

**UN AND PARTNERS IN KYRGYZSTAN APPEAL FOR ASSISTANCE TO AVERT HUMANITARIAN
CONSEQUENCES IN WINTER**

(Bishkek/Dubai/New York/Geneva, 1 December, 2008): In response to significant energy shortages at the start of Kyrgyzstan's tough winter season the United Nations, in consultation with the Government of Kyrgyzstan and other humanitarian partners, has issued a Humanitarian Flash Appeal for US\$ 20 Million to ensure backup power systems for critical facilities and to meet the basic needs of the 800,000 most vulnerable people in the country.

If fully funded, the appeal will support 580,000 food insecure people in their nutritional needs; 210,000 people - of which 10,000 are children - in their basic shelter needs; provide backup power systems to 336 priority health care institutions to ensure continuation of life saving services and; ensure that 2 million residents of the 3 largest cities have uninterrupted water supply over the winter.

“The government has taken extraordinary measures to ensure availability of electricity during the upcoming winter months”, said Neal Walker, United Nations Resident Coordinator for Kyrgyzstan. “Nevertheless, with the Toktogul reservoir low and limited potential to significantly increase thermal generation, there will be shortages. Furthermore, global fluctuation in food prices has affected local prices with particularly severe impact on the poorest and most vulnerable groups.”

In 2007, the Toktogul hydroelectric dam, which feeds the main electricity artery of the country, received less water than anticipated but, more significantly, the cold snap at the beginning of 2008 saw far greater demand for electricity than is usual in the winter. Dry conditions in spring and summer of 2008 exacerbated the low water levels in the dam.

Soaring food and fuel prices, adverse weather conditions and declining remittances further limited the purchasing power of the most vulnerable and contributed to a precarious food security situation for some. A recently conducted World Food Programme assessment revealed that one in five households in Kyrgyzstan, or 1 million people, is severely food insecure and at high nutritional and health risk because of poor food consumption. Of these, 580,000 require immediate humanitarian support.

While the primary aim of the appeal is to address the most critical needs of vulnerable groups and institutions for the period between December 2008 and May 2009, the strategy ensures explicit linkages to both early recovery and medium term development priorities defined in the country's development strategy (CDS 2009-2011).

“It is crucial to address the structural problems that underlie the current difficulties” stated Mr. Walker. “Kyrgyzstan has never before launched an international appeal and has been on a steady path to development. The urgent implementation of priority development interventions defined in country's development strategy, strengthened by early recovery programmes, will help build Kyrgyzstan that does not need annual humanitarian appeals”, he added.

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