

Highlights and Recent Developments

A crisis in the making: Kyrgyzstan may experience a cold, turbulent winter



Photo by OCHA Almaty

Kyrgyzstan, a country experiencing continuous turbulence during last years, is yet to face another rapidly unfolding turmoil. This time the crisis is evolving around its hydro-energy sector, the most vital sector in the national economy. Last year's harsh winter, which saw large-scale depletion of the country's hydroelectric resources, has compromised the energy resilience of Kyrgyzstan. Drought and low reservoir levels left impoverished Kyrgyzstan without ability to produce energy from hydropower stations. High-energy costs, coupled with high food prices, have limited the purchasing power of the most vulnerable groups in society. According to the UN World Food Program assessments, the crisis had left almost 1.8 million Kyrgyz citizens (more than 1/3rd of the population) in a condition of food insecurity of which 1 million people are severely food insecure.

The Ministry for Economic Development and Trade has been assigned to coordinate the Government's measures to avert a potential winter energy crisis situation. Extraordinary measures have been taken by the Government to ensure availability of electricity during the upcoming winter months. The Government plans to boost electrical production at the Bishkek thermal plant through upgrading of the system and importing fossil fuel. Nevertheless, with the reservoir low and limited

potential to significantly increase thermal generation, there will be shortages.

The Government has requested to the international community for urgent assistance to meet the demands of the upcoming winter, with particular attention to ensure the needs of vulnerable groups, and that critical institutions remain functional in a worst-case scenario. In August 2008, the Government requested the UN to assist with the coordination of donor actions to avert potential winter difficulties. In addition to immediate humanitarian interventions, there is a range of critical interventions that must be implemented in the medium and long term to resolve the underlying causes of the current situation in the energy sector.

The OCHA Almaty in collaboration with other UN Agencies and its partners elaborated a Winter Response Plan for food insecurity and energy crisis in Kyrgyzstan focusing primarily on the potential humanitarian needs of vulnerable groups during winter. At the same time the UNDP, in the context of its Central Asia Regional Risk Assessment and with the support of USAID and DFID, is committed to supporting the government to tackle longer-term energy, water and food security challenges. The Risk Assessment for Kyrgyzstan should be seen as complementary and closely linked to the Winter Response Plan. Besides the OCHA Almaty helps building up an effective information management portal allowing humanitarian organizations to share files, calendars, update contact and project database and monitor the distribution of humanitarian goods.

The objectives of the Winter Response Plan are to protect 250,000 specifically vulnerable people from the consequences of electricity and water shortages during the winter, to ensure food access for 580,000 identified food insecure people in extremely vulnerable areas between December 2008 and April 2009, to secure minimal standards of critical services during the winter by complementing government efforts and to ensure urgent effective implementation of priority interventions of the CDS (Country Development Strategy), including linkages between humanitarian assistance and early recovery actions.

This response plan seeks \$18,719,925 to help seven United Nations agencies and three NGOs support the Government of Kyrgyzstan in addressing the needs of the 700,000 most vulnerable people, as well as to undertake preparedness measures to ensure continuation of essential services. Activities will be carried out in the food, health, water & sanitation, shelter and child protection and education sectors.

Partners have indicated that \$545,600 is already available for their proposed projects, leaving an outstanding requirement of \$18,174,265. Targeted assistance will be provided during the next six months, while concerted efforts will be made to mobilise longer-term programmes for risk reduction. Regular assessments will be undertaken to ensure that the planned preparedness and response actions and the resources being sought for them remain relevant, timely and effective. The response plan will be regularly updated to reflect new needs as the situation evolves.

South Kyrgyzstan: Relief efforts save lives, stem losses, but mitigation tasks loom large as cold weather nears

On October 06, 2008 the 6.6-magnitude earthquake jolted the southern province of Osh, Kyrgyzstan. Many areas of the country had experienced the tremor. The quake destroyed hundreds of buildings, roads, as well as infrastructure like communication and electrical networks. 75 people died, and more than 100 people were injured by the earthquake. Nura village right at the epicenter in Chon-Alai Rayon, with a population of 941 people (211 families) was the most destroyed area.

OCHA's response

Immediately following the crisis the OCHA dispatched a Humanitarian Affairs Officer and collaborated on a rapid assessment, monitoring and coordinating the UN response efforts to the affected area. The OCHA has contributed \$ 78 000 to support the relief and recovery efforts of its partners and the Ministry of Emergency Situations. These funds had been used to assist survivors through the purchase and distribution of relief supplies such as winterized tents, blankets, heaters and food, coordination of logistics and transportation.

National response

The Ministry set-up an on-site operations centre and dispatched search and rescue workers to the affected area. The Kyrgyz Government allocated 5 million soms

(\$135,000) for purchase of prefabricated houses and additionally 10,000,000 soms (\$ 270,000) have been donated domestically. The Government has established additional temporary accommodation for residents of the village at alternative location at Gulcha village (150 km from Nura) at dormitory of technical college.

International response

The international community has responded rapidly. Belarus, China, Germany, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Qatar, Russia, Slovakia, Tajikistan, Turkey, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan a.o. in support of the efforts of the Kyrgyz Government continues to channel humanitarian aid to the quake-afflicted Kyrgyzstan.



Photos by Alexey Ossokin, Akipress Fergana

Tajikistan: The Humanitarian Food Security Appeal remains under-funded

Less than a third of the \$35 million sought by United Nations aid agencies last month following the Tajikistan "Humanitarian Food Security Appeal 2008-2009" has been received so far and the situation keeps deteriorating.

The appeal was launched on September 25, 2008 and aims to offer short- and long-term relief by providing food and cash assistance to the most vulnerable people across the country, as well as rehabilitating critical infrastructure and supporting the agriculture sector through the next planting and harvest cycle.

So far, only 26 per cent - or just over \$9 million - of the \$35 million sought in the appeal has been received. This includes nearly \$2 million provided through the UN Central Emergency Response Fund.



Photos by OCHA Almaty

OCHA and Central Asian Countries meet on "Enhancing Regional Cooperation on Disaster Risk Reduction in Central Asia" framework in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

On 2-4 December the 3rd Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction will take place in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Adjacent to this event, a pre-conference consultation is planned to be held on 1 December on "Enhancing Disaster Risk Reduction and Disaster Preparedness Capacities of Central Asian Countries". The pre-conference consultation is co-organised and co-hosted by OCHA and ADRC with collaboration of ISDR Central Asia. The consultation is aimed to foster regional cooperation while discussing and information sharing on regional strategies and programmes as well as concrete recommendations for sub-regional initiatives, in particular with regard to the establishment of a "Central Asian Coordination Centre for Prevention of and Response to emergencies".

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November 2008 Events

- ✓ International Day for Preventing the Exploitation of the Environment in War and Armed Conflict (6 November)
- ✓ International Day for Tolerance (16 November)
- ✓ World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims (16 November)
- ✓ Universal Children's Day (20 November)
- ✓ International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women (25 November)