



Communication of Seismic Risk in the Kyrgyz Republic

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Earthquakes that generate shaking leading to damage or human loss are infrequent events. This can lead to the situation in some parts of the world where, even in seismically hazardous areas, a large proportion of the potentially affected population do not have first-hand experience of a destructive earthquake event. Therefore, continual risk communication is required for the appropriate government agencies, civil defence professionals and the general public to understand the potential risks, and to implement the required risk mitigation measures.

A comprehensive seismic risk communication strategy has been developed for the Kyrgyz Republic as part of a World Bank funded project. The communication strategy has been developed in close consultation with Kyrgyz ministries and agencies, who have been invaluable in tailoring the message to the specific requirements of Kyrgyz society. The communication strategy comprises the production of visual material, including brochures and posters, which illustrate in non-technical language the key elements of seismic risk (hazard, exposure, vulnerability, losses), and which provide easy-to-understand guidance on what the different segments of the society (young, elderly, home owners, employers) can do to reduce losses from earthquakes in their homes, workplace and the community at large.

An important part of the risk communication strategy has been the establishment of a Steering Committee for the reduction of seismic risk in the Kyrgyz Republic. The members of the committee are drawn from those Kyrgyz ministries and institutions that are tasked with measuring and reducing seismic risk in the country, including the Ministries of Education, Transport and Emergency Situations, and the State Construction Agency. The role of the committee includes coordinating the communication between the project team and stakeholders in the Government, and, crucially, taking ownership of the risk mitigation measures and their implementation.

A number of challenges were addressed when developing and implementing the risk communication strategy, and these will be discussed in this presentation. This includes the need for the engineering seismology community of the Kyrgyz Republic to reconsider some of the measures used to describe seismic, such as the ongoing use of macroseismic intensity instead of such measures as peak ground acceleration (PGA).