CENTRAL ASIA
IFRC Country Cluster Office

BACKGROUND

Country Cluster Profile

Central Asia consists of five states: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, and their collective size is approximately ten per cent of the Eurasian continent. Over 75 per cent of the Central Asia region is highly exposed to natural disasters such as floods, landslides and earthquakes, causing loss of life and damage to property. The region is affected by climate change and extreme weather events and increases in temperature will likely result in further expansion of deserts and arid areas. The countries of Central Asia are at different levels of economic development, while growth in Europe and Central Asia overall is projected to fall sharply from 3.2 per cent in 2018 to 1.8 per cent in 2019 according to the World Bank 2019.

The region faces challenges of low life expectancy, high infant and maternal mortality, high rates of tuberculosis (TB) and an emerging HIV/AIDS epidemic. The main causes of death are non-communicable diseases such as cardiovascular diseases and cancer. Access to basic health services presents a challenge in most Central Asia countries, especially in rural areas.
There is large-scale labour mobility in the region. Kazakhstan is a country of transit and destination for migrant workers from Central Asia. Tajikistan is more dependent than any other country in the world on remittances sent home by migrant workers working overseas and it is estimated that half of working-age Tajik males are employed abroad, mostly in the Russian Federation. Kyrgyzstan is also strongly dependent on remittances, which made up a third of the country’s GDP in 2018.

This operational plan reflects the support IFRC will provide to the National Societies in agreed upon areas. The focus for 2020 will be on disaster risk reduction, health, protection, migration and strengthening National Societies’ capacities in the areas of resource and partnership development and strengthening regional coordination and cooperation.

National Society Profile

Founded between 1926 and 1937, the Central Asian National Societies were members of the Union of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies of the USSR until 1991. The National Societies are therefore the oldest humanitarian organizations in each country providing needs-based services to the most vulnerable communities. Acting as auxiliaries to the public authorities in the humanitarian field, they conduct prevention campaigns and support in health and care, disaster risk reduction and response operations, address migration-related challenges, provide social support to the most vulnerable and tackle discrimination, intolerance and violence in communities.

- Kazakhstan Red Crescent has 16 branches, 122 staff members and 1,064 volunteers.
- Kyrgyzstan Red Crescent has 46 branches, 212 staff members and 2,657 volunteers.
- Tajikistan Red Crescent has 69 branches, 152 staff members and 11,400 volunteers.
- Turkmenistan Red Crescent has 51 branches, 139 staff members and 974 volunteers.
- Uzbekistan Red Crescent has 220 branches, 698 staff members and 42,656 volunteers.

Role of the Country Cluster office

The IFRC Country Cluster Office works with the five Central Asian National Societies providing technical assistance in disaster management, risk reduction and health, institutional capacity strengthening, representation and advocacy as well as facilitation of partnerships and multilateral assistance to support
vulnerable communities. The IFRC Country Cluster office is based in Almaty, Kazakhstan and also includes three country offices: in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan.

Movement coordination and cooperation is one of the key priorities of the Country Cluster Support Team, especially in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan where a few Partner National Societies are present. This includes support to partner National Societies with integration agreements.

Movement Footprint

Movement partners present in Central Asia are the German, Italian and Swiss Red Cross Societies, and ICRC. The IFRC Country Cluster Support Team maintains dialogue with all Movement partners to ensure effective cooperation and coordination of activities. In 2020, coordination will continue with the Italian and Spanish Red Cross on youth engagement and disaster risk reduction and volunteering development, building on ongoing programming support such as that of the German Red Cross. Cooperation with the Turkish Red Crescent in first aid will continue, and new Movement partnerships will be further explored.

ICRC supports the National Societies of Central Asia in mine risk education, emergency preparedness and response (Safe Access), communication and international humanitarian law, Restoring Family Links and first aid.
AREA OF FOCUS

**DISASTER RISK REDUCTION**

The five countries in Central Asia are all prone to recurring and large-scale disasters such as earthquakes, mud- and landslides, avalanches, droughts and floods. The intensity and scale of emergencies in Central Asia are on the rise, and climate change is further increasing disaster risks. Central Asia is considered one of the most tectonically unstable areas in Eurasia, and as the density of the population is high in seismically active zones, even a minor earthquake could cause thousands of deaths and injuries.

The Central Asia Resilience Strategy “Silk Road to Resilience” 2018–2022 aims to progressively and sustainably reinforce the resilience of communities across Central Asia. As part of the implementation of the strategy, country-level plans have been developed by National Societies for resilience programming and two regional programmes were initiated by IFRC in 2018–2019.

**Key activities:**

- Initiate a multi-country programme on strengthening the resilience of vulnerable communities through community-based engagement on disaster risk reduction. The programme will support communities to develop their own small-scale disaster mitigation projects and will conduct public awareness and education activities.

- Deliver a programme on strengthening disaster preparedness for response and building institutional capacities in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan through a multi-year partnership coordinated by IFRC and UNICEF regional offices. The programme is part of a new form of cooperation for a scaled-up UNICEF and IFRC partnership concentrating on earthquake-informed emergency preparedness and early-action through building the capacities of local Red Crescent National Societies.

- A series of advocacy activities are planned across the region in partnership with Governments and UN agencies. This includes a conference on climate change adaptation.

**Outcome**

***Number of people who are aware of disaster and climate risks and of the key actions to be taken before, during and after disasters***

190,000

**Communities are better prepared to respond to and recover from disasters**
AREA OF FOCUS

HEALTH

Preventable non-communicable diseases such as cardiovascular disease and cancer are the leading cause of death in Central Asia and mortality rates are expected to increase. Tuberculosis (TB) continues to be a major public health challenge in the region and four of the world’s top ten countries with the highest burden of Multi-Drug Resistant TB are in Central Asia. An exponential increase in HIV rates has been recorded in recent years, which further increases the risk of TB.

In 2020 IFRC plans to focus on the prevention of non-communicable diseases as well as community-based health and first aid (CBHFA) in Tajikistan. To deliver long term health programmes and provide specialized support to Central Asian National Societies, it is planned to recruit an IFRC health delegate.

Key activities:

- Deliver non-communicable disease prevention programmes in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, with a focus on cardiovascular diseases, diabetes and chronic respiratory diseases.

- Hold a second regional workshop on strengthening National Society first aid services focusing on legislation and commercial first aid.

OUTCOME

VULNERABLE PEOPLE’S HEALTH AND DIGNITY ARE IMPROVED THROUGH ACCESS TO RELEVANT SERVICES

NUMBER OF PEOPLE REACHED WITH HEALTH PROGRAMMES AND SERVICES

70,000

400,000 SWISS FRANCS FUNDING REQUIREMENT
AREA OF FOCUS

WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE

In Tajikistan, there is severely limited access to drinking water sources and sanitation connected to a functioning sewerage system. Access is distributed very unevenly: only 36 per cent of rural households in Tajikistan had access to safe drinking water in 2019 (same percentage as 2016), compared to 87 per cent of urban households.

Only half of rural schools have access to piped water, with almost 60 per cent using pit latrines with slabs as toilets. Infectious diarrhea and other waterborne illnesses are recognized as leading causes of infant and child mortality and malnutrition.

In 2020 IFRC hopes to submit a proposal for “ONE WASH” programme in Tajikistan, aiming to reduce the risk of cholera and other water-borne diseases by increasing access to safe water, sanitation and improving hygienic behaviour in rural Tajikistan. If successful then 20 per cent co-financing will be required and activities will include:

- “Hardware” component: development of water facilities and infrastructure in rural areas.
- “Software” component: awareness activities, community-based health and first aid (CBHFA), sanitary and hygiene promotion.
- Inter-sectoral coordination and advocacy.

OUTCOME

VULNERABLE PEOPLE HAVE INCREASED ACCESS TO APPROPRIATE WATER, HYGIENE AND SANITATION SERVICES
Disputes over border demarcation between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan cause multiple conflicts over access and use of natural resources such as water for irrigation and pasture ground for grazing animals. Resource access and use conflicts between Kyrgyz and Tajik border communities have taken place for several years, and during 2019 there were clashes on many different occasions, where soldiers, border guards and civilians on both sides were killed and injured.

IFRC is planning to initiate a programme to promote a culture of non-violence, peace and social inclusion for Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

**Key activities:**

- Conduct joint cultural and sporting events, trainings and workshops among young people.
- Organise a youth camp engaging National Society local branches and offer various skills development training and workshops to support cross-border business.

**Area of Focus**

**Protection, Gender and Inclusion**

**Outcome**

Communities become more safe, peaceful and inclusive

**Number of young people involved in the promotion of a culture of non-violence, peace and social inclusion**

170,000

**50,000 Swiss Francs Funding Requirement**
Many people in Central Asia face challenges of unemployment and poverty, causing them to migrate to other countries of the region to live and work. Most of these people work illegally and have therefore limited access to health services. Many labour migrants, especially women, are exposed to forced labour, abuse and trafficking and are vulnerable to diseases such as HIV, tuberculosis (TB) and sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Migrants’ knowledge of the legal environment and healthcare systems in host countries is generally low. Red Crescent Societies in the region have a vast experience of working with migrant communities and therefore are the best placed actors to raise their awareness and advocate for them.

IFRC plans to initiate a programme to address health needs of labour migrants in Central Asia, which will include activities on expanding humanitarian access and advocacy activities at national and regional levels.

**Key activities:**

- Train volunteers from labour migrant communities to provide peer-to-peer support and disseminate information on risks and available services.
- Educate social and health workers on migration issues including legislation, international human rights law, and migrants’ vulnerability analysis.
- Conduct information campaigns on risks of trafficking and exploitation, with a focus on health risks of women.
- Undertake advocacy activities for the improvement of legal frameworks, expanding migrants’ access to diagnostic services and treatment for TB, HIV and STIs, and reproductive health services.
STRATEGY FOR IMPLEMENTATION

STRENGTHEN NATIONAL SOCIETY CAPACITIES

IFRC will support Central Asian National Societies to build their capacities through specialist technical support and organizational development. For example, IFRC will provide technical assistance to Turkmenistan Red Crescent in the development of a database on registration of volunteers, continue support on fundraising development with Kazakhstan Red Crescent, and provide organizational development support to Tajikistan Red Crescent. IFRC will organize a regional leadership meeting for all Central Asian National Societies to facilitate sharing of experiences through peer support and National Society development in leadership and management, HR, financial management, and resource mobilization.

OUTCOME
THE NATIONAL SOCIETIES HAVE IMPROVED SYSTEMS, STRUCTURES AND COMPETENCIES TO SUPPORT VULNERABLE PEOPLE

ENSURE EFFECTIVE INTERNATIONAL DISASTER MANAGEMENT

IFRC Central Asia will continue to support National Societies with strategic advice, capacity building, reporting, visibility, coordination and technical assistance in disaster management and risk reduction. Additional capacities and expertise will be mobilized from the IFRC Regional Office for Europe, the wider Red Cross Red Crescent network and other stakeholders as needed.

OUTCOME
THE NATIONAL SOCIETIES ARE BETTER PREPARED TO RESPOND TO DISASTERS

370,000 SWISS FRANCS FUNDING REQUIREMENT

90,000 SWISS FRANCS FUNDING REQUIREMENT
STRATEGY FOR IMPLEMENTATION

INFLUENCE OTHERS AS LEADING STRATEGIC PARTNERS

The strong collaboration with UNICEF will continue in emergency preparedness and early-action through a series of joint activities including regional trainings. IFRC will focus on development and implementation of climate-smart disaster law and policies that protect people in vulnerable situations and strengthen National Societies’ legislative advocacy and their auxiliary roles.

OUTCOME

THE NATIONAL SOCIETIES ARE BETTER POSITIONED AMONG KEY STAKEHOLDERS

STRATEGY FOR IMPLEMENTATION

ENSURE A STRONG IFRC

IFRC Head of Programmes for Central Asia will coordinate and improve the quality of the IFRC programming support to National Societies and facilitate technical assistance in organizational development and resource mobilization. The Head of Programmes will 1) provide capacity development support to the National Societies with special attention to organizational development, modernization and domestic resource mobilization; 2) coordinate IFRC programming support to key areas such as disaster risk reduction, health and migration, and fundraise for IFRC Appeals; 3) develop new partnerships with governments, development partners, donors, UN and other international and local organizations for joint programming and scaled up Red Crescent services.

OUTCOME

IFRC ENHANCES ITS EFFECTIVENESS, CREDIBILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

10,000 SWISS FRANCS FUNDING REQUIREMENT

620,000 SWISS FRANCS FUNDING REQUIREMENT
Contact information of the IFRC Country office, for partners who wish to find out more

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