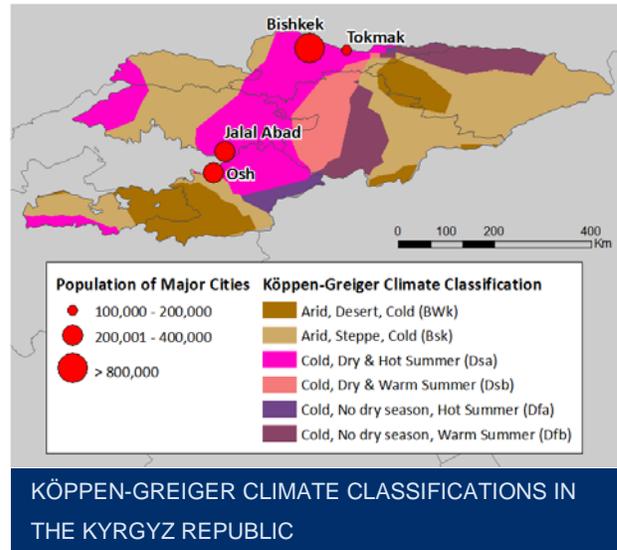




# CLIMATE RISK PROFILE KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

## COUNTRY OVERVIEW

The Kyrgyz Republic is a landlocked, mountainous country in Central Asia with a population of around 6.2 million. Since gaining independence in 1991, the country has experienced social and political instability, and has been particularly vulnerable to external economic shocks. Around 30 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) in the Kyrgyz Republic derives from worker remittances and a single gold mine accounts for 10 percent of GDP. Economic growth has been increasing in recent years while poverty rates have been decreasing, with only 1.4 percent of the country under the internationally agreed upon poverty threshold of \$1.90 per day as of 2016. While the country has some limited hydrocarbon reserves, over 90 percent of generated electricity comes from hydropower. The Kyrgyz Republic is susceptible to natural hazards such as earthquakes and landslides, as well as economic shocks resulting from volatile food prices and political instability. Impacts from such natural hazards and economic shocks may be amplified by expected climate change stressors such as increases in temperature, extreme weather events and glacial melt. The impacts from these and other climate change stressors are likely to significantly affect key natural resources, economic sectors and the governance landscape. (1, 17, 25, 26)



## CLIMATE PROJECTIONS

- 2.0 to 5.5° C increase in annual mean temperatures by 2085
- Changing rainfall patterns and increased heavy rains
- Increased drought

## KEY CLIMATE IMPACTS

<p><b>Agriculture</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduced crop yields and productivity</li> <li>Increased food insecurity</li> <li>Changing incidence of pest outbreaks</li> </ul>	<p><b>Livestock</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Decreased access to food and water</li> <li>Reduced livestock productivity</li> <li>Injury and death from extreme weather</li> </ul>	<p><b>Water Resources</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Melting glaciers</li> <li>Decreased water availability</li> <li>Increased transboundary conflict</li> </ul>
<p><b>Human Health</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased food insecurity and malnutrition</li> <li>Increasing infectious disease burden</li> <li>Increased injury and death</li> </ul>	<p><b>Education</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Damage to education infrastructure</li> <li>Decreased access to education</li> <li>Increased absence</li> </ul>	<p><b>Energy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased energy demand</li> <li>Damaged energy infrastructure</li> <li>Decreased hydropower</li> </ul>

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## CLIMATE SUMMARY

The Kyrgyz Republic can be grouped into four climatic zones: the Plain and Submontane Belt (valleys and foothills) - up to 1,200 meters (m) above sea level; the Medium Altitude Belt (midland) - from 1,200 to 2,200 m above sea level; the High Mountain Belt (alpine) - from 2,200 to 3,500 m above sea level; and the Nival Belt (permanent snow) - higher than 3,500 m above sea level. Seventy percent of the country's land is above 2,000 meters in elevation. While the country is characterized by a dry continental and mainly arid climate with warm summers and cold winters, the patterns vary between the climatic zones. The Plain belt has hot summers and very little precipitation throughout the year, while the High Mountain belt has cooler summers with cold, snowy winters and the Nival belt is a polar climate with snowfields and glaciers. While the average annual temperature is about 2°C for the country as a whole, this varies significantly between the low and high elevation areas. Average low winter temperatures can reach below -20°C in high elevations, while average summer high temperatures are in the high teens to low twenties across the country. Precipitation occurs mostly during the spring and early summer months. While the Kyrgyz Republic receives heavy rainfall, particularly in the high altitudes above 2,000 m, the country is highly drought-prone overall. Average annual precipitation is 389 millimeters (mm), ranging between 300 mm in the eastern region to 600 mm in the southern region. Mudslides, floods, landslides and avalanches occur frequently. (1, 3, 14, 17, 24)

### HISTORICAL CLIMATE

Climate trends from the 20th to early 21st century:

- Increase in annual average temperature of 0.17°C per decade between 1901 and 2013, with significantly higher increase of around 0.5°C per decade from 1983-2013.
- There are some indications that average annual temperature increase is strongest at low altitudes, becoming less pronounced with increasing altitude.
- Average temperature increase is strongest in the winter, particularly November and December, with spring exhibiting smaller increases and even decreases in average temperature.
- As a result of increasing temperatures, nearly one-third of the glacial area across the Central Asia region has disappeared since 1930.
- Slight increase in total annual precipitation of around four percent every 30 years between 1901 and 2013.
- More recent trends in total annual precipitation over the past 20-30 year are less clear, with significant increases and decreases depending on the region. (3,14,24)

### FUTURE CLIMATE

Projected changes include the following:

- Increases in annual average temperature around 2°C by 2060, with a range of around 2.0°C to 5.5°C by 2085.
- Increase in annual maximum temperature of around 2.1°C to 6.7°C by 2085, and an increase in annual minimum temperature of around 2.4°C to 6.2°C in the same period.
- Likely increase in duration of long-lasting heat waves is significant, increasing by between five to 44 days by 2085.
- Average annual precipitation is projected to increase by between two percent and 12 percent by 2085, with the majority of the increase coming in the months of November to April. Other months are likely to experience no change or slight decreases in average precipitation over the same period. Extent of increase may vary across regions and altitudes.
- While the duration of dry spells is likely to increase slightly, rising about two days by 2085, heavy rains are projected to increase in both intensity (six percent to 17 percent) and frequency (16 percent and 17 percent) in the same period. (1,3,14,24)

## SECTOR IMPACTS AND VULNERABILITIES

### AGRICULTURE

Agriculture remains a leading economic sector for the Kyrgyz Republic, employing over a third of the labor force and contributing to around 20 percent of the country's GDP. Much of the cultivation is focused on wheat, maize, barley, potatoes and cotton. While over half (53 percent) of the Kyrgyz Republic is made up of agricultural land, 85 percent is pasture and around 12 percent is arable land. Given the low average rainfall, 80 percent of arable land is irrigated. Even with the irrigation, agriculture production remains highly climate-sensitive. A crippling drought in 2008 resulted in widespread harvest losses, and was then followed by the harshest winter the country had experienced in 40 years. Another major drought in 2012 contributed to a significant economic shock. Climate change is expected to significantly affect agricultural growing conditions, including impacts from rising temperatures, increasing variability of precipitation and the likely overall reduction in surface water due to increased evapotranspiration and glacial melt. The changes will likely increase aridity, affect access to irrigation water sources and accelerate desertification, which is already a significant concern and affects up to half the land in the country. While some crops, such as cotton, could initially benefit from increasing temperatures, overall, climate change is expected to reduce production of food and fiber crops and cut overall food availability per capita. Increases in temperatures, including temperature extremes, along with existing or worsening drought incidence can significantly affect yields, with high impact on sugar beets, wheat, and maize, the latter two of which are particularly sensitive to rainfall timing. Additionally, increasing temperatures and changing rainfall patterns could contribute to increased outbreaks of agricultural diseases and pests, such as locusts. Crop yields and productivity can also be expected to be reduced due to increasing heavy rains and the resultant floods and mudslides. Climate change impacts on agriculture could decrease food security and slow improvement in poverty levels, particularly in rural areas. As extreme weather events and changing climate conditions affect the agriculture sector, migration to other countries in pursuit of economic opportunities could increase. Resilience to climate change risks within the agriculture sector is affected by governance and management across the sector, as well as broader economic growth and workforce opportunities. (1,2,6,16,23,27)

Climate Stressors and Climate Risks AGRICULTURE	
Stressors	Risks
Increased Temperatures	Storm and flood damage to crops
	Reduced crop yields and productivity
Changes in precipitation patterns	Worsening desertification
	Changing patterns of and increases in pest outbreaks
Increased drought	Increased food insecurity
Increased heavy rains	Decreased access to water for irrigation

### LIVESTOCK

Livestock production, primarily cattle, sheep, horses and goats, is a critical component of the agriculture sector, particularly in the foothill areas throughout the country. The majority of agricultural land is pasture, and livestock production typically accounts for around one third of the annual output value for the sector. The projected impacts from climate change may have both positive and negative effects on livestock production. For example, increases in temperature and overall annual rainfall may have a favorable impact on fescue, hayfield and pasture yields across many regions. Ultimately the extent to which the higher productivity improves livestock outcomes will depend on stocking rates and the ability to balance pasture production with livestock feed requirements. In other areas, such as high mountain pastures in the Tien-Shan, Alay, and

Climate Stressors and Climate Risks LIVESTOCK	
Stressors	Risks
Increased temperatures	Changes in pastureland and worsening desertification
	Decreased access to food and water
Changes in precipitation patterns	Increased biological stress and changes in reproductive patterns
	Reduced livestock productivity
Increased drought	Increased spread of infectious disease
Increased heavy rains	Injury and death from increased heavy rains, floods, mudslides, and avalanches

Ak-Saw valleys, the combination of increasing temperatures and decreasing overall water availability is expected to increase desertification and reduce pasture coverage. In these and other areas, climate change impacts may negatively affect the feed, fodder and available grazing for livestock. In addition to the effects on feed and pastureland, projected increases in temperatures, changing rainfall patterns and impacts on water access can be expected to increase biological stress on animals and alter their growth and reproductive patterns. Increased water scarcity and drought incidence can reduce access to drinking water and adequate foraging. The increased biological stress and poorer nutrition are likely to leave the livestock more vulnerable to infectious diseases. This is in addition to potential injuries and deaths from increased intensity and frequency of heavy rains. While a common approach to handling historical climate risks has involved increasing livestock numbers, this can itself lead to pasture degradation, overgrazing and erosion in watershed catchments, which all increase vulnerability to climate risks. The degree to which livestock management practices are resilient to climate risks is affected by policy effectiveness and institutional frameworks. (1,2,6,7,13,14)

### WATER RESOURCES

Water resources serve as a critical source of power generation, providing over 90 percent of all generated power, in addition to providing irrigation and the domestic and industrial water supplies. Glaciers, rivers and lakes are the dominant water source, though groundwater is also important and is primarily used for irrigation. Snow and glaciers in the mountainous terrain serve as the source of water for six major river basins. Several of these basins, particularly the Syr Darya and Amu Darya rivers, provide critical water resources for neighboring countries in Central Asia. Climate change is expected to have a significant impact on the availability and reliability of water resources. While projections indicate there will likely be a slight increase in total annual rainfall, changes in the timing of precipitation within the year combined with increasing dry spells and temperatures will likely lead to increased water stress. Significant reductions in glaciers and snowfields are of critical concern. Increasing temperatures over the past 50 years have already contributed to significant decreases in both mountain snowpack and the volume of the Tien Shan glaciers in the Kyrgyz Republic and neighboring Kazakhstan, with accelerated reductions in the past 20 years. In the short term, until around 2025, the shrinking glaciers are projected to increase total water supply as well as flood and mudslide potential. However, significant decline in surface water flow and annual water supply is expected to occur in the coming decades, with projections suggesting decreased inflow to downstream Syr Darya and Amu Darya rivers of at least 20 percent by 2050 and decreased overall runoff across all basins of between five and 20 percent by 2070. Changes in snowmelt, glacial melt and precipitation patterns are all expected to decrease river flow and irrigation sources during agriculturally important spring and summer months. The decrease in water availability is likely to coincide with an increased demand for agricultural water due to higher temperatures and changing rainfall patterns, increasing water shortages including shortages already experienced in the Syr Darya and Amu Darya basins. Changes to river flows, mountain snowmelt and glacial melt will also likely impact the region’s biodiversity and ecosystem services, and overall water stress could affect availability of water for drinking and sanitation activities. Additionally, given the importance of water flows to neighboring countries in the Central Asia region, climate change impacts on water resources in the Kyrgyz Republic and the transboundary implications may strain regional cooperation, security and politics. (1,4,5,9,12,14,20,23)

Climate Stressors and Climate Risks WATER RESOURCES	
Stressors	Risks
Increased temperatures	Increased glacial melt
	Decreased river flows and runoff
Changes in precipitation	Increased water stress for agriculture and decreased availability for irrigation
	Decreased water access and availability for drinking
Increased drought	Increased floods and mudslides
	Increased disputes over transboundary water resources

## HUMAN HEALTH

The Kyrgyz Republic has prioritized health sector reform and service delivery improvements in recent years, and the government's expenditure on health has been increasing. Despite these increases, infectious, parasitic, and noncommunicable diseases remain a concern. Poverty and food insecurity also contribute to health challenges in the country, particularly in mountainous and rural areas. Projected climate change impacts are likely to create hurdles to improving health outcomes. In comparison to other countries in the Central Asia region, the Kyrgyz Republic has been relatively advanced in recognizing and reporting on the health implications of climate change. Increasing temperatures, particularly maximum temperatures, along with heat waves can be expected to increase incidence of heat stress. This climate stressor, along with drought, can increase mortality, particularly among vulnerable populations like children and the elderly. Higher temperatures and changing rainfall patterns could also lead to an increase in cardio-vascular diseases and intestinal infections and can also change the distribution and transmission rates of vector-borne diseases. For example, areas in the south are expected to experience high risk of malaria outbreaks, and expanding habitats and increased active periods for ticks are likely to heighten the incidence of tick-borne diseases, particularly encephalitis. Increases in frequency and intensity of climate-related extreme events, such as heavy rains, can result in worsening floods, avalanches, and mudslides, all of which can lead to injury and death as well as damage or reduce access to critical health infrastructure. Food insecurity, malnutrition and stunting, the latter of which already affects over 20 percent of children in the predominantly rural south, are expected to be worsened by climate change. Key stressors include increased drought, flooding and desertification, which could decrease crop productivity and increase crop failures. This could imperil those affected by HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis, which is a critical challenge in a country already facing a high tuberculosis burden. The health of these vulnerable communities, as well as others, may also be affected by reduced availability of and access to clean water. Across the health sector, the degree to which climate risks affect health delivery and services is shaped by broader public administration and management of health systems and institutions. (10,16,17,21,22,23)

Climate Stressors and Climate Risks HUMAN HEALTH	
Stressors	Risks
Increased temperatures	Changes in incidence of vector-borne and waterborne diseases
Changes in precipitation patterns	Increased food insecurity and malnutrition
Increased heavy rains	Increased injury and death from heat stress and storms
Increased drought	Damage to health infrastructure
	Decreased access to clean water

## EDUCATION

The young population in the Kyrgyz Republic is, on average, less educated than their parents. This is of particular concern given that half of the population is under the age of 25, and unemployment along with their lack of education contributes to migration out of the country. In recent years, the Kyrgyz Republic has sought to address the critical challenges that have faced education since independence, including high teacher turnover, insufficient teacher training, lack of financial resources and inefficient management of schools. Student performance and retention, which are critical areas of improvement, can be negatively affected by climate change. Increasing intensity and frequency of heavy rains and flooding, along with mudslides and avalanches, can impact both school buildings and students' access to them. These stressors along with increased temperatures are expected to negatively impact electricity provision, which is a critical service for schools. Additionally, economic hardship and food insecurity linked to increasing droughts and other climate change stressors can adversely affect student performance and school attendance. Heat stress

Climate Stressors and Climate Risks EDUCATION	
Stressors	Risks
Increased temperatures	Damage to school buildings and education infrastructure
	Decreased access and transportation to school
Increased heavy rains	Increased health-related school absence and/or decreased performance
Increased drought	Increased food security and economic-related school absence and/or decreased performance

along with other climate-related health concerns could also impact students' ability to attend school or pay attention while there. Such impacts would likely have a disproportionate impact on women, who already experience higher levels of unemployment and barriers to education in the country. In addition to broader education reform efforts, such as improved teacher training and focused programs to reduce dropouts, the Kyrgyz Republic has included wide ranging integration of climate change-related material in the curriculum. Integration ranges from increased coverage of climate change in secondary education to targeted curriculum development for medical schools and construction universities. (1,15,17,19)

## ENERGY

While the Kyrgyz Republic produces a small amount of electricity from fossil fuels, particularly coal and natural gas, hydropower provides around 90 percent of the country's electricity. Hydropower generation is a highly significant component of the country's economy, and it exports over 10 percent of the electricity it generates. While the Kyrgyz Republic only utilizes around 20 percent of its overall hydropower potential, the hydroelectric generation is not able to meet peak winter demand, which leads to increased reliance on thermal power plants and imported fuels. Climate change is expected to have a significant adverse effect on the energy sector. Changing rainfall patterns, increasing temperatures and increasing drought will likely reduce reliability and availability of water for hydropower and thermoelectric cooling. Increasing glacial melt and changes in snowmelt are expected to affect hydropower sources in the coming decades, with increases likely within the next five to 10 years and the potential for significant decreases in water availability in later decades. The aging power plants, energy infrastructure and transmission are already deteriorating, and are expected to face increased threats from higher temperatures and increased heavy rains along with floods and mudslides. The likely reductions in energy supply and transmission will occur against a backdrop of increasing demand due not only to economic growth and demographic change, but also a lengthening of the cooling season that is expected to outpace shortening of the heating season. While historical challenges in management and governance, as well as widespread corruption, have hampered the energy sector, there have been improvements in the political, policy, and regulatory landscape in recent years. Continued improvements will be necessary to increase the sector's resilience to changing climate conditions. (1,9,17, 20,23,26)

Climate Stressors and Climate Risks	
ENERGY	
Stressors	Risks
Increased temperatures	Decreased hydropower reliability and productivity
Changes in precipitation patterns	Damaged energy infrastructure and transmission lines
Increased drought	Increased energy demand
Increased heavy rains	Increased reliance on fossil fuels

## POLICY CONTEXT

The Kyrgyz Republic has been relatively active in considering climate change within policy documents, international commitments and submissions and action plans. In addition to the "Priorities for Adaptation to Climate Change in the Kyrgyz Republic Until 2017 – Updated to 2020", the government noted climate change in the National Sustainable Development Strategy (2013-2017) and developed both a government resolution on adaptation priorities and multiple action plans for climate change across sectors. The country has also submitted three National Communications to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in addition to the Intended Nationally Determined Contribution. However, additional regulatory, financial, legal and organizational support will be needed to implement most of the strategies and action plans, particularly at the agency and ministerial levels. Efforts by USAID/Kyrgyz Republic to strengthen accountability, policy formation and effectiveness of political processes are enabling improved development and implementation of climate change-related policies. (1,11,14,18)

## INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

Efforts to address climate change in the Kyrgyz Republic have largely been diffuse and distributed through sectoral ministries. For example, the State Agency on Environment Protection and Forestry and the Ministry of the Economy have been jointly working to integrate climate change into development planning since 2015. However, the government also previously initiated a National Committee on Climate Change Effects and currently operates a Climate Change Coordination Commission, led by the First Vice Prime Minister and composed of all key ministry and division heads along with representatives from academic, business and civic institutions. (1,8,14)

## NATIONAL STRATEGIES AND PLANS

- [National Sustainable Development Strategy for the Kyrgyz Republic](#) (2013 – 2017)
- [Third National Communication of the Kyrgyz Republic to the UNFCCC](#) (2017)
- [Programs and Action Plans for Adaptation to Climate Change for 2015-2017: For Forestry, Biodiversity, Agriculture, Water Resources, Healthcare, and Emergency Situations](#) (2015)
- [Priorities for Adaptation to Climate Change in the Kyrgyz Republic Until 2017](#) (updated to 2020)
- [Intended Nationally Determined Contribution](#) (2015)

## KEY RESOURCES<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This “Key Resources” section lists works cited in preparing the Climate Risk Profile.

## SELECTED ONGOING EXPERIENCES<sup>2</sup>

Current or recently completed development efforts related to climate change in the Kyrgyz Republic. Projects were selected through review of USAID, other donors', and implementing partner project databases.

Selected Program	Amount	Donor	Year	Implementer
<a href="#">Heat Supply Improvement Project for Kyrgyz Republic</a>	\$46 million	World Bank	2017-2023	N/A
<a href="#">Sustainable Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Project (Kyrgyz Republic)</a>	\$28 million	World Bank	2016-2025	Community Development and Investment Agency
<a href="#">Energy Sector Development Policy Operation (Kyrgyz Republic)</a>	\$24 million	World Bank	2015-2016	Ministry of Energy and Industry of The Kyrgyz Republic
<a href="#">Farmer-to-Farmer (Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan)</a>	\$7.9 million <sup>3</sup>	USAID	2013-2018	ACDI-VOCA
<a href="#">Smart Waters</a>	\$9.5 million	USAID	2015-2020	Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia
<a href="#">Conservation and Adaptation in Asia's High Mountain Landscapes and Communities</a>	\$7.0 million	USAID	2012-2017	World Wildlife Fund
<a href="#">Strengthening of Livelihoods Through Climate Change Adaptation in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan</a>		GIZ	2014-2018	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
<a href="#">Ecosystem-based adaptation to climate change in high mountain regions of Central Asia</a>	\$4.7 million	GIZ	2015-2019	German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety
<a href="#">Kyrgyz Republic: Preparing the Climate Resilience and Disaster Risk Reduction in Water Resources</a>	\$30 million	ADB	2017-2019	Ministry of Agriculture, Food Industry and Land Reclamation
<a href="#">Bishkek District Heating Network</a>	\$7.2 million	EBRD	2017-2020	Bishkek District Heating Network
<a href="#">Capacity Building towards securing the resilience of communities and institution to climate and disaster risks and sustainable and inclusive natural resource management</a>	\$47 million	UNDP	2018-2022	Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, State Agency of Environment Protection and Forestry, Ministry of Emergencies

<sup>2</sup> This "Selected Ongoing Projects" section lists a selection of ongoing development projects and interventions directly or indirectly relevant to climate risk management and adaptation in the Kyrgyz Republic. Projects were identified primarily via desk review of USAID, multi-lateral development bank, and other international donor programming. Projects listed are not meant to be comprehensive.

<sup>3</sup> Budget for entire region, including Armenia, Georgia, Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan.