



DONORS PRINCIPALS IN TAJIKISTAN

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Press release

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Donors in Tajikistan call for more action to reduce disasters¹

During the last few years, natural disasters have destroyed and damaged ten thousand homes and affected more than half the population in Tajikistan. Floods alone affected 408,000 people between 1994 and 2004. Only in 2005, 22 people have died in Tajikistan so far, mainly from the consequences of heavy snowfalls in February, and 5,076 buildings have been damaged or destroyed. Disaster Risk Management in Tajikistan is still mostly response driven, and more attention needs to be given to prevention, mitigation and preparedness. Disaster Management efforts continue to be hindered by a lack of resources, poor communications and difficulties in accessing remote areas. The Ministry of Emergency and Civil Defence (MoES) in Tajikistan has been very active in promoting adequate response to – and preparation for – disasters in Tajikistan, but faces an endless battle with limited resources. Many disasters in Tajikistan could be prevented if proper mitigation measures were taken and disaster risk awareness was raised.

Tajikistan is not alone in suffering the consequences of natural disasters. Ninety percent of global deaths resulting from natural disasters occur in developing countries. Social, economical, environmental and physical vulnerability are all factors contributing to greater risk in disaster-prone situations. The poor are more vulnerable to disasters, while disasters themselves contribute to poverty; at the same time poverty limits the capacity to overcome the problem. In a country prone to frequent disasters, risk reduction is an important factor for **poverty reduction and sustainable development**. More effective disaster **prevention strategies** would not only save millions of dollars, but would also save many lives. Funds currently spent on intervention and relief would be better used to enhance equitable and sustainable development, which would further reduce the risk of disasters.

Individuals and their communities can protect themselves if supported to undertake preventive mitigation and preparedness activities. **Mitigation activities** seek to prevent natural disasters from occurring or to limit their detrimental impact. Such activities may include infrastructure rehabilitation and prevention of environmental degradation, as well as proper land use planning or compliance with building codes. Building a culture of prevention is not easy. While the costs of prevention have to be paid in the present, its benefits can only be reaped in a distant future. Moreover, the benefits are not concrete; they are the **disasters that never happen**.

Disaster risk reduction in Tajikistan is a **community effort** which demands sustained commitment and institutionalisation to develop political, professional and individual skills. Successful disaster risk reduction requires an integrated, multi-level, multi-sector, multi-risk and collaborative approach, representing all relevant skills and capacities.

¹ This press release is issued by the Ambassadors or Representatives of donor Embassies and Organisations which participate in regular donor coordination meetings called '*Principals Meetings*', with a rotating chairperson. Those represented by this joint press release include AKDN, ADB, European Commission, France, Germany, Japan, Iran, OSCE, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, UK, UN, USA. The current chairman is Amb. Graeme Loten, UK.

In order to improve disaster management in Tajikistan, the international community stands ready to support the Government of Tajikistan and the communities in the following:

- Ensure the integration of risk reduction activities and risk assessments into development programmes as added value (for instance in education, agriculture, land use, infrastructure or health);
- Improve disaster risk awareness among and improve capacities of all parts of society, at all levels, and at communities level, in particular;
- Enhance coordinated programming in support of long-term disaster management goals, and place more emphasis on prevention and mitigation in addition to responding immediately when a disaster strikes;
- Continue to support the coordination of disaster risk management activities (REACT) led by the MoES, eventually leading to a national platform to jointly develop strategies and follow up on them.