
REACT Statement of Common Understanding
Revised December 2013

I. Introduction

In 2001 the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) established the Rapid Emergency Assessment and Coordination Team – a partnership for disaster management in Tajikistan. The team was called *REACT* based on the abbreviation of “Rapid Emergency Assessment and Coordination Team” and was intended to serve as the coordinating structure for international disaster response in Tajikistan. In 2003 chairmanship of REACT was transferred to the Committee of Emergency Situations and Civil Defense (CoES) of the Government of Tajikistan

Since first approval of the **Statement of Common Understanding** by REACT members in 2008, the Government of Tajikistan and partners have strengthened overall disaster risk management in Tajikistan through issuing a National Disaster Risk Management Strategy and the establishment of a National Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction. The National Platform provides a Government structure for planning and coordinating risk reduction and provides an additional entry point for dialogue on risk reduction for REACT partners. Further, REACT has established a Recovery Framework and a range of other actions have been taken to improve disaster risk management in Tajikistan.

Acknowledging the role which REACT has played in the coordination of disaster prevention and risk reduction as well as disaster response at all levels and particularly those focused on the community level, and the scope for further reduction of disaster risk in Tajikistan, REACT members recognize that:

- The Government of Tajikistan has a sovereign responsibility to reduce the impact of disasters before they occur.
- The Government of Tajikistan has a sovereign responsibility to assist the population of the country in times of disaster.
- The State Commission of Emergency Situations, chaired by the Chairman of the Government and consisting of line ministries and agencies, is responsible for disaster risk management activities. Subsidiary commissions with similar responsibilities and composition exist at the regional and district levels.
- The Committee of Emergency Situations and Civil Defense is the focal organization responsible for disaster prevention and response actions.
- The humanitarian imperative places a specific responsibility on REACT members to assist Tajikistan in the case of a disaster.
- It is more effective to reduce disaster risk than provide assistance after a disaster has occurred.
- Transparency and collaboration are critical to effective disaster response.
- The free flow of information on disaster impacts and response operations is critical for transparency and collaboration.
- The **Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response** (“Sphere Standards”) and other best practice in humanitarian assistance should guide efforts to lessen the impact of disasters in Tajikistan.
- Those affected by a disaster should be consulted on and engaged in the provision of disaster-related humanitarian assistance.
- The **Hyogo Framework for Action** provides an overall guiding for disaster risk reduction at all levels.

II. Goal and Objectives of REACT

The main goal of REACT is to reduce the impact of disasters on the population of Tajikistan. The specific objectives of REACT include:

- Promoting effective risk reduction, disaster preparedness, disaster response and recovery.
- Supporting the coordination and collaboration of humanitarian actors, international organizations and the Government of Tajikistan.
- Providing a platform for collaborative planning of risk reduction, preparedness, response and recovery activities.
- Providing a platform for the transparent exchange of information, joint planning of operations on disaster risk reduction, preparedness, response and recovery.
- Providing a forum for open discussion of policy and practical issues related to the purpose of REACT.

III. Structure of REACT

The structure of REACT is described in the following sections. A diagram of the structure of REACT can be found in **Annex A**.

A. Members

Any organization actively involved in disaster risk management activities in Tajikistan that accepts this **Statement of Common Understanding** is considered member of REACT. A list of organizations who are REACT members can be found in **Annex B** and can be secured from the national REACT Secretariat.

Organizations which have become members of REACT are considered to no longer be members when:

1. They have requested to no longer be a REACT member, or,
2. No longer work in Tajikistan, or,
3. Have not participated in any REACT activities for a period exceeding 12 months.

B. Chairs

At the national level, REACT is co-chaired by the Committee of Emergency Situations and Civil Defense of the Government of Tajikistan together with the Office of the UN Resident Coordinator. At the regional level, REACT is chaired by the Committee of Emergency Situations. The responsibilities of the Co-Chairs are provided in **Section IV A**, below.

C. Secretariat

A Secretariat for REACT at the national level and for each Regional REACT may be established. CoES fills the task of Secretariat at national level. Other organizations may provide secretariat support to REACT at the national and regional levels by agreement of REACT members. The tasks of a Secretariat are set out in **Section IV B**, below.

D. Sectoral (Cluster) Coordination Groups

REACT may establish those groups it deems necessary to coordinate REACT activities on sectoral basis. A list of current Sectoral Coordination Groups and coordinating organizations is provided in **Annex C**.

In establishing Sectoral Coordination Groups, REACT should designate a REACT member to serve as a coordinator for the group and request that the Government designate a Government co-coordinator for the same Sectoral Coordination Group.

Each Sectoral Coordination Group will establish their own terms of reference and meeting schedule with agreement of the REACT members at large. To the extent possible, Sectoral Coordination Groups will follow Inter-Agency Standing Committee guidance in sectoral coordination, including general terms of reference and other guidance on the role of the sectoral or Cluster coordinator.

REACT members recognize the need to integrate the Cluster Approach (as endorsed by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee) into REACT operations before and during disasters. When the Cluster Approach is activated in Tajikistan, the Sectoral Coordination Groups are considered to be “Clusters” for the purposes of the Cluster Approach but will continue to be an integral part of REACT.

Sectoral Coordinators will be responsible for briefing any new Cluster Coordinator designated on Cluster activation about existing coordination mechanisms, including arrangements for coordination with the Government of Tajikistan. Government co-chairing of Clusters is expected to continue in all cases.

E. Technical Working Groups

REACT members may establish technical working groups on specific topics on a temporary or permanent basis. Technical Working Group membership can be drawn from REACT membership (including Government institutions), and also include individuals or organizations which are not part of the REACT as warranted. REACT members will designate a member organization as the Chair of a technical working group by mutual consent.

Technical Working Groups will report regularly to the general membership on activities and consult with the general membership before taking decisions affecting the current **Statement**, or policy and practice of activities conducted under REACT.

F. Regional REACTs

REACT may establish regional coordinating structures (“Regional REACTs”) as deemed necessary to ensure effective disaster management coordination.

Each Regional REACT will be chaired by the person designated by the Committee of Emergency Situations (Regional REACT Chair) and have a Secretariat provided by a member of REACT present in the area covered by the Regional REACT.

A generic terms of reference for a Regional REACT is provided in **Annex D**. Each Regional REACT will develop their own terms of reference based on the generic document and provide the terms of reference to REACT for concurrence.

G. Rapid Response Team

REACT includes a Rapid Response Team (RRT) composed of trained members working under the oversight of the Committee of Emergency Situations and Civil Defense.

The main activities of RRT are:

1. Coordinating disaster response operations by REACT members at the site of a disaster (in close cooperation with the Government)
2. Conducting rapid, multi-sectoral and quantitative damage and needs assessments in the area of disaster using the available resources in collaboration with the Government’s own assessment process

3. Providing capacity at the site of a disaster to report on needs, damage and relief and recovery operations by REACT members.
4. Providing critical assistance to disaster-affected populations immediately after assessment activities have been completed. Note that the provision of assistance by RRT is intended only to fill gaps in relief operations during rescue and recovery operations immediately following a disaster and not to be a part of the extended response to a disaster.

The operation of the REACT Rapid Response Team is based on the **Standard Operating Procedures** for damage and needs assessment, detailed terms of reference for Rapid Response Teams and other relevant documents and procedures, which can be found in **Annex E**.

IV. Duties and Responsibilities

A. Chairs

The Co-Chairs of REACT ensure coordination of all the operations on disaster risk reduction, preparedness, response and recovery.

The Co-Chairs will convene regular REACT meetings, assure the overall coordination of REACT activities, and assure the provision of guidance, information and support necessary for the execution of the activities undertaken by REACT.

The Committee of Emergency Situations and Civil Defense, as REACT Co-Chair, develops and proposes to REACT members formats of reporting (e.g., operational, quarterly, semiannual, annual and other kinds), which will be discussed by REACT members. After agreement, a schedule of reporting will be provided to REACT members.

B. Secretariat

Each REACT Secretariat at national and regional levels will:

- Prepare agendas, logistical arrangements, announcements and other support tasks for REACT meetings, including scheduled, unscheduled and Sectoral and Technical Working Group meetings, as proposed by REACT members, Co-Chairs and the Sectoral Groups.
- Support the preparation of strategic discussion papers, position papers and documents defining or supporting decisions by REACT, as may be requested. These documents may be prepared by the Secretariat, Sectoral Groups, Technical Working Groups or other parties, as decided by REACT.
- Facilitate the exchange of information between REACT members through web sites, situation reports, tables on assistance and project (who, what, where) and other modes of communication.
- Assure liaison between REACT members.
- Develop and maintain data bases (e.g., relief supplies and personnel) necessary for relief, recovery and risk reduction.
- Supporting the operation of the Rapid Response Teams.
- Facilitate the exchange of experiences and capacities related to disaster risk reduction, preparedness, response and recovery.
- Support the issuance of appeals for assistance and disaster recovery plans.

Secretariats will record the minutes of all meetings and share them with members, as well as provide a mechanism for sharing information between REACT members on normal REACT business and in emergency situations.

C. REACT Members

REACT members agree to:

- Abide by the laws and regulations of Tajikistan, or those other such agreements with the Government of Tajikistan which regulate the presence of specific entities in Tajikistan.
- Provide disaster-related assistance in accordance with the **Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response** and other appropriate standards and good practices, to the best of their means.
- Include disaster survivors or potential victims in planning and provision of all disaster-related risk reduction, preparedness, response and recovery activities.
- Not deny appropriate assistance on the basis of gender, age, health condition, origin or religion.
- Collaborate in disaster impact assessments and undertake cooperative responses to disasters, to the extent possible and within their respective means.
- Share information and agree plans on disaster risk reduction, relief and recovery activities with the Committee of Emergency Situations and Civil Defense and other REACT members.
- Coordinate disaster risk reduction and disaster response plans and activities with the Committee of Emergency Situations and Civil Defense and other REACT members as well as to share information on the results of implementation.
- Share experiences, lessons learned and successful practices in relief and disaster risk reduction.
- Provide logistic, functioning and advocacy support to Committee of Emergency Situations and Civil Defense to build capacities to reduce the impact of disasters in Tajikistan to the best of their means.
- Follow the procedures established by Committee of Emergency Situations and Civil Defense to meet its official responsibilities in coordinating and reporting on disaster-related assistance in Tajikistan.
- Report annually on relief, recovery, disaster risk reduction, response (provision of humanitarian assistance and etc.) related activities to REACT membership.
- Collaborate on real time and ex post facto evaluations of disaster-related activities in Tajikistan.

Nothing in the proceeding text should be construed to prevent organizations involved in humanitarian assistance from assisting the citizens of Tajikistan to lessen the impacts of disasters.

V. Consultations and Meetings

REACT members will conduct those consultations and hold those meetings necessary to accomplish the objectives of the **Statement**. To the extent possible, REACT will use emails, web sites and other means to share information and for coordination to reduce workload on member staff.

REACT members, as a whole, will engage in two types of meetings:

1. Strategic Meetings, to discuss strategic policy and critical issues, for instance, decisions to support disaster response, which require immediate attention or affect the overall operation of REACT.
2. Operational Meetings, to share information and promote operational planning, coordination and collaboration, including details of ongoing activities, disaster plans and operations details, seasonal weather forecasts or request for consultations on specific topics.

In consultation with REACT members, the national Secretariat will establish and manage a schedule of meetings for each calendar year. This schedule will be established latest in

December of the year preceding the year covered. Similar schedules will be established for each Regional REACT.

Apart from regularly scheduled meetings, individual REACT members can approach either Co-Chairs to request meetings to address specific issues or concerns. Where possible, these issues and concerns should be vetted through the relevant Sectoral Coordinating Group.

In the case of a disaster, the REACT Secretariats at the national and regional levels (as appropriate) will assist the Co-Chairs in organizing those meetings necessary for REACT to accomplish the objectives set out in the Statement.

REACT members recognize that decision making representatives are expected to attend designated Strategic Meetings at which their organizations will be expected to contribute to decisions of REACT as a whole at the time the meetings take place. Where possible, information on issues to be discussed at Strategic Meetings and possible decisions will be communicated in advance of the meeting to REACT members.

V. Special Conditions

Membership in REACT does not replace any other legal obligations which may exist on an organization for their legal and proper operation in Tajikistan.

VI. Acceptance, Changes and Amendments

This Statement of Common Understanding may be accepted by REACT members through two procedures:

1. On initial submission to the REACT membership, at a general meeting and/or after a general discussion, through a majority vote of those organizations legally registered in Tajikistan and present at the meeting.
2. Through a letter to the national REACT Secretariat indicating acceptance of the **Statement of Common Understanding**.

The Statement of Common Understanding can be changed or amended by agreement of a majority of REACT members.

The original copy of the Statement of Common Understanding and any revisions will be kept with the national REACT Secretariat. Copies will be provided to each REACT member organization and posted on-line.