



## **Good Practice by Focus Humanitarian Assistance (FOCUS) in Tajikistan through DIPECHO 6 and the United Nation's International Day for Disaster Reduction**

**October, 2011**

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**Dushanbe, Tajikistan, 13 October 2011** - The United Nations designated the second Wednesday of October as the International Day for Natural Disaster Reduction. More recently, it moved this annual observance to October 13<sup>th</sup>. The Day is meant to encourage citizens and governments alike to be a part of constructing more disaster resilient communities and countries.

The goals of the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Department (ECHO) and its Disaster Preparedness Programme (DIPECHO) align well with the International Day. Since 2003, an affiliate of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), Focus Humanitarian Assistance in Tajikistan (FOCUS) has been an implementing partner of the DIPECHO project, with geographic coverage primarily in the eastern province of Tajikistan in Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO), in Afghanistan and the Kyrgyz Republic. FOCUS recently completed the sixth, consecutive DIPECHO Project offered in Central Asia.

Although the project formally ended on August 31, FOCUS received approval from ECHO to use excess funds towards recognizing the International Day and in doing so to increase disaster awareness and preparedness of the communities of GBAO. As part of the Project's activities, working with the public education sector to achieve increased disaster risk reduction (DRR) awareness, FOCUS developed two paper-based activities for middle and secondary school children in DRR, which was exclusively published in a monthly journal distributed to schools through the Ministry of Education's Institute for Professional Development. These activities were based around questions that heighten students' knowledge of DRR in a very contextual way. Secondly, to increase DRR awareness, FOCUS provided the local television and news station with a short but effective public service announcement on DRR and earthquake preparedness through a video, entitled 'Five Minutes for Life: Disaster Preparedness for the Family' which was aired on International Day for Disaster Reduction.

On Monday, October 7, the provincial newspaper featured activities on DRR which reached nearly 1,500 readers and on International Day, following the evening news, the DRR video was broadcasted to an estimated 20,000 viewers. It is anticipated, based on past school and media-

based DRR programming under the auspices of FOCUS and through projects like DIPECHO, that these initiatives will make a difference in the lives of communities in Tajikistan. Providing knowledge and education are the most effective way to create a large scale change that is sustainable and empowers ordinary citizens to re-imagine a world that is more disaster resilient and thus is better prepared for the adverse effects on livelihoods that are created by natural hazards.

International Day for Disaster Reduction provides a platform to create awareness to schools and vulnerable communities through DRR activities and media, which has wide access to remote and isolated mountain communities in Eastern Tajikistan to help individuals and families become more resilient to the impact of natural hazards.

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**The Humanitarian Aid Department of the European Commission (ECHO)** is one of the largest donors for humanitarian aid worldwide. With its funding, nearly 20 million victims of natural or manmade disasters are helped each year in about 70 countries. The aid is distributed through 200 partner organizations (Red Cross and Red Crescent movement, specialized UN agencies and European NGOs) impartially to those who need it most independently of their religion, ethnic origin, gender or political affiliation. For further information please visit: [http://ec.europa.eu/echo/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/echo/index_en.htm)

**Focus Humanitarian Assistance (FOCUS)** is an international disaster management and emergency response agency providing relief and support services during and following natural and man-made disasters, primarily in the developing world. It is established in Europe, North America, Central and South Asia and helps people in need reduce their dependence on humanitarian aid and facilitates their transition to sustainable, self-reliant, long-term development. FOCUS is an affiliate of the Aga Khan Development Network, a group of institutions working to improve opportunities and living conditions for people of all faiths and origins in specific regions of the developing world. For more than 13 years, FOCUS and the Government of Tajikistan have partnered to foster disaster resiliency whereby seeking to improve the quality of life of people in Tajikistan. For more information on FOCUS please visit the website: [www.akdn.org/focus](http://www.akdn.org/focus).