



## JOINT PRESS RELEASE

### **EU-UNICEF partnership demonstrates results for children: Education is core to building resilient societies in Tajikistan**

**DUSHANBE, 28 APRIL 2017** - UNICEF and the European Union (EU) renewed their partnership to support the Ministry of Education and Sciences as well as other national stakeholders, to strengthen disaster risk reduction (DRR) in education. The uniqueness of this initiative stems from the fact that it engages children and adolescent boys and girls as active participants in DRR management. The partnership has already demonstrated success through various school-based DRR initiatives. It entails engaging children in project-based learning activities and simulation exercises. The initiative is facilitated by the partner-NGO Cesvi.

In accordance with the country celebrating the Civil Defence Day in April, the renewed partnership in close collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Science and the Committee on Emergency Situation of the Republic of Tajikistan demonstrated how education can be instrumental in building the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to prepare for and cope with disasters. Such approach also helps to share good practices for the communities affected by disasters to return to normal life with less difficulty.

A joint mission comprising of representatives of Committee on Emergency Situations of the Republic of Tajikistan, Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Tajikistan, the EU Delegation in Tajikistan, Cesvi and UNICEF, attended the events to celebrate Civil Defence Day in the distinctive 'resource schools' in Kulob district (Khatlon Province) to talk to students and teachers about DRR initiatives.

The mission's members discussed with local authorities how to continue the capacity-building of the education sector to enhance technical knowledge on natural hazards facing the communities, as well as assisting and improving the prediction and prevention of disasters and prepare communities to deal with them.

"Disaster Risk Reduction starts in schools: children are particularly vulnerable when natural disaster strikes and they can play an important role in spreading the information on how to prepare for disasters to their families and communities. Working with schools is therefore one of the cornerstones of the DIPECHO program, implemented in Tajikistan since 2003. It promotes a culture of prevention and disaster resilience to make school infrastructure safer and prepares students, teachers and staff to react well when a disaster strikes", said Carlos Afonso, head of the regional EU humanitarian aid office for Central Asia.

Starting from October 2016, the partnership engaged over 2,500 girls and boys in various activities, including participating in planning and learning, simulation exercises and school-based DRR initiatives, DRR youth groups and theatre performance. Results have proven the sustainability of the initiative and demonstrated the enhanced capacity of schools in comprehensive disaster risk management.

Under the ongoing funding stream from the EU - Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DIPECHO), the school-based DRR initiative succeeded in the establishment of DRR committees and DRR teams (rescue, first aid and psychosocial support teams), as well as the active engagement of schoolchildren to learn and practice new skills. The current phase showed that students of all ages can actively study and successfully participate in school-based DRR activities, including school safety measures, vulnerability assessment, hazard mapping and also work with teachers and other adults in the community, towards minimising risk before, during and after disasters.

‘Education can be instrumental in building resilient communities with solid knowledge, skills, and essential attitudes on DRR’, says Lucia Elmi, UNICEF Representative in Tajikistan. ‘Putting children at the heart of this initiative as learners and participants will sustain and mainstream disaster risk reduction in communities prone to natural hazards. It builds the capacity of children, communities and the society as a whole to reduce disaster risks in Tajikistan. This is particularly important as we are seen the devastating effects of climate change and how this is impacting the lives of children and communities. This project and today’s visit has demonstrated that we have a lot to learn from children and children must be part of the solution.

#### **About ECHO**

The Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) is one of the biggest donors for humanitarian aid worldwide. With its funding nearly 20 million victims of natural or man - made disasters are helped each year in about 70 countries. The aid is distributed through 200 partner organizations (Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, specialized UN agencies, and European NGOs) impartially to those who need it most. For further information, please visit: [http://ec.europa.eu/echo/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/echo/index_en.htm)

#### **About Cesvi**

Cesvi is an Italian humanitarian organisation, non-confessional, independent, participatory and non-profit foundation, founded in Bergamo in 1985. In the name Cesvi, the words cooperazione e sviluppo (cooperation and development) underline the fact that Cesvi’s philosophy is based on the idea of giving aid recipients a leading role, working together for their own natural benefit. Cesvi has been working in Tajikistan since 2001. For more information, please visit: <http://www.cesvi.eu/>

#### **About UNICEF**

UNICEF promotes the rights and wellbeing of every child, in everything we do. Together with our partners, we work in 190 countries and territories to translate that commitment into practical action, focusing special effort on reaching the most vulnerable and excluded children, to the benefit of all children, everywhere. For more information about UNICEF in Tajikistan and its work for children, please visit [www.unicef.tj](http://www.unicef.tj) and follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#)

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