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Contact Person: Ramilya Sazazova

USAID Central Asian Republics

Tel: (+7 727) 2507612

Email: RSazazova@usaid.gov

PRESS RELEASE

USAID Regional Water Security Workshop: Glacier Melt in Central and South Asia, December 5-8, 2011 – Almaty

The economic growth, health and security of South and Central Asia are vulnerable to changes in future water supplies. Changes in water supply could result from forms and rates of water usage or climate change's effect on glacier dynamics and monsoon patterns. Nepal, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and the five Central Asian Republics are all vulnerable to these factors. Large portions of these countries' populations live in poverty and face varying levels of water scarcity and food insecurity. These countries contain high altitude communities (except for Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) that are directly vulnerable to melting of nearby glaciers and glacier lake outburst flood hazards. There is a concern that water could become a conflict trigger between countries in these regions.

USAID recognizes the need to proactively address these water security and climate-related issues. From December 5-8, USAID/Central Asian Republics is hosting a workshop to bring together USAID personnel, international, regional and local organizations to: 1) increase knowledge sharing, communication and coordination on regional water security including glacier melt; and 2) identify synergies and potential areas of collaboration between USAID and national and international stakeholders.

The workshop will provide an overview of current knowledge of water security issues and vulnerabilities as they relate to democracy and governance, health, economic growth and environment sectors. Opening the workshop will be U.S. Embassy Chargé d'Affaires Elisabeth Millard and USAID/Central Asian Republics Mission Director Erin McKee. International experts will discuss trans-boundary water issues, changes in glaciers and vulnerabilities related to water supplies. An outcome of the workshop will be building a foundation for an alliance to regional water security with a focus on the impacts of glacier melt.

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is proud to celebrate its 50th Anniversary in 2011. USAID was created in 1961 by American President John F. Kennedy and is funded by the American people. Since 1992, USAID has supported local efforts to improve economic growth, governance, and the quality of health and education in Kazakhstan. For more information about USAID programs, please visit our website at <http://centralasia.usaid.gov>.

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