



Bishkek strengthens disaster resilience with the spotlight on health systems in cooperation with UNDRR, WHO and the EU

With the Making Cities Resilient 2030 Initiative gaining momentum in Europe and Central Asia, a number of cities are accelerating action, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic, and with increasing climate-change impacts. Bishkek, the capital city of the Kyrgyz Republic, has taken significant steps forward in strengthening city resilience. The efforts, in collaboration with the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) and the European Union (EU), have been stepped up under the Central Asia Initiative “Strengthening disaster resilience and accelerating implementation of Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction in Central Asia 2019-2022” with the aim to develop a “Local Disaster Resilience Strategy and Action Plan” for the capital city by August 2022.

A number of important steps have been taken. First, joining to Making Cities Resilient 2030 Initiative in order to achieve these objectives, the City Hall of Bishkek established a Technical Working Group (TWG) to undertake a resilience assessment using Preliminary and Detailed Scorecards as well as the Health System Resilience Scorecard. Resilience assessments to support the strategy development process have been launched this September.

Building on the Preliminary Disaster Resilience Scorecard Assessment held earlier in September, on 24 September, Bishkek, in cooperation with UNDRR, EU and the World Health Organization (WHO) in the Kyrgyz Republic, conducted the Health Systems Disaster Resilience Scorecard Assessment. The significance of the Health Systems Disaster Resilience Scorecard Assessment is the emphasis on facilitating multi-sectoral approaches to integrating health issues in disaster risk reduction/resilience planning at the city level.

In total, 40 TWG's members attended the on-site meeting with an enlarged participation of the health system stakeholders. The Technical Working Group brought together a wide range of experts from local and national government. This includes technical expertise from health sector representatives, emergency managers, ecologists, city planners and others. Experience from past epidemics and the current COVID-19 pandemic highlights the importance of coordination and cooperation between these sectors.

Dr. Baktygul Ismailova, the Head of the City Health Department of Bishkek, underlined the importance of “further discussion on the possible additional solutions in building resilient health systems by assessing gaps in urban planning for ensuring risk-sensitive approach in building resilience in urban areas.”

Mr. Abdurahim Muhidov, UNDRR Regional Programme Coordinator noted, “The health care system worldwide is going through a merciless test due to the COVID-19 pandemic while continuing provision of regular services to the population. The expert meeting today aims at a critical review of all components of the system to support greater resilient in stressful situations”.

Dr. Akbar Esengulov, of the WHO Country Office in Kyrgyzstan said “Emergencies can happen in any country and any city, at any time. When disaster strikes, it can seriously disrupt the functioning of a community and health systems. Assessment of the city's capacities is crucial and can be used to guide action planning to strengthen the resilience of the city and reduce risks associated with a specific hazard and its consequences on health.”



Mr. Hans Farnhammer, Head of Cooperation of the EU Delegation to the Kyrgyz Republic noted: “The current pandemic has reminded us that health issues should be well integrated in disaster risk reduction and resilience planning at the city level. Close coordination and cooperation between disaster managers, health workers and other sectors is key to ensure high level of disaster risk resilience.”

The Ministry of Health and Social Development of the Kyrgyz Republic has also contributed to the developments with an overview on the strategies and policies related to building sustainable health systems as well as the results of the Strategic Risk Assessments (STAR). The STAR assessment, coordinated by WHO and conducted every three-years, offers supports authorities in understanding of the impact of the risks in public health as hazards for the whole country. The use of the STAR assessment results provided the data on potential and existing risks in public health in the Kyrgyz Republic, which constitute an important supplement to the Disaster Resilience Scorecard Assessment-Health Systems.

The TWG’s members will meet again at the beginning of 2022 kicking off the Detailed Scorecard Assessment for the city of Bishkek.

Background information

The assessment was conducted under the Central Asia Initiative “Strengthening disaster resilience and accelerating implementation of Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction in Central Asia 2019-2022”. This includes ongoing work to develop the Local Disaster Resilience Strategy and Action Plan which includes biological hazards and pandemic risk for the capital city of the Kyrgyz Republic as well as the membership of Bishkek in the global initiative “Making Cities Resilient 2030”.

UNDRR within this Initiative, engages with the capital cities in the region to support local governments to reduce risks and advance a holistic and systemic approach to urban resilience. The engagement of Central Asian capital cities in the MCR2030 initiative can leverage the implementation of this project, as cities joining MCR2030 will have access to tools and resources from partners to progress on the resilience roadmap. As a flagship and political priority for UNDRR, the local resilience agenda and MCR2030 offer an opportunity to heighten the resilience work of the capital cities. This project, funded by the European Union, will contribute directly to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goal 11 (SDG11) and other global frameworks, including the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Paris Agreement and the New Urban Agenda in the region.

The EU-funded project “Strengthening disaster resilience and accelerating implementation of Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction in Central Asia”, implemented by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), supports countries of the region in implementing the Sendai Framework priorities. The project supports strengthening regional coordination, development of regional DRR strategy, national disaster loss accounting systems, and community- level disaster risk reduction. On the local level, the project supports the development of disaster resilience strategies of capital cities. For this project, the EU committed EUR 3,750,000 for the three-year implementation.

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