



KYRGYZSTAN

Kyrgyzstan is located at the juncture of two mountain systems. About 93% of its territory lies at an elevation higher than 1000 m above sea level. Extreme events, including glacier lake outburst floods and mudslides, are expected to increase as a result of rising temperature.

About 5000 landslides, mudflows and floods threaten almost 95% of settlements located close to water sources; and more than 90% of the lakes are highland, most of which are under danger of bursting every year.¹

Effects of climate change include a decrease in surface water-flow and glacial water yield and changes in crop cultivation.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND HEALTH

Projected health effects include deaths and injuries from heat, floods and wildfires, changes in infectious and vectorborne disease patterns, potential nutritional changes from decreasing food yields and loss of livelihoods. Exposure to ultraviolet radiation (UV) already presents a challenge in terms of skin cancer and cataract.

By the end of this century, higher temperatures and more frequent heat-waves are expected to increase the incidence of acute intestinal infectious diseases by 10–15%, and diseases of the circulatory system by 30-50%, compared to 2005.

PROTECTING HEALTH FROM CLIMATE CHANGE IN KYRGYZSTAN

Health adaptation has been identified as a priority and includes developing:

- scientific research on the health effects of climate change, with science-based forecasts of possible exacerbation of health problems and prevention and adaptation measures;
- a national action plan to prevent the health effects of climate change.

Scientific assessment of health effects from and vulnerability and adaptation to climate change is a basis for the development of a national health adaptation strategy. A national workshop identified the key research gaps for adaptation planning and the need for training of health professionals and raising awareness across the health system.

An important component of the project *Protecting health from climate change in Kyrgyzstan* is technology transfer of efficient renewable energy for health services, particularly those vulnerable to the interruption of the energy supply (see box).

Activities also include providing information to citizens on risks from UV radiation and contributing to WHO information platforms by sharing data, tools, results and lessons learnt.

1 Second national communication of the Kyrgyz Republic to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. Bishkek, 2009.

Preparatory interviews are conducted to introduce solar energy in the health sector as adaptation to climate change.



Photo: WHO Country Office, Kyrgyzstan

ENHANCING A NATIONAL DIALOGUE ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND HEALTH

Knowledge transfer and information sharing on climate change and health can be enhanced through the involvement of the country's stakeholders, including national and local authorities, civil society, citizens and the media.

A wide information campaign through the main national Internet media will disseminate key messages to promote a dialogue on a stronger role for health systems in protecting

people's health from climate change, especially vulnerable groups. Key deliverables include:

- a special edition of the national news agency AKIpress analytical magazine dedicated to climate change and health in Kyrgyzstan;
- online news, articles and experts comments on health and climate change;
- a youth web forum and online polls to conduct a debate on the effects of climate change on health; and
- a public event for media and key national stakeholders.

THE USE OF SOLAR ENERGY BY THE HEALTH SECTOR: A TOOL FOR HEALTH ADAPTATION

Kyrgyzstan's immense glaciers and snow surfaces represent a strategic resource for all countries in central Asia, a region most vulnerable to climate change. Shrinking of glaciers and snow is resulting in water shortages and could lead to economic, political and environmental problems.

Lack of sufficient hydropower generation capacity entails limitations on the use of electricity particularly in autumn and winter, with serious effects on all aspects of human life. Electricity shortages mainly occur in rural areas, affecting hospitals, first-aid stations and resuscitation units.

Kyrgyzstan has over 300 sunny days a year; there is a great opportunity for the use of renewable energy technologies to generate solar power. The Government acknowledged their importance in adopting the law on renewable energy in January 2009.

The project is introducing renewable energy technologies in five hospitals in different provinces. Solar energy will be used in the health sector for the first time. Solar panels and collectors will ensure increased availability of electricity for patient treatment, and improve the refrigeration of essential medicines and vaccinations.