

# **STRENGTHENING THE DISASTER RISK REDUCTION SYSTEM IN GEORGIA**

## **PROGRESS MEASURED AGAINST TARGETS FOR 2008-2010**

### **DRR TEAM, CPR PORTFOLIO, UNDP GEORGIA, 17 MARCH 2010**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The UNDP project entitled 'Strengthening the Disaster Risk Reduction System in Georgia' is co-sponsored by SDC, UNDP and the UN Resident Coordinator's Office. The project document outlines nine targets from September 2008 to August 2010, which are indicated below together with main achievements until 17 March 2010 - with less than six months left of the implementation period.

The implementation was initially delayed by the August 2008 conflict, which turned attention from preparedness to response and from natural hazards to complex emergencies. Since the beginning of 2009, the project has experienced very positive developments and substantially contributed to turning the attention of the Government and the UN system a) from conflict to risks, and b) from response and preparedness to mitigation and prevention.

The most significant contributions at this stage are:

- 1) Based on extensive inter-agency collaboration among 11 UN agencies, and a clear mandate from the UN Country Team, the DRR advisor took over the coordination of the UN Contingency Planning Focal Points Group in March 2009 and redrafted the UN contingency plan based on a multi-hazard, all-phase approach. This plan was approved by the UNCT during autumn 2009 and is currently being operationalized
- 2) UNDP played a key role in promoting the *Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015* and integrating disaster risk reduction (DRR) as one out of three priority themes in the new *United Nations Development Assistance Framework 2011-2015* (UNDAF), which was approved at a validation workshop for UN, Government, international organizations and NGOs in February 2010

#### **STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS**

- The key conceptual challenge remains to change the focus from response and preparedness (disaster management) to prevention and mitigation (disaster risk reduction)
- Another key challenge is to broaden the civil defense disaster management approach and focus on publicly known risk scenarios, humanitarian issues and collaboration with communities and civil society organizations
- The UNDP DRR strategy for Georgia, finalized in February 2009, has proven useful in guiding the implementation of the project by working through 1) communities at risk, 2) scientific institutions, and 3) international organizations to encourage policy change towards a proactive and preventive risk management approach

## **ACHIEVEMENTS**

The following list of achievements during the first one and a half year's implementation makes it likely that all targets will be achieved before the end of the project in August 2010.

### **1. A functioning UN Disaster Management Team**

- The UN's crisis response capacity was tested during and after the August 2008 conflict. The UN delivered a prompt and coordinated response based on the Inter-agency Standing Committee's humanitarian cluster approach. Due to the high-profile crisis, OCHA temporarily re-established itself in the country from August 2008 to March 2009 to support the UN Resident Coordinator in crisis management and crisis coordination functions
- After OCHA's departure, the DRR advisor took over the coordination of the UN contingency planning exercise. As part of this effort, a group of 12 representatives from 11 agencies agreed on a TOR, which was approved on a UN Country Team meeting in May 2009. The DRR Advisor functions as interlocutor between the UN Country Team and the UN Contingency Planning Focal Points Group
- In April 2009, the UN disaster response capacity was tested during the height of the H1N1 flu epidemic, which triggered several UN activities to alert staff and take precautionary measures
- The 8 September 2009 earthquake in Racha triggered a UN response to support and supplement the Government's efforts. The fact that the DRR advisor was tasked by the UN Resident Coordinator to coordinate the UN Country Team response with the group of UN emergency planners proved a valuable opportunity to test the draft UN contingency plan and enhance the visibility of the interlinked challenges of risk management and disaster management. UNDP translated and disseminated sitreps from the Emergency Management Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and organized a lessons learned meeting among UN Contingency Planning Focal Points on 15 September 2009
- Discussions with the UN Resident Coordinator to enhance crisis coordination are underway and a Humanitarian Country Team has been proposed based on newest Inter-agency Standing Committee guidelines

### **2. UN contingency plans available and relevant parties informed accordingly**

- Before the August 2008 conflict, UN updated several inter-agency contingency plans. These plans developed by emergency focal points in UNDP, UNICEF, WFP and UNHCR contributed to better inter-agency collaboration during and after the August crisis
- In December 2008, UN agencies initiated a new round of contingency planning, which aimed at learning from the August 2008 experience and improving existing emergency response plans. UNDP successfully promoted a multi-hazard contingency planning process targeting both natural and man-made hazards under a crisis heading and covering all planning phases
- The UNDP Crisis Prevention and Recovery (CPR) team took actively part in the preparation, implementation and follow-up to the UN contingency planning workshop in February 2009 with 43 stakeholders from Government, donors, international and national organizations. The DRR

team successfully lobbied for using UN contingency planning as a capacity development exercise based on scientific and publicly known risk scenarios

- At the end of March 2009, the DRR advisor and the CPR team leader attended a UN Country Team simulation exercise in Armenia organized as part of an INSARAG regional earthquake simulation in Yerevan. Our presence at this event gave us important insights into Armenia's disaster management approach, which will prove useful in Georgia
- Based on recommendations from the UN contingency planning workshop in February 2009 and a clear mandate from the UN Country Team, the DRR advisor coordinated the review and re-wrote the new UN contingency plan. A first draft was presented to the UN emergency focal points in May 2009 and a second draft was approved by the UN Country Team in October 2009
- In collaboration with UN Resident Coordinator, the UN Contingency Planning Focal Points and the British Embassy, the DRR team is currently organizing a UN contingency planning workshop / simulation exercise scheduled to 14-15 April 2010

### **3. Partnerships established with key stakeholders**

- From August 2008 onwards, crisis response and recovery partnerships were strengthened through extensive inter-agency and cluster collaboration with UNDP chairing the Early Recovery Cluster
- Through bilateral meetings, the UN contingency planning process, the DRR think-tank and the National Committee for DRR and Sustainable Development, UNDP has broadened its contacts with a long row of actors including a number of Government bodies (e.g. National Security Council, Ministry of Regional Development & Infrastructure, Ministry of Environment Protection & Natural Resources, Ministry of Economic Development, and Ministry of Refugees & Accommodation), civil society representatives (Red Cross movement, NGOs, IOs) and the scientific community. These new actors have proven receptive to DRR messages and approaches
- In close collaboration with SDC and the National Committee for DRR and Sustainable Development, the DRR advisor and the SDC DRR Programme Officer conducted a DRR 'who does what where exercise', which generated organizational profiles from 41 national and international organizations, including several government institutions. The first draft was printed in September 2009 and is available online on the UNDP Georgia website: [http://undp.org.ge/new/index.php?lang\\_id=ENG&sec\\_id=24&info\\_id=621](http://undp.org.ge/new/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=24&info_id=621)  
A second expanded version is currently being updated and printed by the SDC DRR Programme Officer in collaboration with the UNDP DRR team and a UNDP GIS-mapping specialist
- In March 2009, UNDP established a DRR think-tank, which gathers key DRR practitioners in Georgia every second month. The first meeting in March focused on UNDP's DRR strategy and the National Committee for DRR and Sustainable Development. The second and third meeting in May and July 2009 focused on risk assessment methodology. The agenda of the fourth meeting on 10 September was quickly changed to accommodate a panel discussion among representatives from the Emergency Management Department, UNHCR and the Georgian Red Cross Society regarding the ongoing earthquake response. This meeting triggered regional and national UNDP press releases: <http://europeandcis.undp.org/cpr/governance/show/CC4AA6CB->

The fifth think-tank meeting in November 2009 focussed on early warning systems. The sixth think-tank meeting in January 2010 discussed myths and realities of natural disasters, the *ISDR Global Assessment Report 2009* and community-based DRR approaches. The seventh meeting in March 2010 elaborated on National Platforms for DRR and new DIPECHO-funded DRR projects

- UNDP continues its close collaboration with the National Committee for DRR and Sustainable Development to promote DRR in the country. In 2009, UNDP conducted a capacity assessment of the Committee together with the Democratic Governance portfolio and developed a project proposal aiming at developing the Committee's institutional capacities; strengthen multi-stakeholder collaboration; and promoting DRR in Georgia by organizing external events. This project, co-funded by the DRR project and the UNDP Capacity Building Fund, began in October 2009 and runs until August 2010. A DRR project assistant and a strategic planner have been recruited and several other consultancies are planned during the coming months
- In November 2009, UNDP recruited a DRR National Project Officer, who has significantly contributed to closer collaboration with national counterparts including key Government ministries
- The DRR team has put urban risk management high on its agenda. Main stakeholders from Government (e.g. Ministry of Economic Development), municipality (e.g. Tbilisi city council), research institutes (e.g. Institute of Structural Mechanics and Earthquake Engineering), NGOs and private companies have been consulted in order to assess current building codes, building practices and urban planning approaches. Further activities in this field are expected in the months to come

#### **4. Relevant bodies are informed and preparedness improved according to the *National Emergency Response Plan (NERP)***

- In August 2008 - that is before the arrival of the DRR advisor - the President approved the NERP. The implementation of this plan was reportedly initiated in November 2008 and ministries are currently reviewing 17 function plans and providing feedback to the Emergency Management Department. To what extent the operationalization of NERP will result in broader dissemination of the plan, standing operational procedures, simulation exercises and enhanced response capacity remains to be seen. UNDP stands ready to support the Emergency Management Department in the refinement, implementation and dissemination of the NERP as and when requested
- In March 2009 the National Security Council approached UNDP for technical input on contingency planning and risk analysis. The DRR team maintains close links with this high-level institution, which has been mandated by the President to conduct a review of the crisis management system in Georgia. The Security Council has proven adaptive to DRR approaches and inter-agency collaboration, which is a promising event not only for UNDP but also for the UN contingency planning process and donor agencies. The ongoing collaboration with the British Embassy on crisis management is one output of this process

- Together with representatives from the Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure, Deputy Governors and SDC, UNDP took part in a SDC study visit to Armenia, 20-23 July 2009, to evaluate the Armenian disaster management approach and specifically the SDC Ardzagank project. The study group developed a technical report with findings and recommendations, which have been disseminated to members of the UNDP DRR think-tank. UNDP is currently exploring possibilities and approaches to support the ongoing regionalization of the emergency management system

## **5. Formulation of the Emergency Management Strategy completed according to the *Hyogo Framework of Action***

- UNDP has printed posters and publications in English and Georgian to effectively promote the *Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015*. Following a recommendation from the UNDP DRR think-tank, UNDP translated and printed the new *ISDR 2009 DRR terminology* booklet, which is also available online: [http://undp.org.ge/new/index.php?lang\\_id=ENG&sec\\_id=24&info\\_id=619](http://undp.org.ge/new/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=24&info_id=619). These publications have been disseminated through the UNDP DRR think-tank
- UNDP ensured that a Georgian delegation attended the second session of the UN ISDR Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in Geneva, 16-19 June 2009. UNDP co-funded the participation of the delegation, since it is considered an important strategic activity to learn from best international practice and build bridges between government and the scientific community in the country
- The DRR team continuously investigates entry points for mainstreaming DRR in all UNDP programme portfolios including Crisis Prevention & Recovery, Democratic Governance, Economic Development and Environment & Energy. In line with the new UNDAF, DRR is one out of three priority themes in the *UNDP Country Programme Document 2011-2015*
- In collaboration with the UNDP Environment & Energy portfolio, the CPR team has stepped up its collaboration with the Ministry of Environment to promote DRR through a feasibility study of a flood early warning system in Georgia on the request of the Minister. An international and national consultant conducted their assessment from September to December 2009 and their consultancy report has been shared with key stakeholders in the MOE and the National Environment Agency
- UNDP successfully lobbied for the incorporation of DRR and the *Hyogo Framework for Action* in the new UNDAF as one out of three thematic areas. This is a major opportunity to mainstream DRR in future development efforts in the country with far-reaching consequences for the Government, UN and UNDP. The new UNDAF was approved by the Government at a UN, Government, international organization, NGO validation workshop in February 2010

## **6. Emergency Management Action Plan developed and implementation initiated**

- Through municipal trainings in Kvemo-Kartli in 2008 and in Shida-Kartli in 2009, UNDP promoted community-based disaster risk management methodology in collaboration with the UNDP Democratic Governance portfolio and the UNDP FOSTER project

- During autumn 2009, municipal risk management action plans were developed in four municipalities in Shida Kartli in order to promote participatory approaches based on hazard ranking, risk analysis, and community-involvement in pilot projects. These four municipal risk management action plans are currently being reviewed and compiled before being shared with stakeholders
- Based on an OSCE methodology from Kosovo, a quantitative assessment of Georgia's fire-fighting capacity has been verbally agreed with the Emergency Management Department and SDC. Terms of Reference for an international consultancy has been prepared and is currently awaiting approval from SDC headquarters in Bern

## **7. External resources mobilized for implementation of Emergency Management Action Plan**

- Apart from office space and administrative assistance, UNDP contributes to the implementation of the project by covering costs of training events, elaboration of municipal action plans, hiring of national and international experts (e.g. feasibility study of early warning system in Georgia) and capacity building of the National Committee for DRR and Sustainable Development
- Parallel funding from SDC to support the DRR project has significantly increased the effectiveness of the DRR team by facilitating the implementation of important pilot projects
- UNDP has begun substantial and systematic fundraising to support the implementation of the UNDP DRR strategy. Potential donors have been approached (including USAID, the British Embassy, OSCE, the European Commission and World Bank) and efforts to mobilize internal resources within UNDP scaled up
- The DRR team took the lead in the development of a 50-page UNDP South Caucasus proposal to the European Commission's Humanitarian Office aiming at strengthening risk management at regional, national and sub-national levels by linking knowledge, decision and action. This proposal was unfortunately not funded as it was considered too expensive
- Discussions with SDC are underway to extend the project for additional four months followed by a new two-year DRR project. Draft project outlines have been prepared and submitted to SDC for consideration. Another project outline on supporting the regionalization of the emergency management system in the Samagrela region is in the pipeline

## **8. Twelve capacity development initiatives, targeting some 150 persons, at local and national levels**

- The DRR team has designed two training packages, which have been used at various training events around the country: One on disaster risk management and another specifically on DRR. At this stage, UNDP has trained more than 100 municipal officials and civil society representatives from Kvemo-Kartli and Shida Kartli. In connection with the first training, UNDP issued the following press release:  
[http://undp.org.ge/new/index.php?lang\\_id=ENG&sec\\_id=22&info\\_id=395](http://undp.org.ge/new/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=22&info_id=395)
- Subject to available funding, the DRR team will implement community-based DRR activities in new UNDP projects in Pankishi, Samegrelo and Abkhazia
- The DRR team plays an important role in ensuring DRR is properly understood and conceptualized in the UN contingency planning process, the UNDP DRR think-tank and the

UNDAF theme group on DRR based on *UN guidelines on integrating DRR into Common Country Assessments and UNDAFs*

- From February to August 2010, UNDP, SDC and the National Committee for DRR and Sustainable Development conduct a seismic risk assessment of Tbilisi, which combines seismicity of the region with the vulnerability of the population and the elements of risk. Findings will be shared with municipal and government authorities. The main objective of this initiative is to promote risk assessment methodology and create awareness of urban risks. Other risk assessment initiatives are in the pipeline, including a flood-risk assessment of the Rioni river basin and a multi-risk assessment of the Telavi administrative region
- During 2010, the DRR team plans to co-organize external events with DRR stakeholders to 1) promote the implementation of the *Hyogo Framework for Action* in Georgia and 2) develop a risk management action plan for Georgia

#### **9. Two disaster simulation exercises undertaken**

- In February 2010, the UNDP DRR team participated in an inter-ministerial simulation exercise organized by the National Security Council and the British Embassy. Courtesy the British Embassy, a trainer from the British police will facilitate a desk-top simulation exercise (Gori earthquake scenario), which is part of the upcoming UN contingency planning workshop

#### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- Please also see the following link on UNDP's website:  
[http://www.undp.org.ge/new/index.php?lang\\_id=ENG&sec\\_id=40&pr\\_id=86](http://www.undp.org.ge/new/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=40&pr_id=86)