

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Last year was relatively calm across the region, with countries that usually suffer from seasonal disasters, such as Armenia, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan, mostly spared.
- Tajikistan experiences one of the costliest years on record in terms of economic losses incurred by mudflows.
- 2016 could also be dubbed the year of regional cooperation with governments making progress in joining efforts on risk reduction and border demarcation.
- The deadliest clash along the line of contact hits the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict zone with losses on both sides.

## FIGURES

Affected pop.	> 10,000
Undernourished	~3 million
Killed	139

## FUNDING

**29 million**  
received (US\$)

**62%** for response and risk reduction in Tajikistan



Kyrgyzstan. Credit: OCHA

## In this issue

- Policy progress in preparedness P.2
- Seasonal disasters in Tajikistan P.2
- Regional cooperation improved P.4
- Risk projections for 2017 published P.5

## 2016: the year of man-made threats

### Few natural disasters; tension remains in the Caucasus but yields to better regional cooperation in Central Asia

The year of 2016 spared the region major natural disasters, with the most significant disaster of a manageable scale taking place in Tajikistan in May. As a result of flash floods and mudflows across several districts, out of 10,000 affected some 5,500 people required humanitarian assistance. Aid was mobilized by the Government of Tajikistan with the support of the Rapid Emergency Assessment and Coordination Team (REACT).

The first half of the year witnessed the worst escalation of violence in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict zone. Lives were lost, infrastructure damaged and civilians living in the affected areas had to flee to safer areas. The fighting lasted four days and ended in a fragile truce, with frequent violations reported by both sides.

Long-standing tension in Central Asia by the end of 2016 gave way to a significant warming of relations between Uzbekistan and its neighbours – Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The countries achieved substantial progress on border demarcation, exchanged working visits, and signed a number of bilateral agreements, signifying a historic shift in regional cooperation in Central Asia.

On another positive note, Armenia and Tajikistan signed customs agreements with the United Nations in a step that will boost the preparedness of both countries to respond to large-scale emergencies that exceed national capacities.



Credit: REACT Tajikistan  
Tajikistan (May 2016) – flash floods affected the lives of some 10,000 people, many of whom required humanitarian assistance.

## Nagorno-Karabakh conflict zone: major fighting

### Deadliest escalation of the conflict since 1994 ceasefire

On 2-5 April, major fighting flared up along the Line of Contact in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict zone, claiming lives on both sides, including civilians, and causing displacement and humanitarian needs for several thousand people (mostly women, children and

elderly). Response was mobilized locally with some involvement of humanitarian organizations on the ground.

The outbreak was the worst on record since the 1994 ceasefire, according to experts.

The situation drew immediate international attention. On 2 April, the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon issued a statement urging “all relevant parties to put an immediate end to the fighting, fully respect the ceasefire agreement and take urgent steps to de-escalate the situation.”<sup>1</sup> Inter-governmental organizations and leaders of many countries also called for an urgent peaceful resolution.

A truce was brokered on 5 April, however, periodic violations continue to be reported by both sides.

*Across the region, countries are improving the policy framework for better cooperation and response in case of large-scale emergencies. Customs agreements are signed in Armenia and Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan is advancing its international humanitarian law, and other countries in the region are expected to follow suit.*

## Policy-level advances in preparedness

### Armenia and Tajikistan simplify customs procedures in disasters

In 2016, the Governments of Armenia and Tajikistan signed customs agreements with the highest United Nations representatives in their respective countries. These agreements will simplify the entry, exit and transit of humanitarian personnel and relief goods in large-scale emergencies. This applies to UN agencies, intergovernmental, governmental and non-governmental organizations engaged in a humanitarian response in coordination with UN efforts.

Both Armenia and Tajikistan are highly prone to a range of natural and man-made disasters. Customs agreements will contribute to a strengthened preparedness capacity of each country. A similar agreement is expected to be signed in Kazakhstan in 2017 and later in other countries in the region.

### Kyrgyzstan close to adopting international disaster relief law

By December, Kyrgyzstan's draft law on international relief assistance has steadily passed several discussions, reviews and hearings. As of 26 December, the members of the parliamentary committees on social affairs, education, science, culture and public health supported the draft law with a few changes that are to be addressed before an official parliamentary hearing in January 2017.

The proposed law is based on the "Guidelines for the domestic relief and regulation of international disaster relief and assistance in the initial recovery» (IDRL Guidelines). The guidelines provide recommendations on the improvement of the national legal framework to ensure better coordination and provision of timely international assistance in an effective and fair manner.

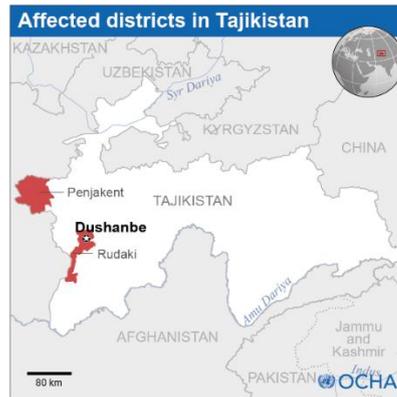
## Seasonal disasters in Armenia, Tajikistan

### Flash floods kill 6, affect 10,000 people in 16 districts in Tajikistan

Heavy rains between 9 and 18 May precipitated into flash floods and mudflows that affected up to 10,000 people (or 1,600 households) across 16 districts in Tajikistan. While sex and age disaggregated data on the affected is not available, it is known that 49 per cent of people living in the affected areas are women. More than half of the affected people required humanitarian assistance. Houses were damaged or destroyed, food stocks and livestock perished, water sources and latrines were covered by mud. Around 1,500 people, including women and children, had to be evacuated.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2016-04-02/statement-attributable-spokesman-secretary-general-nagorno-karabakh>

*Tajikistan experienced one of the costliest years on record in terms of economic losses incurred by seasonal disasters, in particular, mudflows.*



Source: Map sources: ESRI, OCHA, UNCS. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Dotted line represents approximately the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the parties. Map created in June 2016.

Humanitarian partners identified most urgent needs in food, non-food items (NFIs for clearing the debris and reconstruction works), and WASH.

REACT partners organized response actions through six sector areas: early recovery and livelihoods, education, food security, health, shelter and NFIs, and WASH. The Committee of Emergency Situations of Tajikistan coordinated assessment and relief works. The National Red Crescent Society issued an appeal for \$100,667 (CHF 101,333) and responded to the needs of 320 most-affected families.

5,500

People in need of humanitarian assistance

10,000

People affected

6

Killed

Source: REACT, Red Crescent Society of Tajikistan

### Mudflows incur vast economic losses compared with previous years

The year of 2016 was one of the costliest in terms of economic losses caused by mudflows in Tajikistan. The Committee of Emergency Situations estimates that mudflows of various scale cost the country \$21 million (159 million Tajik Somoni), which is the second to highest amount recorded since 2010 when floods and mudflows swept through villages in Kulob and surrounding districts, killing dozens, injuring hundreds and displacing thousands of people.

#### Human and economic losses from mudflows in Tajikistan in 2010-2016

Year	Frequency	People killed	Economic loss (in million US\$)
2010	93	27	95 (TJS 420)
2011	36	7	7.2 (TJS 31.7)
2012	91	7	10 (TJS 47.2)
2013	20	0	11 (TJS 52.8)
2014	19	22	9 (TJS 41)
2015	42	9	19 (TJS 120)
2016	34	7	21 (TJS 158.7)

Source: Committee of Emergency Situations of the Republic of Tajikistan

### Mudflows affect poor regions in Armenia

As a result of heavy rains on 24 June, mudflows came down on a village of Karchaghbyur and a town of Artik in the economically vulnerable regions of Armenia, affecting infrastructure, houses, agricultural lands and public buildings. People living in the area derive their incomes mostly from agriculture and animal husbandry. Damages caused to agricultural lands meant significant long-term consequences for the affected families.

The scale of the disaster was within the scope of the government capacity with additional assistance from the Armenian Red Cross Society of Armenia (ARCS). ARCS issued an appeal in response to the disaster and subsequently covered the needs of 600 people out of 750 affected.

*The last quarter of 2016 saw significant improvements in bilateral relations between Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, as well as between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Countries achieved notable progress in border demarcation, thus, soothing some tensions in the region.*

## Regional cooperation in Central Asia

### Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan border cooperation on a path to recovery

Despite a rocky start and some escalation of the situation along the border between Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan in March and August, by the end of the year the two countries achieved notable progress in mending their relations.

In August-October, working groups conducted three rounds of negotiations on border demarcation and delimitation. On 1 October, a Kyrgyz delegation met with Uzbek counterparts at the “Dostuk” (“Dustlik” – friendship) checkpoint in Andijan, Uzbekistan, that has been closed since 2010 and signed a memorandum of understanding and cooperation. This document should ease future tensions and make local resolution of cross-border conflicts more easily attainable.

In September-October, a working group composed of Kyrgyz and Uzbek officials conducted a joint analysis of dozens of disputed border areas. For years, some 50 such border areas or about 300 km (one fourth of the total shared border) remained non-delimited. This led to frequent conflicts over border crossings and access to resources between communities living along the border. These incidents often involved violence and the use of firearms.

### Tajikistan and Uzbekistan vow to improve ties

After years of tense relations, not least over the construction of the Rogun hydropower dam, towards the end of 2016 Tajikistan and Uzbekistan have signalled the beginning of a new era in bilateral cooperation. In November, government officials from both sides came together to examine disputed areas in their 1,333 km-long border. Among other signs of the improving ties between the two countries are plans to liberalize visa regime, boost trade and open air, train and bus routes.

### Regional platform for Disaster Risk Reduction launched in Dushanbe

Regional cooperation among countries in the Caucasus and Central Asia region received an additional boost on the issues of disaster risk reduction. In July, the Government of Tajikistan [convened](#) national authorities and stakeholders to discuss the region’s overarching direction in achieving the objectives set by the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030.

The meeting in Dushanbe explored two objectives: first, to launch a regional platform, and, second, to agree on the common vision of a more resilient region. Both objectives were met, as the newly launched **Central Asia and South Caucasus Regional Platform** adopted the “**Dushanbe Declaration on Disaster Risk**”. Once processed internally by each participating government, the Declaration will prompt countries in the region to develop and align risk management and risk reduction strategies. This will entail the creation of institutions, coordination mechanisms and procedures.

The Dushanbe Declaration aims to strengthen ties with **the Centre for Emergency Situations and Disaster Risk Reduction**, which is based in Almaty, as a “resource centre for implementation of the Priorities for Action of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.”

## World Humanitarian Summit outcomes

### Agenda for Humanity launched at historic gathering

Some 9,000 participants came together in Istanbul on 23-24 May to close the WHS preparatory chapter and turn the page to actions and commitments. The WHS process was first articulated in the UN Secretary-General’s remarks to the UN General Assembly in 2012. Four years later, the initiative has blossomed into a global process that consulted tens of thousands of people on what the future humanitarian system ought to look like.

This future of the humanitarian system is reflected in the [Agenda for Humanity](#), a five-point plan that outlines the changes and actions that are necessary to alleviate human

suffering, and reduce risk and vulnerability. At the heart of the Agenda for Humanity are five responsibilities:

- Political leadership to prevent and end conflicts
- Uphold the norms that safeguard humanity
- Leave no one behind
- Change people's lives: from delivering aid to ending need
- Invest in humanity

Representatives from the Caucasus and Central Asia region participated in the Summit, with the presidents of Azerbaijan, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan in attendance, as well as the deputy prime ministers of Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. Armenia and Kazakhstan were represented at ambassadorial and ministerial level.

### Post-WHS: Keeping the momentum, tracking progress

One of the primary outcomes of the summit is the launch of the online [Platform for Action, Commitments and Transformation](http://www.agendaforhumanity.org) (PACT) at [www.agendaforhumanity.org](http://www.agendaforhumanity.org). The PACT is designed to keep track of progress in reaching WHS commitments and promoting transparency and accountability.

2017 began with a call for the first round of self-reporting to PACT where countries or organizations are invited to report on their progress in taking forward commitments made at the Summit. Stakeholders are asked to share their challenges and successes. This self-reporting will be done every year, followed by an annual synthesis report (prepared by OCHA) highlighting trends, achievements and gaps in how the 24 transformations of the Agenda for Humanity are being collectively advanced.

*Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan are in the world's top 10 countries most physically exposed to earthquake risk.*

## INFORM results for 2017 published

### Medium risk remains in most countries across the region

All but three countries in the region of the Caucasus and Central Asia were deemed medium risk and stable, according to the third report of the Global Index for Risk Management INFORM published in 2016. Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan have maintained a low risk level, with a footnote that data for Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan is not comprehensive.

Of 191 countries ranked by INFORM, countries in the region received rankings from 58<sup>th</sup> place (Azerbaijan), followed by Tajikistan at 62<sup>nd</sup> place, to the end of the list with Kazakhstan at 145<sup>th</sup> place. In terms of exposure to hazards, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan scored highest in the region at 5.9 and 5.6 respectively (on a scale of 0 to 10, where 10 is the highest risk). Several countries in the region are estimated to be the most exposed to earthquakes: Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan are in the world's top 10 countries (see table on the right).

INFORM is the first global, objective and transparent tool for understanding the risk of humanitarian crises and disasters. It can help identify where and why a crisis might occur, which means humanitarian actors can reduce the risk, build peoples' resilience and prepare better for when crises do happen.

OCHA Regional Office for the Caucasus, Central Asia and Ukraine has been working on a subnational INFORM model, which will be presented in 2017.



#	COUNTRY	(0-10)
1	Iran	10.0
2	Nepal	9.9
3	Uzbekistan	9.9
4	Chile	9.8
5	Guatemala	9.7
6	Kyrgyzstan	9.7
7	Tajikistan	9.7
8	Costa Rica	9.6
9	Ecuador	9.4
10	Japan	9.4

For further information, please contact: **Zarina Nurmukhambetova**, Public Information and Reporting Associate, [nurmukhambetova@un.org](mailto:nurmukhambetova@un.org), Tel. (+7 777) 078 9778  
OCHA humanitarian bulletins are available at | [www.unocha.org/rocca](http://www.unocha.org/rocca) | [www.reliefweb.int](http://www.reliefweb.int)