



FACTSHEETS

EU Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations in the South Caucasus



Introduction

The South Caucasus region is particularly prone to natural hazards, including earthquakes, floods, and landslides. Effects of climate change are exacerbating the impact of climate-related disasters. Improving the capacity of national authorities and local communities to prepare for and respond to disaster is a priority for the European Union in the region.

The EU's humanitarian funding has focused on supporting the disaster preparedness program (DIPECHO) in order to increase the capacity of national stakeholders and people's resilience to recurrent disasters.

What are the needs?

The varied geography of Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan, which includes vast mountain chains, grasslands, and large river systems, makes this region particularly vulnerable to natural disasters. The whole region is exposed to a variety of natural hazards. In recent years, the rising temperatures due to climate change are exacerbating natural disasters such as floods and landslides.

Earthquakes remain the predominant threat with several fault lines across the region,

making it one of the most seismically active zones in the world, with earthquakes occurring frequently. Major cities in South Caucasus are especially at risk. Moreover, earthquakes can trigger avalanches, landslides and mudflows, which pose a considerable threat as almost two-thirds of the entire population of the region live in mountainous areas. Climate change is expected to increase vulnerabilities and exposure to hazards in the coming years, and will result in the need for greater adaptation and assistance in the South Caucasus.

The ongoing tensions between Azerbaijan and Armenia over the disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh and persistent threat of a sudden escalation of violence adds to the humanitarian risks.

How are we helping?

The European Commission's disaster preparedness programme, DIPECHO, is a proven model to save lives and preserve livelihoods. Some of the achievements of this programme are: the increased awareness of disaster risk reduction (DRR); the introduction of disaster risk reduction in school curricula; inclusive disaster risk reduction education to reduce the vulnerability of disadvantaged children; innovative pilot projects linking disaster risk reduction with climate change adaptation. It also helped strengthen the capacities of disaster management authorities, national organisations and communities, and support the inclusion of disaster risk reduction in government policies and development plans. The total DIPECHO funding in South Caucasus since 2010 amounts to over €10.4 million.

From 2017 to 2018, the European Union is funding community-based initiatives to increase the resilience of the population through simple, inexpensive measures such as disaster mapping, evacuation plans, building of safe havens, and development of disaster risk reduction planning in urban environment. The EU also continues to fund school-based preparedness projects, and advocates national and regional authorities to integrate disaster risk reduction into formal school curricula and general school activities.

The current DIPECHO partners in the South Caucasus are UNDP in Armenia, and Save the Children in Armenia and Georgia.

Since 1992, the European Commission, through its European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations department, has provided over €188 million to South Caucasus regions, including both humanitarian aid and funding for disaster risk reduction initiatives (Georgia €97 million, Armenia €49 million, and Azerbaijan €42 million). DIPECHO programmes will be phased out from the region in early 2019.

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