 International Day for Disaster Reduction was 'Women and Girls - the [in]Visible Force of Resilience'. The event was supported by the Government of Kulyab city. Students from Kulyab University volunteered and were enthusiastic about the day.

The overall objective of the Kulyab event was to raise awareness about disaster preparedness and education. This was achieved during the day via puppet shows and competitions such as a painting contest. Public awareness was also raised through media coverage before and after the event.



Children's' paintings from International Disaster Risk Reduction Day 2012. The paintings show the river in the children's village overflowing. Photo credit: Oxfam.

EDUCATION



Children during the simulation exercise.
Photo credit: Sayfullo Nusayriev

UNICEF– Training School Teachers

Disaster preparedness should start as young as possible – including children in kindergartens. When a disaster happens children are particularly vulnerable, especially if they are in the school building at the time.

UNICEF partners with DIPECHO to implement DRR in the education sector. Under the current project, disaster risk reduction messaging will have reached more than 270 teachers in Tajikistan.

Pojei Poyon is a village in Garm District, Tajikistan. The village is particularly vulnerable to natural disasters. In May 2012, a storm hit the region. There was thunder and lightning, and falling rocks, culminating in a mudslide hitting the village. There was significant damage to structures and livestock; much of the stored food had been destroyed.

In 2012 – 2013, UNICEF, with DIPECHO funding, provided DRR preparedness and planning training to teachers in School #54 in Pojei Poyon. Training included simulation exercises and briefing on how to teach DRR messages to children. An evacuation plan was also established.

Isroilova Nazrbi is one of the trained teachers. In addition to being a teacher at School #54, she's the peoples' deputat (representative) for the community and also the leader of the village women's group. She uses UNICEF's DRR materials to train women how to prepare for mudslides and other disasters.

Their group has identified safe places in the village and local mothers now know where to take their children in case of an emergency. Nazrbi says,



Photo credit: UNICEF

'We are very grateful that UNICEF is functioning in our school and trainings are being conducted both for teachers and school children. Since our village is prone to mudslides, it is important that our village knows how to reduce the risk of disasters.'

'I spread DRR messages to my neighbours, some thirty households. By using the information materials and the knowledge I have received during Training of Trainers, I promote awareness in my neighborhood.'

UNICEF – Empowering Students

Once teachers have received DRR training—they are able to share their learning with their students. Young people will often share what they have learnt with their families.

UNICEF, with DIPECHO's support, is implementing DRR education in School #7, Shulmak Village, Garm. Saisharifov Nurullo works as a teacher at School #7. He received training as part UNICEF's DRR project. Nurullo says,

'Shulmak is situated on a hill and from both sides of the village there is a risk of mudslides. Therefore, it is important for people in this village to know how to reduce the impact of natural disasters.'

Saisharifov says that he's getting close to retirement, but his students, like Salohiddin and Faizali, can continue to bring changes in their village by spreading DRR messages.

Through Nurullo's teaching, Salohiddin and Faizali realised that a local man had decided to build a house on a piece of land that was especially prone to mudslides. They raised the issue with their teacher and convinced the man to build his house in a safer area of the village.

Nurullo says that Salohiddin and Faizali demonstrated an interest in DRR since UNICEF began implementing the education programme in their school. Salohiddin says,

'We always heard different messages about DRR, but our knowledge was never deep. This year we have learnt lots of information about earthquakes, mudslides, avalanches, landslides, and fire. Everywhere in our school we see information available on DRR: brochures, books, and banners. We then started to work with our teacher.'

Nurullo wants to ensure that his students are prepared as future leaders and has appointed Salohiddin and Faizali team leaders of different emergency groups. In February 2013, Salohiddin and Faizali participated in a schools competition about Emergency Situations - and they won. To prepare for the competition the students used the only available materials on DRR at their school: the materials that UNICEF provided under the DIPECHO project.

In partnership with the Ministry of Education and Committee on Emergency Situation, in the 2012 – 2013 school year UNICEF's DRR messages reached more than 4,500 students.

Oxfam – Kindergarten Simulation



Gulya at her school. Photo credit: Ruby Wright.

The Network of Community Disaster Preparedness and Education identified the need for a module outlining how to conduct earthquake simulation exercises (evacuating children). It was the first kindergarten simulation exercise in 25 years.

Trainers from the Committee of Emergency Situation and Civil Defense (CoES) and Oxfam first conducted a workshop for kindergarten staff on disaster preparedness and simulation exercises. It's important to build the capacity of teachers as they often don't know what to do themselves during an emergency.

Nazarov Oyahmad, the head of CoES courses in Khatlon region says,

'Today we have put the first and important step in children's protection from natural as well as man-made disasters in kindergartens. This was a joint effort of our Network partners, who have shown great enthusiasm.'

Trainers supported staff to organise and facilitate an earthquake and fire drill in their kindergarten. The head of kindergartens from ten districts in Kulyab zone attended the drill. The exercise has since been replicated in Kurghan-Tube and other districts.



Rozikova Gulchehra (Gulya) has been the head at #3 kindergarten in Kulyab city for twenty years. On the 8th of November 2012 there was an earthquake simulation at her kindergarten, it was the first of its kind in twenty five years. Gulya explains,

‘The exercise is important as children didn’t know what to do and where to go during an emergency, even me and the other teachers didn’t know what to do.’

‘We thought that if there’s an earthquake we should stand near a wall, now we know we should stand far from buildings’.

‘During the simulation even our teachers were asking why are the children not running, the trainers told them no, it should not be like this, they should not run’.

INSTITUTIONS

Oxfam - Centre for Community Disaster Preparedness Education (CCDPE)

The aim of the CCDPE is to serve as an information centre to strengthen the knowledge of communities in disaster prevention, preparedness and awareness. The idea for the CCDPE came from the Kulyab Committee of Emergency Situations and Defense (CoES), as they had no space in which to conduct trainings.

The training centre has now officially been handed over to Kulyab CoES. The head of training courses at CoES is now responsible for the centre. The training centre will be used to provide trainings for community. Trainings will cover first aid trainings and how to react during natural disasters such as earth quakes, floods and mudflows. This centre provides an opportunity for Village Disaster Management Groups to continue their activities after the project has finished. It is hoped that the centre and the trainings will help reduce loss of life and livelihoods for people affected by natural disasters in Kulyab zone.

Ghazi Kelani, Country Director of Oxfam Tajikistan gave a speech at the inauguration, he says,

‘This is the first pilot project of its kind in Tajikistan, we very much hope that the work of the centre will continue in the future under the leadership of the head of CoES in Khatlon region.’





Top left, training centre under construction, top right, the finished training centre, bottom left, Oxfam's Country Director Ghazi Kelani giving a speech during the inauguration ceremony, bottom right, the training centre being used to train kindergarten nurses. Photo credit: Oxfam.

Oxfam - Capacity Building of the Committee of Emergency Situations and Civil Defense (CoES).

When disaster strikes national and international professionals work side by side, coordinating their efforts for maximum effectiveness. Communication is essential in these joint efforts.

Oxfam has organised computer classes for CoES staff in Kurgan-Tube, Khatlon. The classes will improve the capacity of the CoES to manage databases. It's important to electronically store information relating to disasters such the number of deaths, injuries and properties damaged. It's particularly important if there are a number of NGOs assisting with one disaster, as having a centralized database helps reduce the chances of duplicating work. Risk assessments also need to be stored electronically, so that comparisons can be made with data from previous years. As a result of Oxfam's training, the CoES will electronically store data from 1998 – to the present time.

Oxfam has also organised English courses for CoES staff. Staff from various ranks participated to ensure a diffusion of languages skills. Doctors from CoES hospitals around Dushanbe are also attending the course.

In addition to conversational English and grammar, CoES staff study DRR terminology from the Sphere handbook. The classes are important as it's difficult to learn DRR terminology in a second or third language. Learning English helps CoES staff to build professional connections with their international peers. Enabling CoES staff to communicate directly with international organisations is another way to empower them. Helping to secure



ownership of initiatives and embed DRR capacity in the national context.

Nekushoeva Safarbegim has been teaching English to COES staff since the beginning of April 2013. She says,

'I have two groups, one is the beginner group and the other is the elementary group. For the beginner group I teach basic English words and vocabulary. For the elementary groups it is more detailed and more related to Disaster Risk Reduction and their field of work.'

'It is important for the COES staff to learn English because they need to work closely with all of the International Non-Governmental Organisations.'

'The relation between the COES and International organisations is mutually beneficial, the organisation both need each other's support to work, hence if the CoES staff know English it makes their job a lot easier.'



Oxfam - Network of Community Disaster Preparedness and Education

Coordination is essential for effective disaster preparedness. As in the event of a disaster agencies will need to work in close cooperation.

The Committee of Emergencies Situations and Civil Defense (CoES) and Oxfam have established a Network of Community Disaster Preparedness and Education in Khatlon. The Network consists of stakeholders responsible for disaster preparedness and education in the region. The aim of the network is to bring together relevant stakeholders under the umbrella of the CoES.

The meetings are attended by staff from the Khatlon and Kulyab CoES, the Department of Education, the Institute of Professional Development (IPD) Kulyab State University, Government of Khatlon Region, and Oxfam on a monthly basis in Kurghan-Tube, Khatlon. Nazarov Oyahmad is the Deputy Head of the Network. Oyahmad chaired July's meeting. He says,

'It's really important to bring these people together, particularly the Department of Education, because they are responsible for educating communities, kindergartens and schools.'

The network has been successful in influencing children's education. Earthquake simulation exercises have taken place in schools, universities and ambulance services. The first kindergarten simulation exercise in 25 years took place as a result of the network.

A kindergarten DRR 'module' has been developed as a result of the Network. The module provides step-by-step guidance on disaster preparedness, such as how to evacuate children during a disaster. The module is the first of its kind - combining theory and a short film. Oyahmad says that



the module is very helpful for kindergarten teachers.

'It's not easy for nurses to conduct simulation exercises, as they look after very young children. We give them the module and video so they can learn.'

The development of a 'management information system' is also a result of the network meetings. The overall objective of establishing the management information system is to strengthen the use of available information and coordination among stakeholders. The effectiveness of Disaster Risk Reduction is dependent on the availability of good data, information and analysis. Gaps in information and how this information is gathered, analysed and shared affects the quality of response and reduces the risk of a disaster.

A video conference equipment (Policom) and connection to the internet has been installed in the CoES office in Kurghan-Tube and Kulyab. The equipment will enable CoES staff to participate in virtual meetings and trainings – reducing the cost of travel expenses and improving coordination and communication. During an emergency the head of CoeS will use the Policom technology to coordinate his staff regarding the disaster response.

Oyahmad explains,

'So that there's a link between one region and another, they can share experiences between each other.'

Oxfam – Reception Centres

Communities displaced by mudflows, floods and other disasters face the urgent need to find shelter. It's important that emergency shelters are properly equipped and operated by people who are able to offer support.

Buildings are selected which are accessible to vulnerable groups such as people with disabilities and pregnant women. The RCs are connected to a water supply and sewage system. Schools, warehouses and guesthouses often make the best emergency shelters.

The RCs are stocked with non-food items such as clothing, blankets, cooking utensils, flashlights, sanitary kits and other items. The RCs provide safety and essential services such as psychological support, first aid, family reunification and specialists responsible for pregnant women and people with disabilities during the first 72 hours following a disaster.

District authorities and the managers of the buildings have played a key role in identifying and adapting RCs - with support from Oxfam and the Committee of Emergency Situations and Civil Defense (CoES). RCs have now been handed over to the CoES to ensure that the management and maintenance of the buildings is sustainable. Handing over the centres also fosters community empowerment in disaster preparedness.

Khatlon is vulnerable to natural disasters such as floods and mudflows. Sharipov Dilshod is the Head of CoES and the RC in Muminabad, Khatlon region. Dilshod describes the situation during the Kulyab floods of 2010.

‘During the last flood there was no reception centre so we used a stadium. We had stores with food and non-food items, but they were far away from the stadium.’



‘In this area there is a risk of flood as there are lots of mountain rivers. The Reception Centre is built high up, so there is less risk of flood.’

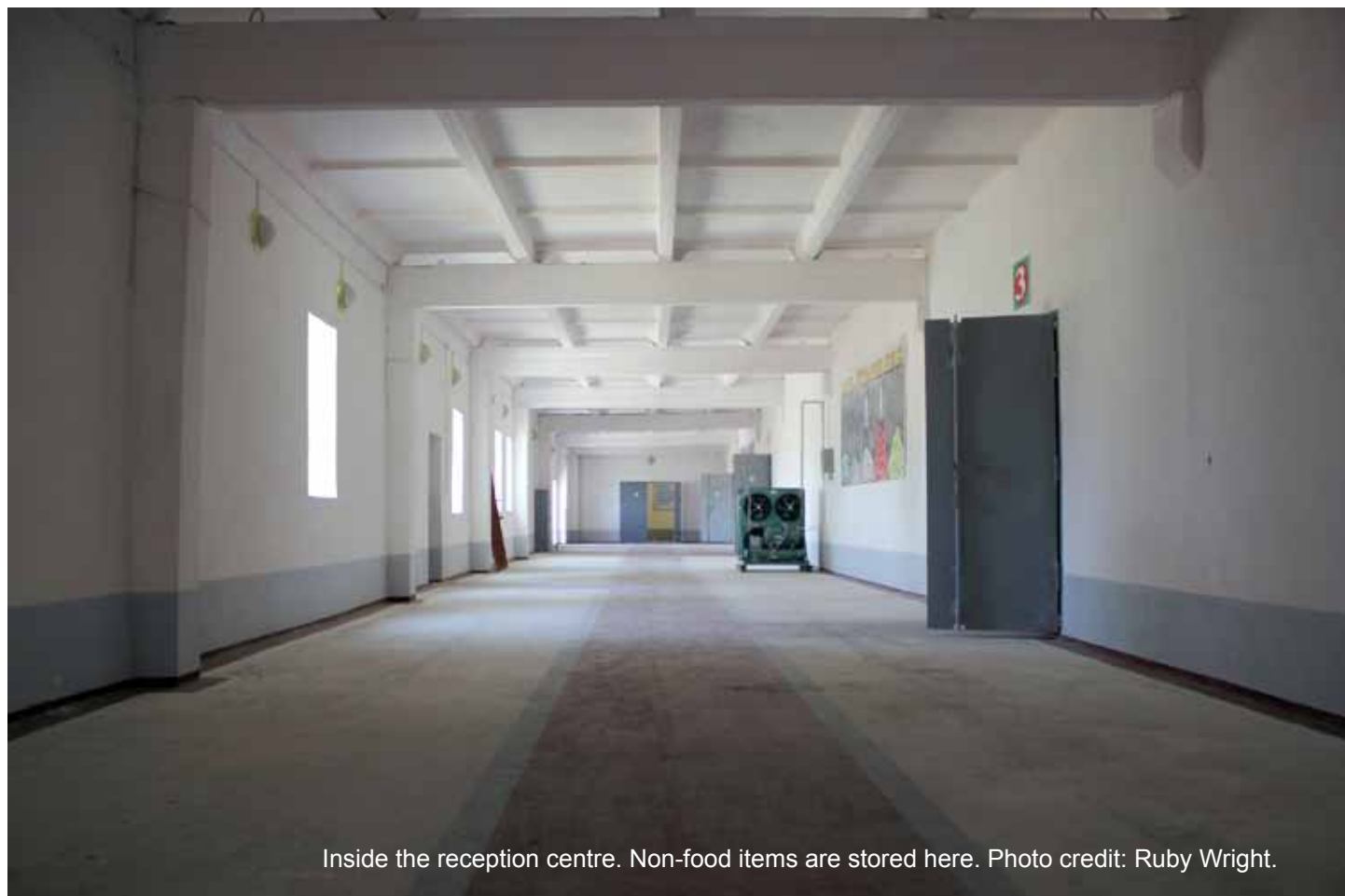
‘This centre is important because during the disaster we can take people from the risky place to this safe place and we can keep them for a few days. In total 400 people can stay here.’

Government staff are responsible for the RC during a disaster. They are provided with fluorescent vests with their role written on the back, so they are easy to identify. Oxfam trains staff regarding their roles and responsibilities. Dilshod says,

‘Oxfam trained the group and helped them develop an action plan. We also have the phone numbers of group members, so that if anything happens, we can call them. The group has also conducted simulation exercises.’

Dilshod is happy with the support he has received but he has suggestions for how international organisations can continue to support disaster preparedness in Muminabad.

‘I’d like the Reception Centre group to do more practical exercises and be more integrated with the Village Disaster Preparedness Groups.’



Inside the reception centre. Non-food items are stored here. Photo credit: Ruby Wright.



Outside the reception centre. Photo credit: Ruby Wright.

ADVOCACY

Oxfam—Legalising Volunteer Groups

Advocacy can happen on a variety of levels from local communities through to international institutions, and include a variety of methods including lobbying, media work, popular campaigning, and changing public attitudes.

Advocacy forms an essential component of Oxfam's DRR work in Tajikistan. As lasting change is only achieved through working with decision-makers.

Bukhoriev Jiyonsho has researched the legal status of Village Disaster Management Groups (VDMGs). He says,

'I began my work by researching whether the groups are legal or not. I identified that they have no status under the law.'

The group's lack of legal status is off-putting to potential members. If members are injured when assisting with a disaster they have no right to compensation or medical care. Jiyonsho explains,

'Their villages are vulnerable so people are willing to learn how to provide first aid and help during a disaster. But they need more incentives and motivation in order for membership numbers to grow.'

'In Kyrgyzstan groups register with their CoES, so in the event of a disaster they can prove they are registered with a group. This is not the case in Tajikistan, nobody is aware of groups, so if they go to the CoES,

the CoES can say - I don't know who you are, so I can't give you anything.'

Jiyonsho makes several recommendations, the first being that, 'VDMGs need to be registered with their local CoES before a disaster happens. The CoES needs to make an announcement saying that they are registering groups'.

His second recommendation is an amendment to the current law. Jiyonsho explains,

'There's a law that every citizens is responsible for other citizens. But nobody is providing this sort of assistance, and people aren't aware of their responsibilities. I recommend amending the law by adding protection of Village Disaster Management Groups.'

Jiyonsho has already had some success in advocating for change. Jiyonsho presented his findings at a regional CoES meeting



Jiyonsho presents his findings to Khatlon CoES.
Photo credit: Ruby Wright.

in Khatlon. He has taken the first steps in advocating for change at the central CoES level.

‘I’ve already influenced at central Dushanbe level, there is an interest from central CoES, and they are ready to cooperate and amend the law.’

HEALTH

World Health Organization (WHO) – Improving Coordination

Strengthening multi-agency collaboration has proven to be one of the keys to success in effectively supporting disaster risk reduction and preparedness. The WHO actively involves providers and rescuers from relevant emergency services, the health care system, and the Committee of Emergency Situations and Civil Protection and Civil Defense (CoES).

Disasters often have a significant impact on people’s health including mass loss of life. Disasters cause ill-health directly through injury and death and indirectly through the disruption of health systems, leaving people without access to medical care. Disasters often damage infrastructure which is essential for good health such as housing, sanitation and water supplies. There are severe psychological impacts associated with disasters as people face disability, loss of family members, and their homes and livelihoods.

Negative impacts to health can be avoided or reduced by disaster risk management measures. The DRR and health sector involves a combination of: hazard and vulnerability reduction to prevent and mitigate risks; preparedness; response and recovery measures.

Saving lives and helping to avoid casualties is the primary objective of the WHO’s support to disaster preparedness and emergency response initiatives with the Government of Tajikistan.

The WHO conducts a number of projects to improve coordination between medical providers, rescuers, fire services and police in emergency response. One good example is the ‘Improving Mass Casualty Management in Tajikistan’ project, which was funded by DIPECHO. The care provided to victims during a disaster can be greatly improved through training ambulance and hospital staff in mass casualty scene management and triage.

Several round-table discussions Since the start of the project in June of 2012, with the four services in charge of emergency response- health care staff, police, fire-services and rescuers, were conducted to look at response and inter-operability aspects of mass casualty incident management.

Two training workshops, including one initial training-of-trainers course were conducted with very active participation of the four services in joint planning and learning. The project is helping to raise attention of the role of para-medical rescue staff in first response care as well as establishing a culture of multi-agency response and inter-agency relationships.

ACTED-Cross Border Simulation Drills

Cross-border initiatives are particularly relevant in Central Asia, given the complicated border that runs through the highly populated Fergana Valley and Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The areas located in the territory of South Kyrgyzstan and North Tajikistan are particularly prone to natural disasters, such as landslides, mudflows, and floods. Natural disasters on one side of the border can quickly spill over into a neighbouring territory. Which is why ACTED aims to improve cross-border cooperation.

ACTED organised an International Cross Border Disaster Simulation Drill between the Ministry of Emergency Situations (MoES) in Kyrgyzstan and the Committee of Emergency Situations (CoES) in Tajikistan, as part of the DIPECHO VII project.

The simulation drill took place on the 26th of June 2013, in Kulundu Ayil Okrug at the Kulundu Cotton Mill in Leilek Rayon, Kyrgyzstan, which is on the border between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. The simulation happened over two days. The drill was based around a major earthquake hitting the border region, requiring a joint response from Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan.

The event was led by the MoES with support from CoES. Tires were set alight to simulate an emergency fire. While a convoy of over 20 vehicles arrived at the site with sirens blazing, ready to use their search and rescue skills.

ACTED played a key role in facilitating the event, working extensively with both government agencies. We met with the Office of the President in Tajikistan, and the Republican Search and Rescue Centre in Kyrgyzstan, as well as the CoES of Sugd and MoES of Batken. ACTED facilitated the

cooperation between the two countries: as a result the simulation drill was successful.

Over 220 participants attended the event, from more than ten different emergency services in both countries, including the MoES and CoES, the fire brigade, police, and army. The services all provided emergency vehicles. Over 20 fire trucks, police cars, and military supply trucks participated in the drill.

The event itself featured search and rescue demonstrations from both sides of the border. Participants simulated rescuing injured people from burning and collapsed buildings, and practiced response maneuvers and supplying vehicles.

The MoES and CoES also rehabilitated a 800 meter stretch of canal running between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The canal contained mud sediment as a result of landslides in 2005 and 2012. The canal was a threat to approximately 35 homes and 3 hectares of agricultural land: it has now been successfully cleaned by a joint Kyrgyz-Tajik team. The canal is now fully operational. Reducing the risks faced by several communities along the Tajik/Kyrgyz border.



CROSS BORDER



Practicing putting out fires caused by the after effects of earthquakes. Photo credit: ACTED.

DISASTER MITIGATION



Community repaired bridge. Photo credit: Acted.

ACTED - Mitigation Work in Uzbekishlakh Village

Mitigation work takes action before a disaster to reduce the physical vulnerability of communities. Such measures include reducing vulnerability of infrastructure such as buildings and canals. It's important that communities are involved in and take ownership of disaster mitigation activities.

In 2013, ACTED conducted eight disaster mitigation works. The mitigation works in Uzbekishlakh Village were particularly successful. Uzbekishlakh is located near to the Khojibarkigan River, in Tajikistan's Jabbor Rasulov Rayon. The village sits on the banks of the main Tamichai Mudflow Canal.

Uzbekishlakh suffers from severe and dangerous mudflows several times a year. The banks of the canal have not been repaired since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Undercutting has almost completely

destroyed the protecting channel. The wall which was supposed to prevent mudflows from destroying houses and agricultural land, has been completely washed away. In total, around 700 meters of canal have been destroyed by repeated disasters, putting the whole community at risk. So far 200 hectares of land have been affected, and 2000 households are situated in the hazard zone.

As part of its community level mitigation projects, ACTED worked with people in Uzbekishlakh to mend the mudflow channel. ACTED had initially planned to rehabilitate 500 meters of the channel, as part of the small-scale mitigation works, using bulldozers to build up the sides of the canal. However, during the project, the community used their own resources to extend the canal by an additional 100 meters. The additional work helps prevent blockages in the channel thus reducing the risk to villages.

The community also replaced the old bridge, which was a solid construction, with holes for water to pass through. These holes had become completely blocked over time, increasing the amount of debris in the channel. The community replaced the old bridge with a freestanding structure, which allows water to pass through.

The community used their own initiative to extend planned works. The project illustrates the extent to which local people were willing to invest in mitigation activities, ensuring the long term sustainability and success of the programme.

Welthungerhilfe and Mercy Corps - Enhancing self-Reliance Through Better Use of Existing Resources

The current Welthungerhilfe (WHH) and Mercy Corps (MC) supports strategies that enable local communities and institutions to better prepare for, mitigate and respond to natural disasters. The project enhances capacities on all levels, thereby increasing communities' resilience and reducing vulnerability.

Mudflows occur on a regular basis in villages of the Rasht Valley, threatening people's lives and causing significant damages to houses, roads, bridges, and, agricultural land. Based on positive experiences during past DRR projects, WHH and MC support vulnerable villages with the construction of mud-flow channels. The channels direct mudflows past villages, thereby reducing risks. These channels are dams made of gravel, sand and stones which are available locally at no cost.

WHH and MC engineers work with villagers who know the routes of mud and debris flows. Bulldozers are used to ensure that the dams are strong enough to withstand floods and mud-flows. An advantage of the simple technology is that any damage can be mended with local materials and community labour. Villagers also receive 'on the job training' from the project team.

CRAT methodology has been used to identify particularly vulnerable areas. The methodology was developed under previous DIPECHO projects. In addition to community meetings and physical site inspections, the CRAT team used satellite images to determine the areas which are most at risk.



A mudflow. Photo credit: Welthungerhilfe.

