HIGHLIGHTS

- Frequent small- to medium-scale disasters occurred throughout the region in 2012.
- Humanitarian partners in Tajikistan seek $492,969 to help Rasht Valley earthquake-affected people.
- Kyrgyzstan at risk of food and energy crisis.
- Over 7,000 ethnic Armenians fled Syria in 2012, but not all are seeking refugee status.

FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of refugees in Armenia</th>
<th>6,000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># of ppl affected in 2012 in Tajikistan</td>
<td>11,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of food insecure ppl in Kyrgyzstan</td>
<td>1.3 million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FUNDING

- 492,969 requested (US$) for Rasht appeal in Tajikistan
- 0% of the Rasht appeal funded
- 30 million received (US$) in humanitarian aid for the region in 2012

Welcome. OCHA is piloting a quarterly Humanitarian Bulletin covering humanitarian issues in the South Caucasus and Central Asia. Based on audience feedback, the next issue will appear in April 2013.

Year in review: small emergencies add up

Across the region, rural households most affected by natural disasters

The year of 2012 was eventful as small- to medium-scale emergencies raged through the region incurring most damage on rural households. Earthquakes in Azerbaijan and Tajikistan, mudflows in Kyrgyzstan, flash floods in Kazakhstan and a hurricane in Georgia – all happened outside of large cities and in remote villages, at times difficult to access. Often these small- to medium-scale disasters affected already vulnerable families. Many of the affected households were subjected to the same disasters more than once.

A cold winter, high precipitation levels in the spring and a dry summer have added to the hardship of the poor rural households. In Kyrgyzstan, massive livestock deaths of over 40,000 heads of cattle left many families without their main source of income and food. In Tajikistan, many families whose houses were made uninhabitable by the 13 May earthquake had to sell livestock to cover reconstruction costs.

Across the region, emergencies in 2012 underlined the importance of building the resilience of people living in disaster-prone areas. In most cases, the governments coped with the immediate disaster aftermath, covering urgent needs for shelter, food, water and other necessary items. But when it came to long-term recovery, support from humanitarian and development partners was often necessary to help affected people back onto their feet, learn from the disaster and better prepare for future shocks.
Rebuilding livelihoods in the Rasht Valley

Humanitarian partners in Tajikistan appeal to donors

Seven months after the 13 May earthquake hit the Rasht Valley in central Tajikistan, affected families are still struggling to rebuild. Out of the 227 families that completely or partially lost their homes in the disaster, few have managed to finish reconstruction before winter. Some families have had to move back into unsafe damaged houses, others moved into refurbished barns that had been used for livestock. Although the Government provided unprecedented aid to affected villages in the amount of US$1.6 million, gaps remain due to delays in supplying reconstruction materials and existing vulnerabilities among the affected villages induced by poverty, frequent natural disasters, a succession of cold protracted winters and hot dry summers, and reliance on remittances, livestock, agriculture and other unstable sources of income.

To help people fully recover from the disaster, humanitarian partners in Tajikistan launched an appeal on 14 December. Through the Rapid Emergency Assessment and Coordination Team (REACT) humanitarian organizations seeking up to $500,000 to help earthquake-affected villages survive winter, finish houses and keep them warm, reconstruct a local school for 435 students and build latrines for 45 families that the Government had relocated to safer areas in the south of the country.

Food & energy crisis looming over Kyrgyzstan

25 per cent of the population food insecure as winter arrives

As of September 2012, WFP estimates that approximately 1.3 million people, or 25 per cent of the total population, are food insecure in Kyrgyzstan. The figure has grown from 18 per cent in March 2012. According to WFP, an additional 13 per cent of households – some 547,000 people – are at risk of becoming food insecure. With dropping wheat production, Kyrgyzstan increasingly relies on food imports that expose the population to global market volatility. Rising food prices and other shocks can throw thousands of vulnerable people into extreme poverty.

Early cold winter puts additional strain on the vulnerable families. The country’s ageing power grid is becoming less functional. Power and gas cuts are common even in the capital city of Bishkek, with people having to resort to extreme measures to cook and keep their dwellings warm.

The Kyrgyz Red Crescent Society (KRCS) estimates that, as of 22 December 2012, at least 1,750 households are severely affected by the extreme weather in Bishkek alone. The International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies allocated $189,000 from its Disaster Relief Emergency Fund to help the most vulnerable 750 families (3,000 people) in and around Bishkek with warm blankets, thermal pots, rechargeable lights and food.

The Government is trying to address the energy crisis, including potential rate increases next year. Energy costs are a sensitive issue for a country where attempts to raise rates in 2010 culminated in violent protests and the subsequent overthrow of the Government.
The humanitarian community is looking anxiously towards January-February 2013 when temperatures usually drop even lower. If the gas and power supply system fails to withstand this season, hundreds of thousands of people will require urgent assistance. The Disaster Response Coordination Unit (DRCU) — an inter-agency disaster platform in Kyrgyzstan — is working with the Government and KRCs on strengthening preparedness for potential deterioration of the situation.

**Over 369 natural disasters hit Kyrgyzstan in 2012**

As of December 2012, some 537 houses remain in need of repair as a result of the record number of natural disasters that occurred in Kyrgyzstan last year. In 2012, the country sustained significant economic losses from natural disasters that amounted to $20 million (or 0.3 per cent of GDP). As in most other years, floods and mudflows were the most frequent and destructive disasters. In response to these emergencies, DRCU members — UN Agencies, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and local and international NGOs — provided food, NFIs and psychosocial support to affected people.

### Damage from natural disasters in Kyrgyzstan in 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Houses damaged</td>
<td>3,329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public institutions</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridges</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irrigation networks</td>
<td>376 km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arable land</td>
<td>10 ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total cost</td>
<td>Over $20 million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: DRCU

### Building resilient communities in Tajikistan

**Over 2 million at risk of food insecurity amid rising number of disasters**

In 2012, Tajikistan experienced over 306 natural disasters that took the lives of 26 people, left thousands of houses in need of major repairs or complete reconstruction, killed livestock, and damaged infrastructure that is vital for many isolated villages. On average, about 150 small- and medium-scale disasters occur annually in Tajikistan, affecting at least 10,000 people.

In addition to a series of natural disasters, over 2 million people are estimated by WFP to be at risk of food insecurity. In the first half of 2012, during the lean season when winter stocks were running out, the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification declared a humanitarian emergency in one district and warned of a dire situation in others. Most of Tajikistan’s territory then was classified as an acute food and livelihoods crisis. The situation has slightly improved thanks to better harvest in Tajikistan and exporting countries, as well as the Government’s and humanitarian community’s response to the needs of the affected people.

### Integrated approach to humanitarian and development issues required

The Government’s capacity to respond to natural disasters has visibly improved, and in 2012, the Government covered urgent needs of most people affected by natural disasters. Besides food aid, required emergency support from the wider humanitarian community was often limited to fuel. Nonetheless, the growing occurrence of natural disasters in a poor country highlights the need to address Tajikistan’s vulnerabilities comprehensively by integrating the work of humanitarian and development actors. Development cannot ignore the shaky operational context, while disaster response cannot ignore the likelihood of more disasters occurring in the future. Globally, UNDP and OCHA are promoting resilience — helping vulnerable communities affected by disasters adapt and withstand future shocks. OCHA and humanitarian partners are currently exploring the idea of piloting the global resilience project in Tajikistan. This project will require humanitarian and development partners to work together to build stronger communities that can withstand natural disasters.
Ethnic Armenians flee Syria

In 2012, over 6,000 Armenians from Syria seek refuge in Armenia

Since the beginning of 2012, over 7,000 Armenians fled Syria, of which 1,000 moved on to other countries while the rest are temporarily or permanently staying in their historical homeland. About 100,000 ethnic Armenians live in Syria. In December, the Armenian State Migration Agency asked the United Nations to assist in the accommodation of 350 Syrian refugees. UNHCR is working out ways to help refugees withstand the winter season, while the Government is facilitating the arrival of more refugees. In parallel, the Government has to consider longer-term implications such as integration of new Armenian citizens despite the country’s difficult economic situation and high unemployment rate. A number of refugees do not wish to obtain refugee status. The Ministry of Diaspora has established the Center for Coordination of the Issues of Syrian Armenians to address the needs of these people.

Abkhazia wants aid programmes to scale down

Humanitarian organizations have been suggested to focus on Gali district

After years of helping post-war Abkhazia, humanitarian organizations might have to wrap up most of their activities in 2013 as recently requested by the de facto authorities of the region. At the 31 October 2012 meeting, humanitarian partners were asked to limit their efforts to Gali district where up to 50,000 returned internally displaced persons are still struggling to access basic livelihoods and proper social services. While the international agencies believe that the situation is comparable to rural areas in other parts of Abkhazia, the de facto authorities see no further need for humanitarian programmes beyond Gali due to socioeconomic growth in the wider region. The United Nations agencies and international NGOs are currently reviewing the possible implications on the vulnerable populations assisted by their on-going programmes as a result of such a shift in focus.
TAJIKISTAN: 2012 humanitarian overview

Legend
- International border
- Province boundary
- National capital
- Provincial capital
- Other cities
- Major roads
- Major rivers
- Lakes
- Floods
- Earthquake
- Landslide/mudslide
- Food insecurity

306 natural disasters occurred in 2012
(150 on average occur every year)

Food insecurity
Country population 7.8 million
People at risk > 2 million
26% of country’s population

Food insecurity

306 natural disasters occurred in 2012
(150 on average occur every year)

26 deaths
217 houses destroyed
1,147 houses damaged
> 11,000 people affected
47 hospitals, schools, & kindergartens damaged
$15 million in economic losses

Humanitarian funding received in 2012 (in millions)

$9.2 Food security assistance
$4.7 Disaster risk reduction
$3.5 Other humanitarian aid

= $17.4

Consolidated Rasht earthquake winter assistance appeal
Emergency: earthquake 13 May 2012
Impact: 100 houses, 3 schools destroyed
124 houses damaged
7 schools & 3 hospitals damaged
1,591 people in 12 villages affected

$492,969 requested

Needs:
- Shelter ($160,179)
- WASH ($32,790)
- Education ($300,000)
- Gender & land access issues (included in existing UN Women programmes)