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Natural Disaster Risk Reduction in Georgia

Natural Disaster Risk Reduction in Georgia Institutional and Legal Framework

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Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	2
2. Legal Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction in Georgia.....	3
3. Institutional Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction in Georgia	6
4. Conclusions and Recommendations	7

1. Introduction

Natural hazards turning into disasters have increased dramatically, both in terms of frequency, complexity, scope and destructive capacity. The majority of the 20 most devastating natural disasters since 1950 have occurred during the last 10 years. Natural disasters are estimated to have claimed about 3 million lives around the world in the past two decades, as well as severely affecting the livelihood of about 1 billion people.

Natural hazards are naturally occurring physical phenomena caused either by rapid or slow onset events having atmospheric, geologic and hydrologic origins on global, regional, national and local scales. Natural disasters are the consequences or effects of natural hazards. They may represent a serious breakdown in sustainability and disruption of economic and social progress. Climate change as well as decadal variations in storms contribute to the increasing number of disasters, but the main causes of disaster are related to other factors such as population growth, urbanization, alteration of the natural environment, substandard dwellings and public buildings, inadequate infrastructure maintenance as well as poverty exacerbation. As such, disasters are to a large extent human-induced.

Development and human disaster is closely interlinked. Developing countries and poor people are more vulnerable to the effects of natural hazards and suffer the greatest losses in terms of lives and livelihoods. Disasters may setback social investments aiming to ameliorate poverty and hunger, provide access to education, health services, safe housing, drinking water and sanitation, or to protect the environment as well as the economic investments that provide employment and income. The economic losses resulted from disasters may exceed contributions from international development sources in many developing countries, and in some cases they even exceed the annual gross domestic product.

The international community is gradually stepping up activities to prevent disasters and increase the preparedness to cope with natural hazards. In the past 10 years, concepts associated with disaster reduction have advanced in both scope and sophistication. There is evidence of greater official and public understanding that the threat of combined political, economic and environmental consequences of disasters demands more effective means to address vulnerability to current and emerging risks.

Due to complex mountainous relief and climatic conditions **Georgia** is highly disaster-prone country. In the past it has frequently experienced serious natural disasters such as earthquakes, floods, droughts, landslides and avalanches. According to the Georgian scientists, environmental degradation has significantly exacerbated natural disasters, threatening livelihoods and well-being of increasing number of communities. Even though Georgia is highly vulnerable to natural hazards because of its topography and geological sensitivity, as scientists state, due to extremely high anthropogenic pressure, it is impossible to differentiate between natural and human-induced catastrophic processes. Georgia's current fragile social, political, and economic environment, rapid urbanization, and improperly maintained infrastructure increase the level of vulnerability and contribute to the impact of disasters. Among anthropogenic factors that are the major causes of increasing natural disasters, the scientist name: current agricultural practices and urbanization trends, large-scale infrastructural projects and mining industry.

According to the same scientists, the current geo-ecological situation in Georgia is critical. Landslides, mudflows, floods, river coast and seashore abrasion, droughts and forest fires are natural disasters that are most frequently occurring in Georgia during last years. Around 3000 settlements (which comprise 80 percent of the total number of settlements in Georgia,) in total with 400 thousand families experienced different degree of risk of natural hazards during last 30 years and more than 50 thousand families were resettled. It has been estimated that annual losses caused by natural disasters comprise USD 150-200 million on average. The damage inflicted by natural disasters in 2004 amounts approximately USD 300 million. In addition to ever so increasing economic losses and population's vulnerability to disasters, resettlement of population from disaster-prone peripheral villages to safer places is also noticeable. This on the one hand, leads to overpopulation of the urban areas and on the other, hinders balanced development of the country and jeopardizes territorial unity and security interests (as the majority of the bordering regions are located at the disaster-prone areas).

With Georgia's turbulent history of internal conflicts in the decades, natural disasters have not historically ranked highly among the Government's perception of risks. Disaster management in general and interrelationship between environmental management and vulnerability to disasters is clearly a critical issue for Georgia, however understanding of the problem and the solutions is either missing or balanced by other conceivably more pressing concerns, such as for instance, resolution of conflicts or ensuring fast economic growth. Only a dedicated group of specialists, such as scientists, technicians and civil engineers, a few non-governmental organizations and professionals working within the government's specialized emergency management and civil defense structures are concerned about natural disasters.

The Government's engagement in natural disasters has increased during last 3-4 years due to the floods and

landslides in the Western Georgian regions in April/May 2005. East Georgia was also affected but less severely than in the West. As part of its response to the floods the Government established a national coordination structure, including a high-level Commission under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister and an Operational Centre in the Emergency Situation and Civil Safety Service of the Ministry of Interior. The Central Government provided funds for emergency road repair and the removal of debris caused by the floods. In the affected areas, local authorities responded relatively quickly to the emergency through the mobilization of reservists and the provision of food and other relief aid.

2. Legal Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction in Georgia

In recent years, many countries have moved their disaster reduction agenda forward through progressive legislative reform, often as a result of a major disaster. This is the case with Georgia too. As said above, the Government's engagement in natural disasters has increased during last years as frequency and magnitude of natural disasters amplified. Although adoption of the Law on Protection of the Population and Territory from Natural and Technological Emergencies in June 2007 can be considered an important step towards improvement of the legal framework regulating natural disaster risk management, legislation in disaster risk reduction remains fragmented and inconsistent, there is still lack of clarity over the respective roles and responsibilities of different actors. In this chapter major legal acts regulating natural disaster risk reduction are described shortly.

Legal definitions

Despite certain progress in lawmaking related to natural disaster risk reduction, none of the legal acts define such important terms and concepts as hazard, disaster (natural or technological), risk, disaster risk reduction, resilience, vulnerability, etc. The term "natural disaster" is mentioned in the Law on Environmental Protection (1996), however definition is not provided. There is an attempt to provide such definition in the Law on Protection of the Population and Territory from Natural and Technological Emergencies; however the law does not cover such aspects, as for instance scope of the hazardous event, its duration, magnitude of the impacts, geographical boundaries, etc. Moreover, without providing any interpretation, the law assigns natural disasters the status of "emergency situations". Described lack and ambiguity of definitions creates confusion and impedes the ability of the Government to formulate effective response to sudden onset natural disasters.

The Law on Environmental Protection

As mentioned above the law on Environmental Protection of 1996 introduces the term "natural disaster", however it does not provide any further interpretation. The law also introduces term "ecological disaster/catastrophe", however law does not clarify differences between natural (or human-induced) and ecological disaster.

The Law on Environmental Protection also requires provision of information concerning expected or previous natural and man-made accidents and other ecological catastrophes. Surprisingly, the legislation obliges the citizens to provide the relevant state agencies with the aforementioned information, but says nothing about the state agencies informing the public.

The law also implies the possibility of the declaration of a state of emergency by the president of Georgia in the event of ecological catastrophes, epidemics and epizootics. In practice the dissemination of information under such circumstances is done according to the situation. The law provides for very general requirements according to which there should be a plan for emergencies, preliminary action plans at state and industrial levels. This kind of general requirement that has no enforcement mechanisms is naturally not met. The only positive provision set out in the law in this sphere is that if the information is important in terms of protection of public safety, it can be revealed even if it constitutes a state secret.

It is stated in Article 17 of the law that the ecological insurance should be provided in Georgia, including mandatory ecological insurance for ecologically hazardous activities. The law also states that the detailed requirements for ecological insurance should be provided in Georgian legislation, however such legislation has not been elaborated until now.

Chapter 11 of the law is completely dedicated to regulation of ecological disasters. This chapter does not contain term "natural disaster"; however the used term is the closest in comparison to terms used in other normative acts (dangerous natural phenomena, natural catastrophe, natural emergency, etc). Article 42 (emergency situation in the events of ecological catastrophes) establishes that emergency situation should be announced on all territory of Georgia or its part in the event of ecological catastrophe. It is also stated that the zone of special ecological state or ecological disaster zone shall be established on the area where emergency situation has been announced.

Articles 43 and 44 introduce definition of both zones. Zone of special ecological state should be announced in the area where environment has deteriorated and human health, flora and fauna is endangered as a result of certain

activities or natural disaster. Zone of ecological disaster should be announced in the area where due to certain activities, emergencies, natural disasters or catastrophes ecological balance has been undermined and human health is endangered. According to the law the president of the country is entitled to announce certain territories as zones of special ecological state or ecological disaster, the president is also entitled to cancel such zones. The regime of both zones should be defined by legislation of Georgia, however such legislation has not been elaborated until now.

The Regulation on the Permit for Impact on Environment

Many scholars note that instruments of environmental management can be counted among effective risk reduction measures, therefore in this chapter the current system of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and relevant regulation is discussed shortly.

In order to mitigate the likely consequences of planning and related economic decisions on the environment and human health the Regulation on the Permit for Impact on Environment was adopted in 2005. It has replaced the Law on Environmental Permit of 1997 which was aimed at prevention of possible negative impacts on the environment and public health due to various types of industrial activities at early planning stages as well as during implementation.

According to the Law on Environmental Permit, the activities defined by the law and dealing with relocation, construction or sectoral development programmes and projects, including the implementation of infrastructure development, reconstruction and the technical renovation of enterprises, projects and programmes for protection and use of natural resources, etc. require an environmental permit. The activities were divided in four categories depending on the scale of activity and significance of environmental impacts. The project proponents were requested to conduct EIA (or limited environmental study, depending on the category of activity) before application to the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources for the permit.

The situation has radically changed when a new Law on Licenses and Permits and Regulation on the Permit for Impact on Environment was adopted in 2005 (the latter was adopted to enforce the provisions of the Law on Licenses and Permits; it defines relatively detailed requirements for issuing the permit). As mentioned above Regulation on the Permit for Impact on Environment replaced the Law on Environmental Permit. Now after changes introduced by the aforementioned law and regulation, the EIA system currently existing in Georgia is effective neither in terms of providing public with the information and ensuring public participation, nor in terms of helping decision-makers to take informed decisions on the activities that have adverse environmental effects, to say nothing of post decision-making monitoring and control. Now the Georgian EIA legislation does not comply with the requirements of Aarhus Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters, as well as to the relevant EU directives.¹ The areas of particular concern include:

1. Applicability of EIA – EIA is applicable to private projects/activities listed in the Regulation on Permit for Impact on the Environment. Public (state-owned) projects are exempt from EIA, while the majority of the activities listed in the abovementioned article can in principle be implemented only by the public institutions. Furthermore, The Law on State Support to Investments makes possible for any person to start implementation of activity without conducting EIA and obtaining permit on condition that he/she will fulfill these obligations in the future.
2. Type of activities subject to EIA/Screening – Regulation gives exhaustive list of activities subject to EIA; the list does not include such activities/projects as for instance, mining, nuclear power stations, agricultural and food industries, wood, paper, leather and textile industries, certain types of infrastructural projects (many of those activities are considered to trigger natural disasters). There is little screening of projects subject to the EIA process, putting an excessive burden on the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources (authority responsible for reviewing EIA reports (state ecological expertise) and granting the permit for impact on the environment) and the developers of small and medium size projects which have no significant environmental impacts. The list of activities subject to EIA does not comply with Annex I of the Council Directive 85/337/EEC and Annex I of Aarhus Convention. The Regulation also does not include open-ended provision on activities that may be subject to EIA as it is foreseen under the Council Directive 85/337/EEC (Annex II activities).
3. Scoping – scoping stage is absent in the legislation; That is why the EIA reports submitted for receiving the ministerial consent are of extremely low quality.
4. Public participation – The Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources is neither obliged nor entitled to ensure public participation in the decision-making on granting the permit for impact on the environment.

¹ Council Directive 85/337/EEC of 27 June 1985 on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment; Council Directive 97/11/EC of 3 March 1997 amending Directive 85/337/EEC of June 1985 on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment.

Instead the project developers are obliged to inform and consult public on the draft EIA report, i.e. before application to the ministry. Ministry is also not obliged to inform public on the decisions on granting the permits.

The Law on Emergency Situations

The Law on Emergency Situations of 1997 deals explicitly with issues of disaster and emergency management. This law focuses on natural, technological and ecological disasters as well as conflict and civil strife. The law gives the President of Georgia the authority to declare a State of Emergency, which must be approved by the Parliament within 48 hours.

Article 4 of the law includes several provisions relating to the need to maintain public order in emergency situations, such as limiting the right of free movement of civilians, the temporary confiscation of firearms and the need to ban mass gatherings and to control the media. Article 5 defines body which should be in charge of coordination the works for preventing and liquidating the consequences of the state of emergency – the National Security Council of Georgia.

Article 13 of the law refers to the population affected by disaster and emergency management. The article specifically stipulates that the government is obliged to provide dwelling premises and compensation to the citizens to whom the damage was inflicted during the state of emergency, or during implementation of preventive or liquidating measures. Government is also taking responsibility to assist disaster affected individuals in finding job or provide any other type of assistance. According to the law, conditions for granting of residential premises, providing compensation for damage and rendering other necessary assistance shall be determined by the President of Georgia according to the legislation. It is not clear though until now what type of assistance the government may provide and how damage should be calculated as Georgian legislation do not provide for any other provisions detailing those stipulated in the Law on Emergency.

Law on Protection of the Population and Territory from Natural and Technological Emergencies

As mentioned above, adoption of the Law on Protection of the Population and Territory from Natural and Technological Emergencies in June 2007 is an important step towards improvement of the legal framework regulating natural disaster risk management; however it only addresses emergency preparedness and response stages of disaster risk reduction cycle. It does not take a holistic approach to disaster risk reduction and it is still missing explicit definitions of key terms. Below some of the important provisions of the law are discussed.

The law provides legal basis for both natural and human-induced disasters. Emergency situation is defined as follows: situation at certain territory which has resulted from a natural disaster, fire, catastrophe, where the state of environment has deteriorated, or ecological balance has been undermined and the health and life of people, flora and fauna is endangered and the environment is damaged. The zone of emergency situation is defined as a territory or an area of water, where the emergency situation has occurred. The risk of emergency situation is probability or frequency of occurrence of emergency situation, which is defined by relevant indicators of risk. Emergency prevention is defined as set of legal, organizational, economic, engineering-technical, sanitary-hygienic, sanitary-epidemiological and other measures, implemented to monitor and control environment and hazardous industry facilities, as well as forecasting of emergency situations or in the event of its occurrence, for the preparedness and mitigation of the results.

According to the law the process of announcement of emergency situation is regulated by the law on Emergency Situations, while in the event of declaring of war – by the Law on Warfare. This provision raises certain concerns regarding applicability of the law; specifically, it is not clear when Law on Protection of the Population and Territory from Natural and Technological Emergencies is applicable, if announcement of emergency situation is regulated by the Law on Emergency Situations, while in the event of declaring the war – the Law on Warfare.

It is noteworthy to mention, that regardless introductory declarations, the law is mainly focused on organization of measures after the natural disaster has taken place and less oriented towards preventive measures and natural disaster risk reduction. This is confirmed by the fact that Article 4 of the law states, that one of the purposes of the law is prevention of natural disasters, however according to the definition of emergency situation the law extends to on-going or occurred natural disasters, elimination of the results of natural disasters. This means that there is certain conflict between definition and the objective.

Paragraph 4 of Article 8 states that the authorized person should provide information in timely manner; it is not clear however what is considered to be the "timely" and when one can say that the information was provided with the delay. It is also not clear who is authorized to evaluate whether information was submitted with delay or not.

According to the Article 5, elimination of impacts of emergency situations is responsibility of central and local authorities, as well as legal entities. In case they are not capable to respond adequately to the emergency situation with their own resources, "organs of a unified system" should take part in elimination of the results of the

emergency situation. It is important to mention that Article 5 does not provide any explanation to what is meant under “organs of a unified system”. This is explained later in Article 13 which states that the Department of Emergency Management of the Ministry of Interior, its structural divisions in Abkhazia and Adjara Autonomous Republics, local bodies of governance and emergency situation management divisions under them are meant under the unified system. Article 11 of the law states that the Government of Georgia shall establish Special Commission on Management of Emergency Situation which should take coordinating role within the unified system. Article 14 of the law further adds that in the event of emergency situation, executive authorities of Georgia shall establish special subdivisions for management of emergency situations to promote functioning of the unified system.

According to paragraph 5 of the same article executive authorities as subjects of the unified system, shall implement their activities on the basis of relevant legal acts, National Response Plan approved by the President and Civil Defense plans. One important issue remains unclear. According to the article, executive authorities are viewed as subject of the unified system, provided by article 13 of the law, while the same article specifies, that subject of the unified system are not generally executive authorities, but the Ministry of Interior and the local bodies of self-governance. This means that apart from the subjects of the unified system provided by article 13 of the law (the Ministry of Interior and the local organs of self-governance) other executive authorities also are involved through implementation of the National Response Plan and Civil Defense Plans approved by the President.

Article 17 of the law introduces the right of the public to carry voluntarily life, health and property insurance for natural disasters in accordance of the rules defined by the Georgian legislation. It should be mentioned however that Georgian legislation does not provide for any such rules, neither law states when they should be adopted. Here it is noteworthy to also mention the UNDAC mission’s report of 2005, which states that the draft law on mandatory insurance for natural disasters which envisages financial support for those living in high risk areas was drafted but not yet adopted.

Finally, there two articles in the law which raise questions as to what legislator meant under the mechanisms introduced by those articles. Article 23 of the law states that the state expertise in the field of protection of territory and population from emergency situations is implemented in accordance with the rules established by the Minister of Interior. The law does not specify what kind of expertise it is, what the subjects of expertise can be or what the outcomes might be.

According to article 24 of the law states that safety declaration is used to address those issues that are related to the protection of territory and population from emergency situations and that should be implemented by the unified system. The law provides neither any further interpretation to what is meant under safety declaration or what are procedures to obtain it, nor who should obtain it, why and where.

To summarize, the Georgian authorities are taking certain steps to improve legislation regulating natural disaster risk reduction, however efforts are scattered and uncoordinated. Lack of clarity in existing legislation over the respective roles and responsibilities of different actors can hamper the delivery of relief assistance. Therefore clear and detailed procedures must be in place to ensure that all actors effectively play their respective roles and that resources are used efficiently.

3. Institutional Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction in Georgia

For the effective and efficient disaster risk reduction it is certainly important to have comprehensive legal framework in place; legislative measures are, however, often weakened by the absence of adequate means of carrying them out. For this, appropriate institutional frameworks and arrangements are needed. These comprise all organizations or institutions with a recognized role to play in disaster reduction, the mechanisms for co-ordination between them, their human resources, funding, equipment and supplies, leadership and effectiveness. It is widely believed that a strong, well located or central agency/authority for disaster and risk management is a key element in the institutional framework, providing a visible focal point for the management and reduction of risk as well as efficient emergency response. It is vitally important that such agencies demonstrate leadership and professional competence, and earn the confidence and support of stakeholders at all levels. In practice, such commitment is often lacking.

In this chapter institutional framework for disaster risk reduction in Georgia is discussed briefly. Key issues for institutional development of the disaster risk reduction system in Georgia are also discussed shortly; those critical issues were identified during the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination Team (UNDAC) mission to Georgia in 2005 to assess the institutional structure and arrangements in place for disaster preparedness and response.

Until July 2004, two bodies within the Government of Georgia shared responsibility for disaster risk management. The main coordinating body was the Standing Commission on Emergencies and Civil Defence under the National Security Council. This body ultimately sanctioned all disaster response by different ministries and advised the President on issues relating to international assistance. Operational responsibility rested with the Department of Emergency Situations and Civil Defence, under the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The Department had offices in Tbilisi and regional branches country-wide. The National Guard had similar functions to the Department of Emergency Situations and Civil Defence, and the differences between the two entities were not clearly defined.

The Department of Emergency Situations and Civil Defence was dissolved by a Ministerial decree in June 2004 following a decision to restructure the Ministry of Internal Affairs. On 31 December, 2004 a national emergency management authority, known as the Emergency Situations and Civil Safety Service was established in the Ministry of Internal Affairs by ministerial decree. Its functions are broad and include the following: development of a civil defence plan and a national plan for emergency response; provision of training for emergency managers, fire-fighters and personnel to be deployed in international rescue operations; monitoring and forecasting of potential hazards; emergency response coordination; participation of rescuers advising Government on disaster management policy.

In addition to the institution described above, the Regional Policy and Emergency Affairs Service at the Prime Minister's Office plays a significant role in overcoming the consequences of disasters. This Service is responsible for the overall coordination of disaster response between different levels of the central and regional governments. The Head of the Service acts simultaneously as a secretary to the Ad Hoc State Commission, established on 3 May 2005, for the flood response, which is chaired by the Prime Minister. The Commission also includes a working group, headed by the State Minister for Reforms Coordination, to propose actions for disaster prevention, management of river basins and more specifically institutional development of river-bank strengthening facility.

In general, decision-making remains problematic throughout the emergency phases as the link between the Commission and the National Coordination Centre was never clarified. Several donors and international agencies noted the difficulty in obtaining clear guidelines on priorities from the Government. Although local authorities undertake detailed assessments, it is not clear if information reaches Tbilisi. Moreover, the capacity to analyze the data and establish priorities appeared to be missing. Little guidance is provided on the location of the areas most affected by the disasters creating difficulties in determining where assessment teams should be deployed.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has an obvious and important role acting as a facilitator between the international community and the government with respect to international assistance. During the recent floods, however, donors and agencies experienced difficulties in obtaining clear information from the government on the urgent needs and priorities.

The efficient, effective and timely management of a major disaster is largely dependent on the rapid collection, analysis, prioritization and dissemination of incident information and the ability to translate these into positive executive and response actions. As UNDAC mission notes in its report, there is little evidence of an efficient, effective and reliable system to meet the strategic and tactical response requirements at national, regional and local levels. The most solid existing structure is the Emergency Situations and Civil Safety Service Coordination Centre in Tbilisi. The Centre, however, requires significant improvements in terms of procedures, methodologies, physical space and equipment, as it will be unable to support or sustain a prolonged major emergency or disaster response operation in its present form.

Some coordination mechanisms exist at the district and municipal levels, but in general terms the concept of a Coordination Centre is not consistently replicated at the required level, under agreed standards and procedures. The mission states that actions are taken on an ad hoc basis. The absence of clear-cut standard operational procedures and of a designated facility hampers the response operations and often results in inadequate decisions on the use of resources.

The Center for Monitoring and Prognosis under the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources is also assigned role in natural disaster risk management system. The Center is primarily responsible for monitoring and prognosis of natural hazards, conducting risk assessments, suggesting recommendations on risk reduction measures.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

1. Natural disasters are increasingly regarded as a problem that requires concerted action and long-term commitment by the international community. International donor organizations should take a responsibility to ensure that all activities and programmes carried out under the development cooperation do not make the country

more vulnerable to natural hazards or contribute to intensifying the negative impacts when disasters strike. Donors should also be well placed to contribute in promoting disaster reduction more actively, because they already play an important role in various related fields, such as environmental protection, promoting peace, democracy and human rights.

There are several international organizations that already have an important role in disaster risk reduction in Georgia such as for instance, United Nations Development Programme, the World Bank, Swiss International Development Agency; It is important that those organizations build partnerships and networks to avoid overlapping actions in promoting disaster risk reduction principles in the programmes and projects they fund, as well as to avoid building parallel structures when supporting agencies that work on disaster issues.

The focus should be on enhancing the country's capacity and willingness to ensure integration of disaster reduction into development and environmental management policies, develop legislation, strengthen environmental and natural resource management (i.e. addressing the underlying root causes of disasters, through improved natural resources management and protection of environment) and in developing and implementing contingency plans.

2. Some of the key challenges for effective disaster reduction are endorsement at all political levels and mainstreaming of disaster reduction in development and budgeting; the main responsibility in this lies with the government. Multidimensional approaches are needed, including mainstreaming and creating a culture of risk reduction in all development sectors, strengthening resilience to cope with natural hazards and disasters, and measures for mitigation of the damaging impacts of disasters.

3. Incorporating disaster reduction in development policies, taking a proactive stand, will require development of a comprehensive agenda for action. An important part of the agenda should be national policy formulation – deciding on the key themes and the geographical and regional focus, and development of an operational work-plan with objectives, priority activities and indicators. Another important step for development of an agenda is adoption of a national action plan for disaster risk reduction in Georgia. It should start with carrying out basic activities such as risk assessment, developing an information and knowledge base, identifying the stakeholders and clarifying roles and responsibilities, and creating consensus about goals and objectives.

4. Proactive stand to reduce the toll of disasters requires a comprehensive approach that encompasses both pre-disaster reduction and post-disaster recovery. Such an approach involves the following set of activities: (a) risk analysis to identify the types of risks and their magnitude; (b) prevention and mitigation to address the structural sources of vulnerability; (c) risk transfer to spread financial risks over time and among different actors; (d) emergency preparedness and response to enhance a country's readiness to cope quickly and effectively with an emergency; and (e) post-disaster rehabilitation and reconstruction to support effective recovery and to safeguard against future disasters. Although progress is noticeable over time in some of the areas, Georgia needs to take substantial steps in all of these areas. Capacity building – in the broad sense – is required in all above listed areas and at all levels – national, local government, civil society, and community.

5. An institutional framework for natural hazards and disasters needs to be thoroughly defined, with clarification of roles and responsibilities. In addition, activities to strengthen the internal capacity of the institutions on disaster risk reduction will be required, including training and competence building and development of support systems, such as guidelines and tools for information handling, quality assurance, monitoring and evaluation.

6. Although adoption of the Law on Protection of the Population and Territory from Natural and Technological Emergencies is an important step towards improvement of the legislation regulating disaster risk reduction, but still, it only addresses emergency preparedness and response stages of disaster risk reduction cycle. Hence, there is need to develop and adopt legal framework which will take a holistic approach to disaster risk reduction, establish explicit definitions of key terms (such as hazard, disaster, risk, resilience, vulnerability, etc.), emphasize linkages to national economic, social and urban development plans, environmental and natural resources management and instruments, assigns roles and responsibilities at all levels, contains guidelines for emergency planning, provides for anti-seismic measures, and includes sanctions for non-compliance.

7. Education and training are key components in disaster reduction. Schools and academic institutions have an important role to play in developing knowledge and awareness on disaster safety. Therefore it is important to integrate disaster reduction into school programmes, develop awareness raising campaigns and support schemes that include strengthening of coping capacity and resilience towards disasters at the local community level.

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