

RASHT VALLEY FEASIBILITY STUDY REPORT

Swiss Development Cooperation



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Views and observations expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the views of the Swiss Development Cooperation or any other governmental and non-governmental organizations, but solely views and observations of the author.

PART I

RASHT VALLEY – MAIN REPORT



List of Abbreviations and Idioms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AKDN	Aga Khan Development Network
AKF	Aga Khan Foundation
Aylok	Seasonal Pasture
CBWSG	Community Based Women Saving Group
CSO	Civil Society Organisations
DCC	Development Coordination Council
DDP	District Development Plan
DDR	Districts of Direct Rule
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
GAA	German Agro Action
GBAO	Gorno Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GIZ	German International Cooperation
Hashar	Community Voluntary Work
Hukumat	Government
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IG	Interest Group
IWM	Integrated Watershed Management
Jamoat	Sub-District
JRC	Jamoat Resource Centre
Mahalla	Community/Neighbourhood
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MEDT	Ministry of Economic Development and Trade
MFI	Micro Finance Institution
MSDSP	Mountain Societies Development Support Programme
MZO	Micro Zonal Organisations
NDC	National Development Council
NDS	National Development Strategy
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPO	National Programme Officer
Oblast	Province
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PA	Public Association
PRS	Poverty Reduction Strategy
Rayon	District
SCO	Swiss Cooperation Office
SDC	Swiss Development Cooperation
SLIS	Strategy for Living Standard Improvement
SUDVO	Social Union for Development of Village Organisations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VO	Village Organisation
WFP	World Food Programme
WTO	World Trade Organisation
WUA	Water User Association

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2. Executive Summary

This Feasibility Study was commissioned by the Swiss Cooperation Office in Tajikistan to analyse current situation in Rasht valley, identify major issues and key priorities for Swiss Agency Development Cooperation development interventions.

This is the first-ever comprehensive report on the region aiming to provide an overall picture on the region and could be also used by other development partners as a solid reference. This mission spent three weeks in the valley, visited all 7 districts of Rasht, 15 Jamoats and scores of villages and travelled around 2000 km. The mission comprised of a Team Leader (Senior Policy Advisor), a National Consultant on Gender and Environment and one of SCO's National Programme Officers as Governance, Civil Society and Migration.

The Rasht Valley has suffered much as a result of long lasting civil conflict, long after the peace treaty was signed by main warring factions in late 2007 and implemented early 2008. Its social and economic infrastructure has seen little rehabilitation and recovery aside from the newly opened highway connecting Dushanbe with the Kyrgyz border. While Jirgatal and Tojikobod are now better linked through the highway, Tavildara is almost entirely locked for much of the winter season that lasts in average 6 months. Several Jamoats in other districts, including Faizobod, Nurobod and Rasht districts are located at altitudes of around 2000 meter above the sea level.

Health and education infrastructure in almost the entire valley dates over 40 years and with absence of maintenance and rehabilitation they are in dire state. Similarly, its energy and water systems are outdated and worn out and no longer respond to the needs of the communities. With rapid population growth, especially in remote mountainous areas, existing social infrastructure, especially health and education, has to cover the needs of 2-3 times the population they were built for 40 years ago.

Rasht economy is agrarian and thus closely related to agriculture, livestock, beekeeping, with potentials in fish farming. The valley possesses some of the most precious natural resources, fertile land and huge fresh water sources and if used more sustainably, agriculture could become the backbone of the economy in the region. However, today, its natural resources have witnessed severe deterioration that has caused severe setback to the agriculture sector. Once famous for its high quality potatoes, fruit and vegetable, the agriculture sector today is no longer a viable economic sector, causing huge outflow of rural male population as migrant labourers, in search of alternative livelihoods.

Flow of remittances helps most families to cover their very basic needs as most migrants from the valley going to Russia lack proper skills and speak basic Russian ending up in seasonal casual labour. Families with better remittance earnings spend much of their precious resources in improved housing, household goods and other luxury goods, such as cars and televisions, with little or nothing invested in agriculture or any other economic sector.

Migration has huge social impact on communities, especially on young families, where the father is out of home for much of the year, leaving women and children

behind. Divorce among young families is common, leaving most women behind with no access to protecting their basic rights, such as access to property and compensation. Aside from community social organizations created by MSDSP, including women saving groups, there are very few initiatives serving the needs of women.

Acute fuel shortages during and after the war has lead to severe destruction of its natural resources, as people have been forced to cut down the forests, sometimes even their precious fruit trees. Livestock numbers have more than doubled since its privatisation in late 1990s, while fodder production has almost entirely diminished putting huge pressure on its pastures. Natural disasters, such as floods, landslides and mudflow as well as avalanches during harsh winter seasons is common, as a result of continued deterioration of natural resources, especially deforestation and overgrazing.

Despite a whole range of institutional reforms at central level, governance patterns in Rasht have not changed much. Local authorities continue to dominate the socio-economic processes with little participation of communities and their representatives, where even the Self-Governance authorities (Jamoat authorities) work entirely under direct supervision, subordination and directives of local Hukumats. There are a few local NGOs and civil society organisations, but all in their initial stage of development and most are donor driven, with little influence on local authorities or decision-making processes.

Key priorities as identified by both local authorities and communities include:

1. Access to safe drinking and irrigation water;
2. Improved health and education facilities, such as rehabilitation of infrastructure, access to necessary material and equipment and qualified professional staff;
3. Support to agriculture, both livestock and crops, and exploring potentials for fish farming and expansion of beekeeping;
4. Access to long-term and affordable credits along with vocational and technical training would enhance potentials for small and medium enterprises, trade and business as well as processing centres for agricultural products;
5. Improved access roads, especially in remote mountainous areas as well as in energy infrastructure;
6. Addressing natural resources issues, including introducing best agricultural practices and sustainable management and use of natural resources;
7. Addressing natural disasters, mostly caused by poor agriculture practices and deforestation and overgrazing.

There are huge potential for both social and economic development in the region, including precious natural resources and it human resources. Having been left on their own for much of the past 10-12 years, there is immense willingness among communities to better organise themselves into user associations and production, service and credit cooperatives.

In order to address communities' needs, it is strongly recommended to adopt an integrated approach to rural development and avoid responding to individual social or economic needs. This way, economic improvements would help people to effectively

maintain the systems and infrastructure in a sustainable manner. For instance, addressing the need for drinking and irrigation water would have to adopt an Integrated Watershed Management Approach that would also address issues of forestry and pasture rehabilitation as well as disaster risk reduction and prevention as an integrated part of the approach.

With regards to implementation of the programme, especially for SDC, there are not many implementing partners in the Rasht Valley and among the few currently engaged in the valley, MSDSP is the only viable implementing partner, with presence (staff and offices) in each of the 7 districts and with access to substantial expertise available within the AKDN network. Therefore, it is strongly recommended to choose MSDSP as the implementing partner for the future development potentials for SDC.

Socio-economic needs in Rasht are huge and very complex and require a coordinate effort to effectively and efficiently respond to the most urgent needs of the communities. Therefore, effective and efficient coordination among development partners and close collaboration with local authorities (Rayons and Jamoats) is vital. When future development interventions are planned, attention must be paid to bridge the gap between national policies and strategies, local development plans and actual community needs.

Effective coordination between stakeholders (Government and development partners) requires a solid platform for policy dialogue in Rasht, where local authorities, development partners, civil society organisations and representatives of communities can meet regularly, discuss the issues and how best to address those. Effective communication with central level authorities would further enhance stakeholder coordination, where national policies and strategies, local development plans and actual needs of communities can be reconciled.

3. Introduction

In 2011, the SCO Country Director, Mr. Peter Mikula, travelled to Rasht Valley and in 2012, he undertook an assessment mission. Since he has been engaging with several DCC member agencies convincing them it was time development agencies rethink their strategy towards Rasht. Rasht was brought to the attention of development partners at the DCC meetings and several individual meetings, both with Ministers, the DCC Chair and UN Resident Coordinator, conveyed the same message to development partners, raising the urgent need for development agencies to start working in Rasht, especially after several humanitarian agencies withdrew from the valley following the latest conflict in 2010 and never replaced with development agencies.

In late October 2012, the Swiss Cooperation Office (SCO) in Tajikistan assigned this mission to undertake a feasibility study for a possible long-term development intervention in the Rasht Valley. From its start, the SCO made serious attempts to engage all stakeholders in the feasibility study, from Central Government to local authorities, Jamoat and Mahalla representatives as well as communities, as the main drivers of development. These attempts are part of a process to engage all stakeholders in a policy dialogue that is intended to lead to sustainable development processes. The dialogue also includes consultations with other donor agencies and international organizations to ensure effective coordination and possible cooperation between and among development partners. Furthermore, analysis of national policies and strategies and analysis of regional and local development plans would enable future development interventions to effectively and efficiently address communities' needs, while effectively responding to the needs of national policies and local development plans.

The mission was comprised of three experts, a Senior Policy Advisor as Team Leader, a national Consultant as Environmental and Gender Specialist and a SDC staff as Migration, Governance and Civil Society Specialist.

Initially, the mission started in Dushanbe with a briefing meeting with the Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Tajikistan, together with the SCO Director and his Personal assistant, on the purpose and objectives of the mission, who in turn provided full support in formally advising local authorities to fully support the mission during the field trip. Meetings were also held with key international organizations in Dushanbe involved in Rasht, notably the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), German International Cooperation (GIZ), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and with Aga Khan Foundation (AKF). AKF also provided substantial support in terms of logistics and organization of meetings through its implementing partner, Mountain Societies Development Support Programme (MSDSP) with presence in all districts of Rasht.

The mission travelled almost 2000 km throughout the Rasht Valley, visiting all 7 Districts and 15 out 53 Jamoats. Meetings were initially held with District Heads, followed by meetings with Jamoat Heads and in each Jamoat 2-3 representatives of all villages in the Jamoat attended meetings held with communities.

At the end of the three-week long field trip, on 23 November 2012, the mission organized a Stakeholder Roundtable with all local authorities at District and Jamoat levels, civil society representatives, international organizations from Rasht and Dushanbe and with community representatives visited by the mission during the field trip. This event provided the first ever opportunity for all stakeholders to be debriefed jointly with the preliminary findings of the mission, with the aim to validate the findings further. The SCO Director and SDC Disaster Risk Reduction Specialist actively participated in this forum..

A debriefing meeting was held together with the SCO Director and his Personal Assistant with the Deputy Prime Minister upon return to Dushanbe. Moreover, a stakeholder meeting was held at the Swiss Cooperation Office in Dushanbe with all main donor agencies and SCO staff at the end of the fourth week of the mission, to present preliminary findings of the mission for discussion and validation.

It is worth noting that this is the first time such a comprehensive assessment and study has been undertaken by any organisation and would serve as an excellent reference for future development interventions.

4. National Policies and Strategies and Local Development Plans

There are several national policies and strategies that guide Tajikistan's social and economic development. These include:

1. National Development Strategy (NDS) 2005-2015
2. Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS-3)), 2010-2012 (last one)
3. Strategy for Living Standard Improvement 2012-2015 (successor of PRS-3)
4. Concept of Agrarian Policy from 2008
5. Agrarian Reform of the Republic of Tajikistan 2009-2012
6. Food Security Programme for the Period 2015
7. Agriculture Sector Reform programme 2012-2020
8. Five-year Energy programme (2012-2016) efficient use of hydropower
9. Social Development Programme 2013-2020 (expected in 2013).

For the purpose of this document, we will concentrate on two major strategies, namely the National Development Strategy and the Poverty reduction Strategy 2010-2012 and its successor, the Strategy for Living Standard Improvement.

4.1 National Development Strategy (NDS) for the Period 2015: The NDS is considered the major national policy document, guiding Tajikistan's socio-economic development for a decade, 2010-2015. Until 2012, its implementation was undertaken through Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS), three-year implementation strategy. The last PRS was developed in late 2009 for the period 2010-2012 and in 2012 the Government of Tajikistan decided that due to significant reduction in poverty and a series of other priorities, the implementation strategy for the next three years would be called "Strategy for Living Standard Improvement 2013-2015".

According to NDS, Tajikistan has at its disposal real opportunities to accomplish its development and if utilized effectively these opportunities can lay a solid foundation for economic and social development. These opportunities include:

- Large potentials of hydropower resources and fresh water;
- Diverse mineral resources;
- Strong potential for the development of tourism;
- Availability of agricultural raw materials for industrial processing;
- Relatively large areas of undeveloped land suitable for agricultural use;
- Favourable conditions for the cultivation of environmentally sound food products;
- Advantageous strategic geographical position to leverage potentials as a transit country in future regional transport and communication; and
- Availability of a comparatively inexpensive labour force.

However, Tajikistan's economic development is influenced by a number of factors that could have an impact on its development processes. The country is landlocked and fragmented due to its geographic feature, with severe shortage in oil and gas making it depend on external sources. Its domestic market is relatively small and the

political instability in its close neighbourhood, continued war in Afghanistan and repeated unrest and civil conflict in the Kyrgyz Republic, along with deteriorating relationship with Uzbekistan. Tajikistan is prone to natural disasters, given its climatic conditions, coupled with continued deterioration of its environment caused by poor agriculture practices and unsustainable use and management of its natural resources.

Moreover, stable and sustainable economic growth that could eliminate poverty in the country faces with a series of challenges in relation to governance and legislative frameworks that call for serious reform and change.

The NDS, therefore, sets a set of measures and if implemented effectively, they should meet the following criteria¹:

1. Sustainable economic growth accompanied by progressive structural changes that would provide for economic diversification and for active participation of the private sector, based on market-oriented competitive economy.
2. Reforms should go beyond the economic sphere that would allow for creation of an effective (state) management system at central and local levels and with a judicial system that is fair and operates with integrity.
3. Reforms in relation to development of human potential, particularly education, healthcare and social welfare are described by NDS as long-term national priorities. Such reforms should ensure development of true social partnership, based on principles of promoting human rights.
4. Ensure stability in macroeconomics, through commitment towards a balanced fiscal policy, while improving inflation and maintaining stability in foreign currency exchange rate.
5. Institutional reforms are crucial elements in achieving national social and economic goals and objectives. Based on international standards and democratic principles, creation of Private Public Partnership (PPP) and Social Partnership would be vital steps towards sustained achievements in socio-economic development.

NDS prescribes serious improvements in three specific blocks, if socio-economic developments and achieving national strategic goals, are to be sustainable.

1. **Functional Block:** should provide for institutional and functional environment that encompasses public administration reform, macroeconomic development, improvement of the investment climate, private sector development and entrepreneurship and regional cooperation and integration into the global economy.
2. **Production Block:** should provide for physical environment in support of economic growth, encompassing food security and development of agro-industrial complex, development of infrastructure, communication, energy and industry.
3. **Social Block:** should provide for expansion of access to basic social services and address issues related to social development, encompassing health and education system development as well as science, expansion of access to water supply, housing and municipal services, improvement of social welfare system and promotion of gender equality as well as environmental sustainability.

¹ National Development Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan for the Period 2015

In achieving the national goals, strengthening social and political stability, as the basis for economic prosperity and social well-being, in an environment shaped by the supremacy of the principles of market economy, freedom, human dignity and equal opportunities for all, the NDS prescribes three major principles²:

1. *Reform of public administration with a view to creating a national development system in the country, the principal features of which are transparency, accountability and a focus on combating corruption;*
2. *Development of the private sector and attraction of investments, based on the expansion of economic freedoms, strengthening property rights and the rule of law, and development of public-private partnerships;*
3. *Development of human potential aimed primarily at increasing the quantity and quality of social services for the poor and achieving the MDGs, expanding public participation in the development process and strengthening social partnerships.*

Following statement of national strategic goals and its principles, the NDS identifies the following development priorities for the period 215 to be achieved:³

The main priorities with regard to improving the ***public administration system and macroeconomic development*** are:

1. Creation of an effective national development system in accordance with the requirements of a market economy: i) improved public administration system; and ii) creation of a modern professional civil service.
2. Full-scale development of market regulatory mechanisms, including indirect regulatory methods: i) effective management of state finances and improved taxation system; ii) improved macroeconomic planning, forecasting and statistics; and iii) improved monetary policy and financial sector.
3. Development of administrative-territorial governance and formation of a full-fledged local self-government.
4. Reform of the judicial and law enforcement systems in accordance with democratic principles.
5. Diversification of the economy and enhancement of export potential.

The priorities for ***improvement of the investment climate and development of the private sector and entrepreneurship*** are:

6. Reinforcement of legislation to improve the investment and entrepreneurial climate: i) better organization of procedures for regulating the activities of economic entities under all forms of ownership; and ii) expansion of support for businesses.

The priorities with regard to ***regional cooperation and integration into the global economy*** are:

7. Further development of regional cooperation; and
8. Integration into the global partnership system.

² NDS et al

³ NDS et al

4.2 Strategy for Living Standard Improvement (SLSI) 2013-2015 (called Poverty Reduction Strategy [PRS] until 2012): The SLSI and its predecessor PRS serve as the implementation strategy for the NDS. PRS and now renamed SLSI are designed for a period of three years and its progress is regularly monitored by the Government, through the National Development Council (NDC), chaired by the President and through its development partners, the Development Coordination Council (DCC).

The NDC is comprised of key sector ministers, notably economic development and trade, finance, health, education, state investment committee and in the absence of the President, it is chaired by the Prime Minister. The DCC is comprised of 26 bilateral, multilateral and United Nations agencies and its chair rotates on annual basis.

On 6 and 11 December 2012, the Development Forum of Tajikistan, comprised of the NDC and DCC reviewed progress on PRS-3 for the period 2010-2012, and the following lines summarize the review report:

- **With regards to Macro-economics**, Tajikistan withstood the 2008-2009 global downturn better than expected, thanks partly to prudent economic management and partly to timely budget support from several development partners. Remittances in 2009 reduced by 30% from US\$ 2.3 billion in 2008 to US\$ 1.6 billion and international prices were lowered for cotton and aluminium, the two major export items from Tajikistan. However, by 2010, international cotton price rose by almost 100% and remittances, mainly from Russia grew to a record US\$ 3 billion. At the same time, budget support from several DCC members, totalling around US\$ 288 million helped the government maintain public expenditure on health, education and social protection mitigating the impact of crisis on poverty and vulnerability.
 - By 2012, the economy recovered from the 2009 slowdown and outlook for the medium-term is favourable, by GDP growing by 6.5% in 2010, 7.4% in 2011 and 7.5% in 2012, partly thanks to increased remittances. Remittances contributed 45% to GDP growth in 2011 and 46% in the first 9 months of 2012, while services, industry and agriculture were other main contributors to GDP, with 13%, 10.4% and 9.8% respectively. Inflation subsided in 2012 but remains susceptible to higher global, fuel, food and commodity prices.
- **With regards to Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)**, strong growth over the past decade has helped reduce poverty substantially from 47% in 2009 to 39.6% in 2012, according to official statistics, although Tajikistan remain the poorest country in Europe and Central Asia. Tajikistan's progress towards achieving its MDGs remains uneven.
 - According to UNDP 2010 progress report, 13 of 32 MDG target indicators for 2015, or 40% are likely to be achieved; an additional 13 are possible but six target indicators seem to be impossible to be achieved.
 - Access to essential public services and their quality, in particular electric power, health and education require significant improvement.
- **With regards to private sector development**, Tajikistan is expected to become a member of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) by mid 2013 and

the WTO General Council recommended enactment of a series of reforms to Tajikistan on 11 December 2012. Tajikistan's membership of WTO will thus mark a significant step towards establishing a more transparent and predictable trade and foreign investment environment.

- The recently approved Land Code (July 2012) is one of the most important achievements of the ongoing agrarian reform process, providing for Land Use Rights to be lifelong, inheritable, exchangeable and tradable, all essential preconditions for small farms and rural households to make their own production decisions and stimulate private sector development in agriculture.
- The revised Tax Code approved in September 2012 and due for implementation in 2013, will simplify tax administration, making it more efficient, and, indirectly, enhancing incentive for private investment, by reducing the number of taxes from 21 to 10, through consolidation and applying a more efficient approach to Value Added Tax (VAT).
- The Law on Public Private Partnership (PPP) was submitted to the Parliament for approval in August 2012 and due to be approved soon, will offer a viable option to attract investment in key sector, such as energy, infrastructure, transport and potentially in health and education.
- **With regard to energy security, food security and connectivity – three Presidential Priorities for SLSI 2013-2015**, the government has initiated several reforms designed to enhance the country's energy independence, although results remain to-date modest. Areas of improvement include: improved billing and more transparency and accountability of the country's electricity provider – a State Unitary Enterprise – its billing system as well as the use of nationwide energy efficient bulbs. Other plans in energy sector include adoption of a Law on renewable energy sources as well as approval a five-year programme (2012-2016) for more effective use of hydropower resources.
 - Food security, mainly focused on increased production, is a key goal of the ongoing comprehensive agrarian reforms since 2009. The Agriculture Reform Programme for the period 2012-2020, approved by the Government of Tajikistan in August 2012 with its 22-point Action Plan, includes measure aiming to expand farmers' access to inputs, irrigation, and improving management and use of natural resources. However, nutrition and food insecurity remain a challenge and current estimates indicate that the share of inadequate food intake in 2011 ranged from 9% in Khatlon to 24% in GBAO (FAO/WFP 2011) and almost one in three children is chronically malnourished (UNICEF/World Bank 2012).
 - Given Tajikistan's landlocked, mountainous terrain, improving internal and external connectivity remains vital for high rate of growth. According to an Asian Development Bank (ADB) assessment in 2011, pavement on 75% of the country's highways is lost partly or completely and up to 80% requires rehabilitation and extensive repair. However, the Government of Tajikistan, with external support, has made every effort in the past few years to rehabilitate and build anew its roads network, with the priority to connect the centre with its

regions and with the neighbouring countries in the North and in the South⁴.

Objectives and main priorities of the Living Standards Improvement Strategy is: ensuring social and economic development and increasing the middle-class population Its specific objectives are, as stated in the SLSI document from December 2012: “In order to quickly stimulate economic development growth and by this mean to improve the living standards of population within the framework of the National Development Strategy, the Government resolutely aims to: address the issues of sustainable macroeconomic development; improve public administration; promote real economic sectors; diversify production; strengthen its export potential; improve the investment climate; support entrepreneurship; ensure social protection; expand the labour market; and strengthen human resources.

In this context, the Government is planning on further development options and gradually improving the population’s standard of living in terms of energy independence, food security, and infrastructure and communications development.”⁵

Furthermore, the SLSI states that: “As the country’s fundamental strategic paper, the National Development Strategy sets state priorities and common policy directions that lead to sustainable economic development, improved access by the population to available social services, and improvement of their livelihoods.

In the *social sector*, the following actions will be taken: creating new jobs in the country, developing human potential, improving the quality of education, expanding equal access to high-quality health care services, increasing access to drinking water, ensuring environmental protection and sustainable development, and ensuring gender equality.

Involve all participants in the public administration reform process and develop an effective social cooperation mechanism.

Extend the allocation of responsibilities for implementing public services to civil society facilities and NGOs.”⁶

The Tajikistan Development Forum 2012 also reviewed goals and objectives of the planned SLSI 2013-2015 and the DCC made the following observations and recommendations:

- **“Putting People as the Priority”** means increased focus on achieving the MDGs by 2015, especially those for education, health and access to safe drinking water.
- **Strengthening social protection**, especially for the most vulnerable groups of people, through development of a comprehensive social protection strategy as the basis for improving coverage and targeting.

⁴ For the full review of PRS-3 for the period 2010-2012 and proposals for SLSI for the period 2013-2015 refer to “Tajikistan: 2012 Development Forum”, Presentation by Development Coordination Council (draft) – 30 November 2012

⁵ Strategy for Living Standard Improvement (SLSI) 2013-2015, Government of Tajikistan, December 2012

⁶ SLSI et al

- **Expanding access to quality social services**, especially health and education, through comprehensive health financing reform and through curriculum reforms based on gradual transition to competency-based learning.
- Improving the **policy and regulatory framework for migrants and refugees**, through development of vocational and technical training and education to provide migrants with the necessary language, social and technical skills and an adequate pre-departure infrastructure; and establishing funds to leverage remittances, in order to increase investment, create jobs, and, not least important, protect the families and their rights left behind.
- With regards to **planning for and managing risks**, although Tajikistan's economy has performed well in the past three years, it remains vulnerable to several external shocks. These include: potential regional or global economic slowdown with possible decline in remittances; and rising global food and fuel prices; for instance. Therefore, it is important to calculate a true low case scenario (say at 1%) annual average range, to account for both external and internal shocks. Calculations should be based on possible budget deficit, investment, poverty and social spending.
- **Vulnerable to natural disasters** of various kinds, Tajikistan is also the country **most vulnerable to climate change** in Europe and Central Asia. With extremes of climate and weather conditions expected to worsen, building resilience to climate change, as well as proper land use management, need to be priorities in natural disaster risk planning.
- To improve the country's **food security**, the concept and definition of food security needs to be broadened to include, not just increase in domestic production but also enhancing access to food and nutrition through purchasing power and public policy.
- Addressing the winter **energy deficit** needs focus on a few critical but practical short and medium-term measures that also advance long-term energy security. These measures may include: energy efficiency measures at industrial level (TALCO- the Aluminium plant); policies to shift electricity-based heating to other fuels like domestic coal or gas; increased electricity prices, with measures to protect the most vulnerable; and securing contract for some import of power until new generation facilities can be financed to be built.
- With regards to **increased role of the private sector**, eliminate direct (state) lending and increase access to market-based finance; introduce tax exemptions for saving deposits; ensure strengthened deposit insurance system; enhance consumer protection; and an extensive public information campaign that would allow Tajikistan's banks to attract more deposits by serving its customers better.
- **Small farmers** have enormous potential for driving **economic growth** and a particular need for **affordable access to market-based finance and credit**. In addition, the government needs to reduce its influence on production and markets drastically, allowing farmers to grow what they believe is good and market their products where they to.
- Finally, the Government of Tajikistan has demonstrated its commitment to reforms, especially those needed to make Tajikistan an attractive destination for investments. However, in order to achieve this goal, many Laws, Resolutions and policies approved by the Government of Tajikistan in recent

years need to move from paper to practice with specific implementation strategies.⁷

In the course of the Development Forum held on 11 December 2012, the DCC members agreed to work on several Government-led priorities through initiatives that put higher accent on delivering tangible benefits for the population by 2015. These include initiatives on Public Administration and Governance, Private Sector Led Growth, Development of Human Potential, Energy and Food Security, as well as increasing communication links between Tajikistan and the region. Implementation of these initiatives will result in more effective development assistance through closer collaboration between international development organizations and the Government in the coming three years.

4.3 Regional and Local Development Plans

As the Rasht valley is governed directly by the central government, there is no Regional Development Plan for Rasht. The Provincial Governments or Oblasts, usually develop these Regional Development Plans.

In support of implementation of the former Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRS) - last PRS was developed for the period 2010-2012 - and the new SLSI 2013-2015, local District Development Plans (DDPs) are aligned with national development goals and developed in close cooperation with the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade (MEDT) and with technical support of development partners.

Most districts still use the DDPs for the period 2010-2012, aside from Rasht District that has developed its new DDP for 2012-2016. The remaining districts reported that joint work is currently in progress with MEDT to develop new DDPs by early 2013, which would be closely linked and aligned with newly developed SLSI 2013-2015. Drafts of the new DDPs were presented for review to the mission but as work is in progress the mission decided not to include any details in this report.

Overall, the DDPs and PRS have a similar structure and provide detailed overview of socio-economic situation by district, outline its challenges, needs as well as potentials, and finally present a plan of activities for the designated period to implement specific actions/measures in various sectors for the development of the district.

Key priorities in most DDPs are very similar too and include among others:

- Support to agriculture and rehabilitation and expansion of irrigation infrastructure;
- Private sector development, mainly support for establishing medium enterprises and small businesses;
- Infrastructure development, with special focus on energy, such as micro and mini hydropower plants, drinking water with focus to rehabilitate existing systems and develop additional ones, and road infrastructure, including access roads between villages and districts;
- Improvement of schools and healthcare facilities in the social sector as well development of cultural and recreation centres.

⁷ Going Forward – Themes and Policy Messages for 2013-2015

5. Stakeholder Analysis

During the last years of the civil war and soon after, several humanitarian agencies were engaged in the Rasht valley, except United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), who managed to create some joint community and local governance structures at Jamoat level and Mountain Societies Development Support Programme, a project of the Aga Khan Foundation (MSDSP/AKF) moved step by step from humanitarian to development programmes.

However, following the upsurge in conflict in 2010, many humanitarian agencies left the Rasht Valley and some were reduced to a mere representation, aside from MSDSP, who despite severe reduction in programmes, kept all their 7 district offices intact. The departure of these humanitarian organizations did not bring in any development agency and left a vacuum in the region.

Though the situation has changed much since 2010 and full peace and stability prevails all over the Valley, so far no other development agency has moved to the Rasht Valley. Some, like Welthungerhilfe (WHH), former German Agro Action support local NGOs with technical assistance while others like German International Cooperation (GIZ) are planning to work through NGOs (in this case most probably with Mercy Corps) who had been engaged in humanitarian aid in Rasht in the past. UNDP office has been reduced to a single regional manager, sharing an office with World Food Programme (WFP). WFP is still among the most active UN agencies, supporting some vulnerable families and schools with food supplies.

This mission undertook whole range meetings with most stakeholders engaged and/or planning to engage, both in Dushanbe and in Rasht. But for the purpose of this report, the following paragraphs summarize activities of different agencies in the valley.

- 1. Local District Hukumats (Governments) and Jamoats:** Rasht Valley is governed directly by the central government and along with some other areas close to Dushanbe, the official regional name is Districts of Direct Rule (DDR). The region consists of 7 districts. Each district is comprised of several Jamoats. The Jamoat Heads are supposed to represent the interest of their communities vis a vis district government. However, despite the new laws on Local Authorities (2008) and Local Self Governance Authorities (2009), Jamoat Heads work under direct supervision and subordination of the District Heads. Similarly, Jamoat Heads are supposed to be elected by the Jamoat Council, made up of community representatives. However, in practice Jamoat Head candidates are always put forward by District Heads and are rarely rejected by the council. Furthermore, with no fiscal budget, Jamoats play limited role and have little influence on decision-making processes. Each district has a District Development Plan (DDP), often prepared with participation of the Jamoats and in close cooperation with Ministry of Economic Development and Trade of the Republic of Tajikistan. Plans range from 3 to 5 years and are supposed to be financed by the Government of Tajikistan and with the support of its development partners. Aside from Rasht District with an approved DDP for 2012-2016, all other districts are still working with central authorities to finalise their new DDPs. All other districts continue working on some outstanding issues from 2010-2012 that is closely

linked with PRS-3. However, discussions with local authorities revealed that state funding is unlikely to cover much of the needs outlined in the DDPs. District plans are mostly aligned with national policies and strategies, especially with National Development Strategy (NDS) for the period 2015 and Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) for 2010-2012. The new PRS, renamed as "Strategy for Living Standard Improvement " for 2013-2015 is about to be finalized soon.

2. **Mountain Societies Development Support Programme (MSDSP):** MSDSP, a Project of the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF), is the single largest and most active organization in the Rasht valley with offices in all 7 districts. It currently employs almost 90 staff members, spread around the valley and include 18 staff at the Regional Office in Gharm, headed by Regional Manager, 7 District Managers, around 55 Community Facilitators and administrative and technical staff. MSDSP started its activities in Rasht in 1997, following its initial successes in GBAO, especially with community mobilization and requested by the Government of Tajikistan to expand its activities in Rasht and mountainous areas of Khatlon. Along a whole range of activities from agriculture to income generation and infrastructural support to health, water and some women initiatives, MSDSP initially started its community mobilization at the Interest Group (IG) level, moving step by step into Village Organisations (VOs) and have meanwhile established on VO in each of the 480 villages. Over the past few years, MSDSP has supported VOs to establish umbrella organizations at the Jamoat level, Social Union for the Development of Village Organisations (SUDVOs) in all the 46 Jamoats. VOs are officially registered social organizations with Jamoat authorities, while SUDVOs enjoy full legal status at regional and national level and are registered with the Ministry of Justice as legal Public Associations. VOs and SUDVOs are involved in village development plans, saving groups, especially among women as well as in supporting village and Jamoat level activities, supported either by local authorities and/or aid agencies. Another activity initiated in the earlier stages of MSDSP engagement in Rasht included saving and credit system at Village and Jamoat level, allowing communities to maximize the use of their own resources, topped up by additional injection of financial resources from MSDSP. These "Micro Lending Organisations" (MLOs) have meanwhile merged into "Micro Zonal Organisation" (MZO), lending loans to community members without collateral and with recommendations from community representatives. Loans range from TJS 100 to TJS 5,000 and their use also varies from addressing urgent social issues to migration and agriculture and small-scale enterprises. Additional activities by MSDSP include support to development of Agricultural Cooperatives, with special attention to enabling potato growers to multiply seed potato and Water User Associations (WUAs) enabling communities to maintain and sustain newly rehabilitated and existing water systems. With a recent SDC funding – "Quick Disbursement Fund" – MSDSP is currently working on 58 small-scale projects around the valley, including 32 projects on health facilities and 26 on education facilities. Specific income generation projects include support to women saving and credit, beekeeping and support to dairy production. Finally, MSDSP has played a crucial role in the establishment and development of local NGOs, of whom this mission visited two active ones during the feasibility study.

3. **German International Cooperation (GIZ):** GIZ is involved in a whole range of agriculture support projects, notably in Sughd and Khatlon, as part of its cooperation with DFID in Rural Growth Programme (RPG, currently named GREAT). GIZ will not expand its own implementation beyond current geographic areas, but would be sub-contracting existing structures, including NGOs to implement its projects in the Rasht Valley. Its main interest in the Rasht Valley will be support to establishing and developing local community organizations with eventual capacities to self-managed agriculture advisory and machinery (agro-leasing) services. Through such village-based structures, issues related to water catchments as well as developing a mechanism to increase household access to finance through support to Micro Finance Institutions (MFIs), along with training that would enable communities to produce goods maximising locally available resources. Another area of attention for GIZ in Rasht would be tourism development that would also include serving the transit route between Dushanbe and Kyrgyz border.
4. **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP):** UNDP has been in Rasht for over 15 years. Its first phase activities concentrated on the development of Jamoat resource Centers, followed by the development of community saving and credit schemes to enable communities to actively participate in planning and implementation of rehabilitation and development plans. With the new Government of Tajikistan Law on Small Scale Credit from 2004, saving schemes were turned into Micro Lending Funds. UNDP also participated on the World Bank funded Watershed Management pilot programme in Jirgatal and Tojikobod 2008-2010. Other areas of activities include employment creation and support to migrant labourer families as well as funding community projects, including orchard development. Overall, UNDP's interest areas include: employment creation; Energy sector; Flood control and support to potato sub-sector rehabilitation. Conflict prevention and policy dialogue are other areas of interest. In 2012, due to lack of funding UNDP offices in Rasht were reduced a single small office with one area manager. However, with an upcoming joint UN programme, "Human Security Trust Fund" with an approximate budget of US\$ 4.2 million with some SDC contribution, UNDP plans to scale up its office in Gharm (Rasht District) in 2013. The aim of this planned project is to build viable capacities for communities and local governments to implement actual projects, with concentration on health, water and energy.
5. **International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC):** ICRC has an active office in the Rasht Valley since November 2010, following the latest eruption of conflict, working with a specific humanitarian mandate and thus is not a development agency. Its main focus is responding to conflicts and emergency preparedness. ICRC has undertaken an assessment of the local capacities in Rasht to emergency response and is working to build viable capacities in health that includes some rehabilitation and basic equipment and material for health centres at district level. A small water project in one Jamoat (Shule) has also been supported by ICRC as well as 50 micro projects for war-affected families. Furthermore, ICRC supports four branches of the national Red Crescent with emergency preparedness and in attempt to make them more self-reliant, income generating projects, such as beekeeping and poultry have been established in Tavildara and Tojikobod respectively. With additional

activities in health training and building local capacities for emergency response, ICRC is planning to stay in Rasht at least for another two years.

6. **World Food Programme (WFP):** Similar to ICRC, WFP is a humanitarian agency with no development mandate, providing support to food security. It shares an office in Gharm with UNDP and is currently involved in projects such as food aid to vulnerable families, "Food for Education" providing hot meals for school children and tree planting at schools.
7. **Welthungerhilfe/German Agro Action (WHH/GAA) and Local NGO Azal:** WHH was working Rasht up until 2010 in the agriculture sector, providing farming communities a whole range of support from seed to advisory services and creation of small-scale agricultural producers. In 2010, following the last eruption of conflict in Rasht, WHH withdrew from Rasht all together. However, recently, it has started working closely with a local NGO, Azal in environmental issues with an international advisor seconded to Azal. Azal has been engaged in environmental projects for a few years now and is currently concentrating on preserving the last two remaining forest reserves in Tavildara District and in Kamarob of the Rasht District. Additionally, Azal plays an important role as environment advocate and is engaged in training and capacity building of local communities on reforestation, livestock control and further reducing damage to an already fragile pasture. Azal sees public awareness campaigns with special focus on women and children as an important element of changing people's behaviour and attitude to the nature and environment. Regenerating agriculture through access to irrigation water is another area of Azal interest.
8. **Local NGO Rushnoyi:** Rushnoyi was created with help of MSDSP as an environmental NGO and has been active in Rasht District mainly. The organization has created the first Botanic Garden of Rasht occupying some 2.5 hectares land with a huge nursery, providing seedlings and saplings to neighbouring villages. It has also created a model orchard cum pasture management at a slope demonstrating that when protected pastures can become much more productive and gardens and orchards can recover when outside the access of livestock, who eat literally everything up. Moreover, Rushnoyi has created the first ever Artisan Association of Rasht valley, collecting handicraft made of textile, wood and other locally available handicraft. In late 2012, some of Rasht handicraft and special fruit products, such as dried fruit, were exhibited in 6 cities in Italy, with an attempt to attract tourism to the area and to open international markets for Rasht products. The overall objective of Rushnoyi is to revive traditional fruit and non-fruit trees that have almost diminished and had proven to be disease resistant, supporting farming communities to improve productivity through distribution of saplings. In 2013, Rushnoyi plans to develop a small national park at an altitude of over 2000 meter above sea level, proving to communities and local authorities that even land at higher altitudes can be made fertile. Finally, establishment of a small museum cum guesthouse and seminar hall is also planned in the vicinity of the botanic garden for 2013.
9. **Local NGO Nisa:** Nisa is a small woman NGO, created in 2003 with extensive support from MSDSP. Other sources of support include UNICEF, Christensen Fund and OSCE, each with small projects, ranging from mother and child to ecology and from health to natural resources management. Nisa is actively advocating on good diet, maximising the use of traditional meals that are not

only nutritious but also healthy. Moreover, it is searching for a range of traditional health practices, including the use of locally grown natural herbs, and replacing chemical medicine. With 4 permanent staff and some 40 volunteers, the organization is involved in a whole range of advocacy, in form of preparing and distributing leaflets, helping others in organizing seminars and similar activities, mostly related to environmental hygiene, ecology and effects of climate change, among others.

5.1 Stakeholder Meetings

5.1.1 Stakeholder Roundtable in Gharm – 23 November 2012: The mission travelled throughout the Rasht Valley for almost three weeks and at the end of the field trip, a stakeholder roundtable was organized to validate the initial findings of the mission. Participants of the roundtable included:

1. Representative of the Office of Deputy Prime Minister from Dushanbe
2. 7 Local Hukumat Representatives – 4 Chairmen and three Deputy Chairmen
3. 15 Jamoat Chairmen with whom the mission had held separate meetings during the field trip
4. 15 community representatives (MSDSP SUDVO Chairs) from 15 Jamoats visited during the field trip
5. 7 District Manager from MSDSP who had extensively supported the mission with logistics, organizing meetings with local authorities and communities
6. Some 15 representatives of local NGOs and international organizations from Rasht and Dushanbe, including: GIZ, UNDP, MSDSP, AKF, Mercy Corps, OSCE, Azal, Rushnoyi and Nisa
7. SCO Country Director and DRR Specialists as well as NPO were also present at the roundtable.



Purpose of the Roundtable: The SCO in Dushanbe had determined that the feasibility study should engage as many stakeholders as possible, both national and international, with the objective to initiate initial steps for policy dialogue

on Rasht and to allow the feasibility study to deliver a more inclusive perception of the situation. Obviously, the more stakeholders involved in the process, the better and more valid the outcomes.

The mission started in Dushanbe with meetings at the highest level of the Government of Tajikistan, the Deputy Prime Minister for a thorough briefing of the feasibility study and its objectives. The mission further visited the major international organizations in Dushanbe to have a clear picture of who is doing what in Rasht and

what are other stakeholders planning for the future. This would allow future SDC intervention to avoid duplication and ensure effective coordination.

Therefore, having visited the stakeholders mentioned above, the objective of the Stakeholder Roundtable was to validate its preliminary findings and where possible obtain additional information and update.

Outcome of the Stakeholder Roundtable: The roundtable was held at MSDSP Regional Office in Gharm Town to offer a neutral venue for all stakeholders and the mission had prepared a summary draft of preliminary findings as well as PowerPoint presentation in English and Tajik. The presentation, attached in the annex, included:

- Analysis of socio-economic context
- Major issues to be addressed
- Key priorities and
- Conclusions and recommendations

Following the brief presentation, Chairman of Rasht District welcomed all stakeholders as an official host of the roundtable. All Hukumat representatives and two community representatives took the floor and validated the findings, while emphasizing on some key priorities, such as economic development through support to revitalize agriculture and livestock; support to employment creation, maximising the use of locally available resources, from natural mines to natural resources, through development of a viable strategy for processing of agriculture products, trade, business and small enterprises. Furthermore, issues related to energy, infrastructure (roads, irrigation, water, health and education) as well as education and drinking water, were reconfirmed as major issues to be addressed. Several stakeholders brought up sustainable approaches to natural resources management and efficient systems to address natural disasters through integrated approaches.

All participants thanked SDC and the mission for the roundtable and stated that this was the first time that an international organization has brought all stakeholders together. Participants also confirmed that this event should be used as the foundation for future policy dialogue, where government and community representatives come together with national and international aid agencies and agree on common issues as well as common solutions.

The team leader of the mission and SCO Country Director further reiterated the importance of such platforms as a means to further cooperation and coordination between stakeholders and promised continuation of such dialogue.

5.1.2 Stakeholder Meeting with SDC office staff and DCC representatives in Dushanbe – 29 November 2012: Similar to stakeholder roundtable in Gharm, SDC also organized a stakeholder presentation in Dushanbe during the fourth week of the mission, where major UN and non-UN DCC representatives as well as SDC staff from Dushanbe participated. The mission presented an updated version of the Gharm Roundtable presentation and sought comments and feedback from DCC member agencies. Participants appreciated SDC efforts towards an inclusive approach to dialogue in its future Rasht Valley plans and

several comments and feedback from the meeting further enhanced the initial findings.

5.1.3 Final Debriefing Session with Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Tajikistan, Dushanbe – 29 November 2012: Following presentation of the preliminary findings to DCC and SCO staff, the mission, together with SCO Country Director and his Personal Assistant, visited the Deputy Prime Minister to brief him of the preliminary findings of the mission. The Deputy Prime Minister highly appreciated SDC approach to engaging all stakeholders in the process and reported that he was fully briefed by his representative on the Stakeholder roundtable in Gharm. Deputy Prime Minister thanked SCO for its commitment to address Rasht problems with long-term development perspective and stated that this region had been neglected for a long time by development agencies and definitely deserves special attention.

Deputy Prime Minister, taking safety and security as an example, reconfirmed that peace and stability is very much linked to sustainable development and we (government and its implementing partners) must work together to address communities' needs in a sustainable manner that would automatically lead to stability and peace in the region. The region is fully safe and secure right now, stated the Deputy Prime Minister and development interventions would further strengthen the security.

Deputy Prime Minister, taking issues related to governance, reported of a major meeting of all provincial and district authorities with H.E. the President of Tajikistan on 30th November 2012, where issues of governance will be discussed among other major issues. The meeting would also inform local authorities of the urgent need to swiftly implement the newly approved Land Code of the Republic of Tajikistan (July 2012) that provides for Land Use Rights to be lifelong, inheritable, exchangeable, and marketable. Similarly, the 30 November meeting would reiterate the need to fully enforce Resolution #111 of the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan on “Freedom to Farm”.

The Deputy Prime Minister closed the meeting by thanking SDC and its Country Director, Mr. Peter Mikula, especially, for its full support to the ongoing policy dialogue as well as for its upcoming development plans for the Rasht Valley and stated his offices will be looking forward to future cooperation and promised full support for future SDC work in the country.

6. Safety and Security

As mentioned earlier in this document, the Rasht Valley was the centre of some fierce fighting during the civil war. Even when the peace deal was officially sealed by major conflicting parties in 1997 and endorsed in 1998, conflict in Rasht did not cease, as some remnants of the resistance to the central government continued fighting long after 2000. As a result, despite the peace deal at central level, Rasht remained a fragile region and was considered unsafe and insecure by most international agencies. The latest conflict erupted in 2010 and lasted into early 2011, causing severe damage to lives and livelihoods as well as to some degree to infrastructure, even though the conflict was localized between Rasht and Nurobod Districts.

As of summer 2011, full peace and stability was established and in the meantime the Government armed and security forces have been deployed in sort of permanent stations throughout the valley. Most people interviewed during this mission, both local authorities and community representatives, reported of full peace and stability and expressed full support for peace in the valley and for safety and security.

Three missions by SDC during 2011 and 2012 also witnessed the full scale of security in the region, while this mission visited Gharm Town in late 2011 and again in May 2012 and did not find any trace of insecurity.

Peace and security are closely linked to development and present one of the many dimensions of development. Absence of long-term development interventions can result in socio-economic fragility and cause instability and insecurity, with communities forced to search for an alternative option to survive and to improve their lives and livelihoods. In contrary, systematic approaches to development that would guarantee communities prosperity and take them out of poverty and misery, would immensely contribute to more peace and security. Once people realize their interests and lives are at stake, they would ensure not to endanger them and will protect them with all means.

In one village in Nurobod District, our guides told us the villagers might challenge us with hostile reception, as this village witnessed 21 deaths during the last upsurge of conflict in 2010/2011. The initial reception was not hostile, but not friendly either until we started to talk to community representatives and members, letting them know that this mission is here to listen to them and to learn from them what their problems are and how they wish to address them in a sustainable manner, the community opened up. In fact, compared to some other villages visited before, this community meeting lasted much longer, as suddenly people started to take keen interest in long-term development interventions. Normally, we would refuse to take food or drinks in community meetings but in this village we were not allowed to leave before taking some tea with fresh and dried fruits. Both our guides and we were very surprised by the sudden change in people's mood that basically proved that most people would protect their long-term socio-economic interests when they are sure of the benefits.

6.1 Fragility Dimension in Tajikistan and its impact on Rasht valley

Tajikistan is considered a fragile country, given its internal and external socio-economic and political situation as well as the regional context. The country faces several facets of fragility that may have serious impact on its stability and its fragile peace:

- 1. Internal Fragility:** Soon after independence, the country went into one of the bloodiest and devastating civil war (late 1992) that lasted six years until the peace treaty between the different power structures was signed in late 1997 and the war officially came to an end in 1998. However, conflict continued up until 2001-2002, especially in the Rasht Valley, where remnants of the resistance continued fighting the central government. In addition to loss of lives, the brutal war caused severe destruction to the country's infrastructure, both social and economic infrastructure that to-date has not been recovered and rehabilitated fully. It displaced large numbers of people and though many have returned to their places of origin, some are still reluctant to return. While both the government and its development partners have been working hard over the past 10-12 years to address infrastructural and socio-economic issues, often with mixed results, the social fragmentation of the society has not fully recovered and will take many more years, perhaps a new generation to recover. Deep divisions between ethnic groups continue to cause frictions between different groups of people and between different geographic zones. Such fractions can even be witnessed among some intellectuals in Dushanbe and other major cities and the level of distrust is sometime clearly visible within common social and economic environments, even within international offices. Moreover, its landlocked and mountainous terrain and absence of viable gas and oil reserves makes Tajikistan economically vulnerable to external shocks. Its economy has recovered significantly over the past 10 or so years, but is far from being in a good shape and despite substantial reforms at central level, governance and socio-economic conditions outside major cities and provincial centres have not changed much. Finally, its infrastructure requires substantial investment that is far beyond the capacity of current national budgets, and would continue to cause geographic disconnects.
- 2. Social and Economic Fragility:** Tajikistan's economic growth currently depends much on remittances from labour migrants, mainly in the Russian Federation, in addition to foreign aid. In 2011, remittances made up 45% of the GDP (a staggering US\$ 3 billion) and estimated to rise to 46% of GDP in 2012 (first 9 months of 2012). While in short and medium term, remittance is expected to continue at the same pace, in longer-term and especially in view of ongoing global economic and financial crisis, it puts the country at risk of external shocks, especially if Russia is to be affected by the global economic slowdown. Most rural families in Tajikistan heavily rely on remittances, yet social and economic rehabilitation especially in rural areas have not been successfully undertaken as the workforce required for is no longer available. Socially, labour migration has caused severe disruption in the communities. With most young men out in migration, today women, children and elderly inhabit many villages, where women carry the full burden of families as well as work in the agriculture sector. Cases of divorce among young families,

restriction of women in rural areas and absence of viable training and capacity building denies young and educated women to participate in socio-economic spheres of their communities and thus most rural communities lose on a substantial workforce among women.

Absence of mineral oil and gas reserves coupled with continued lack of sufficiently produced domestic food makes Tajikistan depend on import of external supplies. Along with high transport costs rising food and fuel prices in global markets are additional causes of vulnerability in Tajikistan. The cost of transport of imports to Tajikistan is at least 20% higher compared to other Central Asian countries, given its geographic location and road infrastructure as well as severe disruption of its railway network, due to the conflict with Uzbekistan.

3. **External Fragility:** The conflict in Afghanistan continues to worsen and with planned withdrawal of international forces in 2014, the situation is expected to get worse, possibly into an all out civil war, as many different political factions would try to gain control of as much territory as possible. Drug cultivation, production and trade provide substantial income, not only to insurgent groups but also to several other political factions that are currently part of the “national government”. Drug trade has been further enhanced as traders usually see instability as an opportunity and they would continue to support instability so as to find the right political and military alliance that would support them. This may have an impact on Tajikistan’s borders and infiltration by insurgents, heavily supported by drug dealers, would grow rapidly to ensure a secure drug trade corridor through Tajikistan.

The situation in the Kyrgyz Republic is far from stable and continued conflict, coupled with systematic abuses of basic rights of certain ethnic and political groups is likely to rise until a stable government of national reconciliation is put in place. The situation in the Kyrgyz Republic causes additional fragility in Tajikistan, especially in Rasht and Sughd, where Tajikistan shares long borders with the Kyrgyz Republic.

Continued political conflict between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan has already caused severe disruption in its supply of gas and oil that used to be imported from Turkmenistan via Uzbekistan and with the disruption of its railway network, Tajikistan is already forced to much higher prices for commodities imported from outside. Unless the two countries find a viable and feasible solution to the ongoing conflict, the situation will continue to pose additional fragility on Tajikistan.

6.2 Fragility Context in Rasht Valley

There are several dimensions of fragility in the Rasht Valley, especially in the upper five districts of Tojikobod, Jirgatal, Rasht, Tavildara and Nurobod. Roghun and Faizobod districts are affected less by the fragility dimension due to their close links with Dushanbe and the rest of the country, whereby Faizobod is considered to be much better developed than the rest of the Valley.

As a whole, current and possible future fragility contexts will inevitably affect the rest of the valley as well as the country in general. For the purpose of this report, we will

consider a few examples of fragility in Rasht with specific recommendations to address those more effectively.

- 1. Political context in Rasht:** Rasht was the centre of some heaviest conflicts during the civil war, where the Islamic Revival Party and several splitter groups had their base. Despite a national peace treaty among various warring factions in 2008, much of the Rasht Valley remained entrenched in conflict, as several smaller opposition groups refused to accept and sign the peace deal. With the continuing insecurity and sporadic conflict, most international aid agencies and government institutions refrained from travelling and working in Rasht until mid 2000, let alone providing any sustained support and development options, further deteriorating the security and causing discontent among the communities, as being “discriminated”. The latest disruption of the small-scale conflict in 2010, further kept development partners away from Rasht.
- 2. Its remoteness and somewhat isolation makes Rasht fragile:** Over the past 10-12 years, much of socio-economic development interventions have, both by the government and its development partners, concentrated on Khatlon Province. While Sughd has been able to push the government and its development partners to spend a fair share of the development resources there, Rasht had been almost entirely neglected, except for a few humanitarian and development agencies. With the eruption of the latest conflict in Rasht in 2010, even many of the humanitarian agencies left Rasht and they have not been replaced with development agencies. Therefore, over 10 years of neglect in the valley has caused severe disruption in socio-economic activities and much of its infrastructure has worn out, with no serious attempts for rehabilitation and recovery. With much of the rural areas located in remote mountainous terrain, much of the valley is completely isolated. Access roads within and between villages and sometimes even between districts (in case of Tavildara, for instance) have almost entirely worn out and with little or no rehabilitation attempts and severe weather conditions, the majority of the population lives in total isolation, especially during harsh winter months, where heavy snow restricts movement of people severely.
- 3. Socio-economic situation and the impact of labour migration:** With no systematic efforts to address socio-economic needs of the communities, and with continued deterioration of agriculture and disruption of social and economic infrastructure, many young male from the valley were forced to seek alternative means and ways to improve their and their families' lives and livelihoods and as a result forced to migrate, mainly to Russia and with small numbers to other countries in the region. Similarly, a small group of educated and trained youth has become economic migrants within the country, where access to employment and income is better. While remittances has been cited as an important source of income by most families during the field mission, it has also been reported that large scale migration has had both economic and social impacts on the households particularly and on the region generally. Its economic impact is clearly visible in the absence of a viable labour force, especially in the agriculture sector. One government official stated that “...perhaps only 40% of arable land is being cultivated in the region...” a statement reconfirmed both by community representatives and aid agencies. Aside from lack of labour force, there has not been sufficient support to

improve farmers' access to quality input supplies, irrigation water, extension and affordable credits and finance.

Socially, labour migration has left severe impact on the families, disrupting their social fabric, causing the rise of traditional and customary behaviour among (elderly) men and those remained in the rural areas, restricting social and economic activities for women, especially of young families.

4. **Fragile ecosystem:** As mentioned earlier in this report, Rasht Valley possesses some of the most precious natural resources and ecosystem. The valley is rich in water resources, though limited access to irrigated land, but has excellent soil and an extraordinary climate to grow specialized agriculture products, such as high quality potato and fruit and vegetable that used to be exported from Rasht in the Soviet era, not only to other parts of Tajikistan, but also to other countries in the region. Its potential for fish farming and beekeeping is greater than in any other parts of the country and people in all districts have begun to exploit some opportunities, such as honey production that has become common scene throughout the valley. However, due to poor agriculture practices and mismanagement of natural resources, the ecosystem of Rasht is in a very fragile state. Over-grazed pastures, deforestation and worn out infrastructure are common scenes around the valley causing natural disasters and impacting people's lives and livelihoods. Without long-term development interventions and viable approaches to sustainable use and management of natural resources the trend is deemed to continue.

7. Rasht Valley - Demography and Geography



With over 400,000 population, the Rasht Valley lies between GBAO, Sughd, Khatlon and DRS, and borders with Kyrgyz Republic. There is varied geographic conception of the Rasht valley, especially among international organizations. According to the Government of Tajikistan, the Rasht Valley includes 7 districts under Direct Republican Rule (DRR). Districts include Faizobod, Roghun, Nurobod, Rasht, Tavildara, Tojikobod and Jirgatal. However, some international organizations consider only the five upper districts (excluding Faizobod and Roghun) as Rasht Valley. For the purpose of this feasibility study we consider the official geographic and administrative boundaries.

The Rasht Valley is composed of a number of side valleys that have different features and characteristics. Among them, much of Tavildara lies in upper mountains and faces severe winter conditions, where most roads are closed for almost 6 months a year. Other districts have mixed altitudes and climatic conditions, ranging from low land to higher up mountainous landscape. With around 110,000 population and 461,260 square km, Rasht District is the most populated, while Tavildara is considered to be the second largest district in Tajikistan, after Murghob in GBAO, with around 597,384 square km. and with a population of just over 20,000.

In Jirgatal, the majority of population is of Kyrgyz origin (more than 60%). Roghun and Nurobod are already feeling the impact of the Roghun Hydropower Project, where almost 40% of Nurobod and around 15% of Roghun population are to be resettled. There are three towns in the Rasht Valley, namely Faizobod, probably the largest, Gharm and Roghun and with the Roghun resettlement plans Darband is emerging as a new town to host the centre of Nurobod District. Aside from the three towns mentioned above, there are minor differences between the 7 districts and all share common social and economic conditions.

For more demographic and other relevant socio-economic figures, please refer to the special reports on each district!!!

8. Analysis of the Socio-economic Context

Women Focus Group Meeting in Kamarob, Rasht District



8.1 Economy

During the devastating civil war, the Rasht Valley has probably suffered most, with heavy damage to its infrastructure and severe disruption of socio-economic activities. The region is considered to have become more conservative, compared to some other regions of Tajikistan, and especially in remote areas traditional norms and customary beliefs continue to gain influence. The change in the social structures has had an impact on women especially, reducing significantly their involvement in the public sphere, while absence of viable economic infrastructure and systematic approaches to employment creation and income-generation has restricted most rural women in their homes. Due to widespread labour migration of the male population, women have become the backbone of agriculture and increasingly heads of households, yet their rights, entitlements and overall status remain for the most part negligible and require an effective, systematic response.

Most of the Rasht Valley is considered an agrarian economy. However, due to scarcity of arable land, agriculture mostly depends on potato, some cereals, orchards and primarily livestock, given its landscape. Once considered the best producers of high quality potato, fresh fruit and vegetable, not only for Tajikistan, but also for Central Asia region, Rasht agriculture sector has witnessed severe setbacks. Various plant diseases due to absence of plant protection and other relevant farm support

services regularly affect its potato production. Its orchards have been aged and lack of access to finance and credits as well as access irrigation water has damaged orchards that require complete renovation and replacement of the almost 40-year old trees that have become very unproductive. Livestock has grown by over 100% since the 1990s and with diminishing access to sustained fodder and deteriorating pastures, also this sector has become unproductive and unprofitable, though it still offers perhaps the best safety net at difficult times, as a social capital.

Unlike the rest of agriculture sector, beekeeping and honey production has become a lucrative sub-sector literally all over the valley, helping many families to improve their livelihoods. One of the best qualities, Rasht Valley honey has already captured national markets and has the potential to capture much of the regional markets. Yet, in order to enable producers to expand existing opportunities, viable systems and mechanisms are required to ensure improved production, processing, labelling and marketing through establishment of honey producer cooperatives.

With huge amount of fresh water, the valley has also great potentials in developing fish farms with a substantial market in major towns and cities, but would also improve local diets and substitute current dietary regime that is mostly restricted to meat, bread and potato.

The valley has huge water resources, yet the irrigation system is outdated and much of the infrastructure has fallen apart already, responding to only 30-40% of farm needs.

Aside from agriculture, natural mines offer additional economic opportunities. Two major coalmines are currently being exploited in Rasht and Tavildara Districts, offering the badly needed winter fuel and covering part of the total requirements in the region. Other mines include substantial gold reserves in the rivers and two international companies are currently exploiting these mines with no benefit to local people and local government.

Climatic conditions and its nature, coupled with improvements in road infrastructure – newly opened highway connecting Dushanbe to the Kyrgyz Republic – offer great prospects for tourism development. However, to attract tourism in the region, substantial support would be required to develop tourism infrastructure, especially accommodation and catering services.

Last but not least, the region possesses a significant variety of natural herbs and plants that could provide an excellent opportunity for pharmaceutical production, with focus on herbal medicinal products. Most people in the region already make use of some herbs for common treatments.

Some trade and small businesses have emerged over the past few years providing employment to the minority of population, while overall poor agricultural productivity, continued degradation of natural resources, complete absence of small and medium industry, absence of quality supplies and services as well as affordable finance has forced the vast majority of people, especially the younger male population into seasonal labour migration. Where available, access to credit is very limited with average 36% interest rate and only for 12-18 months. Most people, farmers and those

interested in enterprises stated clearly that these limitations make it impossible for them to invest in any economic sector.

Years of continued emergency relief and short-term and shortsighted rehabilitation interventions have left some level of dependence and have failed to build a viable bridge between emergency relief and development.

8.2 Education and Health

Socially, the region can be divided between small urban population, based in the three towns, with close links to cities and other urban areas, including Dushanbe and majority rural population, mostly residing in mountainous areas.

This perhaps also explains the difference in access to social services, especially health and education.

Primary school in Kalai Nav village, Roghun District



While primary schools continue to operate in almost all villages, aside from a few remote villages in each district that share schools between 2-3 villages, most Jamoat centres have one or more middle schools (up to grade 9) and a few Jamoats reported high school (up to grade 11). Each

district centre has one or more high schools (up to grade 11). However, much of the education infrastructure was built in the 1960s and 1970s with little rehabilitation and renovation since. Much of the school infrastructure was built for a population 40-50 years ago and with growing population classes are overcrowded and many schools are forced to run 2-3 classes per day to be able to accommodate all school-attending children.

Furthermore, with growing labour migration and with difficult living conditions, most teachers among younger generation prefer to work in urban areas, denying rural areas of qualified teachers.

There are several colleges in the district centres, training professional technical and medical personnel and Gharm Town, Rasht District centre hosts a small university with several faculties, including a medical one and a teacher-training institute.

Health clinic Ulfatobod village, Nurobod District

While all towns and District centres benefit from some level of medical facilities, much of the rural population has limited access to health facilities, aside from basic medical points based often in people's homes. Each district centre has a small to medium size hospital and one or more public health centres. However, most hospitals lack appropriate equipment and lack of quality medication has been reported as some of the shortcomings. Similarly, lack of sufficient qualified medical staff continues to limit quality services, despite serious attempts by local and national authorities to train as many medical personnel as possible at local and national levels. Like qualified teachers, medical students, once trained, prefer to live and work in larger towns and cities, rather than under harsh conditions in the remote areas.



Lack of access to safe drinking water, especially in remote mountainous areas, has been reported as one of the main drivers of several diseases, especially dysentery and diarrhoea. Many women reported that sometimes they walk up to 5 km to fetch water, either from a nearby river and/or spring but also from municipal water supply system in another village.

8.3 Infrastructure

Education, health and energy infrastructure dates mostly over 40 years in the region and have been badly damaged, partly due the long lasting civil war but also because of lack of any sustainable approach in rehabilitation and absence of a mechanism to maintain the infrastructure.

Access to irrigation and drinking water differs from area to area, but one could conclude that the entire infrastructure of the valley is in dire state and requires urgent attention. Drinking water infrastructure built often 40 years ago – those still functional - for a certain number of population and with growing demand for water, they no longer effectively respond to the needs of a fast growing population. Similarly, electric poles and wiring has fallen apart and villagers struggle to maintain the infrastructure intact. In addition to limited access to electricity, aside from district centres, much of the valley suffers from electricity rationing and receives electricity between 4 and 8 hours from October to March/April.

Despite significant intervention by a number of international organizations to address the basic needs of the communities, there is unfortunately little sign of improved conditions and most people visited reported that due to the characteristic of many projects – short-term, quick-fix, without putting the right institutional arrangements in place – much of the infrastructure continues to deteriorate.

Roads connecting villages with each other and with district centres have also witnessed severe damage and despite efforts by communities and local authorities to maintain the roads somehow, lack of proper machinery and material continues to cause further deterioration, often beyond the capacity of local authorities and communities to repair.



Worse affected by road conditions is Tavildara with its main road connecting the district to other districts in the valley as well as to Khatlon and GBAO. Much of Tavildara's villages are cut off completely from each other and from district centre for almost 6 months during the harsh winter season.

Main road Nurobod to Tavildara

8.4 Natural Resources and Disaster Risks

The Rasht Valley possesses some of the most precious natural resources and ecosystems, which - if used sustainably- offer an immense potential for agriculture growth, industry and tourism development – all for the benefit of livelihoods, improved food security and well-being of the local population and the nation's economy as a whole. However today, the natural resources across the entire Rasht Valley have reached an extensive scale of degradation and require urgent measures for rehabilitation, long-term sustainable management and adaptation to climate change.

Land erosion in Khumdon village, Nurobod District



Soil depletion over the years has been reported as one of the factors behind low agricultural productivity in all the districts across the valley.

Cultivation of arable land has been dominated by monoculture – mainly potato – the practice,

which was inherited from Soviet times, coupled with excessive use of fertilizer and pesticides during those years. Even though livestock breeding has been one of the key livelihood sources across the valley, cultivation of nitrogen-fixing forage crops has been very limited, while overall crop diversification, rotation and multi-cropping – which are urgently required both for soil rehabilitation and crop resilience – are hardly practiced, and potato cultivation with diminishing and unprofitable yields continues year after year. Despite the fact that the use of chemical fertilizer and pesticides has been largely reduced, compared to Soviet times, mainly due to high costs and non-accessibility, the use of organic fertilizer on farmland remains very limited (except for household plots), as dry animal dung continues to be one of the key sources of household energy, mainly consumed for cooking and heating.

Compared to the civil war years, wheat cultivation on slopes (where commonly practiced top-down ploughing of slopes, coupled with shrub and tree removal, contributed to soil erosion and topsoil depletion) has now reduced, as the result of poor harvests and increasing reliance on migrant remittances to purchase imported flour. However, the growing numbers of livestock and continued overgrazing have prevented regeneration of the natural vegetative cover on slopes, and thus land degradation continues across the valley, with signs of landslides and gullies as a common scene.

Despite the scarcity of arable irrigated land, the region has a great potential for rain fed agriculture through rainwater retention practices. Throughout the seven districts, one can observe the remaining old orchard terraces, some established during the Soviet times and others even earlier, which unfortunately have been abandoned now. With the support of a few international and local NGOs, some small-scale rain-fed orchards and agro-forestry activities have been initiated; yet their replication remains so far minimal to have a tangible effect. On the other hand, awareness of rural communities about low-cost soil and water conservation techniques also remains limited due to shortage of or no access to advisory/extension services, which could promote replication of best practices.

Pasture management has been unsustainable, while the growing numbers of livestock and uncontrolled grazing, especially over the past 20 years, have caused severe degradation of precious land resources. Across the seven districts, livestock grazing is based on a common pattern: from September to May, livestock is grazed in nearby pastures, around villages and on harvested farmland – usually communities through a collective effort and daily shifts, take the village herd to nearby pastures in the morning and bring it back in the evening; during the severe winter months, stall-feeding is practiced, using mainly the scarce feed harvested from non-cultivated hayfields; and since the end of May till September, herds (mainly ruminants and non-dairy cattle) are grazed in remote pastures (Ayloks), where they stay during the whole summer season. Pasture rotation is largely not practiced, except for a few small scale initiatives, promoted by local NGOs and one international Project, which again lack sufficient scale, replication and continuity. Thus, livestock is grazed freely for the most part of the year. Additional pressure on pastures is put by large transiting herds from Khatlon, which come annually to the Rasht Valley for seasonal grazing in summer Ayloks, especially in Roghun, Rasht, Tojikobod, Jirghatal and Tavildara.

Forestry has almost disappeared in the entire valley; aside from Tavildara and Kamarob in Rasht district that host the last remaining forest reserves. Years of war, continued lack of access to cooking and heating fuel as well as regular disruption in electricity supply and with no alternative energy source, communities had no choice but to resort to extensive cutting of trees, including their precious fruit trees. Over the past several years the enforcement of forest protection laws has seemingly become stricter, as in all the seven districts, communities reported that illegal tree logging has been closely monitored and strictly fined (up to 1000 Somoni/200 USD) by Leskhoz (Forestry Department). To be able to harvest firewood from Leskhoz area, one has to obtain permits, which cost reportedly between 200-250 Somoni (40-50 USD). However, when asked about the amount and type of wood, allowed for harvesting, people indicated that with the official permit, they could harvest as much as they can (normally one truck) per one entry. In some districts, it has been reported that Leskhoz allows to cut only dry trees and pruning, while in other districts communities reported they cut both dry and live trees. Indeed, trucks full of fresh firewood could often be observed on the roads during the mission. And in Nurobod district, for instance, people indicated they buy firewood, harvested from Tavildara. Since the adoption of “the Law on Coal Mining” in 2010 to ensure national energy security, coal-mining industry has been on the rise, especially in the coal-rich areas of Rasht (Kamarob and Hoit) and Tavildara (Sangvor) districts. Despite the abundance of coal in the region, many people still cannot afford to purchase coal for winter heating, as the market monopoly makes it almost impossible. Subsequently, many continue to cut trees and shrubs where possible, to add to cow dung for cooking and heating.

The region has a great potential for developing alternative sources of renewable energy, such as micro-hydropower plants, solar (and even wind energy in Faizabad district, for instance). However, due to high costs involved and limited availability technology in the market, these alternative sources are currently beyond the reach of people. Similarly, best practices in cook-stove and heater modification through simple and low-cost measures already exist, but so far implemented on a small scale by a few local and international NGOs, while awareness in rural communities about these techniques is still very limited. However, evidence shows that if applied more widely, the simple cook-stove and heater modification brings multiple benefits by significantly reducing the consumption of dung and wood and thus helping to: 1) increase the use of organic manure in agriculture to improve the soil and as a result enhance harvests, 2) reduce the frequency of firewood harvesting in forests, 3) reduce the exposure of women to excessive smoke from cook-stoves.

Climate change impact is an additional impediment, which in absence of long-term sustainable interventions will likely pose serious challenges and threats to economic activities, human welfare and the environment in the Rasht Valley. Climate change projections for Tajikistan suggest frequent occurrence of extreme events, such as droughts, floods and storms, drastic variation in temperature, shifting seasons and changing precipitation as well as continued melting of glaciers and drying up of water resources, among other trends. These will negatively impact farming lands, increase desertification and disrupt further an already fragile ecosystem, posing direct threats to agriculture production and people's livelihoods. The adverse impact of climate change will likely be felt more acutely by farming communities, especially by the most vulnerable groups, such as numerous female-headed households dependent mostly on subsistence agriculture. At the same time, most regions of the country,

including the Rasht Valley, have a weak adaptive capacity to respond effectively to growing threats, and this calls urgently for effective adaptation measures and resilience building.

8.5 Migration

The majority of the Valley's labour migrants work in Russia, only a few of them work in Kyrgyz Republic and Kazakhstan.

Labour migration has had both positive and negative effects. It provided the Tajik migrant workers with an opportunity to acquire new experiences and upgrade their qualifications, gain commercial skills, and their remittances have been crucial to the survival of many households in the Valley.

Community meeting in Mahallai Kala village, Jirgatal



The current labour migration bears not only potential gains, but also risk: on a physical level, health is an important concern in connection with migration, especially as long as labour migrants work in low-skilled jobs. Observation revealed that a lot of migrants come back to the villages with considerable health problems due to poor working conditions in Russia. The condition of some of returnees, as described by their family members poses serious threat, making them become inefficient work force and they become additional burden on their families. Furthermore, a study undertaken in 2010 indicates that most labour migrants do not make any contribution to social welfare and pension schemes, neither in the host country nor in their country of origin and thus are deprived on social and pension benefits. With absence of viable schemes in Tajikistan, this situation poses additional risks for returning migrants.

International labour migration has also had a negative impact on gender issues. Traditionally, considered breadwinners, men migrate with the aim to support the family economically, leaving their wives behind to look after children, elderly and take care of the household and also do the majority of work in agriculture. With some families mostly depending on remittances, if the remittance is not received on time, they face economic hardship, often forced to borrow cash from neighbours and relatives. Moreover, returnees that might bring along diseases put their entire family at risk and in some cases where migrants decide to get married in host country and pass away, families are left behind without any caretaker.

Continued labour migration will further hamper rehabilitation and development processes, draining the best workforce from the area and without systematic approaches to income generation and employment creation, the trend is deemed to continue. Regular flow of remittances has also reduced communities' willingness to work hard and make any attempt to recover agriculture sector and/or invest in other economic sectors. Much of remittances are utilized in improved housing and household goods as well as other luxury items such as cars and televisions.

According to local authorities, over 10% of highly qualified youth have already migrated to Russia, though community representatives estimate the numbers much higher. Some villages reported that as many as 80-90% of its youth has migrated, mainly to Russia and with many being unskilled and with serious limitations in Russian language, there earnings are so meagre that it merely covers the cost of basic needs of their families.

Aside from economic perspectives, there are no social activities for the youth that prevents some youth from returning to their villages of origin.

In view of this, creation of employment with specific focus on processing and marketing of agricultural products as well as servicing the transit rout between Tajikistan and the Kyrgyz Republic and further development of trade and business (Small and Medium Enterprises) are of utmost importance to improve the situation, prevent further migration and attract labour migrants to return home.

8.6 Gender Issues

Remoteness of the region, especially its upland villages, coupled with the impact of the devastating civil war has increased the influence of traditional norms and practices, negatively affecting the lives of women and restricting many of them at home. Among the seven districts of the valley, it has been observed that the role of traditional and customary norms is stronger and has more significance in Nurobod, Rasht, Tojikobod and some parts of Tavildara, where women's status and role in the family as well as participation in community life as well as in the public domain is much more restricted. Yet, the picture in towns and semi-rural areas of the region is different, where local authorities are making every effort to involve qualified female personnel in public offices and ensure regular school attendance by girls.

School attendance by girls has overall improved during the past years, owing to government efforts and strict monitoring. In every visited community of the seven districts women and girls have confirmed that secondary school attendance for girls is mandatory (at least up to grade 9). However, in many cases it has been reported that

many girls are not allowed to study beyond grade 9, and thus remain with incomplete secondary education. At the same time, even those girls who have completed secondary school (grade 11), have very limited opportunity to continue to higher education, mostly due to constraining traditional norms but also due to the lack of financial resources. Very few girls actually manage to continue their studies in provincial colleges or national universities, and thus a huge potential for development of specialists is being lost, although there is a severe shortage of teachers, doctors and nurses in almost every village.

Women in Miandu village, Tavildara District with Jamoat Chief



Wide-scale labour migration of men and their prolonged absence from home has left women with increased responsibilities in the household and also in agriculture, where women have become the main workforce.

Yet, despite the ongoing land reform processes, it has been observed that official land use right ownership by women is very rare in the region, and traditionally land use rights are registered in the name of men (although more and more men live abroad minimum for two years and often longer). Discussions with women have also revealed that their knowledge and awareness of rights related to land tenure and other legal matters remains weak. This is very important, especially in view of the rising divorce rate, which has become a serious social consequence of the labour migration, especially among young couples. Divorces by phone or SMS, - where a husband declares divorce calling from Russia - have been commonly reported in villages. In most cases of divorce, women's entitlement to land and property as well as protection of the rights of women, whose husbands fully abandoned them with children, is limited and often denied due to the absence of a legal marriage registration. Despite increased government efforts to ensure legal marriage registration, in many villages it has been noted that weddings under the traditional religious ceremony (Nekoh) continue to take place. Moreover, in some villages, for instance in Tojikobod, it has been revealed that some women did not even have national passports (the official adult Identification Card).

Labour migration has also created increased health risks both for men and women, associated particularly with sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). In many Jamoats, authorities and medical staff stated that every returning migrant has to undergo a mandatory medical examination. And it has been commonly stated that the incidence of STDs is not high. However, with limited access to testing laboratories and other medical services, especially HIV-tests, the real picture in villages remains unclear and

the risks remain high. In one Jamoat in Tavildara, for example, the staff openly stated that they have not been monitoring the HIV incidence in their area. Overall, in all of the visited districts, women face difficulties in accessing quality medical services, particularly related to maternal health and delivery. Especially in villages, which are remote from district centres, women commonly expressed their grave concern over acute shortage of basic gynaecological equipment required for examinations and delivery.

Despite efforts by local authorities to engage as many women as possible in public offices, there is still visible evidence that real participation of women in the public domain and particularly in decision-making processes is very low. Similarly, at community level women representation in decision-making is weak, and traditionally women are associated with the private/household domain. At the household level, the traditional dynamics has been changing due to labour migration and increasing number of female-headed households, where women have to manage family budgets, and in case of abandonment by husbands, have to be the sole bread-winners of the family.

Nevertheless, within communities the role and status of female-headed households remain low, and as such they continue to be restricted to the private domain without active involvement in community decision-making.

Except for existing social organizations, particularly those created by MSDSP, and a few local gender-focused NGOs, there is very limited effort in developing viable women support groups and associations in the region, as well as activities, focused on capacity-building (especially vocational training) and income generation for women.

8.7 Governance

Rasht Valley is governed directly by the central government and along with some other areas close to Dushanbe; the official regional name is Districts of Direct Rule (DDR). The region consists of 7 districts. Each district is comprised of several Jamoats. The Jamoat Heads are supposed to represent the interest of their communities vis a vis district government. However, despite the new laws on Local Authorities (2008) and Local Self Governance Authorities (2009), Jamoat Heads work under direct supervision and subordination of the District Heads. Furthermore, consistent with the above mentioned Law the Jamoats should have their own budget. In reality the Jamoats do not have any operational budget to date.

It is important to contemplate the meaning of two key terms: “local governance” and “local self- governance” before we discuss governance issues.

The concept of *local self-governance* as it is used today in Tajikistan is enshrined in the 1994 Constitution. Local self-governance occurs below district level at sub-district level, called Jamoats or municipality. Representatives from the villages within a given Jamoat constitute the Jamoat Council, meet in principle twice a year, while representation keeps changing at times. Jamoat chair should be elected by the Council, but in reality he/she is de facto appointed by the District Chair, as District Chair always nominates the candidate.

Observations revealed shortcomings in the leadership of existing self-governance institutions in the Rasht Valley, especially with regards to true representation and

accountability, competencies and ability to collect resources. The same is true about other parts of Tajikistan.

Local self-governance institutions clearly lack the means and the capacities to carry out independently their tasks, transforming the Jamoats in an execution body of directives coming from the district.

In general, the real local self-governance model was observed at the village level with **Mahalla Councils**. Mahalla Council is an informal civil society structure made up of 5-11 respected residents of the mahalla (neighbourhood). Their purpose is to regulate day-to-day issues of the mahalla and they have the most up-to-date information about conditions of families in their respective neighbourhood. Some activities undertaken by mahalla councils include: making lists of socially vulnerable groups of the population, distributing humanitarian aid, etc. Mahalla councils, relying on the respect in which the local population holds them, arrange public sanitation, repair schools and carry out other socially significant work. They also collect money from the population to help families in need and are engaged in arranging social events, such as weddings or funeral, organize *hashars* (joint voluntary work to help people to build houses and other neighbourhood infrastructure). Such forms of voluntary endeavour promote feelings of belonging to the community. The basic principle of participation in Mahalla Councils is permanent residence in the community.

The term “local government” is used to mean the lowest form of formal government representation, which in Tajikistan is at the Rayon (district) level. Heads of district are officially elected⁸ but in practice treated as if appointed by the President and hence become the *de facto* decision maker at the local level. This situation leads to Heads of districts being more accountable to the President and less to the district population. Subsequently, the ability of District Heads depends much more on the personality, rather than on political will, though in general, District Heads normally represent the interests of the central government.

8.8 Civil Society

Good governance implies people participation and a civil society who can both contribute to and keep local government accountable for their actions. The different Public Associations (PAs) or Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) that have been established within the communities have all started their initiatives with a service-delivery focus in mind. One of their main roles is to channel benefits through to their members, offering an effective way to reach out and ensure that vulnerable households have access to support. However, they lack the capacity to negotiate and dialogue with local authorities and lack of financial resources to undertake any significant initiative. Moreover, many are supported heavily by donor agencies and are donor-driven. Often, local authorities treat them as subordinates and any wrong movement can cause their closure.

⁸ The President nominates a “candidate” and the district council normally confirms the chairman by voting. Then the President has the right to dismiss this person from this position. The chairman of the district is also the chairman of the district council.

With absence of viable and strong civil society, there is clear lack of constructive engagement between citizens and the government, an essential ingredient of representative democracy. There are a number of national laws and policies and strategies that provide for citizens to articulate their concerns and for government officials to listen to them. However, implementation of such policies and enforcement of existing laws still remain a challenge. Therefore, for a society to be healthy, a representative democracy needs 1) to be populated by citizens who know their rights and responsibilities or have the right institutions, especially representative civil society organisations; and 2) a form of governance and engagement that includes all citizens' voices.

Observation demonstrated that most Public Associations do not possess clear policies, strategies, long-term objectives, nor programmes and appropriate financial plan (to generate funds, including from among the communities and to allocate budgets to various programs). Mostly they are single-issue organisations with no exit-strategy continuing to undertake the same activities, as funds are made available.

PAs rarely collaborate and exchange with relevant local, regional and national players (e.g. government, private sector, scientific institutions and higher education centres). Seldom have they maintained strategic alliances with other players to achieve organisational goals without selling out on ideas and principles.

Several international organisations have provided support to PAs in building viable capacities of local government institutions and PAs, through their development projects, have introduced participatory approaches, such as development planning facilitation skills to improve engagement between local authorities and civil society.

NGO – Rushnoi: Botanic Garden, Rasht District



However, like in other parts of the country, civil society is not yet matured in the Rasht Valley. Aside from a few local Public Associations (PAs) and Village Organizations (VOs) latter

created by MSDSP, there is no other sign of civil society. MSDSP has also established SUDVOs (Social Union for the Development of Village Organisations) at Jamoat level that are involved in small-scale rural development initiatives, including saving and credit groups. Public Associations in the Valley concentrate on environmental, agriculture and economic issues, though very limited in scale and scope and most are donor driven.

While initial steps towards participatory planning have been taken, there are still some challenges ahead for inclusive development planning processes. Planning and decision making of public policy and financing continues to be highly centralized. Therefore, there is a need to develop a horizontal approach that could allow participation of all stakeholders at all levels in planning processes, reflecting the actual needs of the communities and national policies and strategies. In other words, the planning should be undertaken from the village level up to the Jamoat and district levels and finally moved up to central level. This approach will represent an innovative attitude to decision making and would enrich national policies and strategies reflecting actual needs of the communities.

9. Major Issues to be addressed

Considering the analysis of the current situation, community members and local authorities identified the following issues to be addressed:

1. Access to safe drinking water and sanitation both for households and social centres, especially schools and health facilities.
2. Improved access to health facilities – transfer of medical points from homes to health care facilities, improvement of existing clinics from infrastructure to equipment and quality medication. Many people expressed that often they are not sure of the quality of medicine available due to lack of systematic quality control. Unsafe delivery of babies at home remains a dominant practice, especially in remote villages, endangering the lives of mothers and their newborn children.
3. Access to quality seed (potato and cereal) and other agricultural input supplies – most seed has been degenerated and where aid agencies have been working they have not placed a sustained system to ensure continuation of the activities.
 - a. Most gardens and orchards are 40-50 years old and with no support in extension and absence of plant protection they keep deteriorating, reducing the quality and quantity of yields.
 - b. Livestock situation keeps deteriorating and most people requested sustained support, especially in increased fodder production and veterinary service delivery.
 - c. Beekeeping and fish farming have huge potentials in the region and there are some activities ongoing in this area, but need further support in relation to processing, packaging and marketing.
4. Improved education infrastructure and building of new classrooms due to increased number of pupils as well as support to furniture and educational material.
5. Establishment of small enterprises, especially in processing agricultural products and side products. For instance, annually, thousands of tonnes of raw wool and skin are being dumped underground or sold for next to nothing to external traders. With deteriorating condition of orchards, most people only collect the best fruit from their trees – especially apples. Many believe with some small scale processing and drying centres they could turn much of the wasted apple into juice, jam and similar products. These and many other areas could provide sustainable employment in the region, reduce labour migration and improve economic conditions. Many women reported that they spend significant amount of cash every year buying ready-made clothes, both for men and women and children. Development of small-scale tailoring centres would further enhance employment and save precious cash.
6. Women representatives, when asked about possible long-term solutions to their current hardship and socio-economic conditions, stated that employment generation should be addressed more systematically. Taking agriculture as an example, support should be provided to develop viable mechanisms along the entire value chain, from input supply to production, secured provision of services and finance – access to affordable long-term credits. Women also emphasized that access to better healthcare, especially maternity health, and improved education opportunities would help improve their conditions, while viable women support groups and continuous gender-sensitive public

awareness-raising would contribute significantly to improving their status and empowering them.

7. Infrastructure rehabilitation including irrigation and drainage system, access roads between villages and between them and district and Jamoat centres, bridges that connect villagers and/or villages and energy infrastructure has also been mentioned.
8. There are several major issues to be addressed in relation to Natural Resources Management and Disaster Risk Reduction, particularly:

- Unsustainable use and management of natural resources coupled with poor practices and lack of alternative energy sources, have lead to extensive soil erosion and land degradation, specifically severe pasture degradation and deforestation. Livestock, since its privatisation, has almost doubled while external supply of fodder and forage cultivation has significantly diminished, putting huge pressure on pastures and forests.
- Continued landslides and floods along with avalanches threaten people's lives and livelihoods regularly, while response focuses largely on symptomatic post-disaster recovery and emergency assistance, instead of prevention and risk mitigation.

10. Key Priorities

The following issues summarise what local authorities and communities have stated as their common key priorities:

1. Access to safe drinking and irrigation water to improve people's well-being and livelihoods was identified as the major priority by most stakeholders.
2. Improved health and education infrastructure as well as ensuring sustained access to educational material, basic medical equipment and access to quality medication was identified as key priority in further stages of development. Building viable skills and knowledge along with community-based organisations would be necessary to maintain and sustain the systems.
3. Improvements in the agriculture sector, both livestock and crops (mainly potato, but substantial potential in fishery and beekeeping), including sustained access to extension and veterinary services as well as access to long-term affordable credits. Orchard rehabilitation and development has huge potential and offers farming communities and households alike opportunity to generate additional income and increase employment.
4. Small scale industries and processing centres would offer sustained employment and income generation for both men and women, utilising locally available natural, capital and human resources.
5. Specifically for women, increased focused on capacity building (vocational training/courses especially for nurses, mid-wives, and primary-school teachers –as there is a great shortage of them in all of the districts). However, women have emphasized that such training/courses must be organized in their districts, as younger women are mostly not allowed to travel and stay away from home. Wide-scale and systematic awareness raising for women on their rights, entitlements and leadership potential; Special focus on developing viable women support groups and associations.
6. Systematic approaches to mitigation and prevention of natural disasters would require secure access to alternative energy, especially considering the vast water resources as a significant source for micro hydropower plants.
7. Rehabilitation of access roads and energy infrastructure was considered among other priorities.

11. Conclusions and Recommendations

Despite some geographic and topographic differences, all 7 districts share common problems. Efforts by some aid agencies and the government have concentrated on addressing the basic needs of the communities and there is some visible change in socio-economic conditions of the region. The region has perhaps limited land for agriculture expansion, yet it has the best climatic condition for specific areas of agriculture, especially livestock, orchards, beekeeping and fishery development.

At the same time, over 70 years of centrally planned and managed socio-economic sectors has left a serious level of dependence among people. In some meetings, community members have been repeatedly asking for goods and services to be provided. And with long-term emergency relief operations by some aid agencies, this tendency has grown further.

Therefore, future development plans must start from a comprehensive approach on public awareness that would help communities identify their own resources, capital, human and where possible even financial; identify their own needs and how they wish to address those sustainably, taking control of their own lives, by relying on their own resources rather than expecting government and aid agencies to deliver everything.

The infrastructure, especially in villages, has been severely damaged and due to lack of regular maintenance they keep deteriorating and require significant investment for rehabilitation. However, before addressing infrastructural issues, viable community-based associations and organizations with full capacity to effectively operate and maintain the systems is a must. These may include and can be built upon existing social organizations, especially those put in place by MSDSP. Such association would include:

1. Drinking and irrigation water user associations and energy user associations;
2. Agriculture production and service cooperatives, including credit cooperatives;
3. Small industry and processing cooperatives and trade and business associations;
4. Parent/teacher associations as well as village and Jamoat health committees;
5. Beekeepers and fishery cooperatives.

Capacity building and institution development must be at the heart of any future development programme, for both community organizations and local authorities. Much of the capacity building must concentrate on changing people's views and perception of development, based on self-reliant and sustainable principles.

There is a huge potential in the region for economic development, from natural mines to excellent climatic condition as well as land and water and must be exploited in a sustainable manner to address people's needs, without tapping on future generation's resources. Potential areas for development include:

1. Ecologically sound agriculture production, from honey to fishery, fruit to vegetable and dairy products with a growing market in the cities.

2. A vast fresh water resource in the mountains – natural springs – both for drinking and irrigation water but also rivers in the main and side valleys for hydropower development.
3. Since livestock is the main source of livelihood for much of the Rasht Valley, there is a substantial amount of raw wool and skin that is being dumped annually, or sold at next to nothing to external traders. Development of wool and leather has, therefore, huge potential and could offer the badly needed employment and income generation. Furthermore, development of regional handicraft is another potential that could easily capture national and regional markets, if produced according to international standards and designs.
4. Tourism development has not yet been sought, aside from some initial interventions by a local civil society organization, *Rushnoyi*. This organization has also developed the first botanic garden in Rasht District and is planning to expand its activities in other areas of the region. The newly operational highway between Dushanbe and the Kyrgyz Republic is providing an opportunity to local service providers, food and accommodation along the transit route but could easily be expanded further, offering technical workshops, guesthouses and restaurants, further increasing employment and income.

Serious interventions are required to introduce best agricultural practices and appropriate technologies as well as efficient use of existing energy and alternative energy sources to prevent further degradation of the natural resources and reduce disasters, by addressing their root causes. Furthermore, while challenges and threats posed by climate change seem overwhelmingly complex, many of the solutions are relatively simple and closely linked to sustainable natural resources management and improved rural energy efficiency to restore soils and vegetative cover, to reduce crop failure and prevent/mitigate natural disasters. Crucial measures for improving natural resources management, disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation include:

- Shifting from monoculture to crop diversification, multi-cropping and agro-biodiversity with focus on enhanced fodder cultivation;
- Promoting Joint Pasture and Forest Management approaches with focus on rehabilitation, conservation, rotational use and controlled grazing;
- Practicing sustainable cultivation (minimum or no tillage, cross-slope cultivation, contour-terracing, cover crops, increased organic fertilizer use), including crop rotation to enhance soil fertility;
- Scaling-up appropriate low-cost water conservation technologies, such as rainwater harvesting (at household and farm level), drip irrigation, mulching, etc.;
- Promoting energy efficiency through low-cost and locally available conserving technologies (e.g. cook-stove modification, heat-conserving technologies, renewable energy, etc.) to reduce negative impact on women and children, reduce pressure on forests and ecosystems at large, and allow for animal manure to be used more as fertilizer;
- Introducing alternative (drought-, pest- resilient) crops;
- Improving livestock breeding (through introduction of species, resilient to climate variability and overall focus on reducing the livestock number);
- Promoting integrated pest management;

- Developing nurseries to produce seedlings and saplings with focus on native resilient species.

Most of the above measures have already been introduced in the Rasht Valley over the past years, but so far on a very small scale and need wide-scale, systematic promotion, replication and mechanisms to ensure their continuity. Furthermore, an inventory of existing Sustainable Land Management (SLM) practices in Tajikistan has already been compiled under the Pilot Programme for Climate Resilience⁹ and may offer a number of successful examples, which could be replicated in the Rasht Valley.

Importantly, initial stages of development planning must include elements of natural disaster risk reduction, while sustainable use and management of natural resources must become a cross cutting theme in all future development interventions. Addressing infrastructural needs in water and irrigation, energy, education and health care facilities in the region must be accompanied by thorough environmental assessment and planning to ensure that future investments in infrastructure are not wasted due to potential damage, caused by repeated natural disasters.

Moreover, strengthening technical and institutional capacities, specifically through development of community-based organizations (e.g. community pasture, forestry and water user associations among others), as well as capacity building would be critical to ensure sustainability, continuity and ownership of activities.

Extensive public awareness campaigns among communities and authorities to prevent further natural resources deterioration with focus on interrelation between sustainable land management, disaster risk reduction/prevention and climate change adaptation should be an essential component of future programme activities. A very important step would be raising public awareness, specifically to shift the mindsets and still dominant focus of communities and authorities from restoring the old Soviet system (e.g. agriculture based largely on monoculture and electric pump irrigation systems, which can no longer function under current conditions), and instead seek different approaches, including revival of traditional knowledge and livelihood systems, oriented towards achieving self-sufficiency, self-reliance and resilience to climate change.

In view of the above, to address natural resources management in an integrated manner, it is strongly recommended to adopt Integrated Watershed Management approaches that would entail issues related to both irrigation and drinking water, improved agriculture production as well as forestry, pasture management, increased hydropower potential and disaster risk reduction. Integrated Watershed Management is especially timely in view of the projected climate change impact, including significant fact that the catchment area of the Rasht Valley serves as one of the key watersheds of the country, supplying water resources not only for the irrigated valleys of Khatlon, but also feeding the Nurek Hydropower Reservoir as well as the planned Roghun Hydropower Dam.

⁵ Pilot Program for Climate Resilience – Tajikistan, sustainable Land Management Component: the SLM inventory report is accessible at <http://www.ppcr.tj/?item=9>

Considering the multiple challenges in the region, it is important to address socio-economic development in Rasht Valley in an integrated manner. Discussions with communities, local authorities and some aid agencies revealed that much of the past work had been seriously affected by a disconnect between different needs in the socio-economic spheres.

For instance, applying an Integrated Watershed Management (IWM) approach would address natural resources management in an integrated manner that would entail issues related to both irrigation and drinking water, addressing issues related to forestry and pastures as well as disaster risk reduction. This approach would allow for sustainable access to water and improve health condition but would also enhance productivity in the agriculture sector, allowing communities to maintain social and economic infrastructure.

Moreover, including disaster risk reduction as an integrated part of IWM would not simply reduce ongoing disaster risks but would allow for systematic prevention of disasters, by addressing several roots causes of natural disasters at the same time.

Furthermore, social infrastructure and services can only be maintained and sustained in long-term, when communities have the ability to financially sustain them. Subsequently, any future development of social sectors, from water and sanitation to health and education, must be accompanied with feasible economic development. Development of the private sector thus becomes central to socio-economic development and is closely linked to agriculture sector, while agriculture sector development must be based on principles of sustainable use and management of natural resources that would in medium term reduce and mitigate the impact of and in long term prevent natural disasters. Agriculture sector development would have substantial positive impact on nutrition and food security that would in turn enhance people's health.

Most donors do not directly work with local governments. Instead, they promote the development of community-based institutions, engaged in activities ranging from public awareness to service provision through partnerships with larger NGOs. One result of this has been that the local institutional landscape has been enriched; greater space for citizen action has been created. All over Tajikistan, including in the Rasht Valley, there are arrays of new citizen's organizations, as well as higher-level federations of these organizations. The new social landscape has Village Organisations (VOs), Water Users' Associations (WUA), Community Based Women Saving Groups (CBWSGs), Jamoat Resource Centres (JRCs), Social Union for the Development of Village Organisations (SUDVOs), that bring Jamoat authorities and local organizations on one platform. In Muminabad, for instance, civil society development has gone a step further and a District Development Committee (DDC), created by Caritas funded by SDC, has been created that brings together citizens' and government agencies at district level.

These and other examples show that promoting sustainable development, through good governance practices, require working on both sides of the governance equation – building civil society capacity to engage, i.e. demand and government capacity to respond, i.e. supply. The donor community needs to work more closely with government institutions, enabling them effectively implement their mandate and

functions. By engaging the government, both at central and local levels and allowing ownership and responsibility, transfer of knowledge and know-how and potential for scaling up of models can be facilitated.

While the presence of civil society and NGOs is crucial to represent the interest of their communities, it is also important to avoid creating parallel structures, expecting from NGOs and civil society to undertake functions that would usually be fulfilled by local authorities and/or the private sector.

Therefore, it is strongly recommended to undertake a double track approach in future development processes. The central government develops national policies, strategies and legislative frameworks and Oblast (Province) and Rayon (District) authorities are considered as the implementing arms of the central government. Systematic policy dialogue would help improve the quality of national policies and strategies, while communities will ensure accuracy of data, statistics and information as well as their actual needs that in turn would enhance the quality of regional and local development plans.

So far, everywhere in developing world, governments and civil society organizations have a distorted relationship to each other and lack of trust has badly damaged their relationship. While national and local authorities have the bigger picture, NGOs and civil society organizations work closely with communities at grassroots level. Both have valuable strengths and closer cooperation and coordination, rather than destructive competition could benefit both sides. Building mutual trust and confidence would eventually lead to partnership between government authorities and civil society.

According to the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, the National Strategy on International Labour Migration of Tajik Citizens for 2011-2015 does not contain provisions for the reintegration of Tajik migrants returning and recommends that the State take measures to develop a viable strategy for this purpose. Another shortcoming with current policies and strategies is that most migrant labourers do not participate at any of social benefit schemes, neither in their home country nor in the host country. These include health insurance, pension scheme and social services. Assuming that most migrants would eventually return back home, they would be missing out on these services, especially those affected by illnesses and hardship and may no longer have the capability to work.

Therefore, while specific reintegration mechanisms are required to ensure returning migrants would have the opportunity to effectively reintegrate, the state should also develop specific policies and strategies to ensure migrant labourers are considered ordinary members of labour market and contribute to and benefit from social services schemes. Training, retraining and capacity building would be necessary to offer returning migrants better chances for employment. At the same time, serious attention must be paid to employment creation that would attract migrants to return home and prevent further outflow of the labour force.

In order to capitalize on existing human resources, particularly among women, it is of at most importance to adopt a systematic approach to training and capacity building as well as institution development among women groups.

For instance, much of the field work in the agriculture sector is on women's shoulder, however, with additional skills and knowledge they could play a much more important role along the whole value chain.

Affordable access to finance is as important as skills and capacities, and many women have requested provision of low-interest, long-term credits/loans with special focus on female-headed households.

Similarly, training and capacity building for women in social sector, such as teachers, nurses and midwives would address the severe shortage of skilled and specialized personnel, in health and education sectors particularly.

Improving women's condition would require serious efforts to raise general public awareness on a wide scale, related to women's rights, their leadership potential and vital role for improving social-economic conditions in society. If implemented systematically, this may help to change the mindsets of overly conservative communities, thus empowering women and promoting their participation in the public and economic spheres, without suppression by their families and communities at large.

11.1 Specific Recommendations Towards Addressing Fragility in Rasht

Emergencies, socio-economic crisis and conflicts are often caused by the failure of long-term sustainable development. Continued lack of integrated rural development and neglect to improve people's lives and livelihoods is likely to cause more fragility, while viable development interventions that would allow people to improve their socio-economic conditions would inevitably reduce socio-economic fragility and therewith reduce conflicts.

Therefore, it is strongly recommended that future development programmes are tailored such that they respond effectively to growing socio-economic needs of fragile communities in Rasht, especially those isolated politically, geographically and socially. Integrated approaches to development must, therefore, address both social and economic underdevelopment and enhance people's ability to maximise the use of their resources, natural, capital, human and financial, aiming to help people help themselves.

For instance, an integrated approach to natural resources would allow communities to address natural disasters more systematically and sustainably, while improving their livelihoods. Integrated Watershed Management offers the best option to dealing with drinking and irrigation water and address root causes of natural disasters, especially deforestation and overgrazing.

In relation to political and social isolation, it is crucial to ensure future development programmes bridge the gap and disconnect between central and local governments and the actual needs of the people. The best way to address these disparities and disconnection is the creation of a policy dialogue platform that is essentially

supported by the central government but takes place at regional/local level. Local authorities, initially under directives of central government, should be brought closer to the people they are responsible to and for. Engaging civil society, NGOs and community social organisations as well as Mahalla representatives in such a policy dialogue platform is crucial.

Similarly, the disconnect between national policies and strategies and actual community needs must be bridged in a manner that future development interventions would consider supporting implementation of national policies and strategies in responding to community needs. Viable policy dialogue processes would allow communities to freely express their needs and desires for development, enriching local development plans and influencing national policies and strategies.

The problems and issues in the Rasht Valley are complex and social and economic underdevelopment is closely linked to each other. While it is true that access to quality social service, such as health, education and water and sanitation are vital, they can only be maintained and sustained if communities have the viable capacities and institutions to maintain them, but also financial resources to pay for the services.

Therefore, applying integrated rural development approaches (including social as well as economic sectors) is crucial to ensure future development interventions address Rasht problems in a comprehensive manner. A disconnect between social and economic development might cause failure of one or the other and may not effectively respond to the needs of Rasht people in long-term. This would also ensure maintaining the valuable workforce in the region, avoid further migration and enhance social fabric of the societies that are seriously affected by labour migration.

Areas for development include, among others, have been described in detail, in other parts of this report.

PART II

RASHT VALLEY – DISTRICTS OVERVIEW



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1. Introduction

This document follows Part-I of the Rasht Feasibility Study Main Report, Part – I. While Part – I offer broader overview of the Rasht Valley; this report provides detailed and specific information on each individual district. The report provides data and statistics on demography and typography that has been provided by local authorities and the author does not guarantee the accuracy of the data. However, it offer a very good understanding of the social and economic sectors as well as on population, while the maps provide a clear picture of the geography of each district.

The pattern of the report, however, is similar to the main report analysing socio-economic context of each district followed by major issues to be addressed and key priorities as expressed by local authorities and communities and closes with conclusions and recommendations.

The purpose of this report is to allow users/readers within SDC, the wider development partners as well as government agencies to have a clear picture of the issues in all 7 districts as well as priorities and address those more effectively.

Moreover, the report makes specific reference to the stakeholders met and areas visited by the mission.

Therefore, it is hoped that this report would present a solid foundation for decision-making processes during the planning process of future development interventions.

2. Jirgatal District



1. Introduction

Demography and Topography

Population:	62,000 of whom 60% are Kyrgyz ethnic group, 12,000 households
No. of Jamoats & Villages:	10, with 49 villages
Agriculture Land:	161.500 hectare of which arable irrigated 4,350 hectare, rain fed 1700 hectare, pastures 94,000 hectare, forests and shrubs 830 hectare, orchards 436 hectare, fodder plantation 200 ha; potato, cereals, vegetables and fruits
Main crops:	
Livestock:	28,000 cattle, 135,000 sheep and goats, 830 yaks (state breeding farm)
Farms:	1,180 family and individual farms, 13 collective dehkan farms, 4 state farms (seed breeding, nursery and yak breeding), Presidential plots – 1450 ha
Education:	55 schools of which 6 secondary (9 th grade), total 15,700 students; 3 colleges training medical, technical and teacher training
Health:	6 hospitals, 1 polyclinic, 46 village-based medical points

2. Stakeholders – meetings

Meetings were held with District Governor, Executive Officer of District, three Jamoat Chiefs and three community meetings 2-3 representatives from each village, including women, the only district joint men and women meetings were held. Jamoats visited include: Muksu, Surkhob and Yangi Shahr; villages visited include: Sari Kinja, Khush Aghba and Joibosh. MSDSP District Manager organized the meetings and accompanied the mission throughout visits.

3. Situation Analysis

Jirgatal's economy is agrarian based and people derive their livelihoods from agriculture and livestock. Main crop in the district is potato, though access to quality seed and fertiliser continues to deteriorate and with lack of access to finance and credits, farmers complain about reduced crops/yields as well as quality of products. Usual credit rates, even from Micro Finance Institutions (MFIs) are around 36% annually making it impossible for most people to access credits. It is worth mentioning that Jirgatal used to produce some of the best seed potatoes in the region. Orchards represent second livelihood option for the population and the area used to produce some of the best apples in the region. However, continued plant diseases, aged and worn out gardens and orchards and lack of access to extension have caused severe damage to this sub-sector.

Livestock represents both social and livelihood capital, yet with growing number of livestock, both cattle and small ruminants, and with reduced access to fodder and deteriorating pastures as well as access to veterinary services, productivity and profitability has declined sharply over the past years. While potato is cultivated on 4000-hectare land, cereals cover only 1000 hectare, and most families have to purchase their cereal needs from the market, often barter with fruits and potatoes.

Agriculture machinery in the area dates back 30-40 years and much has disappeared already and/or dysfunctional. Irrigation systems have not been maintained and lack of sufficient water, especially when needed, causes further reduction in yields. Rain fed crops depend much on climatic conditions and snowfall and seasonal precipitation.

There seem to be sufficient agricultural land available in the district. However, continued degradation of natural resources, absence of quality supplies and services as well as affordable finance, contributes to further migration.

Though remittances provide some guarantee for survival to almost all households, it further reduces the labour force making it difficult for communities to undertake any rehabilitation and recovery initiative. Regular flow of remittances has reduced communities' willingness to work hard and make any attempt to recover agriculture sector and/or invest in other economic sectors. Much of the remittance is utilized in improving housing and acquiring household goods as well as other luxury items such as cars and televisions.

Acute lack of access to employment has also forced part of the labour force to external and internal migration, especially in more lucrative agricultural and economic areas, such as Rasht, Tojikobod and other districts. Better-off farms for seasonal labour hire many labourers, especially during cultivation and harvesting.

Though there are sufficient medical centres and village based medical points, there seem to be serious shortage of qualified medical staff, especially doctors and nurses. Many village-based medical points are based in households and lack even the minimum public facility. Most health centres are poorly equipped and lack of medication makes it difficult for available medical staff to provide required services.

In order to tackle shortage of qualified medical staff, the local government enrolls 35-40 students annually in the district medical college where students attend a three-year medical training programme. Similarly, some students study in Dushanbe though their return to the district remains questionable. In order to attract professional doctors from Dushanbe and other cities, the district government allocates land for housing, agriculture, access to micro finance and similar facilities, enabling external professional staff to resettle to the area and work with the communities. Among diseases that had previously been eradicated, Tuberculosis seems to have resurfaced and the district authorities reported some 30 cases, often related to poverty and severe lack of nutritious food.

According to local authorities, almost 80% of the district budget is spent on education sector. With around 15,000 students and availability of 1000 teachers, attendance by both girls and boys has improved significantly. Most girls attend at least middle school up to grade 9. Of the 55 schools, 22 are currently entirely Kyrgyz where Tajik language is taught as a second language. However, the District Governor reported that according to recently approved Law of the Government of Tajikistan, all Kyrgyz schools would be turned into Tajik, where Kyrgyz language would be taught as a secondary language to "...allow Kyrgyz communities to integrate in the society and have access to governmental jobs..." This, in our view represents diversion of a well-established education system that respects ethnicities and rights to education in their native language. Considering shortage of teachers, especially in professional areas, some district authorities teach at schools during Saturdays as part time teachers.

Annually, some 20 students are enrolled in the teacher training college at the district center with the attempt to further address shortage of teachers.

Most schools were built 30-40 years ago and the infrastructure is falling apart and requires serious rehabilitation and renovation. Similarly, in view of population growth and increased demand, number of classrooms is limited in each school causing over-crowded classrooms and making it difficult for teachers to conduct lessons as required. Some pupils walk often up to 5 km to the next school and during winter season many miss their education, due to weather conditions.

Like all other areas of Rasht, Jirgatal is rich in water resources, both drinking and irrigation. However, access to both drinking and irrigation water is limited in the villages, due to deteriorated and dilapidated infrastructure. Most water infrastructure was built 30-40 years ago and lack of repair and maintenance has caused severe damage to the sector. Small-scale water supply projects implemented during the last 8-10 years have failed to establish necessary systems and mechanisms so that communities could effectively and efficiently maintain the infrastructure. Lack of access to safe drinking water – many households fetch their water from river, canals and similar sources and women and children reportedly walk up to 3 km to fetch water - has a visible impact of people's health and common water-born diseases, such as dysentery, kidney and skin diseases are on the rise. Similarly, lack of hygienic sanitation system – villagers use traditional pit latrines – and irregular hygiene maintenance affect general household and community environment as well as drinking water.

In addition to continued deterioration of the infrastructure, much of the irrigation and drainage system is regularly damaged by natural disasters, especially avalanches,

mudslides and floods. These disasters also leave devastating impact on people's houses, orchards, agriculture land as well as access roads.

Absence of regular maintenance to infrastructures, especially access roads and bridges has reduced people's mobility both among villages and between villages and district centre. In Sari Kinja village, for instance, a bridge across the river, connecting the communities, destroyed by extreme floods some 5 years ago, separating relatives and members of some families from each other. Where members of families visit each other and/or people wanting to attend health clinic, they must travel 150 km and pay around TJS 100 for a return trip.

Energy is very limited in the district, especially during spring and winter, where communities are provided electricity for only a few hours a day. During this mission's visit, many Jamoats had access to electricity 3-4 hours in the morning and 3-4 hours in the evening, but both government officials and communities confirmed that as of December electricity supply is reduced to 2-3 hours a day. Where people have access to electricity, infrastructure, electric poles, lines and Transmission Unit systems have been aged and damaged, sometimes beyond repair. Lack of access to electricity also impacts the environment, where villagers use all types of alternative energy sources for cooking and heating, from cow dung to cutting of trees and shrubs and the very little forestry that has survived in the area. Only few better-off families afford locally produced and some imported coal for heating during the winter seasons.

Absence of a viable mechanism for sustainable use and management of natural resources has caused systematic degradation of land, water, pastures and forestry. Monoculture, accompanied by excessive use of fertilizer and chemicals in the past, especially where households depend on potato cultivation for survival – as opposed to cotton in the South – has caused severe damage to soil. With absence of extension services and best practices farming communities continue the same cultivation pattern year after year. Most villagers reported that while irrigation water may be secured by around 40-50%, it is drinking water supply that continues to be a major issue.

With absence of fodder production at village level and access to industrial animal feed, and growing numbers of livestock, the pressure on pastures is immense and there are clear signs of destruction and deep scale degradation. Uncontrolled and miss-managed grazing systems and lack of absence to major seasonal pastures – access roads, high altitudes – have additional impact of the pastures especially and on the environment in general.

As a result natural disasters are on the rise causing damage, not only to infrastructure, but also to people's lives and livelihoods. Both government officials and communities reported that recent floods, avalanches and mudslides have cause severe damage to agricultural land, houses, access roads as well as water supply and orchards.

Aside from some trade and small businesses in district centre, private sector is almost non-existent. Despite its potentials, especially in agricultural sector, absence of affordable finance and credit makes it impossible for many to engage in small and medium enterprises. For most people, barter is the common base of trade, where especially potatoes and some apple is bartered for some very essential household supplies, such as wheat flour, sugar and cooking oil. In some cases, where people have extra surplus, they even afford to barter their agriculture products for fuel. Lack

of energy and fuel is a major barrier for private sector development, especially for processing and small industrial enterprises. Fuel costs have risen by almost 100% over the past year and most people cover their basic fuel needs from Kyrgyzstan, where locals are allowed to bring petrol and diesel at almost 50% cheaper.

Local government officials and community representatives estimate the rate of migrant labourers from the region differently. While government data estimates labour migration to Russia at around 10% of the workforce population, community representatives have reported much higher numbers. In some villages, people report 80-90% of youth migrates to Russia soon after they finish high school. Minimum one male member from each household works in Russia and in some cases there are more than two members reported as migrant labourers. Most people report that majority of the migrants return back home for a short visit, especially those engaged in seasonal work. Some also reported that individual family members do not return for as long as 3 years, in most cases, leaving their wives and children behind.

The scale of migration has forced elderly and women to take on all social and economic activities. In some cases, migrants remain in the host country forever, divorcing their wives, while in other cases, most women report that "...we are all married but without husbands..."

While migration has immensely contributed to households' economic well-being it has also disrupted the social fabric of traditional communities, where divorce rate is on the rise, especially among the young families.

As a result of the impact of the civil war and continued lack of attention to the valley as a whole, traditional norms and customs have become common practice. Most marriages are not recorded/registered legally and are carried out in traditional way with the help of religious leaders. In some cases, it was found that young women do not even have identification (passport). These issues further deteriorate the condition of women, depriving them of their rights to claim any economic compensation support, especially for those left with children.

Traditionally, men are considered Heads of Families and thus land and property is always registered in their names. However, where male heads of households are no longer alive, women can register land and property in their name – as Head of the Family. There are several other issues related to women and their condition. These include:

- Most girls in Jirgatal complete their secondary education, however, lack of employment and income generation initiative forces them to stay home and most become housewives. Yet, local authorities are making every attempt to include women in public work, including in leadership positions. In two Jamoats, Heads of Jamoat authority and in some position within the District government women have been appointed.
- As part of Mountain Societies Development Support Programme (MSDSP) effort to create and develop social organizations, all Village Organisations (VOs) have male and female members, and most deputy heads of VOs are women.
- Under MSDSP programme, a number of community saving and credit groups have been established with special focus on women, laying the foundation for medium to long term community development initiatives. However, these

initiatives are currently limited to supporting subsistence social and economic needs of women, rather than responding to their long-term needs.

- Lack of systematic approaches to income generation, including technical and vocational training, further reduces women chance to actively engage in economic activities.
- With limited access to hospitals and health care facilities, most women face additional challenges. For instance, most pregnant women in remote villages deliver at home under unsafe and unhygienic conditions, causing increased infant mortality and putting the lives of mothers at risk.

Despite a whole range of new Laws, Rules and Regulations at Central level, patterns of governance have not changed much in this region and local authorities still dominate decision-making processes, including agriculture planning and targeting. District budgets are often limited to covering running costs and salaries, leaving little for socio-economic development activities.

4. Major Issues to be addressed

Considering the analysis of the current situation, community members and local authorities identified the following issues to be addressed:

1. Access to safe drinking water and sanitation both for households and social centres, especially schools and health facilities.
2. Improved access to health facilities – transfer of medical points from homes to health care facilities, improvement of existing clinics from infrastructure to equipment and quality medication. Many people expressed that often they are not sure of the quality of medicine available in the market due to lack of systematic quality control.
3. Access to quality seed (potato and cereal) and other agricultural input supplies – most seed has been degenerated and where aid agencies have been working have not placed a sustained system in place to ensure continuation of the activities.
 - a. Most gardens and orchards are 40-50 years old with no support in extension and absence of plant protection they keep deteriorating, reducing the quality and quantity of yields. Therefore, renewing gardens and providing extension support to orchards would lead to improved livelihoods and increased income.
 - b. Livestock situation keeps deteriorating and most people requested sustained support, especially in increased fodder production and veterinary service delivery.
 - c. Beekeeping and fish farms have huge potentials in this area and there are some activities ongoing in this area, though very limited.
4. Improved education infrastructure and building of new classrooms due to increased number of pupils as well as support to furniture and educational material.
5. Establishment of small enterprises, especially in processing agricultural and products and side products. For instance, annually, thousands of tonnes of raw wool and skin are being dumped underground and sold for next to nothing to Kyrgyz traders. With deteriorating condition of orchards, most people only collect the best fruit from their trees – especially apples. Many believed with some small scale processing and drying centres they could turn much of the

wasted apple into juice, jam and similar products. These and many other areas could provide sustainable employment in the region, reduce labour migration and improve economic conditions. Many women reported that they spend significant amount of cash every year buying ready-made clothes, both for men and women and children. Development of small-scale milk processing and dairy centres would further enhance employment and improve nutritional conditions of the communities. Establishment of small scale tailoring centres would save them much of their precious cash.

6. Infrastructure rehabilitation including irrigation and drainage system, access roads between villages and between them and district and Jamoat centres, bridges that connect villagers and/or villages and energy infrastructure has also been mentioned.

5. Key Priorities

Following detailed discussions with stakeholders, the mission requested participants of meetings to identify three to four major priorities that would need to be addressed in the initial stages of the planned intervention. These priorities include:

- a. Literally all stakeholders identified Drinking Water supply as the top priority.
- b. Improved access to quality education and health facilities.
- c. Support to rehabilitation of agriculture sector (both livestock and crops).
- d. Income generation and employment creation through development of small-scale enterprises – drying and processing of agriculture products. This should be accompanied by specifically designed technical and vocational training.
- e. Improved access roads and bridges.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

Since the end of the civil war, there have been limited development interventions in this district. Many emergency relief programmes have ceased to operate without being replaced by development interventions. While much of the emergency relief interventions might have saved lives at the time, they have not addressed any of the long-term needs of the communities and have failed to bridge emergency and development.

Therefore, it is strongly recommended that any future intervention concentrate on medium to long-term development interventions, addressing people's needs sustainably. Even short-term quick disbursement projects must ensure bridging the gap between urgent needs of the communities and development perspectives.

Jirgatal is primarily an agrarian area and lives and livelihoods of most people depend directly on agriculture and livestock. Absence of sustained intervention in agriculture sector has forced most of the workforce to labour migration, further reducing opportunities for rehabilitation and recovery.

Therefore, agriculture recovery and development must be based on the principle of creating employment through improved productivity and profitability that would

attract migrant labourers to return back home. Agriculture sector development must be based on sustainable use and management of natural resources, especially land and water, while rehabilitation of pastures and sustained access to services, such as extension, veterinary and access to markets are vital elements of sector growth and development. Economic development of the region in general and agriculture development especially must be private sector led, where local authorities must cease to dominate decision making in production and marketing and dictate cropping patterns, based on principles of the Resolution #111 of the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan on "Freedom to Farm". Specific attention must be paid to develop the seed sector, where farmers with support of the private sector and research institutions can own seed development and production processes, ensuring sustained access to seed, especially potato and cereals, to domestically produced quality seeds.

Orchards and home-based gardens have aged and become mostly unproductive and access to extension and plant protection has almost entirely ceased to be available. Therefore, there is an urgent need to renew the gardens and orchards that have for many years provided sustained income to farming communities through sale of their well-known fruits, especially apples.

Over the years, through privatisation of livestock, the number of livestock has almost doubled, while access to fodder has been reduced significantly and veterinary services, especially certified quality veterinary medicine is non-existent. Livestock represents the second livelihood base for all mountain societies and play a crucial role as a social capital – a sort of saving used for special events, such as funerals, marriages as well as in emergency situations, where in latter case people sell their livestock to cover their emergency needs.

Therefore, sustained development of livestock that is productive and profitable would further improve people's income and livelihoods and must be addressed. Specific attention must be paid in pure breeding, reducing number of livestock, increasing fodder production and ensuring sustained provision of private sector-led veterinary services. Furthermore, there is huge potential for poultry breeding (chicken and turkey) and further development of beekeeping. There is already some honey being produced in the region, however lack of certification and standardization as well as access to markets forces many producers to sell their products to middlemen at lowest prices.

Access to safe drinking water is a huge problem in this district, while significant sources of clean drinking water are available in the mountains, where snow and glaciers feed natural springs. Much of the Soviet era water infrastructure has either dilapidated due to lack of repair and maintenance, or has been damaged by natural disasters, especially avalanches, mudslides and floods. Lack of safe drinking water is being considered as one of the main factors towards increased infectious diseases. Most villagers, especially women and children spend much of their precious time to fetch water from as far as 5 km distances.

Therefore, rehabilitation and renovation of drinking water supply becomes one of the top priorities that would improve people's health and subsequently contribute to improved human capital.

Both local authorities and community representatives confirm that there are sufficient numbers of health care facilities in the district. These include small hospitals, clinics

and village-based medical points. However, many of the medical points are based in people's houses. Furthermore, many of the health centres lack proper and appropriate equipment and most necessary medication. Pharmacies are almost non-existent except in the district centre and lack of well-qualified specialists, doctors, midwives and nurses is another concern.

Therefore, it is strongly recommended to address the following issues:

- Rehabilitation and reconstruction of existing medical facilities and building medical points in villages where such points are based in people's homes.
- Provision of basic medical equipment and development of a self-sustained mechanism for quality medication supply.
- Systematic approach to training and capacity building of medical staff.

Despite reported increase in school attendance both by girls and boys, the education system is in desperate need of reform. Even though almost 80% of district budget is spent on education, one official stated that current education system is no longer meeting today's requirements and would need a comprehensive overhaul. School supplies, furniture and deteriorating infrastructure are among major problems reported, along with lack of qualified teachers.

Therefore, while reforming the education system may be beyond the capacity of any development programme, serious attention is required to address infrastructural needs, sustained provision of education material and teacher training.

Natural resources of the district have continued to deteriorate. Water logging, gully erosion, overgrazing, pasture degradation and deforestation are common and visible in the area. Accompanied by poor agriculture and livestock practices, these are sources of serious natural disasters threatening people's lives and livelihoods. Despite improved mining of natural coal in the region, most people cannot afford to access coal for winter heating, as the market monopoly makes it almost impossible. Subsequently, many continue to cut trees, bushes and shrubs to add to cow dung for cooking and heating.

In view of this, serious interventions are required to introduce best agricultural practices and alternative technologies as well as efficient use and alternative energy sources to prevent further degradation of the natural resources that would have serious consequences on the environment. Specific attention must be paid to prevent further degradation and reduce natural disasters, by addressing their root causes. Initial stages of the development intervention must include elements of natural disaster risk reduction, while sustainable use and management of natural resources must become a cross cutting theme in all future development interventions.

Furthermore, addressing infrastructural needs in water and irrigation, energy, education and health care facilities, in the region must be accompanied by thorough environmental assessment and planning that would ensure future infrastructures are not affected by natural disasters.

Absence of employment and income generation has forced many to migrate. Private sector is in its very initial stage and is engaged mainly in trade and small businesses. Therefore, it is strongly recommended to maximize the use of locally produced goods through small scale processing and packaging systems and improved access to regional and national markets. In line with recently approved national laws, policies and strategies, private sector development must be addressed seriously, if people are

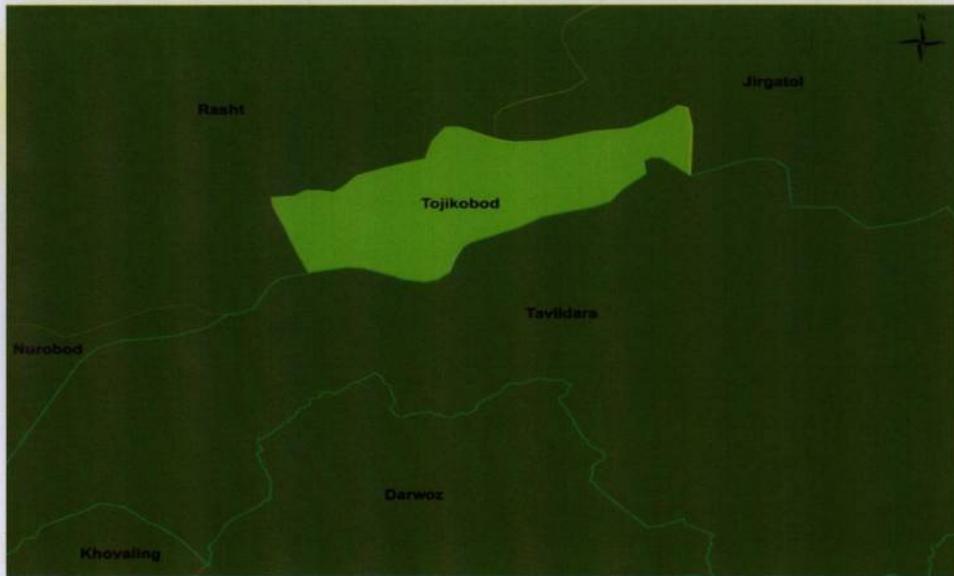
to improve their social and economic conditions and prevent further outflow of labour migrants.

Preparing for a community meeting in Kinja village, Jirgatal



Tourism development has huge potential in this area, particularly for Alpinists. The area has a number of hot springs, glaciers, hunting sources as well as a revitalized local handicraft. One local NGO is already working on development of a botanical garden in the Rasht District but has also created the Association of Rasht Valley handicraft artisans. According to local authorities, in 2012, some 200 tourists visited Jirgatal despite the unrest in Gorno-Badakhshan. Furthermore, the completion of the new highway connecting Dushanbe to Rasht and further to Aloi Valley of Kyrgyz Republic with access to Farghana Valley would attract more tourists and offer income generation opportunities to local communities in catering and technical workshops serving the transit route.

2. Tojikobod District



1. Introduction

Demography and Topography

Population:	more than 39,000, 100% are Tajiks, 5800 households;
No. of Jamoats & Villages:	5, with 45 villages
Agriculture Land:	73.500 hectares of which arable (irrigated-3500 ha, cultivated rain fed- 1800 ha), pastures - 36,000 ha, forests and shrubs - 2131 ha, orchards - 840 ha, fodder plantations – 1220 ha, other land – 26000 ha
Main crops:	potato, cereals, vegetables and fruits
Livestock:	17, 500 cattle, 51,320 sheep and goats; 32,250 poultry;
Farms:	407 family/individual farms and collective dehkan farms (32, 280 ha), 4 state farms (2 seed and 2 livestock breeding – total 331 ha)
Education:	Presidential plots – 450 ha 41 schools of which 16 primary and secondary (up to 9 th grade) and 25 high schools (up to 11 th grade), total 10,500 students; 2 colleges training medical, technical professionals
Health:	1 central hospitals, 4 sub-district (Jamoat-based) hospitals, 1 polyclinic (Public Health Centre) and 35 village-based medical points

2. Stakeholders – meetings

Meetings were held with District Governor, Head of Economic Department of District, three Jamoat Chiefs and three community meetings 2-3 representatives from each village. Separate meetings were held with men and women, considering the social structures. Jamoats visited include: Kalai Labi Ob, Langari Shoh and Nushor;

villages visited include: Kalai Labi Ob, Darai Mazori Poyon and Nushori Poyon. Two women support Public Associations (NGOs) were also met during the visit, who are engaged in awareness raising on women rights and entitlements as well as income generation activities and one also promote community saving and credit scheme, as part of MSDSP support project. MSDSP District Manager accompanied the mission throughout visits.

3. Situation Analysis

Tojikobod and Jirgatal have common economic and social structures and share common problems. Tojikobod is an agrarian district, where majority of people depend directly on agriculture. Industry is non-existent and the only alternative economic activity is trade and small businesses.

They share similar problems and issues as listed for Jirgatal, including deterioration of natural resources and social and economic infrastructure. In one community meeting, when asked about seed sector development, following long years of supported by several agencies, representatives reported that while aid agencies, especially MSDSP, has provided significant support in agriculture the sector, they have not yet managed to put a sustainable mechanism in place that would allow communities to maintain and sustain the achievements. Current agriculture production covers the costs plus some reserves for household consumption.

Migration is as significant as in Jirgatal and has left serious impacts on the society and on economy, reducing precious workforce, though offering alternative income for the communities. All migrant labourers from Tojikobod leave for Russian Federation and only few go to Kazakhstan.

Economic development is seriously hindered by lack of access to affordable long-term credits and rural finance, though the area offers several potentials, such as tourism development, processing of agriculture products, serving the newly opened transit route between Tajikistan and Kyrgyz Republic, among others.

Access to health and education is widely ensured, though serious infrastructural issues, accompanied by severe lack of equipment, educational material, medication and qualified teachers as well as doctors and nurses are listed among major issues. For instance, in one Jamoat, local government allocated TJS 70,000 for construction of a maternity house, yet as the financial resources covered only part of the costs, the project has been abandoned unfinished. Among other diseases prevalence of Tuberculosis is on the rise, particularly among returning migrants, as a result of severe working conditions in host country and lack of access to nutritious food.

Access to safe drinking water has been severely reduced due to dilapidated infrastructure and absence of repair and maintenance. Despite some efforts by aid agencies, especially MSDSP to improve access to safe drinking water, efforts cover only part of the needs of the population and lack a systematic approach for sustainable and self-financed water delivery. Community representatives reported that access to irrigation water is around 60-70% while drinking water supply covers only 25-30% of the total requirements.

The first electricity lines were established in this area in 1974. Since no repair, renovation and/or maintenance has been seriously taking place, causing systematic destruction of the system, reducing access to electricity severely. In some areas, even a minor storm causes electric lines to fall apart and takes often 2-3 days to restore the system.

Migration has left serious social consequences, with divorce among young families as a common issue and like Jirgatal, access to land and property as well as protecting the rights of women whose husbands have left them behind, often with children, is limited. According to local authorities, some 3500 highly qualified youth have already migrated to Russia, though community representatives estimate the numbers much higher. Aside from economic perspectives, there are no social activities for the youth that prevents some youth from returning to their villages of origin.

As a result of MSDSP efforts to establish viable social organizations, there seem to be better understanding of issues but also how these issues could be addressed more sustainably. During the community meeting, it was revealed that people are aware of how best they can organize themselves and how they might address common issues together. In contrary, the role of women is more restricted, due to increased role of traditional norms and customs. At the same time, effective cooperation between local authorities and religious leaders seem to have some positive impact, especially in preventing social disorders, such as divorce cases among young families of migrant labourers.

Two local NGOs met are engaged in raising women awareness on their rights; with particular attention on domestic violence, social issues related to migration as well as promoting income generation and community saving and credit schemes. Initial ideas for income generation include small scale wool processing and dairy development.

Natural disasters, caused by poor agricultural practices, overgrazing and increased livestock numbers are common, causing severe seasonal damage to people's lives and livelihoods as well as to social and economic infrastructure.

There seem to be close cooperation between local self-government authorities and Mahalla leaders on socio-economic issues. Mahallas seem to be much better organized and play an important role in addressing common issues. In one Jamoat it was revealed that a specific Mahalla Committee, made up of 10 community members, is engaged in defining and addressing community problems. This is a sign of awareness on consultation and participation in socio-economic issues that might have been stirred through MSDSP supported social organizations. Women participation in decision-making processes is ensured through MSDSP-supported Village Organisations (VOs) that requires systematic women participation, including nomination of a female member as deputy head of the VO. Furthermore, some community representatives proposed that future development issues should be addressed through inclusive participation of community representatives. For instance, Jamoat-based Working Group of Professionals could be established to provide all support to future programmes as well as ensure coordination and cooperation among and between communities.

4. Major Issues to be addressed

Considering the analysis of the current situation, community members and local authorities identified the following issues to be addressed:

1. Access to safe drinking water and sanitation both for households and social centres, especially schools and health facilities.
2. Improved access to health facilities – transfer of medical points from homes to health care facilities, improvement of existing clinics from infrastructure to equipment and quality medication.
3. Access to quality seed (potato and cereal) and other agricultural input supplies – most seed has been degenerated and where aid agencies have been working have not placed a sustained system in place to ensure continuation of the activities.
 - a. Most gardens and orchards are 40-50 years old with no support in extension and absence of plant protection they keep deteriorating, reducing the quality and quantity of yields. Therefore, renewing gardens and providing extension support to orchards would lead to improved livelihoods and increased income.
 - b. Livestock situation keeps deteriorating and most people requested sustained support, especially in increased fodder production and veterinary service delivery.
 - c. Beekeeping and fish farms have huge potentials in this area and there are some activities ongoing, though very limited.
4. Improved educational infrastructure and building of new classrooms due to increased number of pupils as well as support to furniture and educational material.
5. Establishment of small enterprises, especially in processing agricultural products and side products. For instance, annually, thousands of tonnes of raw wool and skin are being dumped underground or sold for next to nothing to Kyrgyz traders. With deteriorating condition of orchards, most people only collect the best fruit from their trees – especially apples. Many people said with some small scale processing and drying centres they could turn much of the wasted apple into juice, jam and similar products. These and many other areas could provide sustainable employment in the region, reduce migration and improve economic conditions. Many women reported that they spend significant amount of cash every year buying ready-made clothes, both for men and women and children. Development of small-scale tailoring centres would further enhance employment and save precious cash.
6. Women representatives, when asked about possible long-term solutions to their current hardship and socio-economic conditions, stated that employment generation should be addressed more systematically. Taking agriculture as an example, support should be provided to develop viable mechanisms along the entire value chain, from input supply to production, secured provision of services and finance, and from processing to packaging and marketing.
7. Infrastructure rehabilitation including irrigation and drainage system, access roads between villages and between them and district and Jamoat centres, bridges connecting villages and energy infrastructure has also been mentioned.

5. Key Priorities

Based on major issues identified by the local authorities and communities, the following areas were identified as key priorities to be addressed in the initial stages of future development programmes:

- a. Literally all stakeholders identified Drinking Water supply as the top priority. In Langari Shoh Jamoat people proposed to change existing water pipes that no longer provide safe drinking water, due to rust and other issues.
- b. Improved access to quality education and health facilities, especially provision of medical instruments and equipment with special attention to women's needs.
- c. Support to rehabilitation of agriculture sector (both livestock and crops).
- d. Income generation and employment creation through development of small-scale enterprises – drying and processing of agriculture products. This should be accompanied by specifically designed technical and vocational training.
- e. Improved access roads among villages and between villages, Jamoat centres and pastures. The latter would significantly improve livestock access to quality feed and reduce environmental pressure on local and lower level pastures.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

Similar to Jirgatal, there has been limited development interventions in Tojikobod, leaving everything at the mercy of emergency relief agencies, with little signs of bridging the gap between emergency and development.

Therefore, while certain needs of the communities require immediate attention, such interventions must ensure systematic approaches with long-term development perspectives.

Tojikobod economy is agrarian-based and several areas of agriculture and livestock sector development must be addressed sustainably, similar to interventions required in Jirgatal. These include rehabilitation of orchards and gardens; sustained support to developing seed production enabling farmers to access domestically produced quality seed, especially for potato and cereals. Access to finance and credits is restricted due to high interest rates, between 24 and 36%, varying from MFIs to commercial banks. It is important to note that the agriculture sector in this area has gone through many years of monoculture, especially potato, causing severe damage to soil and reducing fertility and productivity of the land resources.

Therefore, specific attention must be paid to introduce crop and livestock diversification as well as crop rotation allowing land and soil that has been degraded to recover and become more productive.

Lack of employment and deteriorating agriculture sector has forced many youth to labour migration, primarily to Russia and has caused serious disruption in traditional and social structures and fabrics of the communities, including regular distance

divorces leaving young mothers and their children behind. In most cases, partly due to traditional norms and customs but also due to existing rules and regulations, women have no access to land and property, as long male heads of households are alive. Therefore, creation of employment, with specific attention to processing and marketing agricultural products as well as servicing the transit rout between Tajikistan and Kyrgyz Republic and further development of trade and businesses (Small and Medium Enterprises) are badly required to improve the situation, prevent further migration and attract migrants to return home.

While irrigation water is available to a large extent (around 60-70%), accesses to safe drinking water is severely restricted due to deteriorating infrastructure and almost complete absence of investment. Similarly, small-scale water supply projects have so far failed to establish a community-based Operation and Maintenance system that would ensure sustainable use and management of the system.

Therefore, future interventions must address sustainability of water system as well as rehabilitating and renovating the dilapidating infrastructure, improving people's health and preventing further spread of water born diseases.

Health and education facilities and systems are outdated and require serious attention to be rehabilitated and renovated. While reforming the education sector is beyond the capacity of any single development programme, improving school facilities, education material and increased access to appropriate classrooms are among priorities to be addressed. Many of the village-based medical points are based within people's homes, similar to Jirgatal and should be placed in public facilities, reducing both the burden and the possible health risks to host families. Clinics and hospitals are in serious need of rehabilitation and require urgent attention in provision of medical instruments and equipment as well as sustained and self-financed supply of quality medication.

Energy and infrastructure, particularly access roads to and from villages to Jamoat and district centres as well as to pastures and water sources are among major priorities of the communities that require immediate attention during the initial stages of development interventions. Alternative source of energy is absolutely necessary to reduce the risk of further deterioration of natural resources, especially the meagre forests and shrubs that have not yet been destroyed. There are significant potentials for the development of micro and mini hydropower plants, yet so far no attempt has been made to exploit these resources. Current electricity system and facilities are outdated and require serious rehabilitation to withstand severe weather conditions.

Years of war and lack of sufficient energy has caused severe damage to natural resources and illegal cutting of forests, fruit trees and shrubs continues to further destroy an already fragile ecosystem. Pastures accessible by communities have been overgrazed at alarming levels and access to seasonal pastures at higher altitudes is limited due to deterioration of access paths and as a result of severe weather conditions. Floods, mudslides and avalanches are common, causing regular damage to people's lives and livelihoods, especially during rainy season and at times of high water table in the river.

Therefore, future development interventions must consider disaster risk reduction and prevention on the basis of sustainable use and management of natural resources, as common cross cutting theme along all development interventions.

There is an almost complete absence of private sector aside from agriculture, except

Home-based sewing project – MSDSP supported Women saving groups



for limited trade and small businesses. Therefore, private sector-led economic approaches must be introduced that would increase employment, improve people's income and attract labour migrants to return home with sustained employment opportunities.

Establishment of processing centres for

agriculture products processing of raw wool and skin are some concrete examples. Similarly, further development of beekeeping and poultry would enhance income and employment potentials. Provision of services to the transit route, from restaurants and hostels to repair workshops are other opportunities.

Last but not least, Tojikobod has huge potentials for tourism development with particular focus on alpinists. Similar to Jirgatal, Tojikobod has several mineral hot springs and countryside with huge potential for tourism development.

There is serious lack of awareness about national Laws, Rules and Regulations among communities, both in relation to economic sectors and in relation to their civil rights. Several community representatives, when asked, were not at all aware of the agrarian reform programme nor of certain GoT Resolutions, such as Resolution on Freedom to Farm and the newly approved Land Code.

Therefore, a series of Public Awareness Campaigns are required to allow communities access to such laws and regulations but also to make them more understandable for ordinary people.

In view of governance and development knowledge, it has been observed that local authorities and some community representatives alike continue to approach the issues with existing humanitarian methods as well as in some cases wishing to return to the old "well functioning" Soviet era systems.

Therefore, there is a serious need to introducing modern approaches to development that would require introduction of appropriate and alternative technology accompanied by systematic training and capacity building. It might be easy to change socio-economic patterns with the younger generation but much more difficult to change certain attitudes and mentality among those who have worked and are used to Soviet era socio-economic approaches. For instance central government target to produce up to one million tonnes of potato by 2015 has driven some local authorities to even force people to grow potato.

3. Tavildara District



1. Introduction

Demography and Topography

Population:	20170, made up of 3227 households
No. of Jamoats:	4 to be extended to 5 from January 2013, separating Sangvor Jamoat into & villages: Sangvor and Vahdat, considering distances
No. of Villages:	82
Agriculture Land:	173920 hectares of which arable (irrigated-1,990 ha, cultivated rain fed- 800 ha), pastures - 171,120 ha, forests and shrubs - 1095 ha, orchards - 746 ha, fodder plantations – Not Available
Main crops:	potato, cereals, vegetables and fruits
Livestock:	21,900 cattle, 49,300 sheep and horses 435; poultry 38250; Bee hives 11,800
Farms:	Total 395 dehkan farms (family/individual farms) and a few collective dehkan farms remaining
Education:	57 schools total 6,800 students; 1 Professional/technical 1 medical college; plus one boarding school for orphans at district centre
Health:	1 central and 2 Jamoat hospitals, 5 polyclinic (Public Health centres), 10 village-based medical points, of which 6 are based in private homes

2. Stakeholders – meetings

Meetings were held with District Governor, Head of Economic Department and Deputy District Governor, two Jamoat Chiefs and two community meetings 2-3 representatives from each village. Separate meetings were held with men and women, considering the social structures. Jamoats visited include: Sangvor and Childara

Jamoats; villages visited include: Dihai Childara, Mionadu. One local Public Associations (NGO), Khingov was also met during the visit, which are engaged in drinking water, beekeeping, small-scale income generation projects for women and agriculture, supported by different international agencies. MSDSP District Manager accompanied the mission throughout visits.

3. Situation Analysis

Tavildara is second largest district in Tajikistan after Murghob in GBAO, bordering with 9 districts of DDR, Khatlon and GBAO. The valley is about 200 km long with numerous side valleys with a total area of 6,000 km2. Its name is related to its length (long valley).

Tavildara used to be the centre of several strong opposition groups during the civil war and has witnessed severe socio-economic and infrastructural damages and its rehabilitation and reconstruction is beyond the capacity of local authorities and communities, even though a whole range of interventions by central government have started in the past years to address some of the major needs of the valley.

People in Tavildara derive their livelihoods mostly from livestock; crops include mainly potato, some wheat and a whole range of natural fruits and herbs as well as beekeeping. Beekeeping was reported to be the best income generating activity with huge potential for expansion. Similarly, people collect walnuts from forests and sell them to traders from cities at lowest prices. Some of the major livestock products marketed outside the district include dry cheese (Qurut) and Chakka (fresh sour cream used to make Qurut). There are several native species of herbs and wild berries that have the potential for processing, packaging and marketing and would improve people's livelihoods immensely with processing facilities and marketing.

The only place attracting national visitors during summer months is a shrine not too far from district centre, where people from around the country come for pilgrimage. Local authorities and communities reported of vast natural mines, including gold and coal that continue to be exploited by international companies and would present huge potential for economic development if managed and owned locally/nationally.

Social sectors, especially health and education are in dire need of rehabilitation and reconstruction, including provision of badly needed equipment, school furniture and material as well as medical supplies; especially for maternity units – most deliveries take place at homes, particularly in winter when most villages are cut off from outside world due to heavy snow. There is a serious shortage of qualified medical and educational specialists as most trained people are not willing to live and work under such harsh circumstances. Drinking water was reported to be a top priority for most villages, even though the valley hosts abundant natural springs with excellent water quality.

The energy sector has not been addressed at all, despite ample potential for mini and micro hydropower. Aside from district centre, the valley survives on rationed electricity, particularly during the six months of autumn and winter. Much of the energy infrastructure, lines, poles and transmission units are 30-40 years old, thus outdated and is falling apart due to lack of regular maintenance and repair. Even small

storms cause disruption of electricity supply for several days and people are left without electricity. Heating and cooking thus represent a huge challenge to communities, even though the local coal mine is offering some relief. Compared to Rasht District, where locally mined coal costs around 700-800 TJS per tonne, in Tavildara, authorities have managed to control the prices and locally mined coal is available at around 200 TJS in autumn and goes up to 300 TJS just before winter.

Agricultural land has already been distributed to family and individual dehkan farms, yet lack of access to quality seed and fertilizer as well as irrigation water and access to finance and affordable long-term credit makes it impossible for farming communities to invest in and make the sector productive and profitable.

Private sector development is in its very initial stages, though much of the local products, including honey, potato and walnuts are marketed by individuals either directly in the cities or through traders at unfair prices.

Continued labour migration further deteriorates the economic and social conditions in the area, particularly in relation to outflow of able-bodied workforce and disrupting social structures of the communities, especially young families. Much of the migration is closely linked to those going to Russia. However, there is also significant internal and environmental migration - considering continued natural disasters, such as earthquakes, floods and avalanches. As a result of May 2012 earthquake, for instance, 45 households from Childara were resettled in Khatlon Oblast.

Tavildara can be considered one of the harshest region in Rasht Valley, where infrastructure has not only not improved but also has been severely damaged as a result of the civil war, continued natural disasters (earthquakes, floods and avalanches) and lack of any investment to repair and maintain the system. Much of the region, especially remote Jamoats and villages are completely cut off from outside world for almost six months a year. The road from GBAO to Rasht, through Tavildara is accessible about 4 months a year and the district has limited access to the rest of Rasht for the remaining 8 months.

Aside from one local NGO (Khingov) that is supported from time to time by international organizations and is thus entirely dependent on donor support; and Village Organisations (VOs) created by MSDSP, there is no other sign of civil society. MSDSP has also supported the creation of Social Union for the Development of Village Organisations (SUDVO) at Jamoat level, where saving and credit is part of their activities.

Both local authorities and community representatives complained of the unsustainable manner many emergency relief agencies have operated in the area for many years. One community representative said: "...We have been begging them to help us restore irrigation system and support with quality seed and fertilizer so we can produce our own food.....the response has often been 'this is not our mandate'....." As a result they have left nothing behind but some dependence among the most vulnerable groups.

Similar to other districts of Rasht Valley, MSDSP has created village-based Community Saving Groups (GAJA), with focus on women, where savings are lent to members only at affordable interest rates. Much of the lending is used to cover

emergency needs as well as some social expenses. However, there is no mechanism in place to ensure expansion of the initiative and keep savings growing for economic purposes, as savings are redistributed at the end of each year to the members and if the group wishes, they continue from scratch again next year.

4. Major Issues to be Addressed

Considering the analysis of situation, both local authorities and community representatives identified the following as major issues to be addressed:

1. Almost all communities identified drinking water as top priority.
2. Improved medical infrastructure and equipment as well as access to trained and qualified medical personnel.
3. Much of the education infrastructure is outdated and with growing population, classrooms are overcrowded, while school material and furniture is in desperate need of improvement. Similarly, lack of qualified teachers has been mentioned as another shortage in the area.
4. Literally every stakeholder interviewed mentioned increased hardship and challenges in commuting from and to the district, considering the condition of the roads connecting Tavildara with its neighbouring districts as well as access roads within and between villages and the district centre. All people met during the mission stated clearly that socio-economic development of Tavildara would not be possible without improving the road conditions.
5. Similar to other parts of Rasht valley, Tavildara has severe shortage of quality seed, fertilizer and severe lack of support to extension and veterinary services. There has been no attempt to improve livestock sector, particularly with pure breeds, aside from one project where Yaks were brought from another area of Tajikistan but failed to survive because of different climatic conditions. Irrigation infrastructure is in dire state due to complete absence of any operation and maintenance system and continued natural disasters. Beekeeping represents at least currently the most viable income-generating sub-sector, even though products are marketed through middlemen at lower prices.
6. Tavildara has probably the most fragile landscape, even though it hosts the largest and perhaps the last remaining natural forests in Tajikistan. Pastures comprise over 90% of the land area, but are deteriorating due to absence of any intervention to rehabilitate and manage them sustainably. Moreover, Tavildara serves as the key site seasonal grazing of livestock from other parts of Tajikistan, especially Khatlon Oblast, contributing to further degradation. Orchards represent an important sub-sector, particularly in relation to provision of minimum vitamins and nutritious food in the area. However, existing orchards and household gardens had been established 40-45 years ago and have aged and thus are no longer productive or profitable and require urgent rehabilitation. Fruit in the area is reported to be of best ecological quality and if improved could represent considerable potential for marketing. In the past – before the civil war - Tavildara was represented in national Annual Agricultural Markets (Mehrogan, Honey Festival and similar events) with its best quality Potatoes and fruits, it has now captured first place for its honey, cattle and small ruminants, having lost its best quality potato and fruit. Similarly, livestock traders come to Tavildara regularly to purchase and/or

barter cattle and ruminants in bulk against wheat flour, cooking oil, sugar and other basic household needs.

7. Prevention and mitigation of natural disasters was identified as another major concern, with social and economic impact, causing regular damage to infrastructure and loss of crops and livestock. Most significant is regular avalanches, considering the long winter season (6 months), but also floods and mudslides as well as regular earthquakes.
8. Creation of income generation and small-scale enterprises, both for men and women, were mentioned as another high priority, with attention on fruit, wild berries and herbs and livestock side-products (wool, leather) as well as dairy processing. Since beekeeping represents an already growing sub-sector, creation of producers' cooperatives and training in production, processing, branding and marketing were specifically requested. Small scale tailoring and sewing centres were requested by most women to cover their own needs and save their precious cash currently spent on externally produced clothes. Employment creation and income generation will help reduce the outflow of seasonal migrants and would offer the area an opportunity for speedy recovery and development.

5. Key Priorities

Consolidating the common issues by all stakeholders, the following key priorities were identified through meetings both at local government and community level:

1. Drinking and irrigation water were mentioned as top priority, leading to improved living condition and good health.
2. Improving roads, both connecting the district to other parts of the valley and villages to each other and to centre of the district, was mentioned as another top priority for socio-economic development and people's well being.
3. Support to improve medical facilities, particularly maternity wards, shifting home-based medical points to public health centres, creation of self-sustained quality medication supply – much of current supply of medication is of unknown quality and sometimes with expired usage dates – would be important to ensure the minimum medical services.
4. Small scale income generation, closely linked to the economic condition of the area, such as processing of agricultural products as well as agricultural by-products would help communities maximize the use of their available resources, but would also increase and improve employment and attract especially young people to remain in their home villages.
5. Last but not least, there is a huge potential for small-scale hydropower throughout the district and most people mentioned electricity as a major priority both for light and for cooking and heating thus reducing further damage to the forestry.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

Tavildara has been severely impacted by the civil war and there has been very limited development intervention in the district. Much of support by the international

organizations over the past 10 years has been limited to emergency relief with no attempt to create the minimum of development foundation.

As mentioned above, its infrastructure, especially roads, energy, water and social sectors have either been damaged or have not been maintained and repaired, making life in the district harsh and communities are challenged with severe living conditions. In addition, continued natural disasters, with minimum prevention and protection endanger people's lives and livelihoods.

With a surface of more than 6,000 km², most villages are apart in long distances and in remote areas, making movement especially during winter months impossible.

Most programmes in the past have been managed and facilitated/coordinated from Gharm, with little or no representation in Tavildara itself. Similarly, there has been limited oversight and regular monitoring and evaluation of ongoing initiatives in Tavildara, leading to low quality of deliveries of those programmes. Involvement of local (district) experts and know-how has been limited and has reduced the impact of development efforts to a minimum, leaving no skills and/or experiences behind.

Therefore, serious attention must be paid to rehabilitate and reconstruct basic infrastructure, with special attention to roads and access to sustained energy, considering the long winter season and harsh climatic conditions. Any future engagement in development interventions must consider local ownership of processes and decision making, while external expertise would be badly needed to advice and guide local population and technical experts to perform better.

Like other districts of Rasht Valley, Tavildara's economy depends much on agriculture, primarily livestock and beekeeping, though there is a huge potential for fishery and expansion of poultry, in view of improving people's diet and good health. Therefore, while sustained access to seed, fertilizer, veterinary and extension services is of utmost priority, sustainable management and use of natural resources must be introduced to protect an already fragile ecosystem. Small-scale examples of pastures and forestry management introduced by local and international NGOs, but with limited impact, as there has not been any long-term and sustained intervention.

One of the last remaining forest reserves in the valley, between Childara Jamoat and District Centre



Tavildara and Kamarob in Rasht District are hosting perhaps the last two forest reserves in the valley. Local authorities, including forestry department are doing their best to protect the forestry, yet

there are clear signs of over-cutting and people as far as Nurobod reported that much of their firewood is supplied from Tavildara.

There are several areas for potential development, including expansion of lucrative honey production, where many women are also engaged in, as well as dairy and other livestock production, walnuts and fruit species specific to Tavildara that would offer best market opportunities in the country, considering their high quality. However, access to affordable long-term credits and basic equipment and machinery will make it impossible to develop these sectors. Most people interviewed expressed the desire to creating sub-sectoral associations and cooperatives and to sustain whatever initial developmental support might be provided.

Therefore, establishment of community-based associations and cooperatives, involving all social and economic sectors, must be accompanied with systems and mechanisms that would help communities to maintain and sustain programmatic achievements. Access to affordable long-term credits would further facilitate development of existing economic sectors, but would also encourage communities to undertake additional initiatives. Capacity building and training must be accompanied to any future development intervention as an integrated part of planning process, enabling local communities to take care of their own affairs in long-term.

Good health and education is key to socio-economic development and have been seriously neglected in Tavildara since the end of the civil war.

Therefore, sustained support to improve health and education sectors, infrastructure, equipment and sustained access to education material and medication is among the highest priorities.

Continued labour migration - 2-3 members of most families have migrated; some come back regularly and others come once in every few years - further impact socio-economic conditions of the area and without long-term approaches to create sustained employment and improve social conditions, including spots and other social facilities, would increase outflow of the young generation from the area. Many of the youth migrating outside have no skills and lack even language skills, such as proper Russian knowledge for those going to Russian Federation. As a result, many have little income and most families reported minimum support received from their members working abroad. One father reported that his son had been gone for almost 9 years, leaving his wife and children behind and gave little support to his own family. The Father forced him eventually to come back home and join his young family and when returned his own children were entirely confused of the presence of a stranger at home.

Therefore, serious attention must be paid to create sustained employment through establishment of small scale enterprises, such as expansion of honey production through honey producing cooperatives, processing and marketing of a whole range of wild and cultivated fruit and herbs, renewed orchards and gardening as well as livestock production, among others. Creation of associations and cooperatives – water and energy users, school parent/teachers committees, production and service cooperatives – must be integrated part of future development interventions.

Absence of active civil society and local public associations (NGOs), aside from MSDSP supported VOs and SUDVOs, leaves the local government alone in dealing with all socio-economic issues. Considering budgetary limitations as well as

difficulties in attracting qualified technical and professional expertise, makes it difficult if not impossible to address all socio-economic issues.

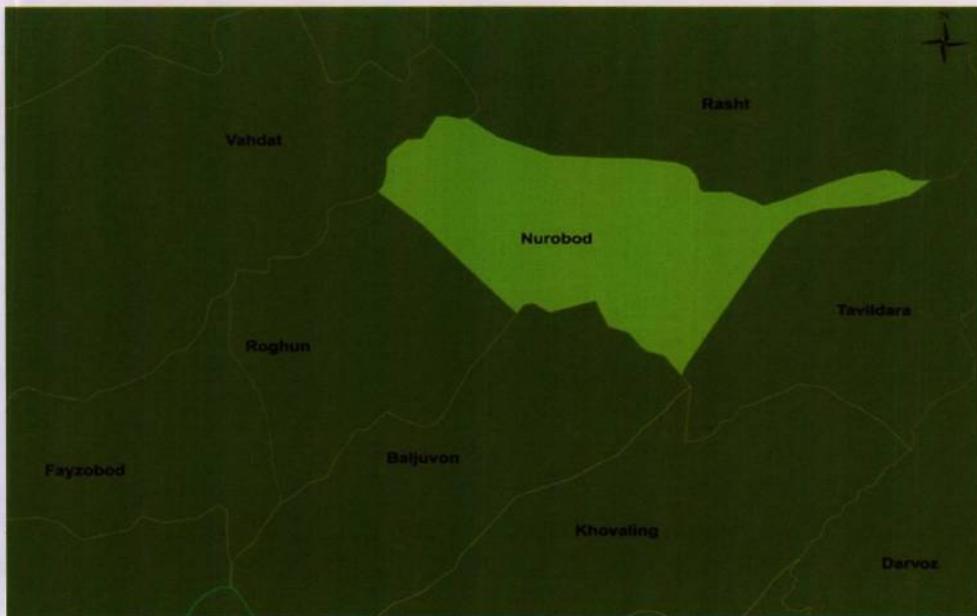
Therefore, while MSDSP has laid the foundation for viable community-based organizations, further support must be given to develop sustained structures with desired skills and capacities to effectively and efficiently own and drive development interventions and actively participate in planning, implementation and decision making processes.

The planned District Development Programme by local government has taken Jamoat recommendations into consideration. However, more efforts are required to develop a more inclusive development programme/plan, engaging community representatives, especially the most vulnerable, with considerable focus on women's needs.

Development interventions will become only then sustainable if affected communities identify their own needs, plan, implement and own decision making processes. While local and central government authorities play an important role in developing policies, strategies and regulate the economic sectors, an inclusive process would require all stakeholders to actively participate – local communities and government authorities alike.

Specific attention will be required to specific needs of women, with particular focus to those left behind by their migrated husbands. Sustained employment would improve their living conditions, yet without equal access to development processes and influence on decision-making, future programmes will fail to include a large segment of the communities and leave a viable workforce out of the process.

4. Nurobod District



1. Introduction

Demography and Topography

Population:	Total population of 66,600, comprised of around 10,000 households
No. of Jamoats:	7; No. of villages 105
Agriculture Land:	3,054 hectares of which arable irrigated land is comprised of 1,351 ha, pastures – 52,875 ha, forests and shrubs – 1,800 ha, cultivated hay fields – 851 ha; orchards – 415 ha, wasteland (waterlogged, salinated etc) – 193 ha
Main crops:	potato, cereals, vegetables and fruits
Livestock:	23,095 cattle, 65,514 small ruminants; 50,448 poultry; 7,432 Bee hives
Farms:	Total of 695 individual and family dehkan farms 33 collective dehkan farms plus 27 state farm
Education:	85 schools, including one boarding school; 1 Professional Technical College, 1 teacher training and 1 medical training centre
Health:	2 hospitals, 30 village-based medical points and 11 public health centres

2. Stakeholders – meetings

Meetings were held with District Acting Governor, Head of Economic Department, two Jamoat Chiefs and two community meetings 2-3 representatives from each village. Separate meetings were held with men and women, considering the social structures. Jamoats visited include: Khumdon and Samsolik; villages visited include:

Sari Qosh and Ulfatobod. MSDSP District Manager accompanied the mission throughout visits.

3. Situation Analysis

Nurobod District lies between Roghun and Rasht districts facing some geographic changes over the next months and years to come. Of the 105 villages, 42 are planned for resettlement under Roghun Hydropower Project mostly to the newly established Shahrak (Town) of Darband, where Local Government offices have already been moved. The newly built town already faces challenges, especially in relation to drinking water as a result of which many families are reluctant to move away from their home villages, despite government efforts to ensure electricity and other infrastructural facilities. Of the total population under planned Roghun Hydropower, some 1100 families have also been moved to different districts of Khatlon.

Due to the planned resettlement of almost 40% of the population, resettlement issues have taken over the priorities of the Nurobod Development Programme for 2013-2016, currently being developed, in line with planned Midterm Development Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan – Strategy for Living Standard Improvement 2013-2015 - under the guidance of the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade.

Similar to other districts of Rasht Valley, Nurobod's economy is agrarian driven, though the establishment of a new town would certainly bring about some economic and demographic changes. Potato, cereals and fruit and vegetable dominate agricultural production. Livestock is another major source of livelihoods. According to local authorities, some 600 ha of arable land has no access to irrigation water while pump stations cover only 40% of the total need, as a result of broken irrigation channels and absence of any major rehabilitation and repair. Lack of access to agriculture input supplies and extension and plant protection services have damaged the orchards severely.

There are over 30 village-based medical points, however, more than half are based in people's homes and have limited equipment and lack any sustained training and capacity building. Several villages lack any health facility, especially those in remote areas. Most schools have been built over 40 years ago and have not witnessed any major repair and rehabilitation and are at dire state; while classrooms are overcrowded with up to 40 pupils per classroom and many schools have to hold 2-3 shifts in a single day. There is a visible lack of professional teachers, especially for subjects related to languages and sciences. Even though local authorities regularly monitor school attendance, it was reported that some families do not allow their girls to continue education beyond grade 9, due to increased influence of traditional beliefs. Absence of sports and social activities further causes outflow of youth from their home villages.

In order to improve the social sector and attract young professionals in health and education, the local government offers incentives, such as housing. However, low state salary scales do not offer any incentive for such professionals to work under such difficult circumstances and many young professionals even from the district prefer to work in better-off places.

According to local authorities, around 2,700 young people have migrated to Russia as labourers. However, community representatives reported that at least one member from each family has already migrated to Russia and the trend continues. While some come back home regularly, especially seasonal labourers (engaged in construction and similar sectors in Russia), others have migrated for good and many fail to provide any sustained support to their families. In contrary, in one village it was reported that a son had asked his father to cover his transport costs from Russia back home. In other cases, people reported that the meagre remittance covers only the basic costs of households and cannot be said that migration and remittance flow has really improved their lives. Most youngsters return back with illnesses, including tuberculosis. Local Government officials also reported that returnees are track down regularly and have to undergo special medical examinations.

With continued deterioration of agriculture sector and absence of any viable employment opportunity, the labour migration trend is becoming a serious issue, draining the best workforce out of their homes and villages, making any recovery and development attempt difficult.

Earthquakes, severe floods and mudslides affect literally all Jamoats every year and with limited resources the response is always one of emergency, causing regular damage to people's lives and livelihoods. Many villages are marked as high-risk areas prone to natural disasters, especially seasonal floods. One of the major irrigation canals, Panjo-Solagi (50-year) serving several villages is regularly been disrupted by heavy floods and neither local authorities nor communities have the resources and machinery to properly clean the canal. One official stated that "...by the time we finish cleaning the canal, half of the cultivation season is gone and most farmers access water too late..." Silt and sand heavily impact the canal and in most cases cleaning is completed only around end of June and early July.

Energy sector is in dire state, considering the system that has been in place for over 40 years, with poles and lines regularly broken and disrupting power supply for weeks. There are villages reportedly without any electricity supply and despite huge water resources for hydropower; so far no attempt has been made to address the energy issue.

One Jamoat representative reported that continued emergency relief has caused disruption among some people in the agriculture sector. Humanitarian assistance has also been criticized as a source of discontent among communities, following selection processes by agency staff. For instance, current humanitarian support covers only 30-35% of the population even if very limited, while in reality one could say that 80-90% of communities live under similar circumstances. The representative quoted the example of the famous story on Robinson Cruzo, who had only one bag of wheat and had to decide whether to eat it and survive the day or plant it and make a sustained livelihood.

4. Major Issues to be addressed

Drinking and irrigation water was reported by vast majority of stakeholders as the main issue to be addressed. Much of the existing infrastructure is either dysfunctional or operates only with limited capacity and requires urgent rehabilitation and renovation as well as support to infrastructure for villages that have no access to water

at all. These include villages that have lost their traditional water sources, while additional villages have been established and denied access to water by others, due to limited resources. Broken water infrastructure regularly affects the quality of drinking water, where human and animal waste is washed into the water pipes, causing water born diseases, especially dysentery and diarrhoea.

The agriculture sector is no longer responding to people's needs. Orchards have not been treated against plant diseases and continue to degenerate, while livestock numbers keep growing and fodder sources decrease, including degradation of pastures and lack of sustained approaches to grow fodder crops. Lack of sufficient irrigation water, despite vast water resources, is another major issue. However, most stakeholders, especially community representatives stated that their major problem is access to viable finance and credits. Much of the credit provided so far is short-term and at highest interest rates (36%). There are 100s of hectares of land in the district laid fallow due to lack of access to irrigation water and deterioration of existing infrastructure.

Primary school children in Ulfatobod village



Similar to agriculture, health, education and energy infrastructure keeps deteriorating and requires serious attention. Classrooms are overcrowded, as most

schools were built 30-40 years ago and with ongoing population growth they no longer respond to community's needs. Health infrastructure requires to be improved along with improved human resources, due to lack of qualified staff. Similarly, access to most urgent equipment and medication is of concern to most people.

Lack of sustained employment causes much of the migration, as people undertake anything possible to secure their basic livelihoods. Without systematic approaches to employment, from agriculture to processing and small and medium enterprises, this current trend is likely to continue to impact communities' social and economic well-being.

Natural disasters present another challenge to both government and communities, including regular earthquakes, mudslides and floods and there is no sign of any systematic approach to prevent and mitigate disasters. These cause regular damage to land, infrastructure and homes. Floods and mudslides in 2012, for instance, washed

away some 100 livestock and destroyed over 100 hectare potato land, while an earthquake in May 2012 destroyed 37 houses.

5. Key Priorities

Considering the analysis of the situation and main issues as identified by local government officials and community representatives, the following key priorities were identified:

1. Access to safe drinking and irrigation water was identified as high priority to ensure good health and well-being and improved livelihoods.
2. Access to affordable long-term credits was mentioned as one of the major barriers for communities to improve agriculture, invest in medium to long-term projects such as orchards and livestock production as well as processing and marketing of their precious agriculture products that is currently wasted to a large degree.
3. Creation of employment and income generation both for men and women was identified as another priority to improve people's livelihoods, attract some of the migrant labourers to return and engage vast human resources among women that is currently concentrating on limited agriculture and taking care of their families.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

In view of imminent restart of work at Roghun Hydropower Project, Nurobod is facing several challenges, including resettlement of almost 40% of its villages and population. The newly built Darband Town is facing drinking water shortages and unless the issue is resolved, local authorities will face serious challenge in moving the population. Access to drinking water was also reported as a major priority in rural villages.

Therefore, it is recommended to support the new town with provision of drinking water that would facilitate speedy resettlement of villages planned under Roghun Hydropower Project. Similarly, safe drinking and irrigation water needs to be addressed in the villages as well.

Social sector in the entire Rasht Valley has reached a level far below acceptable norms and standards and require serious attention in relation to infrastructure, human capacities as well as qualified specialists. Sustained support in developing local capacities and community-based institutions, with special attention to women needs is urgently required.

Therefore, it is recommended to adopt a systematic approach to improve especially health and education sectors to be developed in a sustainable manner, allowing communities and their local authorities ownership and sustainability of the service delivery system.

Agriculture and livestock is the main deriver of livelihoods and have witnessed severe setbacks due to lack of sustained access to quality input supplies, machinery and services (extension, veterinary and others). Dependence on state support has been

further increased through short-term emergency relief support by some aid agencies that needs to be changed.

Therefore, any future intervention must ensure the sustainability of the processes and ensure lasting results, be it sustained access to inputs, services and systems through development of capacities and institutions that would allow communities to benefit from future projects and programmes sustainably. Access to long-term and affordable credits has been mentioned as the major barrier for agricultural growth and development.

Similar to other parts of Rasht Valley, Nurobod faces serious challenges from natural disasters, largely due to unsustainable and poor practices in natural resources management and use. Almost the entire forestry has disappeared here, especially during and after the civil war that lasted much longer in Rasht than any other part of Tajikistan; pastures are regularly overgrazed and are in dire need of rehabilitation. Therefore, while immediate needs of communities need to be addressed quickly, future interventions must be based on a long-term vision.

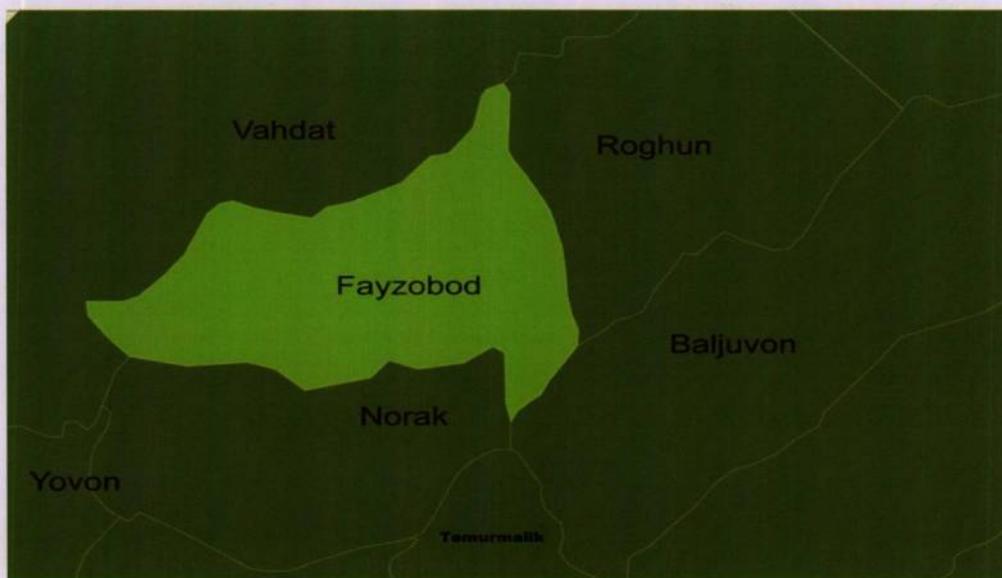
Much of the natural resources degradation, especially forestry is closely linked to lack of sufficient energy in the region. While towns and District centres are ensured regular electricity supply, villages witness regular rations for almost 6 months of the year, especially during harsh winter months.

Therefore, in order to ensure sustainable management and use of natural resources and avoid further damage, systematic approaches are required to address the energy need of the population.

Following the devastating civil war and continued reform and restructuring of socio-economic sectors at central level, old structural systems have been removed but not replaced with new ones. Several socio-economic sectors have witnessed serious setbacks, especially the agriculture sector that used to employ much of the workforce in rural areas. This has subsequently lead to drastic outflow of migrants further reducing the ability of the communities to effectively rebuild the sector and make it productive and profitable.

Therefore, employment creation and income generation for both men and women based on lasting agriculture growth and development is urgently required. In order to provide sufficient employment and attract some of the best labour force to return home, agriculture processing, small and medium enterprises and other income generation schemes at village and Jamoat levels based on local natural and capital resources should be considered along other sectoral initiatives.

5. Faizobod District



1. Introduction

Demography and Topography

Population:	87,800, comprised of 11,130 households
No. of Jamoats:	9 Jamoats, including the Faizobod Town; 86 villages
Agriculture Land:	7,867 hectares of which arable irrigated land is comprised of 3,649 ha, pastures – 50,600 ha, forests and shrubs - none, orchards – 3,485 ha, other land, including fodder plantations – 20,937; wasteland – 137 ha
Main crops:	potato, cereals, vegetables and fruits
Livestock:	36,660 cattle, 79,640 small ruminants; 775,800 poultry; 6050 Bee hives
Farms:	Total of 2,125 dehkan farms of which 2,106 family/individual farms and 18 collective dehkan farms plus one state farm
Education:	59 schools total of 19110 students; 1 Professional Technical College
Health:	1 central and 2 Jamoat hospitals, 1 newly built polyclinic in Faizobod city 13 Public Health centres and 27 village-based medical points

2. Stakeholders – meetings

Meetings were held with District Deputy Governor, Head of Economic Department and Mayor of Faizobod Town, one Jamoat Chief and one community meetings 2-3 representatives from each village. Separate meetings were with men and women to ensure active participation of female community members, though social structures would have allowed joint meeting. Jamoat visited include: Kalai Dasht; villages visited include: Darai Guspandak and Boboi Vali. MSDSP District Manager accompanied the mission throughout the visits.

3. Situation Analysis

Faizobod is located close to Dushanbe (one hour drive) and can be divided in three sections. The lower part of Faizobod is rich with agricultural land, livestock and orchards and gets two harvests per year. Similarly, this area benefits from a series of production and processing centres. The upper part of Faizobod is located at higher altitudes, similar to Roghun and partly even higher than Roghun, with harsh winters, witness regular windstorms and are severely affected by natural disasters. Winter season in upper Faizobod last for 5 months in average, where farming communities struggle to harvest their products in time. Infrastructure is least developed and access to Faizobod centre and Dushanbe is much more restricted, especially for villages in remote areas. The town of Faizobod represents an urban population who derive their livelihoods from trade and business as well as employment at governmental and private sector organizations.

Therefore, its socio-economic condition is diverse and requires diverse attention. For instance, the city mayor requested urgent support for provision of drinking water to the newly built polyclinic and three mahallas in the town – two of the mahallas were built recently, considering the rapid population growth, while one mahalla was provided water from a nearby source that has now dried up. In contrary, communities and Jamoat Chief in the upper areas of Faizobod mentioned extensive support in private sector-led agriculture growth and development, including development of small-scale agriculture-related processing and production centres, where vast amount of fruit is produced. This would in turn help reduce the growing outflow of migrant labourers by creating employment and generating income.

In view of rapid population growth, local authorities have begun to work on a 485-hectare housing project, where overcrowded families will receive plots to build homes for about 6,000 families. 200 hectare land has already been distributed and the rest will follow. These would require drinking water, health and educational facilities as well as electricity supply.

While some villages lack any medical point, others are based in wagons and private homes under unhygienic conditions and require serious attention. Many existing schools have been built over 40 years ago and are in dire need of rehabilitation and renovation. Local government has supported construction of 8 new schools in remote villages, with active contribution of communities. Infrastructure for health and education sectors requires support along with equipment, educational material as well as qualified personnel. Local government provides incentives to qualified teachers and medical staff, in term of housing plot in particular, to attract young qualified specialists. Despite serious attempts by local authorities to place young graduates into higher education many fail to return as living condition is poor and most are seeking better-paid jobs and living conditions. Pregnant women deliver mostly at homes, though with support of trained midwives, yet many lack proper equipment and necessary medication, when needed. Access to proper medical facilities is limited for remote villages. For instance, in one village, people need to walk 8 km to the nearest health centre.

According to local authorities, some 8,000 migrant labourers have left for Russia, however, community and Jamoat representatives indicate 1-2 migrants per family. This slows down further recovery and development processes and would have significant social and economic impact on the communities.

The district has an active women council which meets regularly involving both government and village representatives as well as representatives of civil society (MSDSP). According to Deputy Governor, 50% of local government employees are women, while MSDSP ensures that at least deputy head of social organizations are women. Local government's women department undertakes regular public awareness events in an attempt to improve gender issues and address gender sensitive matters, including domestic violence. It has also reported that parents encourage their children both boys and girls to attend school regularly and attendance has been reported well.

4. Major issues to be addressed

Following the analysis of current situation, local authorities and community representatives identified the following as the main issues to be addressed:

1. Improved drinking and irrigation water supply, both for Faizobod Town and the upper part of the district, was identified as the major priority. There are sufficient water resources in the area but lack of capital investment and appropriate machinery makes it impossible for government and communities to develop this sector.
2. In view of the fact that the majority of people in upper district depend entirely on agriculture, support to seed production, access to fertilizer and long-term affordable credits were mentioned as high priorities. Much of the orchards has degenerated and is no longer productive and profitable. It requires some capital investment to establish nurseries and renovate these precious orchards, improving income and enhancing employment. Furthermore, advisory and extension services are badly needed to improve agriculture as a whole and fruit and vegetable sub-sector in particular. Pure breed cattle and small ruminants would further improve rural population's livelihoods, as livestock represents the second main livelihood source.
3. Acute shortage of electricity is another barrier for economic development. For instance, in Kalai Dasht, with support of MSDSP, a milk-processing centre that used to process 8-10 tonnes of milk per day, had to close down from early October when power rationing started. Currently, collection of milk is continued and unprocessed milk is sold to Dushanbe at less than half price.
4. Much of the district is prone to natural disasters. While the upper areas are regularly affected by floods, mudslides and avalanches, the city of Faizobod is affected regularly by the river overflow, where rain and mud from several small valleys flow into the river passing through Faizobod, causing damage to infrastructure especially. In 2012, for instance, severe floods washed away three bridges and several irrigation canals, filling the irrigation canals with mud and stones. During the visit of the mission in Boboi Vali village, community members were engaged in the rehabilitation of their access road and confirmed that the road is washed away at least twice a year. This indicates that there is no appropriate mechanism in place to mitigate and prevent disasters and much of the effort concentrates on emergency response,

including strengthening riverbanks year after year, instead of investing in solid embankments.

5. Key Priorities

Consolidating main issues to be addressed, the following key priorities were identified by stakeholders:

1. Drinking and irrigation water was considered as high priority to improve people' health and well being. Drinking water is also of high priority for Faizobod Town.
2. Extensive support to rehabilitate agriculture, including small-scale enterprises and processing of agriculture products would enhance income, generate employment and would reduce outflow of labour migrants. Improving seed sector, orchards and livestock were mentioned as specific issues to be addressed in rural areas.
3. Improvements in health and education facilities, including equipment and material, with special focus to maternity wards as well as sustained training and capacity building for qualified specialists.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

As one representative of a civil society mentioned, Faizobod is between Dushanbe and Rasht valley. It is neither considered part of Dushanbe nor of Rasht Valley by most international organizations. So far, many attempts by local authorities and NGOs to attract more development-oriented organizations to Faizobod have failed and many have neglected the area. Considering the socio-economic context of the district divided in three zones, much of the future attention must focus on upper district, while drinking water supply especially should be considered for the Faizobod Town.

Agriculture in the upper and lower district is the main economic activity in the district and is in dire need of rehabilitation and development. At the same time, despite several laws, resolutions and reform processes, government intervention in agriculture continues to be an issue. For instance, in line with national targets to make Tajikistan produce 1 million tonnes of potato by 2015, local authorities all over Rasht are pressing farming communities to shift from other crops to potato. This provides another disincentive for farmers, many of who don't believe in freedom to farm. Therefore, while sustained developmental efforts are badly required to rehabilitate the most important pillar of the economy (agriculture especially), it is equally important that several Government of Tajikistan Laws and Resolutions are being enforced, notably Resolution #111 on "Freedom to Farm", especially when considering market-economy development. Proper development of agriculture sector must be also accompanied by sustained efforts to allow farmers to process and market their products at better rates, instead of selling their raw products at lowest prices.

The social sector in the area has seen limited improvement, despite serious attempts by local authorities and with active community participation and contribution; budgetary limitations do not allow local authorities to bring about radical changes.

Therefore, it is strongly recommended to rehabilitate especially health and education facilities, provide for additional schools, classrooms, health facilities, while sustained capacity building and training should accompany all future efforts. According to local authorities, community participation and contribution is widely common and future programmes must build on such important foundations to make the future social sector sustainable and self financed.

Voluntary community work (*Hashar*) on access road in Boboi Vali village



From evidence seen during the mission, there is a severe lack of appropriate approaches to prevention and mitigation of natural disasters, severe floods and landslides affect rural and urban areas equally,

requiring repeated investment year after year to deal with emergency situations. Continued lack of access to proper machinery and equipment makes it further difficult for both local authorities and communities to deal with natural disasters sustainably. Unsustainable use and management of natural resources, especially continued cutting of the very few trees and bushes still remaining affect much of this. One community member in Nurobod District, for instance, mentioned that 50 years ago, when she moved to this area, hills and mountains were covered by trees and shrubs and they have all disappeared since the civil war.

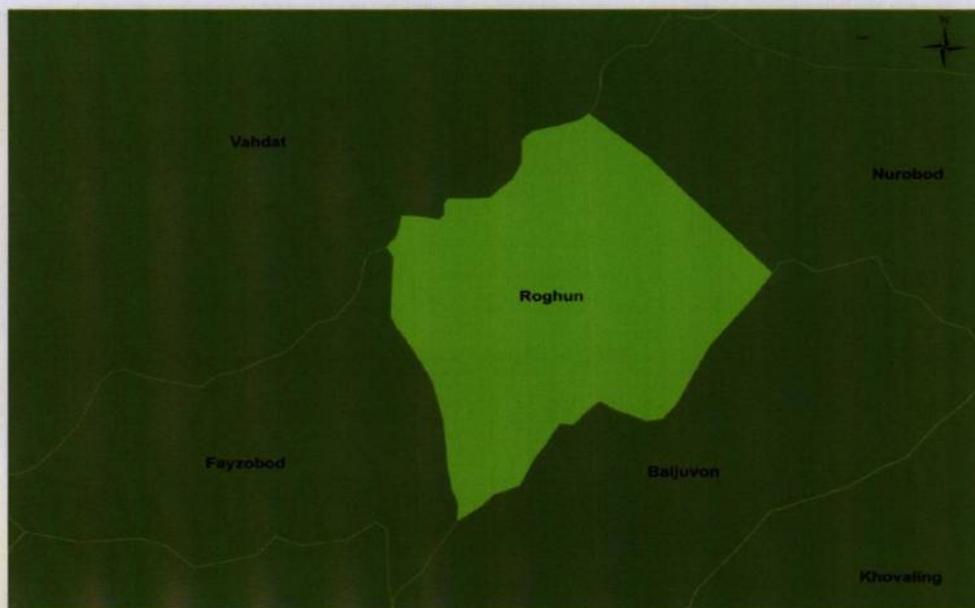
Therefore, reestablishment of forests, rehabilitation of pastures, including rotational grazing and introduction of fodder crops and far more developing an appropriate system to deal with natural resources is urgently required.

Throughout the Rasht valley there are signs of traditionally established terraces that have served as prevention measures against regular floods, both in form of agro-forestry (notably orchards) but also in crop cultivation. If revived and expanded these could represent one of the first steps towards prevention and mitigation of natural disasters and would immensely contribute to improved food security.

Labour migration has been growing over the years, taking some of the best workforce out of the area with serious long-term consequences on social structures but also causing further deterioration in economic sphere. Migration is caused by absence of employment and any meaningful economic development and needs to be addressed before the entire economy depends on remittances.

Therefore, creation of employment while using locally produced goods and raw material, especially from agriculture is urgently required. This could include processing and marketing of agriculture products as well as small enterprises that would effectively respond to local needs and save their precious cash.

6. Roghun District



1. Introduction

Demography and Topography

Population:	40,050, comprised of 6,075 households
No. of Jamoats:	3 Jamoats, including Roghun Town; 59 villages
Agriculture Land:	2,247 hectares of which arable irrigated land is comprised of 296 ha; pastures – 31,200 ha, forests and shrubs – 53 hectare (state forestry farm), orchards – 213 ha, other land, including fodder plantations – 2,857; wasteland – 6 ha
Main crops:	potato, cereals, vegetables and fruits and some oil crops
Livestock:	12,590 cattle, 39,830 small ruminants; 484 horses; 27,875 poultry; 1,895 Bee hives
Farms:	Total of 1,098 dehkan farms of which 2 production cooperatives, 1 state forestry farm, 3 extension/research state farms
Education:	50 schools with total of 8,875 students; 2 kindergartens and one sports school, 1 orphanage, a branch of Vahdat medical college and 2 Professional Technical Colleges
Health:	2 hospitals, 3 Public Health centres and 11 village-based medical points; Roghun also offers 5 spas and one sanatorium, benefiting from its huge natural hot springs

2. Stakeholders – meetings

Meetings were held with District Governor and Deputy Governor, Head of Economic Department, one Jamoat Chief and one community meeting with 2-3 representatives from 4 village. Separate meetings were held for men and women to ensure active participation especially of women. Jamoat visited include: Kadi Ob; Meeting held at

Kalai Nav village. MSDSP District Manager accompanied the mission throughout visits.

3. Situation Analysis

Similar to Nurobod, Roghun also faces resettlement of some of its population, though not in such a large scale. 8 villages are planned to be moved as part of the Roghun Hydropower Project. 6 have already been moved to Tursonzoda District, 110 families to Saidon District within Roghun and another 80 families to Garmoba. All these new settlements face serious challenges in relation to water supply, power and other infrastructure, though the local government makes every effort to effectively respond to their needs. Much of the three Jamoats of Roghun are located in side valleys, with limited access to centres and deteriorating infrastructure.

Roghun Town, front of local Hukumat



Of the 3 Jamoats in Roghun one is a small town, built in 1986, however, in the meantime, the population has grown rapidly and according to local authorities birth rate in the district seems to be the highest in Tajikistan, at an alarming rate of 4.5%. As a result, the town can no longer

accommodate its growing population and the authorities are planning to build new homes, ensure provision of sufficient drinking water and electricity supply as well as schools for 2,260 pupils, as part of Roghun 5 year development plan 2013-2018.

Other initiatives in the 5-year plan include: Agriculture sector development with special attention to orchards and livestock; infrastructure development, including drinking water supply, medical centres in villages and Jamoat-based small hospitals; construction of mini hydropower plants and rehabilitation of inter-village roads; and construction of sports and recreation centres in the town and Jamoats. Another major initiative in the 5-year plan includes rehabilitation and renovation of the main road connecting Roghun to the Dushanbe-Jirgatal highway.

Community initiative and active participation in the socio-economic sphere seems to be very high in Roghun. For instance, following the severe winter of last year, communities purchased three bulldozers at their own cost to ensure snow is cleared regularly and roads remain open to villagers. Another example of community leadership is the rehabilitation of half of a 6 km long irrigation canal that supplies water to some 150 hectare agricultural land, jointly with support of local government.

40-50% of the Roghun population depend on agriculture, while the rest are mainly employed in public sector. According to local authorities labour migration is not as

significant as in other districts and most are seasonal labourers. However, community representatives reported that at least one member of every family is in migration. Contrary to common belief that remittances have become the main source of livelihood, most people stated that earnings from remittance covers only their basic needs.

Main source of livelihood and income for rural population is livestock and orchards with some potato and limited cereals, considering its altitude and landscape. Soil in the mountains is not stony and suitable for rain fed orchards and forestry. However, considering the continued degradation of forests and pasture, they are also the cause of regular mudslides and floods.

The district produces some 20,000 tonnes of apple annually, though in 2012 the harvest was less due to long and harsh winter season. There is a huge potential to revive native species of fruit trees that are more resilient to common plant diseases. Lack of extension service for orchards and veterinary services for livestock along with absence of pure breeds makes it difficult for the sector to grow and develop.

Village medical points are limited and 3-4 villages share one single health centre and despite existence of a medical college in the town, there is a shortage of qualified medical personnel, as many prefer to work in better off places. Furthermore, there is lack of appropriate medical equipment and sustained medication supply chain.

Only few villages have secondary schools and most pupils beyond primary school walk as far as 6 km to a secondary school either in another village or in Jamoat centre. This often causes disruption in their education, especially during winter months. Infrastructure of existing schools is almost 40 years old and is in urgent need of rehabilitation and expansion.

Access to drinking and irrigation water is at the same stage as other districts. There are two irrigation canals from the Soviet era that are badly damaged and beyond the financial capacities of local government and communities to repair. Despite huge potential of water sources, especially natural springs, drinking water is in short supply, especially where new villages have been established. Over the past few years, there has been a chaotic situation in water management, as some villages that had been initially established deny access to those built later. The local government is engaging with communities to address these conflicting interests through regular meetings with communities and their leaders.

Improved livelihoods in Roghun depends much on access to long-term affordable credits and rural finance, considering its economic foundation. In addition to livestock and orchards, there is significant potential for small industries, tourism as well as fish farms and agricultural processing centres. A recent pilot project has shown that pasture rehabilitation through Lucerne cultivation can improve fodder production immensely, by harvesting fodder twice a year and thus increasing fodder productivity to almost 200%.

Roghun's topography is not much different from other districts of Rasht Valley. The scale of land degradation and soil erosion is much more visible and its impact is perhaps more significant. While much of degradation has been caused by deforestation and overgrazing, there is also visible impact of the ongoing highway

construction and the Roghun hydropower project. There is no indication as to how the construction companies and local authorities might address these issues.

4. Major Issues to be addressed

Considering the analysis of the situation, there are several main issues to be addressed as identified by stakeholders. These include:

1. Improved agriculture sector, with special attention to livestock and orchards development, along with support to processing and marketing.
2. Lack of income generation both for men and women has already resulted in outflow of migrant labourers and leaves huge human resources potential among women untapped.
3. Health and education infrastructure requires significant support to effectively respond to the growing needs of the population, especially in remote areas and with particular focus on women's medical needs.
4. Both drinking and irrigation water is scarce despite huge resources, especially as most villages and communities are located in high altitude side-valleys.
5. There is a huge potential for mini hydropower plants but lack of resources has made it impossible for local authorities to address severe shortage of electricity, especially during winter.
6. With rapid population growth, both the Roghun Town and its rural villages are in desperate need of rehabilitation of existing infrastructure and development of new ones.
7. Continued large-scale construction projects, ongoing Dushanbe-Jirgatal Highway and Roghun Hydropower Project have already left some signs of additional land degradation and require urgent attention.

5. Key Priorities

Considering the main issues to be addressed, communities and local authorities have identified the following as their key priorities:

1. Employment creation through income generation projects closely linked to processing locally produced agricultural products, such as orchards and livestock – the latter produces huge amount of raw wool and skin that is being wasted.
2. Rehabilitation of health and education system and infrastructure, including roads and bridges connecting villages has been identified as another priority.
3. Improved access to safe drinking and irrigation water would improve people's well being and enhance agriculture productivity.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

Compared to Nurobod, Roghun faces limited challenges in relation to resettlement of its population and there is evidence that much has already happened. Yet despite serious attempts by local authorities and visible community leadership, lack of sufficient financial and capital resources present a significant challenge. While the

local authorities are making every effort to address the needs of the Roghun Town, rural areas require much more attention in relation to socio-economic development. Therefore, it is strongly advised to bank on the existing close relationship and cooperation between local authorities and communities and ensure future needs are addressed in a sustainable manner, where communities and local authorities own the process and take responsibility.

The to-be finalized 5-year development plan for Roghun District offers an opportunity to closely work with local authorities. Though the plan provides for extensive expansion of infrastructure, health and education facilities as well as economic development, with particular attention to agriculture, it remains to be seen whether the local government might secure the financial resources required for. Yet, there is huge potential in almost every sub-sector from developing mini hydropower plants to improving irrigation and drinking water, especially considering the availability of sufficient water sources.

Therefore, initial stages of future plans should consider maximising the use of existing capacities and resources to improve people's well being, while specific areas of attention for economic development include improvements in livestock and orchards both of which have huge potentials considering the district's favourable climatic conditions.

Like other districts of Rasht Valley, the social sector in Roghun requires special attention, especially in remote rural areas. Health and education infrastructure are in dire state and require rehabilitation and access to proper health equipment, access to quality medication, education material and qualified specialists are some of the particular areas of attention.

Therefore, while addressing immediate needs of communities, future programmes must ensure sustainability of new systems, through viable community organizations that should be fully engaged in the design, implementation of programmes but also in Operation and Maintenance. Subsequently, they will also take responsibility to efficiently operate and maintain the system.

Infrastructure, such as roads between villages, bridges and access roads to Jamoat centre as well as energy infrastructure is falling apart and require substantial rehabilitation, disrupting social and economic activities and causing hardship to communities.

Therefore, while capital support is required to address rehabilitation of the infrastructure, users committees and associations must be established and technical and managerial skills must be developed that would enable communities to take full responsibility for Maintenance and Operation.

Considering the outflow of many young men, or the potential workforce, women provide huge potential in future socio-economic development processes. While income generation and employment would improve their social status both at home and in the society, sustained development of capacities and community-based interest and support groups would further enhance their role in socio-economic spheres of their communities and improve their families' well being.

7. Rasht District



1. Introduction

Demography and Topography

Population:	Approximately 110,000, 16,600 households
No. of Jamoats & vilages:	14, including Gharm Town; 161 villages
Agriculture Land:	93,450 hectare of which arable irrigated 3,550 hectare, cultivated rain fed 1,540 hectare, pastures 53,320 hectare, forests and shrubs 1,870 hectare, orchards 1,515 hectare, fodder plantation 390 ha; wasteland 137 ha; other land 14,500
Main crops:	potato, cereals, fodder, vegetables and fruits
Livestock:	51,250 cattle, 119,000 sheep and goats, 89,600 poultry, 1,260 horses, 18,300 bee hives
Farms:	1,673 family and individual farms, 69 collective dehkan farms, 1 state seed farms
Education:	111 schools with 21,150 students; 3 colleges training medical, technical and professional skills, Gharm University with 4 institutes
Health:	1 central & 4 Jamoat hospitals, 21 public health centres, 40 village-based medical points, 1 psychiatric hospital and 14 specialised units

2. Stakeholders – meetings

Meetings were held with District Governor, 1st Deputy Governor, Executive Officer and Economic Department of District, two Jamoat Chiefs and three community meetings 2-3 representatives from each village. Separate meetings were held with women groups to ensure active women participation in discussions. Jamoats visited

include: Hoit, Kamarob and Jafr; villages visited include: Boqi rahimzoda, Shulmak, Jafr, Sangi Maliki and Buni Sufiyon. The Botanic garden and handicraft centre created by local NGO Rushnoi, a women NGO Nisa and local environmental NGO Azal were also visited. Meetings were also held with UNDP Regional Office, MSDSP Regional Office and Welthungerhilfe Forest Expert with NGO Azal. MSDSP District Manager organized the meetings and accompanied the mission throughout visits.

3. Situation Analysis

In terms of population, Rasht is the largest district in the valley, with around 110,000 populations and a small town with an open market and several mini-markets, where most rural people obtain their basic household needs. Following the unrests of 2010, some international organizations left the area, but most have returned in the meantime and there seems to be full-established peace and stability.

Hoit Jamoat



livelihoods from agriculture, mainly potato, some cereals, orchards and livestock.

Aside from the Gharm town, the rest of the district population lives in rural areas, mostly along the river with a few in remote mountainous areas. Most people, therefore, derive their

Local authorities and community representatives reported that long-term emergency relief has had its negative impact on the area and has failed to address the roots and causes of the problems, leaving much of the necessary infrastructural needs untouched. However, many reported about MSDSP's approach that has been working regularly for the past 14-15 years with some positive impact on people's lives and livelihoods. Yet, many also confirmed that much of its work, especially in the initial years, has addressed urgent needs of the communities and did not always manage to leave a viable and lasting mechanism behind. Example was brought up from many tonnes of cereal and potato seeds as well as fertilizer that MSDSP has provided, improving agriculture sector immensely for a period of 3-4 years and where unfortunately much of quality seed has not been captured through a systematic approach to help farmers reproduce their own seed. Nevertheless, over the past two years, MSDSP has set up potato seed cooperatives and has helped those to construct storage capacities, both for seed and for consumption potato.

Orchards have become very unproductive and unprofitable due to an almost complete absence of rehabilitation and renovation as well as access to extension services and plant protection. Much of the fruit production, especially apples, is being wasted (people collect only best fruits and leave the rest lying on the ground) due to absence of processing facilities.

Livestock has become a major problem; similar to other areas of the Rasht Valley with dramatic increase in numbers of livestock and diminishing fodder production, with huge pressure on pastures. Limited amount of milk, yoghurt and dried cheese (Qurut) is produced for household consumption, failing to capture the fast growing market for dairy products. Similarly, meat productivity is considered very low and according to specialists, the livestock has become a huge burden on natural resources. As one external specialist put it: "...firewood is not destroying the forests.....but livestock is, as they eat up literally everything...."

Access to drinking and irrigation water is limited, especially as much of the infrastructure is falling apart and existing drinking water resources, developed some 40 years ago no longer covers everyone's need. In Hoit, for instance, there is a serious conflict among communities in the upper and lower areas, where the upper community prevents the lower part from access to water. As one community representative put it: "...sometimes even our chicken don't drink water for 2-3 days...and we transport our water from the source by donkeys and on our shoulders..."

Other economic areas in Rasht District include some trade and small businesses, while a substantial coalmine, operating since a few years, does not yet have the right mining capacity to effectively respond to the growing need of the population for cooking and heating fuel. Similarly, because of the market monopoly by the mining company, current coal prices are beyond the reach of the ordinary villagers (TJS 700-800 per tone, compared to TJS 250 in Tavildara).

Social infrastructure, especially health and education, energy infrastructure and roads continue to deteriorate and neither local governments nor communities have the means to restore and rehabilitate them.

With growing population and education centres being over 40 years old, classrooms are overcrowded and lack of sufficient education material, furniture and equipment as well as lack of sufficient qualified professional teachers present serious challenges. District and Jamoat authorities are strictly monitoring school attendance; ensuring girls are not forced to leave school prior to completion. Jamoats closer to the centre report that annually 20-25 graduated girls attend colleges in towns, especially for medical and teacher training.

Similarly, the 60 health facilities in the district are in urgent need of rehabilitation and support from basic medical equipment to quality medication. Many of the village-based medical points are based at homes with limited access to equipment and medication and most deliveries by pregnant women are undertaken at homes, except in urban areas and Jamoat centres.

A local NGO, Nisa, works exclusively with women, with special focus on health and nutrition to improve dietary habits and help households maximize the healthy use of

traditional meals and food items grown in the area. Nisa is also undertaking small scale ecological and natural resources management projects in Rasht.

Increased demand for firewood, continued cutting of trees, especially for the harsh winter season, has had severe impact on the forests in particular and on the environment in general. The only forest reserve and perhaps the last remaining reserve are in Kamarob Jamoat, where both local authorities and communities are making every effort to maintain the reserves intact. As a result, soil erosion, land degradation, mudflows, landslides and floods, accompanied by avalanches, are common features in remote villages, especially.

In response to increased energy requirements, the Government has, for instance, developed three small to medium size hydropower plants in Hoit Jamoat, one with 580 KW capacity, planned to become operational in December 2012 and two smaller ones with 37 and 120 KW capacity respectively.

Similarly, the local NGO, Azal, supported by Welthungerhilfe (GAA), is working in Kamarob forestry reserves with an attempt to help communities maintain and sustain the forestry reserve. Moreover, the local NGO, Rushnoyi, has established a model botanic garden, revitalizing traditional fruit tree species, and is helping women and men to revitalize traditional handicraft. Rushnoyi has recently established a second garden to demonstrate the effect of protective measures for orchards and pastures from overgrazing and damage by livestock, especially. Rushnoyi is also planning a regional reserve park at the higher altitude both to revitalize forestry and pastures but also to attract tourism.

Deteriorating agriculture sector and absence of sustained employment and income generation has forced the vast majority of young people into labour migration and as the trend continues it further reduces the availability of viable labour force for future rehabilitation and development efforts.

Migration has also left serious social challenges behind, especially among women, even though, a good part of the labour migrants go to Russia for seasonal work. Aside from MSDSP supported community saving and credit scheme, with special focus on women there is no other social organizations addressing women need at community level. Women face similar problems like other districts, including lack of access to property and protection of their basic rights.

4. Major issues to be Addressed

Considering the analysis of the situation, local authorities, NGOs and communities identified the following major issues to be addressed in the initial stages of a possible development programme:

1. Access to safe drinking and irrigation water was identified as an absolute priority in order to improve people's health and well being as well as improving agriculture rehabilitation and growth.
2. Improved health and education infrastructure, along with sustained support to educational material, equipment and qualified specialist.

3. Sustained support to agriculture, especially potato production, orchards and livestock, along with systems that would ensure sustainable use and management of natural resources.
4. Energy infrastructure and roads require urgent rehabilitation to allow efficient mobility, especially for remote mountainous villages.
5. Access to long-term affordable credits to allow for development of private sector, small industries and processing centres, utilizing much of locally available resources. Similarly, technical and vocational training would further allow men and women to increase their opportunities for employment and income generation.
6. Addressing issues of women in relation to higher education, training and capacity building enabling them to become more active in the social and economic affairs of their communities and improving their status.
7. Serious efforts are required to address continued deterioration of natural resources that cause regular natural disasters.

5. Key Priorities

Following main issues to be addressed, like all other meetings, community representatives and District and Jamoat representatives expressed the following as their key priorities to be addressed:

1. Access to safe drinking water and improvements in irrigation water to improve well being and increase agriculture.
2. Improved health and education infrastructure, equipment and material but also extensive support to training qualified health and education specialists.
3. Agriculture, being the main source of livelihoods and food security, was mentioned as another priority, especially support to revitalize the potato sector and orchards as well as livestock sub-sector.
4. Agriculture would become a viable livelihood sector if accompanied by processing and marketing skills and institutions that would offer sustained employment for the youth, who currently earn their and their families' livelihoods as labour migrants. Similarly, access to long-term affordable credits would enable communities to invest in agriculture and other economic sectors, with special attention to women income generation and employment.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

Rasht District is considered the centre of the valley and connects to all districts easily. With the newly operational highway connecting Dushanbe to the Kyrgyz border, Gharm town (the district centre) and its economy is growing with additional shops, hotels and restaurants, while it's open market (Bazaar) has always attracted people from surrounding areas. Similarly, the new highway has made travelling from Rasht District, especially to Jirghatol, Tojikobod and Nurobod much easier, allowing people from and to Rasht to move more frequently. Yet, its surrounding Jamoats and villages do not differ much from other districts and require urgent attention, especially its social infrastructure.

Its coal mine has brought some positive changes allowing some people to access sufficient coal for heating and cooking, but is far beyond the reach of ordinary people in remote areas at skyrocketing prices. Lack of access to any other alternative energy continues to force people to cut trees, especially before and during winter, aside from the only forest reserve in Kamarob that both authorities and communities try hard to maintain intact. Yet, growing livestock population continues to be a threat to the last remaining reserve and causing regular damage to an already fragile ecosystem.

Jamoats and villages of the Rasht Valley lie on both sides of the river passing through the district, yet aside from a few pumping stations that are still operational most have ceased to function and fallen apart, limiting access to irrigation water. Its orchards continue to deteriorate and it is quite visible how much land is being laid fallow due to deteriorating irrigation infrastructure, but also lack of access to extension and similar services. Aid agencies are doing their best – especially MSDSP with its newly launched potato seed support, including creation of cooperatives to sustain and maintain seed potato – to support farmers to maintain the level of potato production that serves as the main staple food and its surplus for marketing.

Similar to other districts, a whole range of humanitarian agencies have been involved in Rasht District and several are based in Gharm town, with limited development intervention except for MSDSP and some UNDP support. The latter has reduced its staff to one single area manager who literally monitors some remaining activities from the past 2-3 years. At the same time, few local NGOs and civil society organizations are emerging, partly as a result of MSDSP support, including a women group and two environmental agencies. Therefore, there is huge potential for civil society development in the district.

Capacity building, institution development and putting appropriate systems and mechanisms that would enable communities and local authorities to sustain and maintain past humanitarian and development interventions has been limited. Therefore, future interventions should pay serious attention to these issues. These may include further development of user groups and cooperatives, utilizing MSDSP interventions as a basis, for infrastructural as well as social and economic areas. Gharm town offers an opportunity to be used as a hub for training, capacity building and institution development for other districts because of its infrastructure, but future interventions should avoid overuse of their resources at the cost of other districts.

The Rasht “University” and its colleges offer good opportunity, not only for training, but also for research and further education if utilized properly.

Natural resources use and management needs to be addressed sustainably through lasting and sustainable approaches to mitigate the damage caused already and special support would be required to ensure the last remaining forest reservoir is well-protected from destruction. Therefore, while disaster risk reduction and prevention should become a cross cutting theme for all future interventions, adaptive approaches to agriculture and livestock as well attention to alternative energy would be needed badly.