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Emergency Response Planning in Central Asia: Common Challenges and Opportunities for Cooperation

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Public Health
England



National Institute for Public Health
and the Environment
Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport



Introduction



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International Obligations on emergency response and notification:

- UNGA Res 46/182 lists as Guiding Principles:
 - “Each State has the responsibility first and foremost to take care of the victims of natural disasters and other emergencies occurring on its territory.”
 - (...)
 - “International cooperation to address emergency situations and to strengthen the response capacity of affected countries is thus of great importance.”
- 2005 WHO International Health Regulations:
 - “Each State Party shall notify WHO (...) of all events which may constitute a public health emergency of international concern within its territory”
- National Implementation of the BWC also includes carrying out surveillance for diseases, developing response capabilities, and establishing coordination between officials and government bodies.

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CAP and CIMIC



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- Common Alert Protocol (CAP):
 - An international communication standard for emergency alerting and public warning.
 - XML-based encoding format for messages + Pre-set headings for uniform messages;
 - Designed for “all-hazards”: geophysical (earthquakes), meteorological, fires, public health, CBRNE, environmental, etc.
 - Designed for “all-media”: Sirens, radios, cell phones, internet
- CIMIC/Civil-Military Coordination:
 - Coordination of activities, joint planning and training, exchange of information;
 - Facilitating operations when military forces are involved in ‘Operations other than war’;
 - Safeguarding respect of humanitarian principles;
 - Crucial when foreign military assets are involved in disaster response.

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Methodology



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- VERTIC's Approach:
 - Identify key requirements from guidance documents on CAP and CIMIC + best practices to facilitate and improve implementation;
 - Even though CAP Standards and CIMIC-related guidelines are not legally binding, there are some key principles that need to be followed to participate in them.
 - Initial analysis of participating countries' policies and procedures on emergency response, focusing on national legislation and institutions;
 - Follow-up analysis, working with participating countries for an in-depth understanding of practices;
 - Analysis of regional initiatives and shared challenges;
 - Recommendations;

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CAP: Key requirements and best practices



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Key CAP Requirements at the national level:

- Designating reporting lines/coordination between public health authorities, first responders and alerting authority;
- Designating a CAP alerting authority for CBRNE
 - Provide information for WMO Register of Alerting Authorities
- Establishing and following CAP communication standards;
 - Set up infrastructure to receive and disseminate CAP alerts – these must:
 - Generate authenticated messages
 - Use multiple public alerting mechanisms
 - Be able to be understood by all in the same way
 - Be easy to access and use
- Train authorised personnel in composing and issuing CAP alerts

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CAP: Key requirements and best practices



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CAP good practices:

- Pre-emergency, carry out comprehensive risk assessment + Identifying populations at risk;
- Continuous monitoring of risks;
- Maintaining systems so that alerts are reliable and timely;
- Carry out public education on the warning system

Actions on CAP at the regional level:

- Coordinating CAP standards for interoperability;
- Establishing alerting procedures for cross-border emergencies/ threats;
- Establish common communication infrastructure aggregating CAP alerts from regional partners;

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CIMIC: Key Requirements and best practices:



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Key requirements at the national level for CIMIC/Civil-Military Coordination:

- Establishing a National Disaster Plan;
- Establishing procedures to to set up a Local Emergency Management Authority (or similar);
- Establishing a legislative basis for international cooperation on emergency response and humanitarian relief;
- Establishing procedures for receiving, using and monitoring Foreign Military Assets;
- Establishing training programmes and communication schemes to foster Civil/Military understanding;

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CIMIC: Key Requirements and best practices:



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Key principles to follow when employing foreign military assistance:

- Impartiality of the military;
- A set scale, scope and duration of military intervention;
- Avoiding full reliance on military assets / Maintain civilian ownership of the response (Military responsibility over core civilians functions should cease as soon as possible);
- in case of use of MCDA, should provide information how to tailor international assistance to its particular customs and culture.

Actions at the regional/international level:

- Identifying national points of contact for cooperation on disaster relief;
- Establishing cooperation partnerships for training and disaster relief with foreign countries ;

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Common Challenges at the Regional level



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VERTIC's initial analysis has highlighted a series of shared challenges:

- Not all countries in the region have identified alerting authorities for Public Health and CBRNE emergencies;
- Some countries in the region reported difficulties in coordinating communication and division of responsibilities between different government bodies;
- Several countries in the region have identified training as an ongoing challenge:
 - Only few countries provide training to law enforcement personnel on incidents involving dangerous biological agents;
 - Not all countries involve their military in joint training for emergency response;
- Several countries in the region have not completed a comprehensive risk assessment of their national territories;
- Several countries in the region are currently revising and updating their national legislation;

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Regional Initiatives



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- CIS Model Law on the “Support and Regulation of International Assistance in Emergency Situations and Initial Rehabilitation”
 - Adopted by the CIS Interparliamentary Assembly in November 2014;
 - Intended to facilitate receipt, coordination and monitoring of foreign military assets in order to ensure prompt response to natural disasters;
- Center for Emergency Situations and Disaster Risk Reduction
 - Jointly established by Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, entered into operations in 2016;
 - Promotes cooperation and coordination on emergency response and risk reduction, carries out joint exercises, training and experience-sharing;
 - Open for other states to join; Afghanistan has joined as an observer.

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Opportunities for cooperation



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There are opportunities to foster cooperation at the regional level:

- Build on the existing initiatives at the regional level, to include more countries;
- Exchange knowledge and experience on common challenges and common efforts, i.e. updating legislation;
- Coordinate CAP standards to facilitate cross-border communication;

Possible longer-term objectives;

- Provide a coordination platform for States to request/offer assistance on a voluntary basis, for example following the the EU Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC) model;
- Set up a system for aggregating and disseminating CAP alerts at the regional level.



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Thank you for your attention

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