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Contact: Ramilya Sazazova

USAID/Central Asian Republics

Tel: (+7 727) 2507612

Email: RSazazova@usaid.gov

## PRESS RELEASE

### **Establishing a Collaborative Effort to Assess the Role of Glaciers and Seasonal Snow Cover in the Hydrology of High Asia's Mountains**

The University of Colorado and USAID are conducting a study of glacial melt in High Asia. The objective of this study is to develop an accurate, comprehensive assessment of the snow and glacier contribution to the water resources originating across the Himalaya-Karakoram-Hindu Kush and the mountain ranges of Central Asia (Pamir and Tien Shan), referred to here as "High Asia." These mountain ranges are located within the countries of Bhutan, Nepal, China, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

Approximately one-third of the world's population depends on fresh water availability within this High Asia hydrologic system. However, realistic estimates of the future availability and vulnerability of the water resources in these regions are not possible without a better understanding of the current hydrologic regime within these mountain ranges. This will require improved estimates of the relative contribution of melting seasonal snow and glacier ice to total stream flow, in combination with rainfall and ground water.

Research and planning for these regional water resource issues is a cross-boundary exercise and the work being undertaken within this project will greatly facilitate the international cooperation required for successful water resource management across High Asia. The timing and spatial patterns of snow- and ice-melt play key roles in providing water sources for downstream irrigation, hydropower generation and general consumption. Hydrologic processes in the high-altitude regions of the world are particularly sensitive to climate change because of the predominant role of snow and glaciers in the system.

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