



PRESS RELEASE

Preparing for disasters and reducing risk in Azerbaijan

UNICEF, Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department of the European Commission, the Government of Azerbaijan and Oxfam are joining efforts to improve disaster preparedness and response in the country

Baku, June 22, 2012 - UNICEF together with the Ministry of Emergency Situations of Azerbaijan and Oxfam joined efforts to improve disaster preparedness and response in the country through “Disaster Risk Reduction” project funded by the Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department of the European Commission (ECHO). The second phase of the project will be launched by the partners on June 22 in the Dalgha Plaza, Baku (10 a.m.).

The project will improve disaster preparedness and response in the country to protect from disasters people in the most vulnerable communities, especially children and women living in areas at high risk of natural disasters.

This project is a joint effort of UNICEF, Ministry of Emergency Situation and Ministry of Education, under the scope of its EU-funded partnership entitled “Supporting Disaster Risk Reduction amongst Vulnerable Communities and Institutions in Azerbaijan”, to emphasize the need for a systematic approach to disaster risk reduction and advocate for mainstreaming a child-focused DRR policy and strategic framework into existing education and disaster preparedness related policies, planning and programmes.

The project will be implemented in 8 communities of Salyan and Neftchala districts to develop their disaster resilience and decrease vulnerabilities. Some of the activities under the project will include: strengthening local capacity to be prepared for disasters and more effectively identify and address the needs of vulnerable communities; supporting women and men of different ages to reduce underlying risk and vulnerability factors of potential disasters, as well as strengthening cooperation with the governmental bodies and other relevant structures in the areas of disaster risk reduction.

The launch will be attended by the representatives of the Government, UNICEF, OXFAM, and the EU including the ECHO Representative for South Caucasus, Mr Carlos Afonso, who is travelling to Baku for this purpose

The landscape, climate and infrastructure of Azerbaijan make it highly vulnerable to natural disasters like earthquakes, seasonal floods and landslides, as well as man-made disasters. Every year floods and landslides cause significant damage to agriculture in rural areas, to infrastructure in urban areas and human casualties.

To ensure sustainability, UNICEF is currently promoting the inclusion of disaster risk reduction into formal school curricula, and development of training and learning programmes on how to reduce risk at a community level.

“Children are important, first because they are the most vulnerable in a disaster, but also because they possess unique abilities to contribute to the creation of a culture of safety and prevention,” says UNICEF Representative in Azerbaijan Mark Hereward.

“Teaching about disaster risk reduction needs to start with children, and to involve parents and other community members as well. Disaster risks can be reduced and the resilience of communities can be achieved only through knowledge and education,” he said.

Shovkat Alizadeh, Oxfam in Azerbaijan Country Director, added that, ‘Disaster risk reduction is everybody’s business. By investing in and supporting DRR measures, we can reduce people’s vulnerability and mitigate risks of disaster’.

The Government of Azerbaijan has been actively engaged in strengthening national capacities for disaster preparedness and risk reduction. Efforts are underway to ensure a systematic approach in identifying and assessing the risks and minimizing the socio-economic impact of disasters on children through the application of more holistic and integrated strategies for education.

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