

Coping with natural disasters

The case

Climate change is a global problem of the 21st century affecting socio-economic sustainability and natural environment of mankind. Global climate change is one of the main reasons causing repeating natural disasters. Georgia has incurred more than USD 500 million losses over the last decade as a result of natural disasters, as it is especially exposed to them due to its geographic location – south Caucasus is considered a vulnerable region to natural events. Landslides, mudslides and floods frequently occur there. In addition, it is a seismically active zone. Frequent disasters have a dramatic impact on the country's economy leading to long-lasting consequences. Rural population is especially affected by these consequences as it mostly depends on harvests and goods produced from cattle.

The change process

It is impossible to prevent natural disasters, but reduction of risks and mitigation of expected consequences is an important objective of the government and the NGOs. International organisations active in Georgia provide financial support to the projects aimed at resolution of these problems. One of these projects “Participatory multi-hazard disaster risk reduction in Adjara, Georgia” is implemented in highland regions of Adjara by the Black Sea Eco-



Academy. The project's principle objective is to increase resilience and reduce vulnerability of local communities and institutions through support to strategies, that enable them to prepare for, mitigate and respond to natural disasters and supporting 22 communities to develop their resilience through an institutionalised community based model, promoted within district and national DRR strategic development in Adjara, Georgia.

Disaster risk reduction, DRR, is a cross-cutting and complex development issue. Close collaboration of policy-makers, scientists, urban planners, engineers, architects, development workers and civil society representatives is a precondition for adopting a comprehensive approach and inventing adequate solutions. Multi-stakeholder and inter-agency platforms can help provide and mobilise knowledge, skills and resources required for mainstreaming disaster risk reduction into development policies, for coordination of planning and programmes, and for provision of analysis and advice.

Mobilisation and involvement of local population in this type of projects is of importance. This goal has been achieved through the project of the Black Sea Eco-Academy.

The outcome

Activities carried out within the project are as follows:

- Provided trainings for 40 teachers for developing curriculum and education materials and planned and simulated evacuation plans in 47 schools, public awareness strategy including social networking.
- Established and strengthened 22 Community Emergency Groups, participatory hazard mapping and developed community emergency plans.
- Implemented small-scale, low cost demonstrative mitigation projects through locally managed small grants.
- Established and strengthened 3 District Emergency Groups, and tested the competency of all Emergency Groups through trainings and provision of equipment and simulations.
- Developed electronic database for 3 districts to capture community based hazard mapping and emergency plans, facilitated institutionalising linkages and coordination.
- Lobbied and advocated the model replication and incorporation in development plans.
- Local population, representatives of local governments, experts, scientists as well as other stakeholders were involved in these activities.

The disaster risk reduction project is a good example demonstrating how important are the mutually agreed activities between these sectors. Effective implementation of the DRR project and sustainability to large extent depends on joint activities planned for the future.

Lessons learned

Growth of the involvement both of governmental and private and non-governmental sectors in the Black Sea protection issues, DRR and other environmental issues is also of great significance. In this regard it is very important that the non-governmental organisations working on the issues of the DRR should be strengthened, public shall be informed and development of environmental education and awareness rising shall be ensured. Good governance is the best mechanism for the correct development of the cooperation between the key stakeholders.

