DIVERSITY
IN DISASTER RISK REDUCTION
IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS

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I. Migrants and IDPs

1. Introduction

Displacement and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) are interlinked in important ways. Above all, disasters are one of the main drivers of displacement. Since 2008, an average of 26.4 million people has been displaced from their homes by disasters each year. That is equivalent to one person displaced every second.[1] Moreover, as we will discuss in this chapter, people who live in displacement will often be particularly vulnerable when exposed to a hazard, and it is thus crucial to include displaced people in DRR and emergency programming.

Georgia and Armenia have both witnessed displacement caused by conflicts and disasters. In this chapter, we will argue that a DRR approach can be useful when responding to some of the displacement issues these countries are facing. Preparing for an effective response and strengthening the resilience of displaced people living in hazard-prone areas can help alleviate the suffering and vulnerability of the displaced while increasing the efficiency and reducing the cost of government disaster programmes. Moreover, by taking appropriate disaster risk reduction measures we can also avoid - or at least mitigate - further) displacement.

To understand the DRR needs of displaced people in Armenia and Georgia, we will set off this chapter by exploring the causes of displacement in the region and the specific vulnerabilities of the displaced to hazards. We will then briefly look at international documents that provide guidance on including the forcibly displaced in DRR, before we examine some of the policies and projects in the area in Armenia and Georgia. Based on this, we will conclude with some recommendations on how the needs and capacities of displaced people can be included in DRR measures in the region.

2. Vulnerability of the displaced and disaster risks in Armenia and Georgia

Over the last 30 years, armed conflicts and natural disasters have forced people in both Armenia and Georgia to leave their home and move to other parts of their country. In addition, people fleeing conflict, violence or persecution in their home country have sought refuge in the region. Although there are differences both between and within these groups of forcibly displaced persons, they are likely to be disproportionally affected by disasters and thus need to be given particular attention in DRR activities and policies in the region.

People who live in displacement are often especially at risk of disasters as they already are more likely to face a host of challenges resulting from their displacement. Their vulnerabilities might also be heightened by poverty as they often have less access to livelihoods and basic services. In particular, displaced people often have limited access to agricultural land and are, as a consequence, more vulnerable to disasters that affect the crops.[2]

Forcibly displaced people might also be disproportionately affected by disasters as they more often live in substandard housing and may be compelled to live on marginal land or in hazard-prone areas. Lack of social networks combined with less awareness of existing disaster risks, or past disasters specific to the area where they

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1   IDMC, Global Estimates 2015: People displaced by disasters, July 2015

2   Brookings-LSE, Climate Change and Internal Displacement, 2014; A/HRC/10/61, 15.01.2009 Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the relationship between climate change and human rights - Summary, paras. 42-54; A/HRC/16/62, 04.02.2011 Report of the 2010 Social Forum (Geneva, 4-6 October 2010), para. 48.
It should also be noted that the host communities also often experience increased vulnerability as their resources are pressed when more people settle in the area.

have settled, often make them even more vulnerable and exposed. For some of the displaced, predominantly those who have fled across state borders, language obstacles as well as a lack of understanding of social and cultural codes may further affect their resilience.[3]

Although there are no assessments of displaced people's vulnerability to hazards in the Caucasus, or any data on the likelihood of these groups living in hazard-prone areas, IDPs and refugees in Armenia and Georgia face many of the above challenges that make them more susceptible to the impact of hazards.

While we have so far focused on the vulnerabilities of the displaced people in the region, it is important to remember that the displaced also have resources and capacities. To some extent, even the very experience of being displaced may have provided them with certain coping strategies and skills. And although it should be noted that there are many important differences in terms of vulnerability, capacity and exposure to hazards among the displaced,[4] the above nevertheless shows that people living in displacement in Georgia and Armenia are particularly susceptible to the effects of hazards. As such, they may also be at increased risk of secondary displacement in case of a disaster.[5]

2.1 Causes of displacement

In both countries, the majority of the internally displaced first fled their homes in the early 1990s as a result of the inter-ethnic conflict that accompanied the breakup of the Soviet Union. According to the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees of Georgia (MRA), there are currently 259,247 registered internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Georgia.[6] Most of these IDPs were displaced during conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia in the early 1990s, while a smaller number were displaced as a result of the conflict with the Russian Federation over South Ossetia in August 2008. While there are no recent figures of IDPs in Armenia, around 8400 persons are still believed to live in displacement after fleeing their homes during the 1988-1994 conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia over Nagorno-Karabakh.[7]

Armenia currently also hosts 15,688 refugees, most of whom are persons of ethnic Armenian background who have fled the ongoing conflict in Syria and sought protection in Armenia.[8] The refugee population in Georgia is by comparison relatively small, with 857 persons of various nationalities.[9]

In addition to people displaced by conflict and violence, the region has also seen persons forced to leave their homes due to natural disasters such as earthquakes, landslides, avalanches and floods.[10] The largest waves of

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3   ibid

4   See for instance Refugee Survey Quarterly, The Multiple Geographies of Internal Displacement: Georgia, 4 December 2014, available at: http://goo.gl/D2CEyt. Needless to say, vulnerable groups and persons among the displaced, such as women, children, people with disabilities and the elderly as discussed in other chapters of this publication, will often be in an even more vulnerable situation.

5   A more vulnerable population is more at risk of being displaced by a disaster, see e.g. https://www.nanseninitiative.org/staff-member/ human-vs-natural-causes-of-displacement-the-relationship-between-conflict-and-disaster-as-drivers-of-movement/

6   MRA, Numbers of Registered IDPs by 17.09.2014, http://www.mra.gov.ge/eng/static/55

7   IDMC, Armenia Figures Analysis, December 2014, http://www.internal-displacement.org/europe-the-caucasus-and-central-asia/armenia/ figures-analysis The figure draws on a 2004 NRC survey carried out in coordination with the government as updated figures are not available.

8   UNHCR Armenia, Factsheet, July 2015. The number includes those displaced by conflict in Syria who have obtained citizenship and residence in Armenia but are still considered to be "persons in a refugee-like situation"

9   UNHCR, Statistical Snapshot, December 2014, http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/page?page=49e48d2e6&submit=GO

10   The governments in Georgia and Armenia have been reluctant to call persons uprooted by natural disasters as IDPs and prefer the term "ecological migrants" or "eco-migrants". As we will discuss later, this concept is however currently not clearly defined in national legislation and this has consequences for the protection and assistance provided to this group. In view of this, as well as for the overall purpose of this chapter and in accordance with the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement which is acknowledged as the international standard in the area, we will refer to persons displaced by disasters as IDPs here.

disaster-induced displacement in Georgia took place in the late 1980s due to avalanches in Svaneti and landslides in Adjara.[11] According to the latest MRA statistics available, the number of households affected by natural disasters registered in Georgia is 35-37,000 (140,000-150,000 persons).[12] In Armenia, there are no official statistics on people displaced by disasters,[13] but around 18,500 people are considered to remain displaced in the country after fleeing the Spitak earthquake in 1988.[14]

2.2 IDPs displaced by conflicts

Even though the majority of the IDPs resulting from conflict in the region were displaced decades ago and have received considerable assistance from their governments and the international community, many of them remain vulnerable. In Georgia, IDPs continue to suffer from inadequate housing conditions, unemployment and lack of livelihood opportunities. The protractedness of their situation also makes it more challenging for them to regain their self-reliance, and the fact that they are less likely to own land, livestock or a house than the general population increases their vulnerability to hazards.[15]

While there is limited official information on the current situation of the IDPs displaced in Armenia as a result of the Nagorno-Karabakh war, it is likely that the absence of any targeted government or international assistance continues to make it difficult for the IDPs to overcome the effects of their displacement and find a durable solution to their situation.[16]

2.3 Refugees

Despite a generally very positive response from the Armenian Government to the influx of Syrian refugees, the refugee population suffers from vulnerabilities stemming from their displacement. Currently, the overall most pressing concerns for the refugees are reported to be inadequate housing and lack of access to livelihoods which in some cases have forced families to move from the capital to the regions to lower their living costs.[17]

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11   Office of Public Defender of Georgia, Human Rights Situation of Persons Affected and Displaced as a result of Natural Disaster / Eco-Migrants in Georgia, 2013, p.5-6 available at http://www.ombudsman.ge/uploads/other/1/1322.pdf

12   ibid, p.6; UNDP Georgia, Georgia Disaster Risk Reduction Capacity Assessment Report, September 2014, p.62.; CENN, Immigrant Families Without Legal Protection, August 2015, available at http://humanrights.ge/index.php?a=main&pid=18405&lang=eng CENN.
It should be noted that all of these might not be considered displaced as there is currently no clear distinction in the national regulations and policies between persons who are affected by disasters and those who also have been forced to leave their homes because of a disaster, see Office of Public Defender of Georgia, Human Rights Situation of Persons Affected and Displaced as a result of Natural Disaster / Eco-Migrants in Georgia, 2013, p.15

13   CENN, Eco-migration in Armenia - Trends, Dynamics and Challenges, October 2013, available at:
http://w3.cenn.org/wssl/uploads/Eco_migration%20report_Arm_131018

14   IDMC, Global Estimates 2015: People displaced by disasters, July 2015, p. 96, available at:
http://www.internal-displacement.org/assets/library/Media/201507-globalEstimates-2015/20150713-global-estimates-2015-en-v1.pdf

15   IDMC, Georgia: Displacement in brief, 2012, available at: http://www.internal-displacement.org/europe-the-caucasus-and-central-asia/georgia/summary; UNDP Georgia, Economic and Social Vulnerability in Georgia, 2013, available at: http://www.ge.undp.org/content/dam/georgia/docs/publications/GE_vnerability_eng.pdf ; A/HRC/26/33/Add.1, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons, Chaloka Beyani, 2013, available at: http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/IDPersons/Pages/Visits.aspx

16   IDMC, Armenia: Internal Displacement in brief, December 2011, available at: http://www.internal-displacement.org/europe-the-caucasus-and-central-asia/armenia/summary; A/66/18, Report of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, 2011, p. 20

17   UNHCR Armenia, Briefing Note no. 3 on the state of the Displaced Population, May 2015

2.4 IDPs displaced by disasters and eco-migration

People displaced as a result of disasters probably constitute the group of displaced in the region about which we know the least. It is likely also the group that has the weakest legal protection and have been provided with the least comprehensive assistance among the forcibly displaced. While this in itself places them in a vulnerable situation, the information that is available on "eco-migration" in Georgia and Armenia also confirms that this group is disadvantaged and often faces housing insecurity and challenges connected with socio-economic integration in the area of displacement.[18] To cope with this, some of the displaced move back to their damaged houses, at least temporarily, to access their livelihoods and avoid having to pay rent elsewhere.[19] Needless to say, this will make them especially exposed and vulnerable if a disaster strikes again.

Both Armenia and Georgia are located in one of the most active seismic zones, thus there is high risk of geophysical disasters. Earthquakes, flooding and landslides cause serious damage and result in the migration of the local population. For example, earthquakes in the last 20 years have harmed a number of people and have been the cause for eco-migration. In Armenia, after the destructive earthquake in Spitak in 1988, 500,000 people were forced to become eco-migrants. In Georgia, Adjara, the population was resettled due to landslides and floods mainly from mountainous regions and there are climate migrants as well. In Adjara, the population of the region has decreased from 376,016 in 2002 to 336,077 at present.

3. International commitments on DRR and displacement

In order to address the disaster risk reduction needs of displaced persons, it makes sense to refer to international standards on both DRR and displacement.

The most significant global policy on DRR is currently the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 adopted at the Third UN World Conference in Sendai in Japan in March this year. Both Armenia and Georgia have endorsed the Sendai Framework. While the policy has been criticised by Oxfam, among others, for its shortcomings,[20] it can be seen as a step forward from its predecessor the Hyogo framework in that it offers the first ever global targets for DRR and has a far stronger focus on displacement issues. Among other things, it mentions migrants as a group whose participation at the local level should be supported and which possess important knowledge and skills that can be useful in the design and implementation of DRR.[21]

Another international standard that is likely to have important consequences for both displacement issues and DRR, is the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to be adopted in September this year. It remains to be seen exactly how displacement and DRR will be tackled in the SDGs, but it is hoped that it will receive special attention, including by making an explicit reference to IDPs as vulnerable and marginalised groups in disasters.[22]

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18 CENN, Legal Issues Regarding Eco-migration in Georgia, 2015; CENN, Eco-migration in Armenia - Trends, Dynamics and Challenges, October 2013; Office of Public Defender of Georgia, Human Rights Situation of Persons Affected and Displaced as a result of Natural Disasters / Eco-Migrants in Georgia, 2013; EU Neighbourhood Info Centre, South Caucasus: project highlights range of problems faced by eco-migrants, 05.12.2013, available at: http://www.enpi-info.eu/eastportal/news/latest/35460/South-Caucasus:-project-highlights-range-of-problems-faced-by-eco-migrants

19 ibid; Interview with Oxfam implementing partner in Adjara 11.08.2015

20 See: Oxfam, Governments fall short at World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, March 2015, available at: https://www.oxfam.org/en/pressroom/reactions/governments-fall-short-world-conference-disaster-risk-reduction

21 The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, see priority 2, 27(h), p. 18 and Role of Stakeholders, 35(vi), p. 23, available at: http://www.preventionweb.net/files/43291_sendaiframeworkfordrren.pdf

22 IDMC, Global Estimates 2015: People displaced by disasters, July 2015

In the field of displacement, the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement is considered the main international standard for protecting internally displaced persons. The Guiding Principles link the prevention, protection and assistance of IDPs to their human rights entitlements and guarantees. Importantly, it also covers people displaced by natural disasters and identifies the rights and guarantees relevant to the protection of the internally displaced in all phases of displacement.[23] People who have fled to another country, and received international protection as refugees, fall under the protection of the 1951 UN Refugee Convention which guarantees their basic human rights.[24]

International Human Rights can also guide us in efforts to reduce the vulnerabilities to disasters of the displaced. A human rights-based approach recognises a displaced person's environmental rights, livelihood rights, standard of living rights, housing rights, and other classes of rights and is important for ensuring that responses to displacement are sustainable. This perspective can also help us to protect and prepare for displacement before a disaster occurs.[25]

A human rights-based approach also encourages the participation of the displaced in the development of DRR plans and projects. If the human rights of the displaced are to be respected, individuals and communities need access to information, consultation and effective participation in decision-making processes. The involvement of the displaced in these processes directly affects resilience and adaptation over the long term.

4. Projects and Policies in Georgia and Armenia: Good Practices

Both Armenia and Georgia have taken specific actions to strengthen DRR over the last years. In Armenia, a National DRR platform was established in 2010 and a National Strategy was approved by the Government in 2012.[26] Georgia has approved a DRR National Strategy in January 2017 taking a series of steps to address disaster risks over the last years. In addition, both countries have a long tradition for providing protection and assistance to displaced people. Moreover, several national and international organisations have implemented projects both in the field of displacement and DRR in the two countries. However, despite all this, policies and projects that link DRR and displacement are hard to come by in the region.

To examine how the DRR needs of displaced people in Armenia and Georgia are addressed, we need to look at both policies on national, regional and local levels, and community-based activities that include displaced people.[27] We will start with the latter, which is important to promote an inclusive, participatory approach and empower displaced people.

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23 The 1998 Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, available at: http://www.idpguidingprinciples.org

24 While, to our knowledge, not a group that exists in Georgia or Armenia, people who are displaced across borders in the context of disasters and climate change currently lack adequate protection in international law similar to what is provided to IDPs or refugees. Important efforts to address this protection gap is however ongoing, see e.g. the Nansen Initiative: https://www.nanseninitiative.org

25 A positive trend in the area of DRR and displacement is that more and more states recognise that they also should take concrete actions to prevent, mitigate, prohibit and eliminate the root causes of displacement. One prominent example is the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, better known as the Kampala Convention, that legally binds governments to take actions to prevent displacement caused by natural disasters (see article 2(a) and 4(2)), available at: http://www.au.int/en/sites/default/files/AFRICAN_UNION_CONVENTION_FOR_THE_PROTECTION_AND_ASSISTANCE_OF_INTERNALLY_DISPLACED_PERSONS_IN_AFRICA_(KAMPALA_CONVENTION).pdf

26 See http://www.arnap.am/?lang=en. The DRR Strategy is available at: http://www.arnap.am/category/Աֆն-զգալինատգմավարություն/?lang=en

27 See DIPECHO Central Asia and Caucasus, Humanitarian Implementation Plan, 2012, available at: http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/funding/decisions/2012/HIPs/DIPECHO_cac.pdf

4.1 Projects addressing the DRR needs of displaced people

While we have identified a few DRR projects aimed particularly at displaced people in Armenia and Georgia, there are projects in the region that address the DRR needs of IDPs and refugees. Firstly, without having an explicit DRR component, several projects for displaced persons in the region can be said to strengthen their resilience and make them less vulnerable if exposed to a hazard. Activities that strengthen the self-reliance of the displaced and contribute to their socio-economic integration will in general reduce their vulnerability to disasters. Displaced people who are empowered and self-reliant will be more able to resist and recover from the impact of hazards.[28]

UNDP in Armenia focuses on environmental governance and climate change mitigation, adaptation and energy efficiency and investing in strengthening the capacity of national institutions to ensure environmental security. The organisation supports the Ministry of Emergency Situations and other stakeholders in enhancing their capacity and elaborating the national disaster risk reduction strategy for Armenia.

IOM in Armenia concentrates on emergency relief, return, reintegration, capacity-building and protection of the rights of affected populations. IOM is also engaged in disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation issues. IOM empowers communities to assist in the reconstruction and rehabilitation of affected areas as one of the ways to prevent forced migration, for example, works on decreasing the massive migration pressure in the Southern Armenian settlements.

There are good practices of programmes addressing the special needs of these particular groups. For example, UNHCR in Georgia participates in the Eco-Migrants Commission within the Ministry of IDPs from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees of Georgia (MRA). The protection cluster for natural disasters is coordinated by UNHCR and the organisation provides capacity-building to national actors.

While the above activities might reduce the DRR needs of the displaced, projects that explicitly link DRR and displacement issues are virtually non-existent in the region. The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation's (SDC) project aimed at providing natural disaster victims and rural IDPs in Georgia with durable housing solutions and integration opportunities might be considered an exception. This project's target group is people displaced (or at risk of displacement) due to natural disasters, as well as a few families displaced by conflict, living in disaster-hit mountainous regions of Georgia. The project is, similarly, implemented by the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees (MRA), who is responsible for the resettlement of the displaced to new housing in a hazard-free area through a process involving the active participation of the displaced themselves. In addition, a local NGO offers targeted, tailor-made livelihood support according to the displaced persons' skills and the economic potential of the region of relocation (e.g. livestock breeding, greenhouse development, skills training).[29]

While this SDC project focuses on response to a disaster, the participation of the IDPs in the resettlement process and the livelihoods component contribute to the socio-economic integration of the displaced in the community where they are resettled. As such the project also strengthens the resilience and lessens the vulnerability and exposure of the displaced to further hazards in line with the principles of "building back better."

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28 Examples of such projects for the various groups of displaced, include UNHCR Armenia's self-reliance projects and community mobilisation activities for refugees (UNHCR Armenia, Key Activities for 2015); CHCA's income-generating activities for IDPs in Georgia (Charity Humanitarian Centre "Abkhazeti" (CHCA) http://chca.org.ge/itst/index.php?module=Content-House&action=view&id=2999&lang=eng); and Intellect's livelihoods projects for "eco-migrants" in the Adjara region of Georgia (Intellect, Improving the situation of migrants in Adjara region, see: http://www.intellect.org.ge/index.php?&m1=2&m3=3&tid=264&rf=text&lang=en#.VdBkE1wd5--)

29 Meeting with SDC 21.08.2015; SDC Fact Sheet: "Assisting Resettlement and Integration of Rural Natural Disaster Victims and IDPs in Safer Rural Areas, phase II"

Another example of a disaster response project that targets displaced people is the disaster preparedness trainings offered by ASB to conflict-displaced IDPs living in hazard-prone areas. On the other hand, displaced persons also benefit from community-based DRR activities for the general population, like the incorporation of DRR in education in Armenia with the community based activities conducted by the Bridge of Hope NGO in the Tavush region, and in Georgia with the Black Sea Eco-Academy (BSEA) NGO's DRR oriented community work aimed at mitigating disaster risks in the Adjara Autonomous Republic.[30]

CENN in Armenia and Georgia, with funding from the Austrian Development Cooperation and the European Union, implements projects demonstrating the benefits of best practices in eco-migration management. In Georgia, through lobbying and advocacy for eco-migrants rights at the local level resulted in the anti-flood construction of an irrigation system, generating self-employment opportunities and sustainable livelihood, tree planting and care and waste composting. The organisation also engaged the eco-migrant children in thematic eco-camps. Furthermore, it conducted an assessment of the access to safe water supply, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services in rural schools, health clinics and migrants' (eco and social) shelters, and in the most vulnerable communities gave target groups the opportunity to combat poverty. In Armenia, together with Green Lane NGO, the initiation and implementation of successful systemic reform has been supported in the field of eco-migration in the South Caucasus countries via strengthening the capacities of the civil society actors and enhancing structured and inclusive multi-stakeholder dialogue at the national and regional levels. In Armenia, the project targets the Tavush and Lori regions, in Georgia – Kakheti, Kvemo-Kartli and Adjara.

4.2 Policies on DRR and displacement

On a policy level, both Armenia and Georgia have, as described, taken important steps to strengthen DRR and have laws and procedures in place to protect and assist displaced people. However, what is striking is the lack of policies that link and address these areas together. This leads to gaps in the protection of people displaced from the effects of disasters. While this may partly be due to the absence of economic resources and limited data, it is also caused by a lack of relevant legislation and well-defined regulations. This is particularly true for people displaced by disasters who lack a legal status and are not covered by a consistent assistance policy in any of the countries.[31]

While persons displaced by disasters benefit from several provisions in national law, there is no legislative framework defining their status as internally displaced, or "eco-migrants", in Armenia and Georgia.[32] This also has detrimental consequences for the assistance with which they are provided. While the Government of Georgia still has measures in place to provide people displaced by disasters with housing and financial support, the assistance is not uniform and often *ad hoc.* There is also no proper post-resettlement adaptation and integration strategy in place for this group of the displaced, which often leaves them in a vulnerable and less sustainable situation.[33] The Public Defender's office is among those who have criticised the Government in Georgia for this protection gap and there are also several NGOs engaged in research and advocacy for the improvement of this group's situation

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30 UNISDR, Progress and challenges in DRR, 2014, available at: http://www.unisdr.org/files/40967_40967progressandchallengesindisaste. pdf; Interview with BSEA Adjara, 11.08.2015.

31 CENN, Legislation Issues Regarding Ecomigration in Georgia, 2015, available at: http://w3.cenn.org/wssl/uploads/documents/CENN_ Ecomigration_Policy_Paper_IDPvsDraftlaw_ENG.pdf; Office of Public Defender of Georgia, Human Rights Situation of Persons Affected and Displaced as a result of Natural Disasters / Eco-Migrants in Georgia, 2013, available at http://www.ombudsman.ge/uploads/ other/1/1322.pdf; CENN, Eco-migration in Armenia - Trends, Dynamics and Challenges, October 2013, available at: http://w3.cenn.org/ wssl/uploads/Eco_migration%20report_Arm_131018

32 It should be noted, that in the case of Georgia, a Law on Eco-migration was drafted in 2013. The law is however yet to be adopted and the draft has been criticised for lacking precise guarantees and not being fully in line with international standards.

33 ibid

in the two countries.[34] The SDC project mentioned above can also be seen as a practical initiative to support the Government in addressing this gap. However, thus far, it only targets a small proportion of the persons displaced by disasters each year in Georgia.

Finally, it is worth pointing out that there also is a lack of effective planning and measures *preventing* future cases of displacement caused by disasters in the region. While it might seem difficult to prioritize prevention and mitigation measures when one already struggles to respond to ongoing disasters and displacement, preparing for disasters is likely to reduce the costs of the damage incurred when a disaster strikes and make recovery efforts more efficient and sustainable.

5. Conclusion and recommendations

The experience of being displaced has been shown to increase peoples' vulnerability to the impact of hazards. Furthermore, the risk of being displaced by disasters has increased substantially over the last decades. While these links between displacement and disasters are recognised by governments and communities in Armenia and Georgia, there are limited data, few targeted projects or specific plans to protect the displaced from disasters and avoid further displacement caused by disasters. Building on international standards and the positive initiatives that already are taking place in Armenia and Georgia, we thus recommend the following general initiatives for governments and other stakeholders to better include the needs of displaced people in DRR measures in the South Caucasus region:

- **Gather and systematise data on displaced persons' vulnerability and exposure to hazards** - more data is needed to be able to address the specific DRR needs of the displaced in Armenia and Georgia, including the ability to develop consistent policies and targeted intervention on a community level. A vulnerability and risk mapping exercise should link data on displaced persons and their place of residence with data on hazard threats. In general, there is also a lack of comprehensive information on the situation of people displaced by disasters ("eco-migrants") in both countries as well as on IDPs who are yet to find a durable solution after being displaced in Armenia during the Nagorno-Karabakh war.

- **Revise and strengthen legislation to ensure protection of all the displaced, including those fleeing disasters** - while the most important thing is to adopt a clear and comprehensive legal definition of persons displaced by disasters, in the case of Georgia, we would recommend that this is done by aligning the IDP law with the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. Moreover, a legal framework for preventing displacement and providing protection to persons at risk of displacement due to disasters should also be developed. All this should be followed up by appropriate policies and procedures as well as financial allocations to ensure that the displaced are provided with adequate targeted assistance and that their human rights are upheld.

- **Continue and expand community-based DRR activities that aim to build the resilience of displaced people -** in particular the most vulnerable among them.

- **Base policies and activities on a participatory approach** - that focuses on the vulnerabilities and capacities of the people at risk, including the displaced, who might have knowledge and skills that are particularly valuable in the planning of DRR measures. In this regard, we also support the suggestion from the UNDP DRR Capacity Assessment Report for Georgia of conducting a sensitisation programme for local authorities

34 See the publications from the Public Defender and CENN referred to above as well as the joint project by Institute of Democracy, Eurasian Partnership Foundation, and Young Scientists' Union «Intellect»: «Campaign for Advocacy of Eco-Migrants and potential Eco-Migrant families», see: http://www.iod.ge/index.php/en/press-center-en/news-en/620-project-campaign-for-advocacy-of-eco-migrants-and-potential-eco-migrant-families

and communities on disaster risks and impacts on vulnerable groups, including displaced people, in order to increase their understanding of, and participation in, risk-informed local planning.[35] This can be undertaken in both countries.

- **In recovery efforts, and in particular when people have been displaced by disasters, focus on «Building Back Better» -** to ensure more sustainable solutions and minimise the risk of further displacement, including by establishing clear policies and procedures, and ensuring the participation of those affected in the recovery process.

- **Finally, strengthen climate change adaptation and prevention measures to help avoid or mitigate displacement caused by disasters -** including through DRR activities such as infrastructure improvements, evacuation plans, relocation of people at risk of displacement to safer areas and other measures to improve the resilience of communities.

Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund (ASB), Georgia
Disaster Preparedness Training for IDPs in Georgia

Target group: IDPs living in 50 Collective Centers and their host communities in Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti Region in Georgia.

Background: IDPs in this region were considered particularly vulnerable and exposed to hazards as the region frequently experiences landslides, earthquakes, floods and fires; and the collective centres are located in remote areas with limited access to emergency services.

Objective: To increase awareness and reduce vulnerability of the target group towards natural and technological disasters.

Activity: 25 first aid trainings and 50 trainings on preparedness and response to disasters; development of evacuation plans and evacuation simulations in each community.

© ASB Georgia

CENN and GreenLine, Armenia and Georgia
Support for Eco Migrant Families

Target group: Eco migrant families: Armenia, Tavush and Lori, Georgia – Kakheti, Kvemo-Kartli and Adjara (1000-1200).

Background: In the regions prone to landslides and other natural disasters inhabitants are resettled but at the same time deprived their livelihoods, the source of income and exposed to poverty. The majority of ecomigrants are settled in the most economically depressed areas, and therefore became even poorer after displacement.

Objective: To empower and activate eco migrant families, with a special focus on women and children and provide relevant environment and DRR related knowledge, skills in order to enhance coping mechanisms

© CENN

Activity: The activities in Georgia included and advocacy for eco migrants rights to develop anti-flood construction of an irrigation system, provision of an opportunities for sustainable livelihood and income generation and safe water supply. In Armenia CENN in collaboration with GreenLine have supported a systemic reform implementation in the field of eco-migration.

UNHCR, Georgia
Support for IDPs in Georgia

© Ministry of IDPs from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees of Georgia (MRA)

Target group: IDPs in Georgia

Background: UNHCR's overall strategy is supporting the Government in protecting the displaced populations by finding durable solutions in line with international standards. Some IDPs in Georgia remain in protracted displacement for over two decades. The national legislation does not consider persons displaced due to natural disasters as IDPs (they are referred to as "ecological migrants").

Objective: Access to durable solutions, including the right to return.

Activity: UNHCR conducts advocacy and various activities, including support to sustainable return directly and/or through its partners. UNHCR participates at the Eco-Migrants Commission within the Ministry of IDPs from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees of Georgia (MRA). Within the Commission, UNHCR primarily contributes to the elaboration of national policy and legal documents. The protection cluster for natural disasters is coordinated by UNHCR and the organisation provides capacity-building to national actors.

2. Women

1. Introduction

Disasters are not gender neutral and when they occur, men, women, boys and girls are affected differently. This calls for urgent need for identification of gendered aspects of vulnerabilities and risks, gender-sensitive behaviours and cultural patterns that withhold the full involvement of citizens of all genders in disaster risk reduction activities.[36]

During the last 10 years, 3,400 natural disasters have taken place in the world – hurricanes, floods earthquakes and other natural calamities. More than 700,000 people have died, more than 1.4 mln were injured and 23 mln lost their shelter. In general, disaster has affected 1.5 bln people and women, children and vulnerable people have been those most affected.[37]

Disasters happen suddenly and without warning. So, it is important for all citizens—men and women, girls and boys—to be optimally prepared. Georgia and Armenia are traditional societies, where decision making and public life are dominated by men while household life is the women's domain. Deeply rooted stereotypes that favour men over women in the public discourse are common and held in almost every region in the country.[38] Such attitudes and stereotypes result in the uneven control of the resources and the freedoms men and women enjoy in this country, among them education, wealth and health.[39] Different research studies carried out about gender stereotypes demonstrate that the distribution of social roles in society is strictly determined by gender, on the basis of which individuals are entrusted with specific duties and responsibilities.[40]

Armenian and Georgian women in rural areas mostly stay at home. Household responsibilities such as cleaning the house, cooking, gardening and looking after children are considered to be the female domain while men in rural areas are associated with hard physical labour. A small number of working-aged men usually find jobs that pay better salaries in urban areas and move out of the rural community. Most men still go to high pastures and stay away from home, often for several weeks at a time.[41]

2. Vulnerability of women in disaster risks in Armenia and Georgia

Women experience natural disasters in different ways and very often women are more unprotected. This fact is proved by statistical data about the people affected by natural disasters all over the world, as well as is confirmed in several international research studies. Gender differences are present in all the stages, starting from facing the risk, risk perception, physical and psychological consequences, and disaster resilience to response and recovery.

Natural disasters exacerbate existing gender inequalities and pre-existing vulnerabilities. Many of those who die in natural disasters are women, as they tend to have small children to care for, or have weaker climbing,

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36 http://police.ge/files/pdf/sagangebos_statistika/kanonebi/DRR%20Capacity%20Assessment%20Repot%20Georgia%202014.pdf

37 Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015 – 2030 http://www.preventionweb.net/files/43291_sendaiframeworkfordrren.pdf

38 Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015 – 2030 http://www.preventionweb.net/files/43291_sendaiframeworkfordrren.pdf

39 Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015 – 2030 http://www.preventionweb.net/files/43291_sendaiframeworkfordrren.pdf

40 http://eeca.unfpa.org/publications/men-and-gender-relations-georgia

41 Gender in DRR study, Oxfam Georgia, March 2017

running, and swimming abilities. This condition is exacerbated by the fact that both Georgian and many Armenian households are headed by women for 8 to 9 months of the year, when their husbands are working abroad. Women also tend to have less access to essential resources and information for preparedness, mitigation, and rehabilitation. Assistance can often be discriminatory in impact even if not intended to be so. Government policies can even reinforce social divisions, albeit unintentionally.[42]

Women suffer unequally during disasters due their social role, discrimination and poverty. Women have their areas of responsibility—caring for children and the elderly, housekeeping activities—which acquire specific characteristics during hazards. Women have less access to assets, financial and material resources. They have less business skills, limited access to loans, and smaller salaries causing additional difficulties in the rehabilitation phase. Poor people are more affected by disasters and women prevail among the poor. Female-headed households are more vulnerable.

Besides this, their role and capacities are not sufficiently recognised in disaster risk reduction work. If we do not put efforts to strengthen the role of women and girls to increase their resilience to disasters, the size of disasters and their harmful consequences will increase.[43] The Global Assessment Report on disaster risk reduction (GAR15)[44] published in 2015 established that women in the whole world are more exposed to the negative impacts of natural disasters and hazards than men. Women are the main victims of such hazards as wars, natural disasters, fatal diseases, and epidemics. In general, women and children die 14 times more frequently compared to men.

This and similar data constitute convincing facts that make a case for the gender sensitivity of strategies for disaster risk reduction, which may thus save thousands of lives. Any expression of inequality, including gender, increases vulnerability to natural hazards. Expression of gender differences during prevention, rescue activities and in the rehabilitation stage is explained by the unequal status of men and women in different spheres of life. This is proven by the assessments and observations made as a result of different studies of natural hazards that have revealed the reasons of gender differences and their consequences.[45]

Stereotypes and factors for female exclusion from DRR work

The cultural and ethnic background in Armenia and Georgia determines, for most locations, the roles played by men and women in the community, which also influences their perception and engagement in preparedness and mitigation work. For both men and women, there are certain roles defined that limit their full and flexible engagement in the community life.

There are some specific stereotypes that affect work distribution within the family and attribute women and men to specific tasks, restrict women's movement in and outside the community as well as their participation in community meetings, making them unable to voice their issues and needs. They don't have direct access to community development and decision making activities as these are attributed as a man's role. As a result, the knowledge they receive through the male family member is often incomplete and defragmented, as well as synthesised from the male perspective.

42 Asian Development Bank, https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/linked-documents/49078-001-sd-03.pdf

43 Irina Bokova-Director General of UNESCO

44 http://www.preventionweb.net/english/hyogo/gar/2015/en/gar-pdf/GAR2015_EN.pdf
Global assessment report on disaster risk reduction 2015

45 According to the following sources: Women as a force in resilience building, gender equality in disaster risk reduction. A Background Paper on gender inclusion in HFA2, April 2014 http://www.preventionweb.net/documents/posthfa/background_paper_gender_inclusion_in_hfa2.pdf;
Gender guidance on disaster risk reduction / Handbook. UNDP, Yerevan 2011.
Towards Resilience http://www.arnap.am/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Towards-Resilience_Arm.pdf

The key stereotypes related to gender roles in society are also related to professions. Women, being associated with the child care role, are perceived as most suitable for the teacher's job, and since in the traditional pattern they also look after the sick, disabled and elder family members, they are also associated with the professions of doctors, nurses or pharmacists. When it comes to running small businesses, societal connotation suggests that women should be in charge for female-oriented initiatives, like beauty salons, cosmetics or apparel retail, restaurants, private schools or kindergartens. As for men, more physical professions are associated with them, like working on infrastructure, technical solutions, working as a plumber, tractor driver, engineer, architect, or being in a decision making role.

The distribution of power within the household affects all family members both psychologically and emotionally. For men, it is important to stress to other family members that he is the head and leader. A woman's subordinated role in the family and any restrictions may negatively influence self-esteem, decrease the level of ambitions. The term "gender equality" often carries a misunderstanding and a negative connotation, being perceived as something not natural and associated with aggressive activism and the over-activity of women.

As for the issue of children and youth, it is considered that investing in boys' education is more important and necessary as this is a future breadwinner who will later be responsible for the family's income generation and well-being, including financial support for his elderly parents. Girls are raised mostly to prepare for the role of more physical care for sick and elderly family members, and to have a more direct role as a caregiver.

3. International commitments on DRR and gender and women engagement

The strategy and action plan adopted at the Yokohama World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (1994) emphasised the necessity of increasing community participation and female empowerment at all the stages of disaster management programs.[46]

Since 1995, all the basic documents relating to female engagement have addressed gender issues in the disaster risk reduction context. One of 12 problematic spheres of the Beijing Plan of Action (1995) is "Women and the environment", which is considered as a strategic objective for the active involvement of women in environmental decision making at all levels. Governments, regional and international organisations and NGOs had been assigned the task of studying the impact of disasters on women, developing assessment mechanisms, informing them and enhancing the role of women in disaster prevention processes. In 2008, the Women's Global Forum devoted to gender, climate change and disaster risk reduction issues adopted one more strategic document – the Manila Declaration. The International Conference on Gender and Disaster Risk Reduction held in China in 2009 approved the "Beijing international action plan considering gender perspectives in DRR" laying out 9 actions to be carried out by 2015.[47]

The reports on implementing the Hyogo Framework for Action show that during the reporting period of 2009-2011, 62 countries out of 70 did not provide information on vulnerability and gender disaggregation issues. Only 26% and 30% of countries submitted information on significant and sustainable development respectively in 2011 and 2013. The results of monitoring, midterm revision and 'Views from the Front Line'[48] reports do not adequately address gender aspects during HFA implementation.

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46 Yokohama strategy and Plan of Action http://www.unisdr.org/files/8241_doc6841contenido1.pdf

47 Making Disaster Risk Reduction Gender-Sensitive Policy and Practical Guidelines http://www.preventionweb.net/files/9922_MakingDisasterRiskReductionGenderSe.pdf

48 Women's views from the Frontline http://huairou.org/sites/default/files/Womens_Views_from_the_Frontline_Huairou_Commission.pdf

The Sendai Framework for Action for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 was adopted at the Third UN World Conference in Sendai, Japan, on 18 March 2015.[49] In its guiding principles, the Sendai Framework for Action recognises the importance of gender dimensions in DRR and calls for inclusiveness and engagement of "all-of-society", which can be used as a gender dimension. The Sendai Framework for Action calls for integration of "a gender, age, disability and cultural perspective in all policies and practices; and the promotion of women and youth leadership; in this context, special attention should be paid to the improvement of organised voluntary work of citizens."[50]

In its fourth priority—enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and to "Build Back Better" in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction—a key measure that has been singled out is the empowerment of women and persons with disabilities to publicly lead and promote gender equitable and universally accessible response, recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction approaches. These include, for example, when mentioning the instruments through which the fourth priority can be achieved, the Sendai Framework for Action emphasises the need for the development of forecasting and early warning systems and technological means to ensure that early warning systems are present for society, and tailoring them to the needs of users and the social setting these users live in, and in particular gender. The Framework stresses the important role of stakeholders in making women's participation critical for effective management of disaster risk and designing, resourcing and implementing gender-sensitive disaster risk reduction policies, plans and programmes.[51] It encourages the collection, analysis, management and use of DRR-relevant data from the gender perspective; the engagement of men and women in disaster risk governance at the national and local levels; ensuring women's engagement in integrated and multidisciplinary approaches and bringing together disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and livelihoods issues; ensuring the capacities of women, girls, men and boys to respond to disasters and contribute to building resilient communities in all phases of emergency management – pre, during and post.

Out of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), particularly Goal 5 concentrates on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls, including ensuring women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life, access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws. In addition, Goal 11 focusing on making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable, and stresses the importance of reducing the number of deaths and the number of people affected and substantially decrease the direct economic losses, with a focus on protecting the poor and people in vulnerable situations, among them women.

4. Projects and Policies in Georgia and Armenia: Good Practices

Some of the key country stakeholders in Armenia and Georgia have gender-inclusive policies and programmes. The national and local level actors, as well as international organisations report that gender and age disaggregation is insufficient, defragmented and disconnected among various levels: community, municipal, regional and national. There is a lack of data and evidence on the specific needs of men, women, boys and girls at all disaster risk management stages; however, in some locations, the first gender- and age-disaggregated information has been obtained by the stakeholders.

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49 http://www.unisdr.org/files/43291_sendaiframeworkfordrren.pdf

50 http://www.unisdr.org/files/43291_sendaiframeworkfordrren.pdf

51 http://www.unisdr.org/files/43291_sendaiframeworkfordrren.pdf , p 28

4.1 DRR and gender country policy making

In Armenia, the introduction of gender approaches in the disaster risk reduction policy started with the formation of gender groups within the framework of the "Disaster risk reduction national platform" foundation (DRRNP),[52] *as well as through cooperation among the* DRRNP, the RA Ministry of Emergency Situations and its 5 agencies,[53] and the UNDP **"**Disaster preparedness and risk reduction national capacities" project. In 2011, the practical handbook "Gender guidance on disaster risk reduction" was developed as part of this project, attempting to introduce a gender-sensitive policy in DRR.

These actions are in harmony with the Hyogo Framework for Action and later with the Sendai Framework,[54] as well as with the goals and objectives of the Republic of Armenia Gender Policy Strategic Program 2011-2015[55] for ensuring gender guidance and the involvement of women in the emergency situation management system. The Gender Policy Concept Paper includes four specific strategies relevant to increasing women's participation in disaster risk management: (i) mainstreaming gender into the National Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction, (ii) undertaking gender-based information activities in the disaster risk reduction field (TV programmes, publications, briefings, discussions), (iii) establishment of a gender theme group in the national Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, and (iv) inclusion of gender issues into the curricula of the Crisis Management State Academy.[56]

The Republic of Armenia Disaster Risk Reduction National Strategy adopted in 2012 was one of the first examples of introducing gender approaches in DRR. The document says: "The main objective of risk assessment is to ensure security for all the representatives of society; hence it is necessary to consider the role of women and men and the level of their preparedness. One of the main objectives of introducing gender sensitive polices is the encouragement of female participation and the involvement of women in the decision-making system and positions."[57] The strategy is replete with gender provisions, e.g., (i) consideration of the differing situations faced by women and men during disaster risk and vulnerability assessments, (ii) development and implementation of a gender-sensitive policy in disaster risk reduction, and (iii) involvement of various population groups in stakeholder consultations and other mechanisms to incorporate social and gender concerns in disaster risk reduction management, among others.

In Georgia, the State Security and Crisis Management Council of Georgia (SSCMC) and Emergency Management Agency (EMA) of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA), supported by other key stakeholders—including the Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Natural Resources and Protection, National Environmental Agency, National Centre for Disease Control and Public Health (NCDC) of the Ministry of Labour Health and Social Affairs, Institute of Earth Science, Department of Spatial Planning and Construction Policy of the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development, and others—are responsible for mainstreaming disaster preparedness and mitigation efforts into their policy and practice work. The key country strategies related to security and emergency management include the 2017-2020 DRR National Strategy and its Action Plan, 2015 Law on State Security Policy Planning and Coordination, 2014 Law on Public Safety, Law on Structure, Authority and Functioning Procedures of the Georgian Government, as well as the National Response Plan on Natural

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52 "Disaster Risk Reduction National Platform" foundation (DRRNP) was founded by RA Government resolution N1694-N of December 2, 2010.

53 The RA Ministry of Emergency Situation, founded in 2008, consists of the Armenian Rescue Service, National Seismic Protection Service, ArmHydroMet, State Reserves Agency and National Center of Technical Security. In 2014, the RA Ministry of Territorial Administration and Ministry of Emergency Situation merged. Fifteen structures are affiliated to this Ministry out of which 13 are in the sphere of emergency situations

54 Hyogo Framework for Action , http://www.mta.gov.am/hy/International/
Hyogo Framework for Action http://www.unisdr.org/2005/wcdr/intergover/official-doc/L-docs/Hyogo-framework-for-action-english.pdf
http://www.unisdr.org/files/1037_hyogoframeworkforactionenglish.pdf

55 Republic of Armenia Gender Policy Strategic Program 2011-2015 http://www.gov.am/u_files/file/kananc-xorh/gender-strategic%20 programm%202011-2015.pdf

56 Asian Development Bank, https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/linked-documents/49078-001-sd-03.pdf

57 http://www.mes.am/en/news/item/2016/10/13/13102016/

and Man-Made Emergency Situations.[58] In 2015, the European Union–Georgia Association Agreement was signed and came into force in July 2016.

The country efforts in the field of gender issues is led by the country's Gender Advisory department under the Prime Minister's office and the key gender related policies in Georgia include the Concept on Gender Equality, Gender Equality Law of Georgia, National Action Plan on Gender Equality (2014-16), and the Human Rights Action Plan of the Government of Georgia (2016-17). The National Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy 2017-2020 and the Action Plan approved in 2017 are based on the assessment of "National Threat Assessment Document 2015-2018", the law on "National Security Policy Planning and Coordination" and recognise natural disasters as having a negative effect on the economic growth and sustainable development of the state. Among other issues, the document identifies gender equality as one of the priority areas.

4.2 Projects addressing the DRR needs of displaced people

In 2015 UNDP Georgia carried out a risk assessment of the Rioni River basin in Western Georgia susceptible to floods, mud torrents and landslides (Flood Management in the Rioni River Basin). The assessment envisioned drawing up the maps of disaster zones and included the gender statistics with statistical information about men, women, girls and boys and their specific needs to be better prepared for a disaster response, for example, in an evacuation situation, when camps or provisional shelters are organised, it should be easy to cite data on the number of men, women, girls and boys, including a focus on certain specificities related to hygiene, reproductive health, and tailored psychological support towards different gender and age groups accordingly. Therefore, there is a very weak track record of information on analysis related to gender in DRR, including on the gender- and age-disaggregated data.

UNDP in Armenia developed a "Gender Mainstreaming in Disaster Risk Reduction" Training of Trainers Manual[59] in 2011 in order to support the national government and DRR stakeholders with the integration of gender into DRR strategies, policies, frameworks, and stimulate the incorporation of gender analysis into national and regional long- and short-term plans and programmes. The manual covers practical exercises and case studies, presenting the best practices in mainstreaming gender into DRR.

UNDP Armenia in collaboration with the Disaster Risk Reduction National Platform (DRR NP), UN Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Ministry of Healthcare the training on *"The Minimum Initial Services Package (MISP) in Emergency Situations"* was implemented in Kapan for the health personnel and rescuers. The training was organised to convey appropriate knowledge and skills to health workers and rescuers that will to relevant professionals to enable them to organize as well as provide emergency reproduction services to pregnant women and those giving birth to a baby which, in its turn, will decrease and prevent the mortality and morbidity rates. The regional administration of Syunik Region requested UNDP to replicate it in otyher 5 cities of the region.

CENN conducted a study on gender in disaster risk management in 2012, but the findings did not reveal substantial barriers regarding the gender aspects of disaster risk management, with the exception of the gender- and age-disaggregated data.. In both Armenia and Georgia, Women are the mind and heart of all Oxfam initiatives. This is the reason that Oxfam, together with its partners, include gender equality and DRR gender issues in the policies and actions at all levels. By the initiative of Oxfam, within the framework of the DRR national platform, a Gender Thematic Group was founded to achieve the aforementioned goals. In order to share the knowledge and materials, Oxfam cooperates with relevant ministries and other key stakeholders such as local and international NGOs.

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58 Gender in DRR study, Oxfam March 2017.

59 UNDP, http://www.un.am/up/library/Gender%20Mainstreaming_DRR_eng.pdf

Mercy Corps has been involved in the creation of Women and Family Rooms in selected municipalities of Georgia that, as a result, ended up being connected with the Mercy Corps DRR work at the community level. In Georgia, Oxfam has conducted the 'Gender in DRR' study that aimed at examining gendered needs and gaps, with a potential for gender mainstreaming, taking a sample of 6 municipalities in the country – Keda, Khulo, Shuakhevi, Tianeti, Dusheti and Telavi. Taking into account both quantitative and qualitative research components, the study focused on the Sendai Framework for Action and Sustainable Development Goals as benchmarking tools for assessing the implementation of gender sensitive DRR approaches at the community and municipal level. Mercy Corps created in Adjara the DRR working groups to support farmers and small scale livestock producers in emergency and prevent the widspread of animal diseases during natural disasters in Adjara.

In Armenia, Oxfam together with its partners include gender equality and DRR gender issues in policies and actions at all levels. By the initiative of Oxfam, within the framework of the DRR national platform, a Gender Thematic Group was founded to achieve the aforementioned goals. In order to share the knowledge and materials, Oxfam cooperates with relevant ministries and other key stakeholders such as local and international NGOs. Sharing of knowledge and best practice with communities is a part of Oxfam's accomplishments of incorporating gender issues in regional rescue activities. Voluntary rescue teams have been founded and are now operating in the Vayots Dzor region. The teams have female members that take active participation in discussions about emergencies and disasters and provide solutions. A voluntary team of women brings special benefits to the community; the team members have knowledge and skills that contribute to the safety of their community.

Oxfam in Georgia, as a part of its Gender Justice programme, has contributed to the creation of the position of Municipal Gender Advisors at the local governmental level, which currently collaborate with Oxfam on mainstreaming DRR into community gender-sensitive programmes and vice versa, through building the capacity of the Advisors by raising their awareness about the importance of women's engagement in DRR. In 2016/17, Oxfam conducted a Gender in DRR study to examine the involvement of women, men, boys and girls in DRR activities and to explore good practices and challenges as well as their potential at the local level to be engaged in future DRR work, the elaboration of the findings and development of recommendations, and in collaboration with national level stakeholders, to influence positive changes at the regional, municipal and community levels in relation to gender sensitive mainstreaming in disaster risk reduction.

5. Conclusion and recommendations

In order to ensure equal participation of men and women in the community disaster risk reduction work it is recommended to:

- **Advocate for gender-sensitive policy making** - Improve the conceptual and practical understanding of Gender-DRR linkages and encourage the standardisation of the gender-sensitive DRR criteria integrated into future policy interventions at all levels in relevant strategic and policy documentation (concept papers, strategic plans, action plans and etc.). Undertake gender analyses of all the polices and strategies directed at disaster risk reduction, climate change, poverty reduction, including community development programs and enhancing the awareness among policy decision-makers at national and local levels for strong evidence-based gender-sensitive disaster risk reduction policy making.

- **Enhance the capacity for gender-specific data collection and analysis** - that could be leveraged for the purpose of pre-disaster risk assessment, prevention and mitigation and for the development and implementation of appropriate preparedness and effective response to disaster. Set up a local level risk assessment methodology including gender-sensitive risk assessment criteria, focused on the gender-based vulnerability analysis. For example, to advocate for LLRM/CTVA[60] to be adjusted as the local level risk assessment methodology reflecting

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60 Common Tool for Vulnerability Assessment (CTVA in Georgia), Local Level Risk Management (LLRM)

national level tools endorsed the government actors. Conduct village hazards assessments and creating action plans with male and female community members to better understand women's vulnerabilities and capacities as well as creating facilities accessible by both women and men.

- **Enhance national and local early warning systems from a gender-sensitive perspective** - taking into account different needs of men and women, boys and girls, and their different needs on access to information and communication regarding potential and devastating hazards and taking into consideration different regional specificities. Equalise the loss assessment of both women and men's assets in disasters. Tailoring the early warning for men, women, boys and girls, provide information on how to minimise losses of livestock, livelihoods, agriculture, water and energy.

- **Build community women's preparedness skills** - Undermine women's attachment to their homes by enhancing their technical and physical (driving, climbing, swimming skills) preparation for DRR as well as enhance their access to information, training and education on different life necessities like disaster management. Encourage women to join community preparedness work, e.g. community volunteer groups, first aid training, community mitigation project development, regular village disaster preparedness team meetings, participate in emergency planning and disaster management committees. Engaging men and boys, provide life-saving skills to girls and boys, including skills to produce disaster-resilient vegetable gardens and livelihoods by both adults and youth (eco-clubs).

- **Strengthen public education and awareness in disaster risk reduction** – include gender specific disaster risk information and knowledge into awareness raising campaigns, social media and community mobilisation that is based on a diverse media resource. Enhance perspectives for raising awareness and knowledge of gendered DRR in gender focal points for further development and implementation of appropriate preparedness and effective response to disaster. Collect best practices and create female role models in DRR who will have the power to influence the community through awareness raising and campaigning.

- **Build women's recognition within the community of the capacity and knowledge to support mitigation and preparedness** - Serve as advisors for creating community response models related to special needs assistance in temporary shelters, water sanitation and hygiene, health, nutrition and the targeted distribution of food and non-food kits, considering needs of men, women, boys and girls. Challenging the stereotypes, include women in rescue teams in disaster risk reduction programmes and include men in teams responsible for childcare. Examining the disaster scenarios within families and communities, and how both women and men can support each other, introduce some social role changes in reproductive (typically female) and productive (typically male) responsibilities to overcome the hardship of the situation and optimise the response, reducing their own and family's losses by using their own strategies. Promote equal men and women's leadership in disaster management to reduce risk for all population groups, including men, women, boys and girls.

- **Develop female-inclusive climate change adaptation and livelihood initiatives -** that focus on encouraging women to take part in new kinds of activities, for example setting up new business groups for income generation to increase women's entrepreneurship as well as creating women's leadership roles in the community.

- **Integrate gender-sensitive data into DRR budgeting** – to provide programme budgeting and resource and service allocation while offering the DRR instruments. Local level government budgets should become gender sensitive to address the needs of women and men in general programmes executed at the municipality level, including gendered DRR-relevant activities, awareness raising campaign planning, implementation and evaluation, and allocating financial resources for female members of Community Volunteer Groups (CVGs).

- **Invest in creating a gender-sensitive formal and informal DRR education curriculum** - for all age groups. Assist research institutions in producing studies on gender sensitive policies and programs regarding disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation, poverty reduction, and boost the education of women in specialised disaster risk reduction educational establishments (for example: Crisis Management State Academy in Armenia).

UNDP, DRR National Platform, Armenia
MISP Training for the Health Personnel and Rescuers in Kapan, Syunik Region

Target group: 40 representatives of male and female health personnel and 75 rescuers certified.

Background: Reproductive Health (RH) issues are the main reason for maternal mortality and morbidity throughout the world, including the Caucasus. MISP aims at preservation of reproductive health is a complex of primary coordinated activities which should be exercised by health personnel at emergency situations, providing urgent medical aid to pregnant women and those giving birth.

Objective: Women focus in DRM sinergies with Minimum Iinitial Services Package (MISP) in Emergency Situations.


© UNDP Armenia

Activity: The training was organised to convey appropriate knowledge and skills to health workers and rescuers that will to relevant professionals to enable them to organize as well as provide emergency reproduction services to pregnant women and those giving birth to a baby which, in its turn, will decrease and prevent the mortality and morbidity rates. The regional administration of Syunik Region requested UNDP to replicate it in other 5 cities of the region.

Oxfam, BRIDGE and Black Sea Eco Academy, Georgia
Mainstreaming DRR through Community Work, DRR Resource Centres and Collaboration with Municipal Gender Advisors in Adjara and Advocating through the 'Gender in DRR' Study
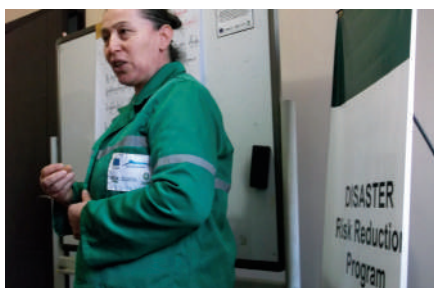
© Oxfam, BRIDGE, BSEA

Target group: Community women participating in DRR/CCA related activities and partners Gender Advisors in 3 Municipalities of Adjara (Keda, Khulo, Shuakvevi) and advocating for strengthening the role of community women in preparedness through the Gender in DRr study and its dissemination

Background: Adjara is exposed to numerous serious disasters, like landslides, floods and flash floods. Selected communities are being involved in DRR activities, hence women had limited access to community preparedness and mitigation work and involvement due to other duties, stereotypes and relatively low empowerment level.

Objective: To empower and activate community women to participate in DRR work and decision making at communities with a support from and mainstreaming by Municipal Gender Advisors and to advocate for women's role strengthening through Gender in DRR study and advocacy work around the paper

Activity: 3 Gender Advisors in Keda, Khulo and Shuakhevi have been engaged to support a cross-cutting mainstreaming of diverse gender related issues through Municipal work and planning and in the community work mapping women's needs, strengthening their participation in the DRR/CCA training, work and awareness raising, women's participation in the community rescue volunteers groups, DRR lobbyists and initiative groups. The programme established DRR Resource centres where the DRR related work is mainstreamed and women are delivered training on DRR, CCA, leadership, advocacy and entrepreneurship.

Oxfam, OxYGen, Bridge of Hope, Armenia
Advocating for Women Inclusion in the Preparedness Work at All Levels

Target group: National and regional stakeholders, community female and male beneficiaries

Background: Women were not sufficiently involved in the DRR related decision making processes as well as in the preparedness community work due to limited access to information, training and policy making processes.

Objective: To activate and empower community women participation in the DRR work and decision making and advocating for gender balanced approaches

Activity: Oxfam and partners have led the Gender Working Group under the DRR National Platform to advocate women's role strengthening in the

© Oxfam, OxYGen, Bridge of Hope, STC

national and regional strategies, plans and programmes. At the regional level the organizations have been collaborating with the Family and Children Department in Tavush and delivered a serried of ToT training for community representatives on gender issues in emergency.

Mercy Corps, Georgia
Creation of Women's Rooms and DRR Working Groups to support Farmers and Small Scale Livestock Producers in Emergency and Prevent the Widspread of Animal in Adjara

© Mercy Corps

Background: In Adjara, there were no places where women could gather and learn about women related issues, including preventive measures and protection. Women and men farmers and small scale livestock producers in Adjara have no information about preventive measures and how to deal with their livestock during natural disasters. There was no coordination mechanism nor advisory on how to protect animals and be prepared for disasters.

Target group: 38.500 female and male beneficiaries received information on animal disease prevention, 5 Women's Rooms and 5 DRR Working Groups created in Adjara.

Objective: Ensure women have equal access to education and awareness raising related to DRR for family issues and the livestock prevention. Activity: To facilitate the engagement of female representatives of the municipal government in DRR WGs and ensured that women are involved during the discussion process of DRR issues and have opportunity to express their views. Municipal DRR WGs are linked with the programme facilitated Women's Room (Municipal open space), which ensures that rural women and men have equal access to and use DRR WG hotline, participate in informational meetings and trainings.

3. Children and Youth

1. Introduction

During disasters, the risk of death is higher among children and youth compared to adults, or they suffer from malnutrition in the future, are injured and die from diseases more often. Disasters can force them to leave their houses and even countries. Children are more vulnerable while losing their kin or families, and can become victims of mercenary adults that are ready to take advantage of the situation. According to Ban Ki-Moon, "Children are among the most vulnerable. Thousands died last year as earthquake, flood or hurricane reduced their schools to rubble. These deaths could have been prevented. Lives can be saved by advance planning - and by building schools, homes, hospitals, communities and cities to withstand hazards. Such measures to reduce risk will grow ever more important as our climate changes and extreme events become more frequent and intense."[61]

As UNICEF reports in its assessment, 50-60% of people affected by disasters per year are children, and altogether each year 66.5 mln children suffer from disasters.[62] Only in 2011, out of almost 200 mln disaster victims, 100 mln were children.[63] In poor countries, children experience the risk of disaster risk. More than 99% of deaths due to climate change take place in developing countries and children constitute more than 80 %.[64]

The vulnerability of children during disasters includes death, injuries, diseases, family loss, interruption of education, work and sexual exploitation, and trafficking risks. Often, children experience more serious risks than adults as it is more difficult for children to overcome sudden and painful changes. Children are more vulnerable to sudden hazards, extreme situations due to lack of abilities, skills, life experience, moral and psychological unpreparedness and other objective reasons.[65] There are also age-related physiological peculiarities that make children more vulnerable, e.g. children and elderly people are more vulnerable to global warming due to their weak thermoregulation abilities.[66] Disasters have an unequal impact on poor countries and undermine the achievements of development. Disasters exacerbate any demonstration of social inequality.

The destruction of public health infrastructures leads to the growth of mother and child mortality. During disasters, the employees of public health institutions, along with infrastructures, are affected as well which also deteriorates general health condition.

The destruction of public health infrastructures and sanitary and hygiene facilities contribute to epidemics of different diseases. In this case also, children are the one most severely affected. Because of disasters, water supplies are interrupted and food is not provided in sufficient quantities, causing the progression of diseases among children.

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61 Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations

62 International Day for Disaster Reduction 2011 http://www.un.org/en/events/disasterreductionday/

63 Towards the resilient future children want: a review of progress in achieving the Children's Charter for Disaster Risk Reduction http://www.unisdr.org/files/33253_33253towardstheresilientfuture2013l.pdf

64 A post-2015 world fit for children Issue Brief: Strengthening Resilience through Disaster Risk Reduction http://www.unicef.org/post2015/files/P2015_issue_brief_set.pdf

65 Disaster risk management at local level, Education and methodological handbook, "Strengthening of national capacities for disaster preparedness and risk reduction" within the frame of UNDP project, Yerevan, 2011.

66 Disaster risk management at local level, Education and methodological handbook, "Strengthening of national capacities for disaster preparedness and risk reduction" within the frame of UNDP project, Yerevan, 2011.

Disasters disrupt the natural life of children, deprive them from the care of the family and parents, and may cause violations of children's rights. In many countries, disaster-affected children are provided for adoption without waiting for their parents or relatives to be found. High levels of mortality among children are related to the safety of pre-school and school buildings. Based on experience, it has been found that the collapse of these structures is the number-one risk factor for children.

2. Vulnerability of children and youth during disasters in Armenia and Georgia

Schools are where children spend most of their time and they need to provide a safe environment for children. Many Armenian and Georgian children do not have a formal or regular quality channel to learn and apply the simplest security measures against disasters in various settings, including their households.

In Armenia, during the devastating Spitak earthquake in 1988, more than 240 pre-school buildings and 277 schools were destroyed or damaged. There were no casualties in the private houses of Gogaran village located next to Spitak town, whereas the number of casualties in the schools reached 187. In Gyumri, two thousand schoolchildren died under the ruins of their schools.

Similarly, in Georgia, children, women and youth living in natural hazard-prone areas are particularly vulnerable, as they often lack the knowledge and life skills that would enable them to be better prepared and to respond adequately to disasters. In addition, children and youth in Georgia are at a higher risk of poverty than any other age group. The country's disaster risk profile, political, economic and poverty/child poverty indicators, show that the women and children of Georgia would experience the devastating consequences of disasters (man-made or natural) if they were to occur. Furthermore, children and young people with disabilities are at high risk of severe physical and psychological harm. Based on the recent Welfare Monitoring Survey,[67] 21.7% of all children live under the general poverty line in Georgia. Vulnerable children include children living in poverty and children with disabilities.

Addressing DRR through education of children and youth

As a consequence of schools collapsing during natural disasters, children lose the opportunity to study. Disasters disrupt academic process as mass displacements take place during disasters. In many cases, surviving school buildings are used as temporary shelters for the people affected by hazards, which is also a reason for the interruption of the academic process. Elementary and secondary education requires great expenses, whereas the construction of school buildings without meeting construction norms and standards increases these expenses by several times. For example, the investigations made after Spitak earthquake revealed that the aseismic strength of schools had not been correctly calculated.

Getting first-hand information about disaster risk reduction allows children to develop life-long knowledge about handling emergency situations and mitigation skills at difficult times, which helps them become resilient towards various hazards. DRR education also provides the necessary mechanisms for child participation and enhances their teamwork skills. Including DRR education in the school curricula not only enhances teachers' understanding of disaster risk management but also contributes to the overall level of safety at school. Prioritising DRR also leads to creating safer communities as local authorities raise their capacity and develop local mechanisms for protecting all citizens' lives and livelihoods.

67 http://unicef.ge/uploads/Welfare_Monitoring_Survey_Georgia-ENG_WEB.pdf

3. International commitments on DRR and children and youth engagement

The protection of children's right to survival and development includes the right of protecting the children from natural disasters and war risks which is reflected in all the fundamental documents relating to children's rights starting from Declaration of Children's Rights (1959) to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). Ten basic principles for child protection were set in the Declaration and Plan of Action[68] "A world fit for children" adopted in 2002, at a special session of the UN General Assembly devoted to the condition of children, including the necessity for protecting children against natural disasters and the impact of environmental degradation. This approach has been set both in the Millennium Declaration and the Development Goals (2000), as well as in all the documents that formulated the Sustainable Development Goals after 2015.[69]

The main priorities of necessary actions for the mitigation of disaster and climate change impacts are presented in the Children's Charter for Disaster Risk Reduction adopted in the 3rd session of DRR global platform in 2011 in Geneva. Through consultations with more than 600 children from 21 countries, 5 main priorities were identified. According to children, education, child protection and access to DRR information are necessary for their families and communities to mitigate disaster and climate change impacts. This Charter is especially valuable as it promotes the role of children and young people as active participants of the pursued activities.

The five priorities in DRR Children's Charter are.

1. Schools must be safe and education must not be interrupted
2. Child protection must be a priority before, after and during a disaster
3. Children and young people have the right to participate and to access the information they need
4. Local infrastructure must be safe, and relief and reconstruction must help reduce future disaster risks
5. Disaster risk reduction activities must reach the most vulnerable.

The priorities of the Children's Charter are based on the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015[70] and are addressed in the Sendai project for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030.[71]

4. Projects and Policies in Georgia and Armenia: Good practices

In both countries, the Governments are devoted to ensure that a culture of safety reaches children and the youth, primarily through targeting schools, kindergartens and higher educational institutions with relevant policy making, adjusting curriculum, and building the capacity of children, youth, teachers and principals in mainstreaming DRR at all levels.

4.1 DRR, children and youth country policy making

Armenia, after joining the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1992), adopted in 1996 the Law on the Rights of Children, which together with other issues regulates child protection issues in emergency situations. Article 28 of the law says: "The state shall provide immediate and free assistance to the children in emergency

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68 S-27/2. A world fit for children/ 10 May 2002 http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N02/481/78/PDF/N0248178. pdf?OpenElement

69 A post-2015 world fit for children Issue Brief: Strengthening Resilience through Disaster Risk Reduction http://www.unicef.org/post2015/files/P2015_issue_brief_set.pdf

70 http://www.mta.gov.am/hy/International/

71 Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015 – 2030 http://www.preventionweb.net/files/43291_sendaiframeworkfordrren.pdf

situations, take appropriate measures to evacuate them from high-risk zones, assist them in joining their families and provide required medical assistance. The state and its relevant bodies shall ensure social protection of children in emergencies meeting their first priority needs."[72] The RA National Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction"[73] developed with consideration of the lessons learnt from the Spitak earthquake prioritises the creation of institutional grounds for disaster risk reduction management, as well as the introduction of necessary projects: "Disaster risk reduction indicators were included in public education standards enabling to provide disaster risk reduction education in elementary and secondary schools, as well as in pre-school institutions."[74] The Ministry of Emergency Situations, the State Academy of Crisis Management, Armenian National Survey for Seismic Protection and other governmental entities, as well as the Armenian Red Cross Society (ARCS) signed a memorandum in 1997. The Armenian Government has approved the internal and external school assessment methodology, the concept on DRR education of the population and the school safety improvement "School Seismic Safety Improvement for 2015–2030" programme. The State Academy of Crisis Management has been established, which is the only emergency management school in the CIS region. The Academy provides vocational education and training, specialised rescue training, higher education courses for bachelor and master degrees, and emergency management education for teachers and students. The Government has committed to a school safety assessment as a part of a programme and supported planning resources for the improvement of the seismic safety of schools.

In Georgia, the Ministries of Education and Science of Georgia, Environment Protection and Ministry of Internal Affairs have been introduced to interactive methods and are being taught how to use them in the core subjects of the National Curriculum – Civil Protection and Safety subject in grades IV and VIII and the Head of Class Hour programme in grades V-IX. In addition, as part of a pilot, a network of children from schools throughout Georgia has been established to promote the exchange ideas and good practices in disaster risk reduction and environment protection.[75] Additionally, under an Association Agreement with the European Union signed in 2014, Georgia committed to align its legislation in a number of relevant sectors with that of the European Union, and to implement the ensuing reforms within an identified timeframe, which includes a theme of safety for vulnerable community members, like children, youth and the people with disabilities. The Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, the Emergency Management Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and UNICEF, a specially established Technical Expert Group has initiated a review of the national curriculum with an aim to integrate disaster risk reduction into the Head of Class Programme for grades V to IX where and prepared an introduction of 12 hours disaster risk reduction programme per grade (V - IX) in schools countrywide This accompanies a special programme and a guide for teachers on introducing interactive methodologies of teaching disaster risk reduction.

4.2 Projects addressing the DRR needs of children and youth

In Armenia, these approaches are addressed in the activities of the Educational Thematic Group set up within the framework of the National Platform Foundation, having the goal to promote the creation and development of safety and resilience culture at all education levels. The realisation of this goal is connected to the development of educational programmes and handbooks, development of disaster risk comprehensive management models and their introduction in the public education system.

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72 RA law on the Rights of Children http://www.parliament.am/legislation.php?sel=show&ID=1700

73 http://www.gov.am/u_files/file/kananc-xorh/gender-strategic%20programm%202011-2015.pdf

74 Republic of Armenia Disaster Risk Reduction National Strategy /RA Government Resolution N 281-N of Match 7, 2012 / http://www.mta.gov.am/files/legislation/334.pdf

75 UNICEF, https://www.unicef.org/about/annualreport/files/Georgia_COAR_2013.pdf

By the order and assistance of the Ministry of Emergency Situations, a great number of disaster risk management[76] learning guides have been developed for children, several studies have been carried out,[77] handbooks and programmes prepared for children have been introduced in schools. The Crisis Management State Academy plays a critical part in the DRR education process. Educational trainings are an integral part to DRR education, providing the possibility to strengthen theoretical knowledge with practical skills in emergency situations.

In all its DRR projects, Armenia closely cooperates with international organisations, including the organisations dealing with child protection issues. Together with the RA state structures, UNICEF, Armenian Red Cross Society, Disaster Risk Reduction National Platform, Oxfam and Save the Children are involved in the DIPECHO project "Supporting community resilience in the South Caucasus" implemented within the frame of European Commission Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection.

UNICEF works on DRR in Georgia and Armenia at three levels: policy level to generate dialogue between ministries and relevant DRR policies and legislation, DRR capacity building, and practical approaches at a sub-national level that, in turn, can provide vital information for policy makers on what works, and enhancing national policies and capacities to better integrate elements of risk reduction within national education curricula, teacher training and day-to-day management of schools. UNICEF also closely collaborates with key government agencies, especially in the education and emergency sectors, to support critical policy, legislative and systemic improvements, which directly contribute to the national commitments. UNICEF is also expanding cooperation with key regional partners working in risk reduction, including UN-ISDR, UNDP, Oxfam and IFRC.

In Georgia, UNICEF trained teachers and provided them with educational materials on disaster risk reduction based on which they are conducting regular lessons applying interactive methodologies. In Armenia, UNICEF conducted an assessment of schools in collaboration with the Government to prioritise the schools located in most-at-risk areas for the School Seismic Safety Investment Plan currently being developed by the Asian Development Bank. UNICEF in Armenia introduced an innovative approach in order to teach children about disaster risk reduction (DRR) and develop a culture of resilience within their communities by interacting with a web-based environment and educational materials focusing on local hazards. UNICEF supported the activities of NGO networks for Child Protection and Environmental Education through institutional capacity building and joint resource mobilisation.[78] It also developed the publication "Me and the Surrounding World", which is included in the primary school curriculum, incorporates life-skills topics and methodology, including disaster preparedness. UNICEF also devised the conceptual standards for child-friendly schools to ensure a safe and enabling school environment for all children.[79]

In Armenia, the Armenian Red Cross Society, Save the Children, UNICEF, Oxfam/Oxygen, Bridge of Hope and the LORE Rescue Team and UNDP supported the disaster preparedness training of school children in several districts. They also regularly organise evacuation simulations in schools in order to help teachers and pupils develop the necessary skills to vacate buildings in an organised manner during emergencies. These activities also include drawing competitions, quizzes for children and the life-skills and young rescuers competitions.

Save the Children focuses on child protection both in Armenia and Georgia, working throughout the country in each case and building caregivers' capacity to recognise and deal with child protection issues, establishing systems for referral and monitoring and working to promote alternative care and legislative changes. The organisation conducts awareness-raising activities for parents and capacity building for caregivers to ensure that positive parenting approaches are used for upbringing of children including those with disabilities (described

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76 UNICEF Child Protection Manual for Specialists_arm.pdf, /2009/; Disaster risk reduction education, cooperation of the teachers and parents for education about safety measures. Manual for the teachers of pre-school institutions and elementary schools. The manual is guaranteed for use by the RA Ministry of Education and Science. Yerevan, 2013.

77 RA legislation and education policy for disaster preparedness, Analytical report on children's needs and rights. Assistance to the South Caucasus vulnerable communities and institutions for disaster risk reduction (Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan), Yerevan, 2011.

78 UNICEF, https://www.unicef.org/about/annualreport/files/Armenia_Annual_Report_2014.pdf

79 UNICEF, https://www.unicef.org/ceecis/Children_and_disasters_Building_resilience_through_education_final.pdf

in the following chapter). In Georgia, Save the Children has been working in Adjara and Samstkhe-Javakheti to improve disaster preparedness for very young and special needs children as well as their teachers and caretakers. In Armenia, the organisation has been working in the town of Vanadzor in Lori Marz, to reduce its vulnerability and equipping the community with knowledge and skills to manage emergency situations more effectively and to increase the involvement in disaster risk reduction.

In Georgia, established DMTs and developed school DPPs, conducted trainings on First Aid and Psychological First Aid, inclusive and child centered DRR, CP in Emergencies for state education and emergency professionals at national and regional levels. In Armenia, along with the National Institute of Education provided master trainings on IDRR and child protection in emergency to selected members of National Institute of Education regional branches, and 20 trained master trainers trained 467 teachers from 55 educational institutions.

Another good practice is the Georgia Red Cross Society's (GRCS) experience where the community volunteers who received Training of Trainers (ToT) from GRCS certified First Aid (FA) trainers, established groups consisting of students from Tkibuli public schools and provided a training on first aid in emergency. In Armenia, the organisation developed a training manual for teachers, including classes for grades 1-4 and 5-9 where DRR themes are incorporated into a sample lessons. The organisation also created the Safe Family Manual. Red Cross Society is working on DRR activities with a special focus on vulnerabilities, including the focus on schools, children and their families. For example, the Armenian Red Cross elaborated emergency and safety school plans for children and school principals. The organization facilitated several family simulation exercises with rescue services and participatory needs assessment in community needs and emergencies.

In Georgia, ASB is working with universities and mainstreams DRR through the higher level education curriculum. In addition, ASB created DRR corners in the target universities across Georgia sharing with students educational materials on disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation. ASB also works with other stakeholders—the key ministries and DIPECHO partners: Save the Children, Georgian Red Cross Society, UNICEF and Oxfam—on a "Disaster Risk Reduction Roadmap" implementation guide for the disaster risk reduction (DRR) strategy in the education sector.

In addition, there have been good practices of mainstreaming DRR through informal education. For example, Oxfam in Armenia (Vayots Dzor) and Georgia (Adjara, Kakheti and Mtskheta-Mtianeti) created Youth/Eco Clubs gathering local children and youth who have been engaged in learning sessions and active community activities related to disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation. In Armenia, the youth involved in the Oxfam programme worked on school Green Laboratories learning about disasters, ways of looking after the greenhouse crops, entrepreneurship, livelihoods and developing family safety plans. In Georgia, Youth Club members took part in the waste management raising awareness activities in their communities and worked on mapping their communities' vulnerabilities in case of a disaster situation.

5. Conclusion and recommendations

In order to ensure the engagement of children and youth in disaster risk reduction work the following recommendations should be applied:

- **Youth and children's involvement in disaster risk reduction** - can play an essential role in increasing the long-term resilience of communities as they are the best messengers within their families and communities. Increase significantly the participation of children and young people in development and DRR processes.[80] This relates to children and youth of all ages, including pre-school and young children, focusing on their susceptibility to disaster risk based on their age and development level, and their particular needs in emergencies.

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[80] A post-2015 world fit for children Issue Brief: Strengthening Resilience through Disaster Risk Reduction http://www.unicef.org/post2015/files/P2015_issue_brief_set.pdf

- **Considering child protection in relation to female participation in DRR processes** - during emergencies, children are usually next to women – their mothers or teachers. In this respect, the gender sensitivity of the DRR projects is also a guarantee for the security of children. Gender approaches are important from another viewpoint also as boys and girls have specific capabilities that can be used for the reduction or prevention of the risks.

- **School safety considered as a holistic approach** – the safety of schools in the DRR strategy means not only the safety of buildings, but also organisational works of school management and other responsible persons, awareness of the teachers and students and appropriate skills. The so called "safe school" model also includes work with parents, the cooperation of the teachers and parents to teach the children safe behaviour rules and skills. This is also a method to activate and increase parents' safety knowledge and skills. Teachers are very important actors not only for ensuring the safety of children, but they can also work with the parents of children increasing their disaster risk reduction knowledge. "The activities directed to reduction of natural disaster risks start from the school."[81]

- **Children and youth as DRR change agents** - in the DRR national documents, similar to international approaches, children are not considered as passive information recipients. Children and young people will be actively involved in disaster prevention activities. DRR culture is developed starting from the kindergarten and school where children are thought that disaster risk reduction is an issue of general responsibility. Active involvement and participation at the local level is one of the risk management module components. In some communities there is already a successful experience of young people's participation in the risk and vulnerability assessments.

- **Prioritise children and youth in policy making** - make child protection one of the priority directions in the National Disaster Risk Reduction Strategies revised according to Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, including basic DRR components in educational programmes; develop a DRR national educational program; ensure the inclusion of children and youth safety issues in emergency response systems and disaster preparedness topics in school programmes

- **Provide coordinated DRR education at schools** - i.e introduce, as related subjects, technology, "Me and the Environment", geography, natural sciences, biology, physics, chemistry, information technologies. Studying these subjects the children, will obtain clear knowledge and capabilities.

- **Enhancing educational materials** - support educational, emergency management and other related institutions to develop, test and disseminate pro-children, gender-sensitive DRR educational materials; teach, train and upgrade DRR teachers' qualifications and provide mandatory DRR trainings for the directors and deputy directors of the schools.

- **Data management and early warning** - maintain age-disaggregated statistics in the DRR sphere; ensure that relevant early warning systems reaching children and youth are in place, take measures for ensuring complete safety and seismic resistance of pre-school educational institutions and schools.

- **Raising awareness, role models promotion** – collect, promote and disseminate best practices with regard to disaster risk management at schools through exchange of experience, conferences, round tables, awareness and interest protection activities, formal and non-formal education. Contribute to strengthening of capacities of public education institutions for providing psychological and social assistance to the children during emergencies.

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81 2006-2007 Slogan of Disaster risk reduction international campaign http://www.emergency.am/res/Virtual%20Library/DRR%20in%20 Education/Safe%20Schools%20in%20Safe%20Territories%20-%20RUS.pdf

UNICEF, Armenia
Applying Innovative Approach Through Web-based Solutions

Target group: Stepanavan school #1 and Ashtarak school #1

Background: Armenia is one of the most disaster prone countries in the region and strives to build a safe school environment based on the comprehensive school safety approach.

Objective: To apply an innovative approach in order to teach children about disaster risk reduction (DRR) and develop a culture of resilience within their communities by interacting with a web-based environment and educational materials focusing on local hazards.

© Unicef Armenia

Activity: Through the engagement of students in an innovative community-based DRR exercise they were empowered to put the methodology to practice, assess non-structural risks, and develop a DRR plan for their school. They modeled the hazards and vulnerabilities of their communities into a map, collecting geographical information from a GPS data system. With this exercise, they also learned to locate specific hyperlinks and bridge potential local hazards with relevant learning materials.This student-led analysis was presented to the members of the school and the community in Ashtarak and Stepanavan. The identified risks and recommendations for risk reduction and mitigation were submitted to local municipalities for review and incorporation into community development plans.

Oxfam, BRIDGE and Black Sea Eco Academy, Georgia
Youth Eco Clubs' Work and Engagement it DRR and CCA Activities

© Oxfam, BRIDGE, BSEA

Target group: 6 Youth Eco Clubs (120 members) in Municipalities of Keda, Khulo, Shuakhevi, Tianeti, Dusheti and Kakheti

Background: Young people have the potential to be the driving force for the social change and strengthening engagement in DRR and CCA work, and to be the change agents and ambassadors of issues related to environment, natural disasters and climate change.

Objective: To engage and use the potential of youth for campaigning and raising awareness about resilience issues such as natural disasters preparedness, climate change adaptation and mitigation and environmental protection.

Activity: The youth have been provided with various trainings on campaigning, awareness raising,, how to act during and after disasters, first aid and climate change issues. Based on the knowledge based young people developed their own small projects and presented them to the municipalities. One of the projects was related to proper waste management issues Thanks to this youth project the rubbish bins have been purchased, delivered to local villages and the youth campaign for the waste management awareness was conducted. Youth Eco Clubs conducted also in their villages a mapping exercise to identify vulnerabilities and community inhabitants requiring a special assistance in case of emergency. They also have been working in their households on Family Emergency and Safety Plans.

Armenian Red Cross Society, DRR National Platform, Armenia
Involvement of Children and their Families in the Preparedness Activities

Background: As this remote region proves prone to earthquakes, flooding, hail, snowstorms and fires and the emergency services are located far from the community centers, coupled with the fact that it has the highest poverty level in the country this region is deemed highly vulnerable.

Target group: Beneficiaries are the entire population of Shirak region with special focus on vulnerable groups, including families with small children. In addition, the action organized Community Volunteer Groups (CVG) of 20, age and gender balanced, in 25 communities.

Objective: To increase awareness and enhance the resilience of people in Southern Caucasus by reducing their vulnerability to underlying risks and disasters' impacts, including the focus on schools, children and their families.

© Armenian Red Cross Society

Activity: Armenian Red Cross developed emergency planning and school safety plans for children and school principals. Family simulation exercises with rescue services and participatory needs assessment in community needs and emergencies. 25 first aid trainings were delivered as well as simulations. Basic rescue & rope techniques were introduced as well as psycho-social support and disaster risk mitigation trainings.

4. People with Disabilities

1. Introduction

The World Health Organisation estimates the global prevalence of disability to be around 10%. People with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, psychological, mental or cognitive impartments that interact with environmental barriers and hinder their full and efficient participation in social life on an equal basis with others. People with disabilities are particularly vulnerable and suffer significantly from disasters. Disruption to physical, social, economic, and environmental networks and support systems affect persons with disabilities much more than the general population. Persons with disabilities are more likely to be left behind or abandoned during evacuation in disasters and conflicts due to a lack of preparation and planning. In addition, several facilities, transportation means and services are not adapted for use by the people with disabilities. Most shelters and refugee camps are not accessible and people with disabilities are turned away from shelters as refugees and experience discrimination. Similarly, in any community disaster risk reduction activities, they are excluded from preparedness and mitigation work as those having difficulties with accessibility to training and activities in the communities, as well as decision making regarding community preparedness actions.

Children with disabilities, especially those with physical and mental disability, are a particularly vulnerable group when disasters occur. These children and their teachers and caregivers are often excluded from disaster risk reduction activities. They are less informed and prepared to ensure their safety in times of disaster. Children with disabilities experience physical, psychological and educational vulnerability in disaster situations, which have a more powerful impact on their lives and safety.

2. Vulnerability of disabled adults and children during disasters in Armenia and Georgia

According to Georgia's Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs, 118,651 persons with disabilities were registered as recipients of state social assistance as of 1 March 2015.[82] This constitutes only 3% of the total population residing in Georgia (3,729,500). This notable difference suggests that a large number of people living with disabilities are not registered to receive social welfare and are therefore vulnerable to a lack of relevant attention and adjusted professional care.[83] Similarly, there is no mapping of the disabled and vulnerable population for both adults and children in their communities.

In Armenia, people with disabilities constitute 6% of population. According to official data, as of 1 January 2015, 194,861 people with disabilities were registered in Armenia. Children with disabilities are at increased risk in the face of disasters: the analysis of the Spitak earthquake (Armenia, 1988) revealed that children suffered more than adults because they were in school at the time of the quake. According to the Armenian National Mental Health Research Centre (1993), almost 2/3 of total deaths were children and adolescents.[84]

In both countries, resilience related institutions are still developing their capacities, several public institutions, especially at the regional and community level, are vulnerable to natural hazards, especially to earthquakes and

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82 http://opendata.ge

83 ASB, http://www.asb-georgia.org/en/news/198-disability-inclusive-approaches-asb-georgia

84 Save the Children, https://rm.coe.int/16800cde0e

fire. According to the assessment - 100% of educational, care and housing facilities in Armenia, and 50% of educational and 100% of the assessed living facilities (dormitories) in Georgia do not meet evacuation and safety standards taking disabled children's needs into account and lack necessary emergency equipment, and 70% of institutions assessed in Armenia and 100% of institutions assessed in Georgia lack disaster management plans and regular emergency simulations.[85]

2.1 Inclusiveness in DRR work

People with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, psychological, mental or cognitive impartments that interact with environmental barriers and hinder their full and efficient participation in social life on an equal basis with others. Disabled adults and children are particularly vulnerable and suffer more significantly from disasters. Both during disasters and the preparedness stage, the disabled should be provided with assistance that is tailored to their individual needs and peculiarities. For this purpose, all decision makers and responsible persons, local governments, community leaders voluntary groups, representatives of local and international organisations, social and other workers should be involved in this process. Involvement of the people with disabilities is essential for responding and preparing to disasters in all stages starting from prevention and mitigation up to assistance, rehabilitation and reconstruction.

Mainstreaming disability into emergency responses and preparedness, by making disability issues and persons with disabilities visible in national and international actions plans and policies, is essential to ensure equality and human rights for all. From the viewpoint of the social model, disability is defined as functional limitations that result from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers. Consequently, the policy directed to the solution of disability issues should be focused on elimination of environmental barriers and creation of equal opportunities, which is especially important during risk prevention and elimination processes.

3. International commitments on DRR and disability

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was adopted in December 2006. The Convention marks a "paradigm shift" in attitudes and approaches to persons with disabilities. It takes to a new height the movement from viewing persons with disabilities as "objects" of charity, medical treatment, and social protection towards viewing persons with disabilities as "subjects with rights," who are capable of claiming those rights and making decisions for their lives based on their free and informed consent as well as being active members of society.

The Convention is intended as a human rights instrument with an explicit, social development dimension. It adopts a broad categorisation of persons with disabilities and reaffirms that all persons with all types of disabilities must enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms. It clarifies and qualifies how all categories of rights apply to persons with disabilities and identifies areas where adaptations have to be made for persons with disabilities to effectively exercise their rights and areas where their rights have been violated, and where protection of rights must be reinforced.

Article 11 on situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies pays particular attention to the obligation of State parties to undertake "all necessary measures to ensure the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk, including situations of armed conflict, humanitarian emergencies and the occurrence of natural disasters." Furthermore, Article 4.1 states that "State parties undertake to ensure and promote the full realisation

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85 Save the Children, https://rm.coe.int/16800cde0e

of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all persons with disabilities without discrimination of any kind on the basis of disability" and Article 32 recognises the importance of international cooperation to address the limited capacities of some states to respond to situations of risk and humanitarian crises.

First, the Millennium Development Goals and later the Sustainable Development Goals have the potential to make life better for billions of people in the world's poorest countries. However, disability is currently not included in the indicators and targets to help evaluate and monitor the achievement of the MDGs/SDGs. Furthermore, persons with disabilities are often excluded from international and national poverty reduction strategies. Environmental dangers and natural disasters can lead to the onset of many types of disabilities, and inaccessible environments prevent persons with disabilities from taking part in economic and social activities. Human and environmental recovery is vital for the achievement of MDG Goal 7, "Ensure Environmental Sustainability". The MDGs/SDGs cannot be achieved without the inclusion of all persons in society, including persons with disabilities.

4. Projects and policies in Georgia and Armenia: Good practices

Ensuring full access to the physical environment, transportation, information and communication, and services open to the public is a vital precondition for the effective enjoyment of many rights. In situations of risk, natural disasters and armed conflict, the emergency services must be accessible to persons with disabilities, or their lives cannot be saved or their well-being protected. Accessibility has to be incorporated as a priority in post-disaster reconstruction efforts. Therefore, disaster risk reduction must be accessible and disability inclusive.

4.1 DRR and special needs-oriented country policy making actors

In 2010, the Republic of Armenia ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which was enacted on 22 October 2010. The convention, inter alia, undertakes to ensure the protection and safety of people with disabilities in emergencies, including armed conflicts, emergency humanitarian situations and natural disasters. Articles 11 and 32 of Convention require inclusive humanitarian responsibility for people with disabilities.

However, over the last five years, the RA laws do not define norms and obligations relating to people with disabilities in disaster risk reduction or elimination processes.[86] Namely in the RA, laws on the "Legal regime of the emergency state" (2012), "Protection of population in emergency situations" (1998), as well as in RA government resolution number 1180-N of 18 August 2011 on approving the order for "Evacuation of population from dangerous zones", people with disabilities are almost not addressed. However, it should be mentioned that the Order of the RA Minister of Urban Development on "Approving building norms for people with limited mobility" specifies mandatory standards for ensuring access of the people with disabilities and limited mobility, and, in a different section, envisages standards for the routes of their evacuation, internal facilities and other preventive technical facilities.[87] After ratifying the Convention according to Article 6 of the RA Constitution, it became an integral part to the RA legal system. Based on this article, if the ratified international treaty specified norms other than the law, the norms of the international treaty shall prevail. All the countries joining the Convention should review their legislations, making them more inclusive to ensure the participation of persons with disabilities in all the spheres, including DRR policies. In 2014, the Armenian Government's amendments to the Law on General Education directly stipulated a long-awaited transformation of special schools for children with disabilities into Pedagogical Support Centres.

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86 Alternative report about "UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities" based on the Inception Report of the RA Government dated of 2012.

87 Order of the RA Minister of Urban Development on "Approving building norms for the people with limited mobility" RA Building Code IV-11.07.01-2006 (3.02-05-2003).

In Armenia, the Government has embarked on a review of the legal framework and practice of domestic and inter-country adoption systems, which will lead to the revision of child protection related provisions in the Family Code. The Government prepared and adopted the Strategy on People with Disabilities and a Youth Employment Strategy.

The Organic Law of Georgia "Labour Code", Article 2, paragraph 3 says that during the probation period or employment relations, any form of discrimination is prohibited including the prohibition of discrimination on the basis of disability. Georgia's Law on General Education, through its Article 9, highlights that everyone has an equal right to receive complete general education, in order to fully develop their personality and to acquire the knowledge and skills that are essential for the success of equal opportunities for private and public life. In Article 33, the law obliges an educational institution to impose benefits for their disabled children in order to create the necessary conditions for learning and growing. According to the Law on Higher Education, institutions are obliged to care for the learning conditions for students with disabilities (Article 3, paragraph 3, "d"). Despite the existing norms in legislative acts and regulations, however, the provision of the right to education for persons with disabilities, especially in rural areas, is not properly implemented.

In 2014, Georgia became the 34th country in the Asia Pacific, and 143rd in the world, to join the group of State party to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). In the beginning of 2014, the Government of Georgia issued a resolution endorsing the Action Plan for the Provision of Equal Rights for Persons with Disabilities for the years 2014-2016. In order to reform the legal framework on legal capacity and to bring national laws in compliance with the decision of the Constitutional Court, a working group has been set up by the decision of the Committee of the Legal Issues of the Parliament of Georgia.

Georgia signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2008 and ratified it at the end of 2013. The Convention treats disability as a human rights issue and aims to improve the living standards of people with disabilities by ensuring equal access to education, employment and social services. It requires countries to incorporate the human rights standards for disabled persons in national legislation. The Constitution of Georgia and several laws include a special provision on the rights of people with disabilities, e.g. the Georgian Law on Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities.[88]

In both Georgia and Armenia, the National Disaster Risk Reduction Strategies recognise persons with disabilities as one of the main priority groups to be included in preparedness and mitigation work.

4.2 Projects focused on inclusive education and people with disabilities

Save the Children has been conducting a disaster risk reduction initiative for inclusive DRR for vulnerable Armenian and Georgian children in kindergartens and special care institutions, aiming to improve disaster preparedness among pre-school and special needs children, as well as their teachers and caregivers. Within the framework of the project, activities in Armenia have been undertaken to reflect the needs and rights of the most vulnerable children (including children with special needs) in the disaster risk reduction policy, to build the capacity of children, schools and kindergartens in hazard prone areas to better prepare for, mitigate, and respond to disasters and to tackle issues related to disaster risk reduction in the context of the national education system. The organisation supports building resilience of children, their families, schools, communities and systems. Regional and community authorities and school principals are supported with developments and updates of the school disaster management plans including school fire safety. Disaster risk reduction and resilience education is introduced as a part of regular classes where school students learn about disasters and develop a culture of safety and resilience. Children with the guidance of their teachers and tutors, learn to protect themselves and their peers in times of disasters, engage in evacuations and other drills helping them to develop rescuing skills.

88   UNECE, https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/pau/age/WG7/Documents/Road_Map_-_Georgia.pdf

In Georgia, Save the Children was an initiator of Inclusive Education Reform, led Deaf Education Reform and contributed to the first Georgian Sign Language Grammar (GSL) training manual creation. In addition, the first National Disability Database (software) has been created to collect data on people with disabilities to support the State for better planning and service delivery. Save the Children in collaboration with Deaf Union created the DRR terminology on GSL. In Armenia, Save the Children and National Institute of Education (NIE) organized training of trainers for preschool and school teachers from inclusive schools and kindergartens in Vanadzor town of the Lori Marz and conducted a training of trainers (ToT) on inclusive DRR, child protection in emergencies and psychological first aid to understand how to combine ordinary classes with DRR lessons and include the topic into a daily working plan at school and to actively learn and participate in school safety measures, and also work with teachers and other adults in the community towards minimizing risk before, during and after a disaster.

ASB is working in Georgia to promote an understanding of persons living with disability and encourage support for their dignity, rights and wellbeing. This is a step towards a greater awareness of the rights and welfare of the people with disabilities. It also aims to raise awareness about the benefits of integrating disabled persons into every aspect of life, from economic, to political, to social and cultural, encompassing all known disabilities. Disability projects within ASB include support to social enterprises that provide services to people with disabilities and the elderly, especially in rural areas. ASB works with partners to promote inclusiveness for people with disabilities in policy making processes that affect the proper and rightful quality of their lives. ASB introduced and has been working in Georgia on an institutionalized disability inclusive DRR model in the university programming to effectively use DiDRR knowledge and practice for students with and without disabilities. By targeting 6 state universities of Georgia, the organization has been working on the higher education IDRR curriculum, developed a guidebook for the Universities and set up iDRR education Resourse Centers at the target universities.

Oxfam Armenia is collaborating with Oxygen and Bridge of Hope on mainstreaming DRR into Bridge of Hope's inclusive beneficiary Civic Centres to ensure increased protection and preparedness of children and youth through the introduction of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation in formal and informal education (at schools, Civic Centres). In its work, Oxfam focuses also on children with special needs and youth that are actively engaged in community preparedness processes: home and family safety planning, community vulnerability assessment, building community and school resilience through the introduction of innovative Green Labs.

The Mercy Corps representation in Georgia, in partnership with CENN (Caucasus Environmental NGO Network), has been currently implementing an environmental programme called Enhancing Local Capacity and Regional Cooperation for Climate Change Adaptation and Biodiversity Conservation in the South Caucasus. Within the framework of the programme, the pilot projects are planned to mitigate the risks and better adapt to CC impacts and one of these projects is designed for implementation in Qedeli Community, Signagi Municipality, Kakheti Region, Georgia, at the asylum for people with disabilities, including building the asylum with an alternative source of energy, as they often face power cuts and electric supply interruptions due to frequent strong winds and hard rains taking place in recent years caused by climate change. The asylum serves 21 people with disabilities with ages ranging between 16 and 42 years.

5. Conclusion and recommendations

Several studies show us that including the needs and voices of persons with disabilities at all stages of the disaster management process, and especially during planning and preparedness, can significantly reduce their vulnerability and increase the effectiveness of Government response and recovery efforts. However, despite an increasing worldwide focus on disaster risk reduction as opposed to mere disaster response, most city and related Government agencies fail to adequately plan for—or include—persons with disabilities in their disaster management activities. This causes severe inequities in access to immediate response, as well as long-term recovery resources for people who have disabilities prior to the disaster and those who acquire a disability as a result of the disaster. Rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts must not only be inclusive and responsive

to the needs of all people, including persons with disabilities, but should include the participation of persons with disabilities, to ensure that their needs and rights are respected. Women with disabilities are a particularly vulnerable group whose needs should be included at all stages of recovery and reconstruction efforts.

In order to ensure engagement of children and youth disaster risk reduction work it is recommended to:

- **Ensuring participation in the DRR process -** people with disabilities have the right to participate in decision-making processes that influence their lives and should be fully involved the DRR policy and project developments, their application and monitoring processes. Hence, it is necessary to eliminate all the barriers hindering their active participation and enlarge capacity building programs.

- **Creation of inclusive monitoring and assessment system -** it is essential to ensure inclusiveness of DRR monitoring and assessment state system, as well as availability of necessary resources for assessing the needs of people with disabilities and appropriate responding during emergencies.

- **Development of target programs -** DRR programs should be developed not only for persons with various disabilities but should also consider age, sex, cultural and language peculiarities and adapt programmes to these needs. During development of programmes, the risk groups and institutions, such as special schools, hospitals, care homes and closed institutions should be in the focus of attention.

- **Mapping -** in order to provide appropriate assistance during emergencies, it is necessary to have a database providing information about the location of people with disabilities according to their type of disability or needs and required assistance, ensuring the confidentiality of personal data. In case of possible hazards, such information will help the crisis centres verify whether there are people with disabilities in the risk zone, identify their location and provide the relevant assistance based on this information.

- **Development of DRR specialist capacities -** conduct trainings for the specialists working in DRR sphere on the subject of protecting the rights of people with disabilities. Such trainings should be carried out by people with disabilities with the participation of policy makers, implementers and monitoring specialists.

The capacity of rescue team members should be improved, their knowledge on assisting the people with different disabilities upgraded. The trainings should include general knowledge about disability, as well as professional skills, for example, the development of plans for easy evacuation and testing for the realisation of such plans, protection of people with disabilities during emergencies, etc.

- **Exclusion of discrimination -** it should be ensured that the persons with disabilities have equal access to the same quality and volume of DR reduction, assistance and rehabilitation services by adapting mass services to the needs of people with disabilities or, in certain cases, introducing special services for people with disabilities, providing assistance and comfortable shelters, removing all access barriers to the services for all people with disabilities regardless of their problems and age, promoting development and strengthening of the capacities of people with disabilities and their participation in all processes, including decision making.

- **Improvement of DRR education in formal programmes -** DRR and disability issues should be included in public education and special education programmes. These subjects should be equally taught both in general academic schools for students with and without disabilities, as well as in special education establishments for the students studying or living there.

- **Scientific and technological assistance -** the government should promote accessibility of scientific and technological knowledge for meeting the needs of people with disabilities in the DRR sphere. In case of necessity, technical and economic assistance should be provided for sharing accessible and supporting technologies through international cooperation.

- **Realisation of protection-** the main activities for protecting people with disabilities during emergencies should include: warning about hazards and dangers based on the universal principle, provision of shelters, organisation of evacuation by creating appropriate conditions for different groups of people with disabilities, paying special attention to women and children with disabilities, rescue activities, as well as other urgent rehabilitation works based on the universal design principle providing access for all, provision of medical assistance to people with disabilities, paying special attention to women and children with disabilities, people chronically needing pills/medicines.

- **Network cooperation -** improve network cooperation and information sharing with organisations dealing with DRR and disability issues, as well as protection of interests of people with disabilities and human rights.

- **Promotion of research about DRR and disability issues -** it is necessary to undertake studies for a timely response to disasters and appropriate actions for their prevention. One of the main preconditions for the efficiency of such studies is the involvement of persons with disabilities. In this case, they are not only respondents but act also as researchers.

- **Development of capacities of people with disabilities and their organisations -** people with disabilities should be prepared for different spheres of life, and emergency situations require specific preparedness. It is necessary to ensure the education and awareness of the people with disabilities about disaster risk reduction issues, as well as the development of their capacities to respond to emergencies. This process should include also the cooperation with local self-governing bodies, international organisations and other stakeholders.

- **Raising of awareness of the local self-governing bodies and society members**

  Unfortunately, in many societies priority, is given to the people without disabilities and services provided to them. Members of society have inaccurate opinions and stereotypes about the capacities and potential of people with disabilities, and therefore they consider them, especially during emergencies, as helpless, weak people needing the protection of others. The programmes designed for raising the awareness of communities should promote the creation of an appropriate attitude towards the rights of the people with disabilities in society, as well as the forms of their protection.

- **Involvement of people with disabilities in psychological rehabilitation works**

  The knowledge and experience of persons with disabilities constitute a good resource for providing technical and psychological assistance to the people affected by disasters and emergency situations. They should be involved in social and psychological rehabilitation works, as well as in the activities envisaged for adaptation of the affected population.

- **Strengthened capacity of local communities to identify and address the needs of most vulnerable populations in disaster risk reduction** - reflecting the needs and rights of the most vulnerable children, including children with disabilities, in the national disaster risk reduction policy.

Save the Children International, Armenia
Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction for children with/ without special needs in Armenia

© Save The Children Armenia

Background: Since 2012 up to date Save the Children implements programs in Armenia to increase preparedness of children with and without special needs, their teachers/caregivers and families towards disasters. The activities have been implemented in six provinces of Armenia and Yerevan, targeting more than 117 institutions, including inclusive schools and preschools (kindergartens), special care institutions.

Target group: Children with and without special needs, Teachers/ Caregivers, Disaster Risk Management (DRM) team members, national and province level authorities.

Objective: Increase preparedness of children with and without disabilities, their teachers and families towards disasters.

Activity: Increased preparedness of institutions, school and preschool children and teachers through small mitigation projects, DRR education, evacuation drills and development of inclusive educational materials (Guides for teachers, games for children, audio and video materials, Braille version). Established DMTs and developed school DPPs, conducted trainings on First Aid and Psychological First Aid, inclusive and child centered DRR, CP in Emergencies for state education and emergency professionals at national and regional levels.

Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund (ASB), Georgia
Youth Focus - DiDRR Course in University Curricula

© ASB Georgia

Target group: 6 state universities of Georgia (Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University, Zugdidi Shota Meskhia State Teaching University, Akaki Tsereteli State University, Gori State Teaching University, Telavi Iakob Gogebashvili State University, Samtskhe-Javakheti State University)

Background: There was a need to include disability inclusive DRR model for the higher education sector.

Objective: To institutionalize disability inclusive DRR model in the university programming to effectively use DiDRR knowledge and practice for students with and without disabilities.

Activity: ASB has been working with to endorse and integrate DiDRR course in university curricula and strengthen capacities of University lecturers. Guidebook for the Universities will be also developed and endorsed by MoES and EMA for preschool teachers as well as iDRR education Recourse Centers will be established at the target universities. Resource centers will include on-line, printed and electronic DiDRR material developed by ASB and partner organizations (Oxfam, Georgian Red Cross, and Save the Children).

Save the Children International, Georgia
Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction Education for children with/ without special needs in Georgia

Background: There are 8 special schools in Georgia, where children with different special education needs getting education but the safety and vulnerability in regards to natural hazards was not part of their education. Teachers did not have education materials, especially, the methodology how to teach children with special needs DRR topics as well as opportunity to develop their skills within Teachers Professional Development Centers (3 in total in Georgia) as well.

Target group: Children and Teachers of all special schools and piloted inclusive schools, Trainers of all Teacher Houses of Georgia.

Objective: Creating a safer environment for children with/without special needs in special schools and piloted inclusive schools through child focus inclusive DRR education.

© Save the Children Georgia

Activity: Save the Children (SC) developed the ToT module and guidebook on Inclusive DRR for teachers followed by the DRR sign language dictionary for deaf and hard of hearing children. SC conducted trainings for special school teachers on how to conduct DRR lessons. SC also created additional educational/ awareness materials, such as 3 animations and 4 TV programmes with Georgian sign language translation and participation of children. To institutionalize all the efforts and further replicate the results throughout Georgia SC conducted Inclusive DRR ToT training for Teachers' Professional Development Center trainers, handed over the training module to TPDC, which is already accredited.

Oxfam, OxYGen and Bridge of Hope, Armenia
Inclusive DRR in Civic Centres of the Tavush region

© Oxfam, OxYGen, Bridge of Hope

Target group: Families with children with special needs in Tavush, Armenia.

Background: In Tavush landslide areas people are driven to poverty to flee their homes.In villages like Hovk houses are on a slide-prone land and It had become risky to continue living there. Families rentvery poor apartments in Ijevan and face on-going serious socio-economic challenges. Their conditions worsen because they used to run their small farms, gardens and maintain their livelihoods in villages of their origin.

Objective: To mainstream DRR issues through an inclusive education, including for children and families from disaster prone areas.

Activity: The intervention is focused on working with children with special needs, including those of relocated families. The children are provided with special therapies, like art-therapy classes, and receive pedagogical and psychologist support at Child Day-Care center of Bridge of Hope. The DRR component is incorporated into the BoH programme and children from landsliade prone areas can learn about landslides and other natural hazards.

5. The Elderly

1. Introduction

The world is ageing. According to international classification, people reaching 65 years of age are defined as the elderly. The data of the World Health Organisation stipulates that in 2050, 2 bln people in the world will be 60 years or older. In 2015, there were 48% more people aged 60 years or over worldwide than there were in 2000, and by 2050, the number of older people is projected to triple compared to 2000.[89] Currently, 10% of the world's population is already over the age of 60, and by 2030, there will be more people over 60 than under 10.[90]

The combination of more extreme climate and disaster events coupled with the failure to adapt DRR responses to the ageing demographic trend has the potential to increase older people's vulnerability to risks and disasters. Yet, the specific requirements and strengths of older people are often not given appropriate consideration in DRR.

Unlike other representatives of society, elderly people have some limitations when it comes to reacting immediately to hazards and risks, or responding to emergencies; they are less mobile and are often hampered by other diseases that limit their mobility, cognitive or other functions to a certain extent. Older persons are vulnerable and have special needs especially when they have age-related chronic diseases. They may also suffer from psychological aspects caused by difficult disaster emergency situations. They also become vulnerable due to social and economic constraints hindering them from being prepared for hazards, or responding or adapting to them. In addition, they are not properly informed about possible hazards.

The vulnerability of elders and their capacities are often overlooked during disasters and emergency situations. The state is still missing a relevant database that is sex- and age-disaggregated, that would map vulnerable community members and provide guidelines on how to support elderly people's special needs during emergencies. Similarly, in disaster preparedness, there are several limitations for elderly people's inclusion in activities like training, community mitigation and preparedness projects and initiative development, as well as access to decision making and voicing their concerns and needs. The life experience, skills and knowledge of elders is valuable in different DRR processes and this is still a niche in preparedness actions to be filled in by appreciating and understanding the importance and added value of elderly people's participation. Many elderly people experience the hazards on several occasions in their life. Many of them, based on their experience, know well what to do, and are ready to help and assist the people who have ended up in difficult situations.

2. Elderly people and disaster risks in Armenia and Georgia

In the Republic of Armenia, 63 years is defined as the retirement age. 11 per cent of Armenia's 3.1 million inhabitants are aged 65 years or older, and this share is projected to reach 18% by 2030. As of 1 January 2015, the number of 63-year old people constituted 371.3 thousand or 12.3% of population. Women constituted 59.7% of the elderly and 15.6% of the elderly were people with disabilities.

Population ageing is advancing rapidly in Georgia. In 2010, out of its 4.4 million people more than 14% were 65 years and older. By 2030, this is expected to grow to 21%. Life expectancy at birth, which in 2010 was 78 years

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89 United Nations: http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/pdf/ageing/WPA2015_Report.pdf

90 HelpAge, http://gndr.org/images/newsite/Learning/Older_Persons/UNISDR_2014_DisasterResilienceAgeingWorld.pdf

for Georgian women and 71 years for Georgian men, is predicted to rise to 80 years for women and 73 years for men in 2030.[91]

In both Armenia and Georgia, mainstreaming ageing into DRR strategies, processes and plans integrating ageing issues into all policy fields and all policy levels is still under development. In addition, in both countries, the classical sequence of study, work and retirement is gradually becoming blurred with interlinked periods of work and study that continue beyond retirement, especially combined with migration processes. Some retirees go on being employees, entrepreneurs or volunteers, as it happens with some DRR community volunteers in Georgia and Armenia, while other older workers may gradually want to work less as they approach retirement and spend time taking care of their grandchildren or their own ageing parents. In both countries, more and more people combine these elements, giving themselves more flexibly nowadays and creating new possibilities to be involved in the preparedness and mitigation work at their communities.

3. International commitments on elderly people in DRR

In 2002, countries adopted the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing as the first international strategic document in response to population ageing.

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 adopted at the Third UN World Conference calls for a "whole of society" approach to DRR. Indeed, it encourages governments to seek the active contribution of relevant stakeholders including women, children and youth, persons with disabilities, poor people, migrants, indigenous peoples, volunteers, the community of practitioners, and older persons when shaping and implementing DRR policies, plans and standards. Analogously to its predecessor, the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015 (HFA), the Sendai Framework makes a clear point about the importance of engaging communities in order to strengthen disaster governance. States are to this end encouraged to assign, as appropriate, clear roles and tasks to community representatives within disaster risk management institutions and processes and decision making through relevant legal frameworks. It highlights that "Older persons have years of knowledge, skills and wisdom, which are invaluable assets to reduce disaster risk, and they should be included in the design of policies, plans and mechanisms, including for early warning."

Charter 14 for Older People in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) focuses on the adoption of three key principles of an inclusive approach to DRR. It calls for stronger commitment from governments, donors and organisations to act on the shortcomings in DRR policies, strategies and practices that often insufficiently respond to older people's disaster risks. They must acknowledge and fulfil older people's rights and engage older people's capacities and contributions. This Charter has been developed through consultations with governments, NGOs, DRR and ageing experts as well as older men and women.

Charter 14 calls for an inclusive approach whereby DRR responds to older people: 1. In need: Older people have specific requirements which must be understood and responded to within all DRR activities. 2. Invisible: Older people's vulnerabilities and capacities are often overlooked; the collection of data on people's age and sex is essential to ensure older people and other people at risk are visible and supported in DRR. 3. Invaluable: Older people have years of knowledge, skills and wisdom which are invaluable assets in DRR and must be acknowledged, valued and engaged by supporting older people to participate in DRR. Fourteen minimum standards which underpin the three key principles have been developed. These are categorised as easy-win 1-star actions to best practice 3-star actions. Those signing up to Charter 14 are asked to identify how they are already reaching some of these standards and to commit working towards others. A commitment to at least one minimum standard is required for Charter 14 signees.

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91 UNECE, https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/pau/age/Capacity_building/Road_Maps/Georgia/Publication/Take_care_of_time_-_Ageing_in_Georgia.pdf

The main principles of involving elderly people in DRR include: addressing special needs in all DRR processes, collection of data according to age and sex, involvement of the elderly in DRR projects taking into account their life experience and knowledge. The fourteen minimum standards of the Charter 14 include the following:

- Older people are particularly addressed in disaster management and climate polices, requiring direct actions in planning, budgeting and training stages.

- Consideration of vulnerability and capacities of older people during assessment of local and national hazards and climate risks,

- Warning messages and information are accessible, understandable and applicable by older people.

- Concrete actions for evacuation plans at the local level ensuring evacuation and protection of older people, including actions envisaged for older people with limited mobility, speech and hearing impairments and psychological disorders.

- Disaster supplies and stocks including assistive devices, medicines and food are required and accessible to older people during disasters.

- Evacuation and leisure centres are equipped with benches above the ground, handrails, have access to wheelchairs and are separated for men and women.

- Collection of statistical data according to sex, age, disability for the following age groups: 50-59, 60-69, 70-79 and 80+ in disaster management and risk reduction initiatives.

- Training of health, search, rescue, management, coordination, food, protection staff for working with elderly people and responding to their specific needs during emergencies.

- Knowledge, skills and contributions of elderly people in disaster risk management are recognised and promoted at high levels.

- Older people have access to cash transfers and livelihood recovery initiatives.

- Flexible and climate-smart initiatives include older people who continue working.

- Older people are presented in the DRR management process by the community and at national level to ensure that their voices are heard.

- An active social protection system, availability and access to pensions, operating cash transfer mechanisms. Older people have access to hazard insurance and risk directed transfer mechanisms.

The World Health Organisation created the Age-friendly Cities framework to review living environments as to how they allow participation of older persons. The programme helps cities and communities become more supportive of older people by addressing their diverse needs related to environment, transport, housing, social participation, respect and social inclusion, civic participation and employment, communication, and community support and health services, as well as safety issues.[92]

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92 For the full guide see: http://www.who.int/ageing/publications/Age_friendly_cities_checklist.pdf; http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2007/9789241547307_eng.pdf

4. Projects and policies in Georgia and Armenia: Good practices

It is crucial to promote age-inclusive resilience-building among practitioners and policy makers. It gives a comprehensive overview of how resilience-building programmes should be designed and implemented to ensure the inclusion of older people. It also highlights the benefits of including and empowering older people through DRR and resilience-building activities. By applying an older people lens to DRR programming, which involves assessing the specific vulnerabilities and capacities of older people and encouraging them to take a more proactive role, we can support older people to become more resilient – with wide ranging benefits for themselves, their families, and their wider communities. We have included case studies to highlight good practice, demonstrating what can be achieved by working for and with older people.

4.1 DRR and elderly country policy making

Both in Georgia and Armenia, the National Disaster Risk Reduction Strategies recognise the role of older people in disaster risk reduction. The RA legislation specifies that older people should be ensured by a decent standard of living. The RA legislation and policy are directed to the social protection of older people.

The RA Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs highlights, as central issues of the sphere, the improvement of the quality of provided social service and care to older people, access and affordability of services, improvement of care and social services, as well as sanitary and hygiene conditions of care homes etc.[93] In the legal acts regulating the DRR sphere, the needs of the elderly, like the needs of people with disabilities, are not addressed. In 2005, the Government adopted a Social Assistance Legislation that covered vulnerable groups including older persons. The government has elaborated a national strategy on ageing for which the focal point for developing the strategy is the Department of Persons with Disabilities and Older Persons of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.

Georgia, as a signatory to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, declares in its Constitution, Article 25: "Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control." The Constitution of Georgia also declares these to be main principles of human rights. The Law on Social Protection is oriented towards homeless persons and their needs for shelter. In May 2014, the Government of Georgia adopted the Strategy of Social and Economic Development of Georgia 2020 which focuses on inclusive economic and social development, including strategic support to the social policy for the growing older population. In addition, based on an amendment to the Law of Georgia on State Compensation and State Academic Scholarship, a compensation of 400 lari is given to veterans of World War II and 200 lari is given to family members of deceased veterans.[94]

On the HelpAge Disaster Risk and Age Index ranking, Georgia is positioned at 73rd place, and Armenia is on 110th place. The index demonstrates how older people's day-to-day living conditions can leave them vulnerable and at risk from disasters to which they are exposed, to demonstrate policies and practices that can significantly reduce the risks to older people and to present good practice and learning on age-responsive disaster risk management.[95]

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93 Key issues of elders http://www.mlsa.am/home/index.php?menu_id=110&child_id=125&code_id=185

94 http://civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=26728.

95 HelpAge, http://www.helpage.org/what-we-do/climate-change/disaster-risk-and-age-index/#report

4.2 Projects focused on inclusion of older people in DRR

ASB in Georgia has organised an event at the Elderly Shelter of Tbilisi. The children recited with flashcards, sang about disaster preparedness and, using toy blocks and tables, they imitated an earthquake. Afterwards they performed what exactly needs to be done during a real one. The most fun part was when the elderly started to join the performance. With helmets on, the seniors evacuated the building together with the little ones.

The Red Cross Society ensures inclusion of vulnerable groups and a focus on elderly community members.
For example, the Georgian Red Cross conducted several DRR activities, ensuring the participation of elderly people in the actions. Among the steps taken were: shelter provision, psycho-social Support, disaster risk mitigation trainings, family emergency planning,; 21 first aid trainings, basic rescue & rope techniques, simulation exercises with rescue services and participatory needs assessment in community needs, ensuring vulnerable groups like elderly people are included in the joint work.

The Red Cross is working with disabled beneficiaries. The Volunteer Community Disaster Preparedness and Response Teams (VCDPRT) previously established by the IFRC in collaboration with the Georgian Red Cross Disaster Management department conducted three trainings in Disaster Management for older people in Tbilisi, Sagarejo and Khelvachauri. Knowledge and experience on what to do and how to reduce the impact of disaster when it occurs were shared.

5. Conclusion and recommendations

- **Create a database of elderly people** - it is necessary to create a DRR database including the number of elders living in the community, their location, senior centres, soup kitchens, hospitals, care homes keeping individual data confidentiality.

- **Tailored medical support preparedness** - create an informational medical list including the name and contacts of medical doctors and diagnoses, state the use of special assistive appliances, allergy diseases or other needs of older people. Diseases of older people that may cause also disability include cancer, diabetes, cardiovascular and respiratory diseases. In case of emergencies the elders should have insulin, pills improving blood coagulation. Prepare medicines for seven days in case there is no opportunity to contact or find these medicines.

- **Developed adjusted family and individual evacuation plan** - by assessing the capacities of older people and considering their needs, clarify what actions they can take independently and what additional assistance they need.

- **Community assistance provision** - work with guardians or supporting services if older people live alone and receive medical treatment and care at home. They must be ready to respond to emergencies and provide assistance in case of necessity.

- **Senior homes and special institutions** - where older people live should be the focus of attention. They must feel safe and secure in these houses and receive relevant services and support as all community members, but taking into consideration their special needs, for example: older people are more sensitive to cold and extreme heat, temperature fluctuations or extreme weather patterns than others.

- **Tailored shelter and psychological support** – the individual needs of elders should be considered while providing them with shelters during emergencies, for example such shelters should be located in quiet places to the extent possible. During rehabilitation works following disaster or emergency situations, older people should be provided with psychological assistance. In addition to medical assistance and food, they often need communication more, especially with peer groups.

- **Age friendly environment** - an overarching vision and strategy should be developed that includes elements of territorial, spatial and urban development, housing, settlements and age- and disability-friendly environments with a focus on safety. The strategy should come with an appropriate action plan and corresponding legislation as well as a clear outline of functions and responsibilities of governments on different levels. The strategy should provide guidance to improve the living conditions of vulnerable groups, including older persons.

The Georgian Red Cross Society, Georgia
Disaster Risk Reduction in the Imereti & Racha Regions, including a focus on the elderly

Background: The earthquake prone regions of Imereti & Racha are afflicted by floods, hail, snowstorms and fires; coupled with the distant locations of emergency services, high poverty rates and unemployment they are rated as highly vulnerable regions. In numerous situations elderly people are excluded from the preparedness community work and contribution to decision making on the mitigation and prevention measures.

Target group: Entire population of the target regions with special focus on vulnerable groups such as elderly

Objective: To increase awareness and enhance the resilience of people in Southern Caucasus by reducing their vulnerability to underlying risks and disasters' impacts. Inclusion of vulnerable groups and a focus on elderly community members.

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Activity: The Georgian Red Cross conducted several DRR activities, ensuring the participation of elderly people in the actions. Among the steps taken were: shelter provision, psycho-social Support, disaster risk mitigation trainings, family emergency planning,; 21 first aid trainings, basic rescue & rope techniques, simulation exercises with rescue services and participatory needs assessment in community needs, ensuring vulnerable groups like elderly people are included in the joint work.

Help Age, Global, South Caucasus Focus, Georgia and Armenia

HelpAge International is an organization helping older people claiming their rights, challenging discrimination and overcoming poverty, so that they can lead dignified, secure, active and healthy lives. In collaboration with the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) it created the Disaster Risk and Age Index providing global and local perspective in elder people involvement in disaster preparedness and mitigation to measure and assess countries' progress in supporting older populations in respect of disaster risk, highlighting gaps and encouraging adequate policy making to include elderly people in any preparedness actions.

In the Disaster Risk and Age Index rankings Armenia has been positioned at 110th place and Georgia at 73 place. Recommendations included in the paper, including for Armenia and Georgia, encompass: highlighting the older people in national disaster, management and climate policies, collecting sex-, age- and disability-disaggregated data, including for older age groups: 50-59, 60-69, 70-79, and 80+ years, in all disaster management data sets, making age- and disaster-smart development decisions to create resilient and age-inclusive societies.

More information: http://www.helpage.org/what-we-do/climate-change/disaster-risk-and-age-index/