



1st Special Response Group

Anytime
Anywhere

SAR and disaster response in Tajikistan

Tajikistan is a rugged, mountainous country in the heart of Central Asia. Approximately the size of Wisconsin, its character was formed by glaciation and by a dense network of rivers, carving steep valleys out of sharp, high mountain ranges. Most Tajik civilization is concentrated in four broad, wide valleys, separated from each other by the terrain.

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, greeted with cheers in the West, was a crushing blow for this Central Asian nation. For seventy years the Soviet Union's centralized society had provided it with an entire spectrum of goods and services. Brochures from the late 70's show a prosperous country with universities, ski resorts, and astronomical observatories. The collapse of the Soviet Union, plus several years of civil war, reversed seventy years of development, leaving behind the remnants of a power grid, a crumbling transportation infrastructure, and fond memories of the Soviet era.



Emergency alarm in
Bartang Valley

Tajikistan is now effectively a third world country. Public services are minimal, political life is still unstable, and annual income per capita is \$157. At the same time, it is a country beset by natural disasters; avalanches, floods, and landslides are all common.

Like all other public services, search and rescue (SAR) teams have been hit hard by the country's collapse into poverty. Although team members, both men and women, are dedicated, enthusiastic, and eager to train and learn, their equipment is sparse, outdated and often broken. Many SAR teams' complete equipment is less than what *one* of our team members would normally carry on a mission. Similarly, modern training is hard to come by.

1SRG is working with FOCUS, an NGO addressing disaster prevention, preparation, and mitigation, to assess the state of SAR resources in Tajikistan and how best to improve SAR and disaster response in the local context. Ultimately, our project will outfit Tajikistani SAR teams with modern equipment and training that can be supported and continued locally. This may mean training to Russian standards; it certainly means focusing on different solutions for communications and disaster response than we would deploy in the West. This project is a partnership where learning takes place on all sides.



Group training with SAR
team in Khorog

*Children can be an important
resource for disaster response.
These children, in Bartang Valley,
have basic disaster training.*



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