



## Building Capacities and Strengthening Disaster Preparedness in Central Asia

Climate change is causing more severe and frequent disasters, affecting the lives and livelihoods of people across the world. In Central Asia—specifically Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan—storms and floods are being exacerbated by the effects of climate change and together with earthquakes and floods are among the region’s most severe natural hazards.

A global temperature rise of 1.5–2 degrees Celsius will mean average summer temperatures persist above 30 degrees in some parts of the region, triggering more frequent and severe droughts and heatwaves while also causing glacier melt, heightening the risk of flooding. The latter will be further aggravated by more frequent and intense rainfall events. The result being, considering Kazakhstan for example, that the number of people exposed to extreme river flooding is expected to rise by [72%](#) in the next two decades.

Disaster prevention and better preparedness is therefore essential to protecting people and reducing the burden of recurrent natural hazards on the region’s developing economies. It will also be critical to [strengthen the capability of states](#), organizations, and societies to manage disaster risk.

This can be achieved through a comprehensive approach towards capacity building along with other disaster preparedness [measures](#). The [Strengthening Financial Resilience and Accelerating Risk Reduction in Central Asia Program](#) (SFRARR), funded by the European Union and implemented by the World Bank and the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR) in close cooperation with the Center of Emergency Situations and Disaster Risk Reduction is an example of exactly this. SFRARR contributes to resilience building in Central Asia through quantifying disaster risks, exposure mapping, and establishing fundamental awareness and capacities around disaster risk management and finance.



## Investment, implementation, and knowledge exchange

[Capacity building](#) is the process through which individuals, organizations and societies obtain, strengthen, and then maintain new capabilities. Most importantly, capacity building sustains results beyond the duration of a specific project by investing in local knowledge and skills.

Too frequently capacity building is only delivered at or close to the end of a project or provides a singular, one-way dissemination of knowledge about project outputs and methods. Knowledge sharing in multiple directions and with a wide range of participants can enhance the quality of outputs and deliverables, promote greater understanding and trust in established processes, and involve country stakeholders in disaster risk management more widely.

To date, SFRARR has delivered seventeen country-level and regional [workshops and training sessions](#) on managing disaster risk to an array of stakeholders including government officials, local practitioners, academia, students, and the private sector. These capacity building events explored how to better understand risk data and gain experience in methods of assessing hazards, exposure, and vulnerability and were important opportunities for national stakeholders to become acquainted with the latest tools to manage or reduce disaster risks. This included disaster risk financing, risk transfer instruments, and methods of adapting national social protection systems to respond to increased needs in an emergency.

In return, knowledge and expertise shared by local experts have helped the Program and its implementing partners better understand the peculiarities of local challenges and ensured that the data and knowledge produced are applicable to the needs of each country and the region.

Through this regional approach, SFRARR established cross-border processes and institutions, such as the [Regional Scientific and Technical Council on Emergency Situations](#) (RSTC). The RSTC provides Central Asia countries with a formal platform to proactively cooperate on risk management at regional level.

## Collecting and exploiting risk data

A regional multi-hazard risk assessment has been one of the set piece deliverables of SFRARR. In conducting this assessment, a vast amount of knowledge and data was gathered on earthquake, landslide, fluvial and pluvial flood hazard, as well as exposure and vulnerability data.

By complementing this data with a specialized program of workshops and trainings, based around understanding and handling such data, SFRARR is helping national policymakers make the best possible use of a resource that will support risk-informed decision making for years to come. The data and reports on these topics are now publicly available on the World Bank's [Data Catalogue](#).

## Positive feedback, virtuous cycles

The feedback from national participants has been especially encouraging, indicating that the provided workshops, tools, and risk data have been exceptionally relevant to their current work.

*“Compared with other assessments in the region, SFRARR has produced a meticulous assessment of the regional disaster risk; in future this can provide a forum to enhance technical knowledge of the Ministry of Emergency Situations’ decision-making staff in reading and visualizing data on exposure, vulnerability, and disaster risk.”* —said Almabek Aidakeev, Head of the Secretariat of the National Platform of the Kyrgyz Republic on Disaster Risk Reduction.

Central Asia remains vulnerable to many natural hazards. With increasing climatic risks, enhanced disaster risk resilience is vital to saving lives and preventing economic losses. Capacity building is key to strengthening the region's climate and disaster risk preparedness. SFRARR is focusing on this essential pillar to ensure that concrete improvements in risk-informed decision making will persist long after the Program concludes at the end of 2024.