

# **Statement of Common Understanding**

**Rapid Emergency Assessment and Coordination Team  
REACT - Tajikistan**

**Dushanbe – 2008**

## **I. Introduction**

In 2001 the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) established the Rapid Emergency Assessment and Coordination Team – a partnership on disaster management in Tajikistan. This team was conditionally called REACT in accordance with the English abbreviation “Rapid Emergency Assessment and Coordination Team” and was intended to serve as the coordinating structure for international disaster response in Tajikistan. Following the end of OCHA activities in Tajikistan, chairmanship of REACT transferred to the Committee of Emergency Situations and Civil Defense (CoES), Government of Tajikistan and UNDP Disaster Risk Management Programme (UNDP DRMP) acting as the REACT Secretariat.

The members of REACT recognize that REACT fills a significant positive role in coordination of disaster prevention and risk reduction as well as disaster response at all levels and particularly those focused on the community level.

REACT members recognize that:

- The Government of Tajikistan has a sovereign responsibility to assist the population of the country in times of disaster, and to reduce the impact of disasters before they occur.
- The Committee of Emergency Situations and Civil Defense is a central executive body, which ensures the coordination of a range of activities during the planning and implementation of disaster risk reduction, and the preparation and protection of the population, economic objects and the territory of the Republic of Tajikistan from the consequences of natural and technological disasters.
- The humanitarian imperative places a specific responsibility on REACT members to assist the Government of Tajikistan in effectively respond to disasters in Tajikistan.
- Disaster risk reduction is more efficient than post-disaster response in reducing the impact of a disaster.
- Transparency and collaboration are critical to effective disaster response.
- The free flow of information on disaster impacts and response operations is critical for transparency and collaboration.
- The “Sphere” Standards and other best practice in humanitarian assistance should guide efforts to lessen the impact of disasters in Tajikistan.
- The disaster survivor should be consulted in the provision of disaster-related humanitarian assistance.

## **II. Goal and Objectives of REACT**

The main goal of REACT is to reduce the impact of disasters on the population of Tajikistan.

The specific objectives of REACT include:

- Promoting effective risk reduction, disaster preparedness, disaster response and recovery.
- Supporting the coordination and collaboration of humanitarian actors, international organizations and the Government of Tajikistan.
- Providing a platform for collaborative planning of risk reduction, preparedness, response and recovery activities.
- Providing a platform for the transparent exchange of information, joint planning of operations on disaster risk reduction, preparedness, response and recovery.
- Providing a forum for open discussion of policy and practical issues related to the purpose of REACT.

## **III. Structure of REACT**

### **A. Composition**

REACT is composed of members, Chairs, Secretariats national and regional groups, sectoral and technical working groups, a rapid response team and a management group. A diagram of the structure of REACT can be found in Annex A.

### **B. Members**

Any organization involved in disaster risk management activities in Tajikistan that accepts this Statement of Common Understanding is considered member of REACT. A list of organizations-REACT members is provided in Annex B or can be secured from the national REACT Secretariat.

Active membership in REACT shall be demonstrated by attendance to at least seven monthly REACT meetings, at the national or regional level, in every twelve month period. Where an organization has not attended upon unreasonable excuse, their name will be removed from the list of REACT members. Reinstatement will be through the procedure set out in VII 2.

### **C. Chair**

REACT is chaired by the Committee of Emergency Situations and Civil Defense under the Government of Tajikistan at national and local levels.

### **D. Secretariat**

Secretariat functions for REACT in Dushanbe, Zeravshan Valley and Khujand of Sughd Oblast and Kurgan – Tube in Khatlon Oblast are carried out by the UNDP Disaster Risk Management Programme.

Secretariat functions for REACT in Rasht valley are executed by German Agro Action, in Kulyab city of Khatlon Oblast by Oxfam Great Britain and in Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast by FOCUS Humanitarian Assistance.

### **E. Sectoral Coordination Groups**

REACT incorporates eight (8) Coordination Groups covering specific sectoral activities related to disaster risk management. These groups and the leading agencies are as follows:

- Food Security (including food, agriculture and nutrition): WFP and FAO
- Shelter and non-food items (including temporary camp management): UNDP (IFRC)
- Health: WHO
- Water and sanitation: UNICEF
- Education: UNICEF and Save the Children
- Logistics: WFP
- Protection: UNHCR
- Early Recovery: UNDP

The Statement of Common Understanding also accepts the Hyogo Framework for Action as an overall guiding document for disaster risk reduction at all levels.

Sectoral Coordination Groups are expected to meet at least monthly, and more frequently in a disaster situation, report regularly to the general REACT membership on their activities,

and consult with sector members on actions which could affect the Statement of Common Understanding and the policy and practice of REACT.

REACT members recognize the need to integrate the UN Cluster approach into REACT operations before and during disasters. When the UN Cluster approach is activated in Tajikistan, the Sectoral Coordination Groups are considered to be “clusters” for the purposes of the UN Cluster approach but will continue to be an integral part of REACT. During cluster activation additional capacity can be mobilized from Global surge capacity. Cluster leads in Tajikistan have the overall responsibility to brief new cluster members (including Surge capacity) on coordination mechanisms available in the country.

Each Sectoral Coordination Group establishes its own terms of reference, which are to be provided to REACT. To the degree possible, the terms of reference should reflect the Generic Terms of Reference specific for UN regulations related to clusters.

#### **F. Technical Working Groups**

REACT members can establish technical working groups on specific topics on temporary or permanent basis. Technical Working Group membership can be drawn from REACT membership, and also include individuals or organizations which are not part of the REACT. REACT will designate a member organization as the Chair of a technical working group by mutual consent.

Technical Working Groups will report regularly to the general membership on activities and consult with the general membership before taking decisions affecting the current Statement, policy and practice of activities conducted under REACT.

It is anticipated that Technical Working Groups will address the integration of cross-cutting issues such as environment, gender, age, disability and chronic illnesses into the work of the Sectoral Working Groups established under REACT.

#### **G. Regional REACT Groups**

REACT activities below the national level are accomplished by Regional REACTs. Regional REACTs work in accordance with the principles and procedures contained in this Statement of Common Understanding. Specific terms of reference for the Regional REACTs are established by REACT at national level. Regional REACTs are expected to report to the national-level REACT on a regular basis and closely cooperate with sectoral and technical working groups as appropriate.

Currently Regional REACTs exist in Rasht valley, Zeravshan Valley, Khujand city of Sughd Oblast, Kulyab city and Kurgan-tyube city of Khatlon Oblast and in Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast.

#### **H. Rapid Response Team**

REACT includes a Rapid Response Team (RRT) composed of trained members working under the oversight of the Committee of Emergency Situations and Civil Defense.

The main activities of RRT are:

1. Coordinating disaster response operations by REACT members at the site of a disaster (in close cooperation with similar CoES structures at sites).
2. Conducting rapid situation assessment, quantitative damage and needs assessment in the area of disaster using the available resources.

3. Providing capacity at the site of a disaster for reporting on needs, damage and relief and recovery operations by REACT members.
4. Providing critical assistance to disaster-affected populations immediately after assessment activities have been completed. Note that the provision of assistance by RRT is intended only to fill gaps in relief operations during rescue and recovery operations immediately following a disaster and not to be a part of the extended response to a disaster.

Separate Operational Guidelines and other relevant documents and procedures are developed for the REACT Rapid Response Team's activities in order to arrange effective activity.

#### **IV. REACT Management**

REACT may establish a Management Group. This group includes CoES (Chairman), representatives of UNDP DRMP and the representatives of other REACT members. The membership of the group will be reviewed regularly and membership can be changed as needed.

The Management Group will oversee the activities of REACT and consult on issues arising between REACT meetings. The Group will discuss and propose to the REACT membership actions and activities related to the goals and objectives of REACT.

The Management Group will report regularly to the general membership on its activities and consult with the general membership before taking decisions affecting this Statement of Common Understanding or the policy and practice of activities undertaken through REACT.

REACT members meet at least once monthly and more frequently as necessary. The REACT Chair will normally call REACT meetings, but REACT members can ask the Chair to convene extraordinary meetings as necessary.

REACT members can make suggestions, singularly or as a group, to conduct real time or ex post facto evaluations of disaster risk reduction, relief or recovery activities. Evaluations will conform to current good practice and be shared among REACT members.

#### **V. Duties and Responsibilities**

##### **A. Chair**

The Chair of REACT ensures coordination of all the operations on disaster risk reduction, preparedness, response and recovery.

The Chair convokes regular REACT meetings at least once per month, assures the overall coordination of REACT activities, and assures the provision of guidance, information and support necessary for the execution of the activities undertaken by REACT.

The Committee of Emergency Situations and Civil Defense, as REACT Chair, develops and proposes to REACT members formats of reporting (e.g., operational, quarterly, semiannual, annual and other kinds), which will be discussed by REACT members. After agreement a schedule of reporting will be provided to REACT members.

##### **B. Secretariat**

The REACT Secretariats (UNDP DRMP in Dushanbe, Zarafshan Valley, Khujand and Kurgan-Tube, German Agro Action in Rasht, Oxfam in Kulyob and FOCUS in GBAO) will undertake the following actions:

- Information exchange between REACT members through web sites, situation reports, tables on assistance and project (who, what where) and other modes of communication;
- Assuring liaison between REACT members;
- Developing and maintaining data bases (e.g., relief supplies and personnel);
- Supporting the operation of Rapid Response Teams, and
- The exchange of experiences and capacities related to disaster risk reduction, preparedness, response and recovery.

The Secretariat will record the minutes of all meetings and share them with members, as well as provide a mechanism for sharing information between REACT members on normal REACT business and in emergency situations. Where necessary, UNDP DRMP will serve as a communications hub between REACT members at the national, as appropriate, at the site of a disaster.

### **C. Members**

REACT members agree to:

- Abide by the laws and regulations of Tajikistan.
- Provide disaster-related assistance in accordance with the Sphere Standards and other appropriate standards and good practices.
- Include disaster survivors or potential victims in planning and provision of all disaster-related risk reduction, preparedness, response and recovery activities.
- Not deny appropriate assistance on the basis of gender, age, health condition, origin or religion.
- Collaborate in disaster impact assessments and undertake cooperative responses to disasters, to the extent possible and within their respective means.
- Share information and agree plans on disaster risk reduction, relief and recovery activities with the Committee of Emergency Situations and Civil Defense and other REACT members.
- Coordinate disaster risk reduction and disaster response plans and activities with the Committee of Emergency Situations and Civil Defense and other REACT members as well as to share information on the results of implementation.
- Share experiences, lessons learned and successful practices in relief and disaster risk reduction.
- Provide logistic, functioning and advocacy support to Committee of Emergency Situations and Civil Defense to build capacities to reduce the impact of disasters in Tajikistan.
- Follow the procedures established by Committee of Emergency Situations and Civil Defense to meet its official responsibilities in coordinating and reporting on disaster-related assistance in Tajikistan.
- Report annually on relief, recovery, disaster risk reduction, response (provision of humanitarian assistance and etc.) related activities to REACT membership.
- Conduct real time and ex post facto evaluations of disaster-related activities in Tajikistan.

Nothing in the proceeding text should be construed to prevent organizations involved in humanitarian assistance from assisting the citizens of Tajikistan in lessening the impacts of disasters.

## **VI. Special Conditions**

Membership in REACT does not replace any other legal obligations which may exist on an organization for their legal and proper operation in Tajikistan.

## **VII. Acceptance, Changes and Amendments**

This Statement of Common Understanding is accepted by REACT members through two procedures:

1. On initial submission to the REACT membership, at a general meeting and after a general discussion, through a majority vote of those organizations legally registered in Tajikistan and present at the meeting.
2. Following initial acceptance of the Statement of Common Understanding by a vote of REACT members, through a letter to the national REACT Secretariat indicating acceptance of the Statement of Common Understanding

The Statement of Common Understanding can be changed or amended by agreement of a majority of REACT members taken.

The original copy of the Statement of Common Understanding will be kept at national REACT secretariat, and copies will be provided to each REACT member organization.

## **Annex A. REACT Structure and its Regional Subdivisions**

## **Annex B. REACT Members**

