

skat Swiss Resource Centre and Consultancies for Development

Final Report

# Mid-term Evaluation

Improving Community Resilience through Sustainable Livelihoods (ICR) in the Rasht Valley 2022-2027

For

**Federal Department of Foreign Affairs FDFA**

**Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC**

**SKAT Consulting Ltd.**

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# List of Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| AKAH | Aga Khan Agency for Habitat |
| AKDN | Aga Khan Development Network |
| AKF | Aga Khan Foundation |
| AP | Accelerate Prosperity |
| CAP | Cluster Action Plan |
| CEDRIG | Climate, Environment, and Disaster Risk Reduction Integration Guidance |
| CER | Cost-effectiveness ratio |
| CERT | Community Emergency Response Team |
| CODAN | Emergency communication systems |
| CoESCD | Committee of Emergency Situations and Civil Defence of Tajikistan |
| DDP | District development plan |
| DRR | Disaster risk reduction |
| DWSS | Drinking water supply scheme |
| ECD | Early childhood development |
| GHG | Greenhouse gases |
| GIS | Geographic information system |
| HCD | Human-centered design |
| HVRA | Hazard, vulnerability, and risk assessment |
| IDP | Internally displaced person |
| IHA | Integrated Habitat Assessment |
| IHHI | Integrated Health and Habitat Improvement Project |
| IVDP | Integrated village development plans |
| IWMP | Integrated watershed management plan |
| KMK | Khojagii Manziliu Kommu |
| LA | Local authority |
| LG | Local government |
| MC | Mahalla Committees |
| MDO | Micro Deposit Organization |
| MSDSP | Mountain Societies Development Support Programme |
| NCF | Nurturing Care Framework |
| NDC | Nationally Determined Contributions |
| NDS | National Development Strategy (of Tajikistan) |
| OCA | Organization capacity assessments |
| PG | Producer Groups |
| PMP | Pasture management plans |
| PUG | Pasture User Group |
| SAP | Smart agricultural practices |
| SDC | Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation |
| SME | Small and medium enterprises |
| VDP | Village Development Plan |
| WASH | Water, sanitation, and hygiene |
| WMP | Watershed Management Plans |
| WUC | Water user committee |

# Executive Summary

The Improving Community Resilience through Sustainable Livelihoods, or ICR Project in the Rasht Valley is a contribution from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) to the Aga Khan Development Network's (AKDN) Development Program, 2022-2027. The current (first) phase is from Dec 2022 to Nov. 2027 with a possible second phase till 2032. ICR seeks to ensure that ***People enjoy improved quality of life in more resilient, healthy, and equitable communities.*** This mid-term evaluation aims to assess the project's progress, intermediate outcomes as well as identify key obstacles and challenges encountered in the first half of the project implementation period. The evaluation provides insights and lessons to inform the remaining implementation period, highlighting best practices and innovative approaches in the project's areas of intervention.

Aga Khan Foundation (AKF) is the main implementor of the project. Following government directives, two of the other implementing entities - the Mountain Societies Development Support Programme (MSDSP) and Aga Khan Agency for Habitat (AKAH) have been incorporated within AKF since February, 2025. AKF is now in the process of registering itself afresh with the Ministry of Justice while Accelerate Prosperity (AP), another ICR project partner, remains an independent entity. The process of registration needs to be completed by September 2025.

Rasht Valley is in the upper central part of Tajikistan and comprises seven districts. ICR works in 49 villages in four districts across four selected watersheds. The region is experiencing both economic and social development after the destruction it suffered during the civil war. The construction of the Roghun hydroelectric power plant brings funding for large infrastructure, relocation of villages as well as many migrant workers. With a high emigration rate, roles of women are also changing from agricultural labour to active participants and decision makers.

The ICR project is well situated in this context and is on track to achieving its targets. Most planned activities are feasible, except for restrictions on developing a data collection tool for GHG emissions and $CO_2$ sequestration and a digital application for community feedback mechanism. These are affected by regulatory constraints. Further, government policy to focus donor funding largely on infrastructure and equipment (85%) with the government paying the software costs has affected the ECD program. In this case the program activities were expanded within the same budget. These changes are largely beyond AKF's control and were communicated to SDC in a timely manner and the budgets adjusted accordingly. Several recommendations are provided for the remaining period of this phase, summarized here:

1. The bottom-up approach and strong community involvement in project design is effective. However, AKF should now emphasize community responsibility, contributions and ownership, with clearly defined responsibilities, including for the DRR interventions. Concentration of past and current project activities in a few villages poses a risk of 'aid dependency'. In future Integrated Habitat Assessment should provide information on past AKF and other donor investments in the villages to avoid concentration of resources.
2. Awareness and access to low-cost improved sanitation solutions and hygiene practices should receive greater attention be combined with water supply provision. Access to locally fabricated low-cost toilet pans can significantly improve functionality of the existing pit latrines.
3. The quality of construction of all infrastructures is high. However, there is a tradeoff between the cost of individual units and population coverage. It is recommended that in future the focus should shift from construction of new toilet blocks in a few schools, to improving the functionality of several school toilets through the introduction of a low-cost toilet pans, ventilation system and fly trap for the pits (VIP latrine), dustbin and/or simple incineration system for sanitary waste and hand washing stations in all schools.

4. While hygiene awareness programs have been held on a large-scale, use of soap for handwashing was not observed. The full health benefits of improved water supply and sanitation can only be achieved through integration of these aspects.
5. In the next phase, a clearer distinction could improve efficiency: livelihood initiatives would benefit from greater application of the HCD approach, focusing on community needs and achieving higher satisfaction, while business opportunities should follow a Market Systems Development (MSD) approach- analysing root causes of market failures, identifying market actors for partnerships, and leveraging contributions for sustainable, scalable change. There are many opportunities and gaps in the agricultural value chains in the region. Several actors and services are missing. A systemic analysis should be used to identify key leverage points, partnerships and enterprises that can be provide missing services to use the full potential of the value chains.
6. Financial literacy among women entrepreneurs needs to be improved. Short training videos, business coaching tutorials and peer coaching should be strengthened.
7. The financial products of MSDSP need to be adapted to the needs of the entrepreneurs, supporting financial linkages for growth. MSDSP supported projects can also serve as a pipeline for AP and the linkage between the two should be strengthened.
8. As farmers shift to more high value crops and intensive practices with project support, the investments that are at risk of extreme events are also growing. Early warning, agromet, agricultural advisory services and inputs need to be integrated in the program to reduce and manage risks.
9. Access to electricity in the region is very limited. Therefore, it is recommended that all water pumping systems are solar by default and solar energy provision, a key priority identified by adolescents through the Human Centric Design (HCD) program, is integrated in ECD and school toilet construction programs.
10. The Integrated Habitat Assessment reports identified the use of animal manure for cooking as a key factor for deficiencies in soil nutrients in all the watersheds. Integrating biogas, vermi-composing and trials of solar cooking systems have the potential to address soil fertility, energy security and economic benefits in an integrated way.
11. Given that the region is exposed to multiple hazards and the risks are extensive, a functioning early warning system (EWS) is essential.
12. The upper catchments of springs, which are the preferred source of both drinking water and irrigation, are being degraded due to multiple factors, including uncontrolled animal grazing. Spring shed management can deliver multiple benefits of water security, protection of the landscape and reduction of landslide risks. Monitoring of springs and changes in their discharge is also a key step to building adaptive capacity of mountain communities.
13. A broader impact on the landscape will only be seen if there is policy support for management of herd sizes, controlled grazing, breed improvement and stall feeding. Partnership with other programs and dialogue at donor platforms is needed to complement local actions.
14. It is recommended that the leadership of national entities like CoESCD and the center for Healthy Lifestyle Development of the Ministry of Health with whom the project collaborates, are invited to the Steering Committee to strengthen the national representation and the role of the body.
15. The pending registration of AKF is a risk. AKF's institutional restructuring adds to a sense of uncertainty. A scenario-based risk management plan would be helpful in navigating through this context.

# 1. Introduction

The Improving Community Resilience through Sustainable Livelihoods or ICR Project in the Rasht Valley is a contribution from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) to the Aga Khan Development Network's (AKDN) Development Program, 2022-2027. It aims to enhance the livelihoods of vulnerable communities in the Rasht valley in the four districts of Faizabad, Rogun, Nurabad and Sangvor. ICR works in partnership with governments, businesses, civil society, other development actors and their projects implemented in the region and builds on the learnings of the IHHI project and AKDN's experiences in the region. SDC's contribution to ICR is for an overall timeframe of ten years with two phases of five years each. The first phase is from Dec 2022 to Nov. 2027 with a possible second phase till 2032. The current phase budget of CHF 14,000,000 comprises the following contributions:

- CHF 7,000,000 as SDC's contribution (50%)
- CHF 1,400,000 as AKDN's contribution (10%)
- CHF 5,600,000 as AKDN's contribution through other ongoing projects (40%)

The key project partners are the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF), the Mountain Societies Development Support Programme (MSDSP), Aga Khan Agency for Habitat (AKAH) which have merged under AKF in February 2025 and Accelerate Prosperity (AP).

Tajikistan has a high literacy rate of over 90% and is one of the most remittance dependent economies in the world. It is rich in several natural resources but remains the poorest country in Central Asia. Ninety percent of the territory is mountainous and is vulnerable to several hazards including earthquakes. Tajikistan is also vulnerable to regional geopolitics and economic shocks. Recent World Bank assessments1 indicate that there has been a steady decline in poverty from 25.7% in 2015 to a projected 13.4% in 2022 at the international poverty line of USD 3.65/day. Income from labour and remittances have been the most important factors in the decline of the poverty rate.

The Rasht Valley, located in the upper central region of Tajikistan, is socioeconomically more vulnerable. A changing climate is negatively affecting its water resources, agriculture, energy, transportation, infrastructure and public health sectors while recurrent extreme weather events destroy infrastructure and livelihoods. People lack timely access to early warning and weather forecasts which limits their adaptive capacity. Recognizing these, ICR seeks to address the following issues:

- deficiencies in existing water and sanitation services;
- ineffectiveness of the agricultural system;
- the impacts of climate change and disaster risks;
- limited focus on improving livelihood potentials of women and youth; and
- need for a strong governance system that can provide an enabling environment for a vibrant, inclusive, and empowered indigenous civil society that works closely with the public and private sectors to achieve mutual goals.

As per SDC's governance policy marker, the project is assessed as Governance '**Significant**' making governance an important and deliberate objective. The governance objective must be explicitly addressed i.e., it cannot be implicit or assumed.

1 The World Bank: Poverty & Equity Brief Tajikistan, April 2024 https://pip.worldbank.org/home accessed Sept 2, 2025

# 2. Project Description

The ICR project log frame states the goal of the project as: People enjoy improved quality of life in more resilient, healthy, and equitable communities*.*

This is based on a theory of change which states: ***IF*** *community members actively participate in the design, implementation, and feedback mechanisms of the local development processes (Outcome 1), and* ***IF*** *communities have equitable access and equitably use of vital services (such as WASH and childcare services) that are effectively provided by public and private actors (Outcome 2), and* ***IF*** *women and youth generate a sustainable income (Outcome 3), and* ***IF*** *communities engage in management, regeneration and protection of their natural resources and adopt disaster risk reduction measures and practices (Outcome 4),* ***THEN*** *people will enjoy improved quality of life BECAUSE of more resilient, healthy, and sustainable communities (Impact) in the Rasht Valley in Republic of Tajikistan.*

The specific program Outcomes, indicators and targets are:

| | |
|---|---|
| Outcome 1: Community members actively participate in the design, implementation, and feedback mechanisms of the local development processes | % and # of community members and local authorities' representatives reporting active participation in the design and implementation of new local development processes such as IWSMPs, IVDPs and DDPs (disaggregated by gender and age |
| | % and # of community members reporting active participation in designing solutions and providing feedback on existing local development processes (disaggregated by gender and age) |
| | % and # of people who are satisfied with the quality of the interventions identified though the gender analysis, incorporated into the IWSMP, IVDP, DDP, and implemented |
| | % and # of local authorities' representatives confirming that people's feedback was incorporated into the relevant development plans |
| | Proportion of local governments that adopt and implement local disaster risk reduction strategies in line with national strategies and the Sendai Framework (Target 4) |
| Outcome2: Communities have equitable access and equitably use vital services (such as WASH and childcare services) which are effectively provided by public and private actors. | % and # of target population using safely managed drinking water services<br>Target: 10,150 people (5,075 female; 5,075 male) or 24% increase since the baseline) |
| | % and # of people that gained access to improved sanitation and hygiene services (segregated by gender)<br>(Target: 12,000 people (6,000 female; 6,000 male or 1,2% increase since baseline) |
| | % and # of target population practicing healthy sanitation and hygiene behaviours (disaggregated by gender) |
| | Average financial self-sufficient rate of daycare centers (all income generated/all costs) in supported microenterprises |
| Outcome 3: Women and youth generate a sustainable income | # of % of persons using new or better technical skills |
| | # of new jobs created and retained for women and youth (segregated by gender and type of employment) |
| | % and # of women and youth benefitting from increased annual average income (disaggregated by gender and age) |
| | |
| Outcome 4: Communities engage in management, regeneration and protection of their natural resources and adopt disaster risk reduction measures and practices | # and % of persons benefiting from DRR-informed climate change adaptation measures |
| | # and % of smallholder farming households with increased income from agricultural production |
| | % and # of target farmers reporting active use of at least two climate-smart agriculture practices for at least two years |
| | # of ha of land demonstrating improved soil health as a result of climate-smart agricultural practices |
| | % and # of community members in target areas reporting improved disaster preparedness with having potential to take appropriate measures in anticipation of hazards |
| | # of green and climate-smart projects for which the benefits and learnings (such as $CO_2$ emission reduction, cost savings for energy/water, time savings, additional income generated) are documented and disseminated |

The program seeks to mainstream **climate resilience, innovation and digitization, and gender equality** and address them in a cross-cutting manner.

# 3. Scope, Methodology & Limitations of the Evaluation

This mid-term evaluation is aimed to assess the project's progress, intermediate outcomes as well as identify key obstacles and challenges encountered during the first half of project implementation period. Additionally, it provides insights and lessons learned to inform the remaining implementation period of the current phase and highlight best practices and innovative approaches within the project's areas of intervention. The specific objectives of the evaluation are in the detailed ToR at Annex 1.

## Methodology

The team of two consultants was supported by an experienced translator. The team met all key departmental representatives of the national government, other donor agencies, NGOs representatives, Governors and key stakeholder departments at the district level. We met and interviewed several direct project beneficiaries over five days, on site. A mix of tools and methods were used for data collection. A checklist of questions was prepared and administered in individual interviews or in focus group discussions with multiple beneficiaries. The list of key informants consulted is at **Annex 5** and the checklist of questions at **Annex 6**.

In group interactions we were attentive to issues of inclusion based on gender, age or socio-economic status. The presence of an experienced translator enabled the two consultants to interview and interact with several beneficiaries while also remaining attentive to group dynamics. The evaluation approach adhered to the SEVAL guidelines of being utility focused with frequent open exchanges and discussions with project staff to clarify points and understand the context in which decisions and choices were made. The evaluation was carried out in an ethically correct and unbiased manner using methodologically robust tools. An onsite de-briefing meeting was held immediately after the return from the district visits. A draft report was shared with SDC and AKF, all comments have been addressed in this final version of the report. The evaluation uses the OECD DAC criteria, the analysis is presented in Chapter 5 of this report.

Our methodology comprised the following steps:

- Desk Review and Inception Report
- Consultations with National Govt and Donors
- Formal meetings with district level authorities
- Exchange with Primary Stakeholders including service providers
- Interviews with individual and groups of project beneficiaries

A range of direct project beneficiaries were interviewed during the evaluation. As all project activities seek to be demand responsive, we validated the needs of the specific beneficiary or group for the activities in which they are engaged. A representative sample of beneficiaries was selected without striving for a statistically significant sample size. Our primary data collection aimed to seek a more qualitative understanding and validation of the data collected by the project M&E system.

As a specific focus of the project is the strengthening of sub-national implementation capacities, application of the key principles of participation, transparency and accountability was assessed. We met representatives of all stakeholder groups including individual farmers, women and youth who have benefited from training, mentoring and financial assistance. We ensured that the information collected had a logical connection to the evaluation questions and the assessment provided. One of the project hypotheses is that communities can raise significant amounts of funds both internally and from labour migrants through remittances. Examples of community participation were sought during each village level interaction.

## Analysis, Reporting and Presentation

After the field visits a de-briefing meeting was held in Dushanbe with SDC and AKF. A draft report was presented on Aug 14 and all the feedback addressed in this final report. The logframe was updated and is annexed.

## Limitations

One of the limitations of the methodology was that we visited only project villages and not those where no intervention has been made. Therefore, a comparison of control vs sample was not possible. In the endline evaluation this aspect could be kept in mind. Further, the phase end evaluation could also focus more on the contribution of project outputs to the outcomes. This could only partially be done in this mid-term evaluation.

# 4. Project Achievements and Results

## Outcome 1:

Community members actively participate in the design, implementation, and feedback mechanisms of the local development processes

The key activities within Outcome 1 are as below:

| | |
|---|---|
| Activity 1.1.1 | Design Integrated Habitat Assessment (IHAs) of newly targeted watersheds |
| Activity 1.1.2 | Conduct a gender analysis to identify inequalities in access to natural resources, and division of labour |
| Activity 1.1.3 | Support WDGs to develop Watershed Management Plans and facilitate their inclusion in DDPs/IVDPs |
| Activity 1.2.1 | Conduct institutional capacity assessments and capacity building for Mahalla Committees (MCs) |
| Activity 1.2.2 | Pilot a digital application to gauge community's feedback (had to be revised) |

The project was initiated with a multi-disciplinary assessment of the selected watersheds through an Integrated Habitat Assessment (IHA) which provided a comprehensive analysis of social engagement, community perceptions, risk rankings, demographics, geomorphology, hydrology, geology, hazard zones, infrastructure, and livelihoods, allowing the project to target its interventions and allocate human and financial resources. Gender analysis informed tailored programs for women-headed households, who often rely on small-scale farming for food and income. Eight such households received support for greenhouse construction and biogas installation.

IVDPs were carried out in 49 villages, involving 1,255 participants. Their priorities and data are suggested to be integrated into sub-district and district-level development planning from November 2025 onwards. Interviews with state authorities confirm they are well informed about ICR interventions and actively engaged in the planning process. There is also strong interaction among watersheds, facilitated through the Watershed Development Groups. Local priorities identified through these processes serve as key inputs, and members of the community involved in such planning process as resource persons for district planning processes bringing valuable local perspectives as well as ownership and downward accountability into formal planning processes.

The activity of developing a pilot digital application to gauge community feedback had to be adapted due to restrictions on data collection due to regulatory constraints. However, community priorities are being incorporated in planning processes in various ways. Government stakeholders, such as the leads of the Working Groups, report that they do hold community level meeting to gauge people's needs as part of the district planning process. Data is also collected by the Jamoat level staff on several parameters on a quarterly basis for upward reporting. Downward accountability is not so structured and is mainly through community interaction and engagement by the officials.

## Outcome 2:

Communities have equitable access and equitably use vital services (such as WASH and childcare services) that public and private actors effectively provide

| | |
|---|---|
| Activity 2.1.1 | New Safely Managed Drinking Water Supply Schemes (DWSS) constructed, and services established |
| Activity 2.1.2 | Form Water User Associations/Committees |
| Activity 2.1.3 | Construct Public Sanitation Systems |
| Activity 2.2.1 | Arrange awareness sessions on healthy sanitation and hygiene behaviour |
| Activity 2.3.1 | Support the establishment of private and community-based day care centers |
| Activity 2.4.1 | Understand, learn and ideate to address the problems faced by adolescents in the target community |
| Activity 2.4.2 | Provide small grants to prioritized HCD ideas to address issues faced by adolescent girls and boys and improve access to services at the community level |

ICR baseline survey data (June 2023) indicates that most households in the targeted areas have traditional pit latrine (89.6%) and only 9.7% have modern toilets with septic tanks. Most people reported satisfaction with the sanitation facilities with 7.4% saying they are dissatisfied and 1.1% very dissatisfied. Due to the fact that most toilets are pit latrines which have an issue with smell and flies, the average distance between dwelling and toilet facilities is 20 meters (min 2m max 100m). Our observations also confirm the baseline finding that most households (60% according to baseline survey) don't have designated place for washing hands. While the vast majority (83%) reported during the baseline that they always wash their hands with soap after using the toilet, presence of soap was not observed in the community or household latrines. This may be a classical reporting bias where respondents in a survey provide the socially acceptable answer.

While being pit latrines the toilets are uniformly clean (no urine or feces on the floor or squatting area) and there is no open defecation or solid waste anywhere in the settlements. This eliminates 90% of the health risks. Use of water for cleaning is minimal, reducing the problem of fecal sludge management. As more water comes into the household with piped supply and as aspirations change, preferences are shifting towards flush toilets. This will create new challenges for safe disposal of fecal sludge. Thus, an incremental approach to improving the functionality of the existing stock of pit latrines should be the focus in the remaining years of ICR and in its second phase. As handwashing with soap is not observed practice, the transmission route of germs from feces à flies à fingers à food is open and the translation of WASH provision into health benefits is compromised.

The results of the IHA indicate that access to clean drinking water is a priority issue across all watersheds. Site selection for DWSS construction is based on IHA findings and the proportion of the target population lacking access to clean drinking water, with a key criterion being that at least 50% of residents in the area lack access to clean drinking water. Construction of the DWSS system in Faizobod is approximately 80% complete, while progress in other sites ranges between 30–40%. To ensure quality and compliance with technical and safety standards, the project team prepares detailed specifications for all construction materials during the tendering process. Suppliers are required to provide a one-year guarantee, with 5% of the final payment retained until the end of the warranty period. Additionally, the AKF technical team independently verifies the quality of construction materials using its own tools and criteria, assessing parameters such as high-density polyethylene (HDPE) grade, pressure rating, and other technical standards. The water supply systems are planned to be equipped with solar panels to ensure a reliable electricity source. For the management and maintenance of the DWSS systems, four WUCs have been formally registered and are being supported through capacity-building activities focused on management and technical maintenance. Each WUC consists of up to 15 members, including 2 to 5 women.

Through the IVDP process, communities actively participated in prioritizing the projects for financing. They engage in consultations with sub-district authorities, followed by discussions with district authorities, to ensure the project's integration into the DDP. In all four project sites, state authorities are involved in planning and monitoring activities; however, no financial allocation has been made from the state budget. Community contributions account for up to 15% of the total cost, provided in the form of both cash and labor.

All four projects are currently in the early stages of determining water tariff rates. Upon project completion, each WUC is given one month to assess key operational costs—such as water usage, electricity, and administrative expenses and to propose a per-cubic-meter rate to KMK/Tojik Ob Dehot. While minimum tariff rates are proposed by Tojik Ob Dehot (0.60 TJS per cubic meter for spring water sources and 2.00 TJS per cubic meter for borehole water) WUCs have the flexibility to define their own rates based on local conditions and affordability.

ECD is one of the sectors where several significant changes have occurred during implementation.
The original proposal placed strong emphasis on balancing project inputs to soft and hard activities related to ECD. The plan envisioned both schools based ECD centers from 8 am to 12 pm and privately owned, fee-based ECD centers for children aged 3 to 6 years, operating from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM. However, ECD has since been prioritized by the national education system, particularly with a focus on the soft component. Under current regulations, only the Ministry of Education and Science is authorized to develop and implement learning curricular. As a result, AKF's role has been limited to supporting the hard components equipping facilities with furniture, toys, and playgrounds. The program facilitated contribution from local communities for renovating school classrooms.

Two ECD centers visited by the evaluation team were initially launched with fee-based services but later cancelled the fees after the government began covering the teacher's salary through the school budget. Since these ECD centers operate only for three hours per shift, their impact on enabling young mothers to participate in economic activities remains limited. As AKF is no longer involvement in the soft component and due to high community contributions, approximately 50% of the originally allocated budget was saved. These were redirected to expand support for infrastructure, allowing AKF to support 20 ECD centers, more than double the original plan of 8 centers.

In parallel, AKF collaborated with the Education Department to conduct a needs assessment using a Human-Centered Design (HCD) approach to understand the challenges faced by adolescents, a neglected demographic group. A total of 161 adolescents, including 81 girls, participated in HCD workshops, exploring topics such as financial literacy, health and hygiene, and community development. From this process, 12 ideas were shortlisted for funding and two have been implemented to date, including the installation of solar panels in a school to supply electricity for both computer classes and an ECD center.

## Outcome 3:

Women and youth generate a sustainable income

| | |
|---|---|
| Activity 3.1.1 | Support local enterprises for enhancing DRR and energy-efficient (EE) products |
| Activity 3.2.1 | Develop affordable green financing products |

As of the mid-term, 41% of the budget for this outcome has been disbursed, enabling 41 persons to access financial services (low-interest credit combined with grants) and 95 to benefit from technical skills training and capacity building. The initial target was to support 20 NRM and DRR-driven business ideas; through a competitive process, 15 were shortlisted from 80 applications. These ranged from agricultural machinery and equipment to honey production, greenhouses, cold storage, dairy, and gas block manufacturing. Additional projects and capacity-building initiatives

were supported through Accelerate Prosperity, with participants joining incubation and acceleration cohorts. Supported business ideas span horticulture, apiculture, food and beverage services and confectionery.

## Outcome 4:

Communities manage, regenerate, and protect their natural resources and adopt disaster risk reduction measures and practices

| | |
|---|---|
| Activity 4.1.1 | Developing and scaling the GHG emission and CO2 sequestration data collection tool |
| Activity 4.2.1 | Establish Producer Groups (PGs) and develop Cluster Action Plans (CAPs) for production intensification/diversification |
| Activity 4.2.2 | Implement CAPs to promote and enhance post-harvest handling process management, with a focus on women |
| Activity 4.2.3 | Rehabilitate and construct climate-smart and disaster resilient irrigation systems |
| Activity 4.2.4 | Build capacity of farmers on climate-smart agriculture practices |
| Activity 4.2.5 | Establish and support watershed-level pasture user groups to develop and implement Pasture Management Plans as part of WMPs |
| Activity 4.2.6 | Support households with production of diversified food via kitchen gardens, greenhouses, and private nurseries |
| Activity 4.2.7 | Construct climate-smart agriculture storage facilities |
| Activity 4.2.8 | Build technical capacities for protection, treatment and management of forests, pastures, and bare landscapes |
| Activity 4.3.1 | Establish/strengthen Community Emergency Response Teams |
| Activity 4.3.2 | Raise the government and community's awareness on climate change |
| Activity 4.3.3 | Strengthen Emergency Communications Systems |
| Activity 4.3.4 | Preposition/Replenish Stockpiles |
| Activity 4.3.5 | Construct multi-function, gender equitable, inclusive, energy efficient, and seismic resistant emergency shelters |
| Activity 4.3.6 | Construction of structural mitigation schemes |

A range of livelihood initiatives have been supported benefiting 96 families. These include kitchen gardens, vermicompost production, high-quality wheat seeds and provision of agricultural equipment, motorized tillers with ploughs, small carts, hillers (ridges), tillage machines, sprinklers, and other tools.

Medium-scale projects were also implemented, including irrigation infrastructure covering 261 ha and the establishment of a cold storage/warehouse with a capacity of 100 metric tons. In total, around 3,000 people have benefited from improved land management practices of whom 50% women.

Eight refresher trainings have been conducted for eight CERTs (two per district). A total of 240 people has been trained in disaster preparedness and response through simulations and training sessions. They comprised 99 females, 141 males, and 73 youth. During the field visit, an emergency shelter in Nurobod district was under construction, while the team inspected a shelter built under the IHHI project in Sangvor district. The facility, renovated by CoESCD, is well maintained and actively used to accommodate families affected by earthquakes and floods. Additionally, four new standard stockpiles have been established, and four existing ones from the IHHI project were replenished, with their use well documented and maintained. During January – June 2024, 51 natural disaster incidents were recorded and documented, including 7 earthquakes and 9 mudflows.

Greenhouse gas emission inventory or carbon accounting at a national scale is a state obligation under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Paris Agreement which is mandated to the Hydromet department in Tajikistan. Unlike project baselines which are created bottom-up, GHG baseline and reporting protocols are top-down, defined by the UNFCCC, the baseline year for and against which countries report their emissions is usually 1990. Using

macro-economic data, each sector of the economy is assessed for its technology, process, energy use etc and using emission factors provided the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the sectoral, national and per capita emissions are computed. It is not a 'bottom up' process given challenges of a vast number of emission sources, millions of data points, variability within them, measurement challenges etc. While the budget has already been reallocated by strengthening early warning systems and climate smart agricultural practices the expected results can still be achieved. Further, ICR could introduce the topic among the adolescents to create awareness and generate innovative ideas for mitigation building on the work already done using the HCD approach. Further, AKF could also present its own Scope 1 and 2 emission data as well as its contributions to mitigation through tree planting etc., which are being collected for its corporate global reporting.

## Transversal Topics

ICR seeks to mainstream gender equality, climate and disaster resilience, and innovation and digitization, addressing them as transversal topics across project Outcomes.

### Gender Equality

Tajikistan has made progress on gender equality in several areas since the end of the Soviet era, but in others, the data is unclear or worsening. Overall, Tajikistan ranks well on UNDP's Gender Inequality Index relative to its Human Development Index rank and relative to other Medium Human Development Countries due to low maternal mortality rates and relatively high female education rates (93.3% of population 25 or older has atleast some secondary education). According to the Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) 2019, women in Tajikistan experience the greatest discrimination due to family-related factors, followed by social institutions that provide access to productive and financial resources. Nevertheless, women's employment in agriculture and education sectors is equal to men with 53% of women in agriculture and 55% in education. Several lessons were drawn from IHHI and have been successfully adopted in ICR to foster greater gender equality, viz:

- Focus on inclusion of women and youth to ensure their active participation in the decision-making process during the design of integrated watershed management plans and integrated village development plans. Women are also active in WUC, in management of the irrigation projects, cold storage, in enterprises as well as in production activities such greenhouses and beekeeping. Women were also seen to be active members in the CERT teams and their involvement in training with men and youth does not appear to be problematic any longer (our questions seemed to surprise the CoESCD staff).
- It was also observed that more educated women, such as schoolteachers and college students, have been involved in the CERT and the ECD programs respectively. They possibly serve as role models and enable greater participation of other women in decision-making processes.
- In more conservative areas and for some topics, trainings have also been conducted separately for women, to enable their active participation.

The program assumes that improved infrastructure and access to services will stimulate women's socioeconomic inclusion and that better access to quality child day care services, following ECD principles, will give women more time for their socioeconomic involvement. However, ECD is highly valued by women of all generations for the early foundation for education it provides pre-school children and the behavioural changes it triggers among children. ECD is not seen as a mechanism of childcare, releasing women for gainful employment. Rather, it is valued for the benefits it brings to the children. Due to the overall high literacy rates, families value this and are willing to pay for ECD.

While the burden of work on women is high and their responsibilities higher in families with male emigration, it has also created space for women to be more active in decision making. The project matches its support to the capacities of individual women beneficiaries providing a menu of options such as support for kitchen gardens, greenhouses, irrigation, enterprise development (e.g., confectionary supported by AP) or collective cold storage facility. In some instances, where women headed households lack financial capacity to contribute towards an infrastructure (e.g. water supply or irrigation systems), the rest of the community has stepped in and this has been facilitated and accepted by the project.

## Climate Change (and DRR)

The impacts of climate variability and change are already being felt in the valley. Contrasting weather conditions of extreme heat (at flowering stage) as well as cold (at bud formations stage) are reported in the same season in different parts of the valley. Given the mountainous terrain, several micro-climates are seen within a small area. While agricultural operations have always been vulnerable to changes in weather, the return periods of extreme weather may be shortening impacting farm productivity and profits in the mid-term. These need to be monitored as most economic activity in the region is agrarian. As farmers shift to more high value crops (e.g European apple varieties) and intensive practices (green houses with multiple harvests) with the project support, the risks are also aggregating. Therefore, it is important that access to weather services and agromet advisories is integrated in the project support activities. These can be accessed through existing or upcoming services from Tajik hydromet, through collaboration with SDC partners (CARITAS) or by promoting private service providers as in many parts of Asia (Videos – VCB-N). There is now a demand for agricultural extension, higher quality inputs and advisories all of which can be viable businesses to be supported by MSDSP and AP.

All dimensions of the 4 R model of Resilience are observed to different extents at the project levels, in the water systems and beyond, viz:

**Robustness** (the ability to withstand stress without failure): collective beekeeping activity where some colonies died but the group could create more colonies and replenish the loss.

**Redundancy** (to have back-up systems to maintain functionality if a system fails): protective irrigation and heating systems in green houses in case of long dry periods and cold spells, respectively.

**Resourcefulness** (capacity to mobilize resources and adapt): while in a few cases a concentration of project investment raises concerns of aid dependency, there are several other instances where beneficiaries have mobilized additional resources or renegotiated repayment terms with creditors after crop failure in an orchard.

**Rapidity** (speed of response and recovery after a disruption): it was heartening to see the ability of the financial institution and AP to rapidly respond to the weather induced crop failure and modify repayment terms, within the season, enabling the farmer to invest for the next season.

The key hindering factors identified in the prodoc of (i) lack of budget for strengthening the existing warning systems; (ii) failure of warning mechanisms and limited budget to implement mitigation strategies; (iii) lack of technical assessment of the housing stock in the valley, remain. Given that the region is exposed to multiple hazards and the risks are extensive, a functioning early warning system (EWS) is essential. Now it operates through multiple wattsapp groups with the risk that some messages do not reach the target or are mis-communicated. Better integration using digital tools will improve the robustness of the system.

Managed pastures, including those initiated by ICR are few and scattered and their impact on reducing exposure to natural disasters is limited to the specific sites, which are well selected. A broader impact will only be seen if there is policy support for management of herd sizes, controlled grazing, breed improvement and stall feeding.

Solid waste seems to be well managed in the settlements as well as along riverbanks.

## Innovation and Digitalization

Many opportunities for digitalization are seen from current work. Use of smart phones and digital communication is high although internet access is controlled and slow. Within these limitations existing project information such as the hazard maps and the underlying database could be provided to the COESCD and to the CERT teams. Digital content for financial literacy, innovative agricultural practices etc. can be generated through crowd sourcing. At the moment people are consuming digital content, but they could also produce such content. The use of the Caritas developed BOT for agromet advisory could be upscaled. Training videos on toilets, financial literacy, an app on business plan development process could also be developed or such content crowd sourced.

## Validity of Project Assumptions

The extent to which the project pre-conditions are still valid was assessed.

- While the geopolitical landscape at the macro, national level is challenging with new laws and regulations, it remains conducive at the district and local levels.
- Local authorities are very willing to support initiatives executed in this program.
- Reliable GHG and CO2 monitoring tools however are neither available nor allowed to be used in the local context.
- Religious and traditional leaders are indeed convinced of the value of gender and social inclusion and support women's empowerment.

# 5. Assessment against OECD DAC Criteria

## Relevance

All thematic areas—WASH, ECD, DRR, and NRM—are relevant to rural communities' needs, particularly as the national government focuses on large infrastructure projects, leaving smaller initiatives to development partners. Strong community mobilization across all areas adds value through participation in planning, implementation, co-financing, ownership, and long-term sustainability. Community and state authority engagement in all ICR interventions was evident, reflecting their clear understanding of project activities and their role in addressing urgent needs unmet by state rural budgets.

IHA enabled the project to direct resources to the most vulnerable communities. While drinking water is a widespread challenge across all watersheds, areas were prioritized using rigid criteria to maximize coverage per intervention. Communities actively participate in assessment, planning, and implementation, contributing both cash and in-kind support. Through WUCs, they also engage in system management decisions and coordination with state authorities on ownership and maintenance of the system. Another good example is the identification of high-risk sites through the IHA and the design of targeted risk mitigation projects for them.

Overall, this is a complex project addressing needs across multiple thematic areas. The team has done well in assessing the social, economic, and environmental context to prioritize community needs, allocate responsibilities among AKF's sectoral teams, and ensure strong coordination (e.g., integrating WASH/DRR with economic development and community mobilization). However, there is some uncertainty in the approach to livelihood and business support projects and the need to see better integration of water supply with improved sanitation and hygiene behaviour (while this is in the plans and maybe forthcoming).

In the next phase, a clearer distinction could improve efficiency: livelihood initiatives would benefit from greater application of the HCD approach), focusing on community needs and achieving higher satisfaction, while business opportunities should follow a Market Systems Development (MSD) approach- analysing root causes of market failures, identifying market actors for partnerships, and leveraging contributions for sustainable, scalable change. For both approaches, AKF should build internal staff capacity to ensure effective adoption during intervention design and implementation. Incremental improvements in functionality of pit latrines through use of a better pan, ventilation of the pit (VIP latrines), handwashing station with provision of soap in all schools and ECD centres may yield better and greater health impacts than the current quite expensive latrine complexes. While taboos around menstrual hygiene have reduced, school latrines should include low-cost incinerators for safe disposal.

The interventions are well aligned with community needs, particularly given the government's limited resources to address urgent climate change impacts on water scarcity, natural resources, and disaster risk management. The project design is detailed, ensuring each output contributes to the intended outcomes and, ultimately, the overall objective. The team has a robust MEL system in place to track progress against each outcome and indicator. Most planned activities are feasible, except for uncertainties in developing a data collection tool for GHG emissions and $CO_2$ sequestration, a digital application for the community feedback mechanism, and the software component of ECD projects, which are largely beyond AKF's direct control. Changes at the output level were communicated to SDC and adjusted accordingly.

Changes occurred in the ECD component, which is part of the WASH and childcare services outcome. ECDs have helped shift parents' mindsets, increasing willingness to pay for services. Similarly, water supply systems have been adapted to meet local resource conditions (spring to borewell to avoid resource use conflict between drinking and irrigation needs). DRR investments are need based, sometimes outside the watershed boundaries if needed.

## Coherence

Water supply, agriculture, DRR and climate resilience are the key priorities in the country while government resources are mainly invested in large infrastructure. SDC and AKF are the key actors in rural development in Rasht, a region devasted by the civil war, facing food scarcity but with the potential to produce surplus food. Thus, the project is aligned with national priorities as well as gaps and needs.

ICR is fully aligned with the priorities of Swiss development cooperation of 1) human development, 2) sustainable economic development, 3) climate and environment, 4) peace and governance. Areas of focus in the new dispatch viz: engagement with the private sector and new technologies can be further enhanced. ICR is aligned with SDC's aim to address deeply rooted socio-economic challenges, including gender disparities and exclusion, as well growing risks for climate change, in an adaptive and flexible manner. It contributes to several of the SDGs.

ICR is fully aligned with the goals of the Swiss Cooperation Programme, Central Asia (2022–25) of contributing to peace and social cohesion; responsive and strengthened institutions; and sustainable development to improve the resilience of the population.

A key lesson learned from earlier assessments is that contextual challenges in the region hinder the achievement of policy reforms and systemic changes, making it necessary to pursue policy work through grassroots activities at the sub-national level and to focus more on enhancing the resilience of people. The focus of the ICR project is aligned with this. Switzerland seeks to strike the right balance in achieving results that are ambitious as well as realistic. ICR contributes to the expected outcome of the WICC portfolio in Tajikistan of 'People live and work – reasonably protected from natural hazards – in resilient settings and use quality public infrastructure services, and water resources are managed with a basin approach in a climate-resilient, sustainable and inclusive way'.

ICR fills an important development investment gap in topics of emergency response, early childhood development, engagement of adolescents and in drinking water and is complementary to the govt investments in large infrastructure. Improving agricultural productivity and entrepreneurship development are national priorities to which ICR contributes in concrete ways. Outcome 1 contributes to improved quality and responsiveness of the district development plans being prepared for the 2026 – 30 period. There is harmonization of data and methodologies between ICR and local level planning. At the district and lower levels there is excellent coordination with functionaries and high ownership of the interventions, including by CBOs.

**Integration**

| Nature of Integration | Observations | Issues & Recommendations |
|---|---|---|
| Within sectors, eg WASH | Water supply is the key priority of people and the govt. Hygiene awareness campaigns (Ac 2.2.1) are held with participation of health dept. Technical advice and basic design for private latrines, although part of the plan, are not yet seen. The logframe envisages improvement or rehabilitation of 400 private latrines which has not yet started and is expected to follow water provision. Latrine construction is currently concentrated in a few schools and market places. Menstrual hygiene can be openly discussed with school administrations responsible for improved toilets. | Household water connections result in greater water use and shift towards pour flush toilets which impacts the efficiency of traditional pit latrines, enhancing the volume of fecal sludge and creating challenges for its disposal. Improved systems for pour flush pit latrine systems should be integrated with water supply provision. Handwashing is a cultural practice but use of soap is not yet seen. This should be promoted (through positive association, for example) and the behaviour change monitored. While dustbins for disposal of menstrual waste are provided in newly build school toilets, provisions for their safe disposal (eg incineration) are not planned. This can create a new problem of solid waste management which is currently not an issue. Lack of integration of this aspect can create cultural barriers to use of the disposal facilities. |
| Cross sectoral eg Greenhouse and Irrigation as DRR | Ability to respond to needs but, incremental actions rather than integrated. | As investments in economic activities grow, the risks from weather based and other disaster risks also increases. Important to move from incremental cross sectoral integration to planned, with potentially a greater own contribution from the beneficiary. This will help avoid shocks and business risks. |
| | Yield and incomes from high value orchards show high fluctuation with weather. | A systemic and whole of value chain approach in entrepreneurship promotion (green houses, orchards, agro input and advisory, coldstorage) contributing to overall local economic development. |
| | AP's financial product allows to factor in such risks in the repayment schedule. | A return period of 4 yrs for such weather fluctuations is factored in by the investor. However if the frequency increases with climate change the financial viability of such investments will be affected. Important to observe patterns, analyse trends and adapt investments such as selection of species. integrate agromet advisories in the investment package to enhance adaptive capacity. |
| | ECD and WASH: child friendly toilets | Traditional pit latrine seats have narrow openings which are appropriate for children. The squatting pans in the new toilets in the schools and markets, however, have been cut open destroying their water seal and making |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | the opening large and less child friendly. All ECDs should have child friendly toilet seats.<br>DRR. |
| Across phases of SDC - AKF financed projects eg. IHHI, ICR | Protecting investments made in IHHI for irrigation for instance with DRR measures (pasture protection and slope stabilization) financed by ICR are seen. | Risk of high concentration of investments in a few villages and high dependency on AKF ('they are here permanently').<br>Promote a partnership approach with communities not only taking care of maintenance but also incremental investments for DRR with part contribution from AKF. |
| Programmatic within AKF eg ICR and regreening | As above – ICR investments are being complemented with other funds such as Regreening. | Maintenance of plantations should be community responsibility with necessary mechanisms in place (irrigation, social fencing). |
| With Govt financed priorities eg ECD | No govt financial allocation for priority topics such as agriculture. AKF resources fill an important financing and development gap.<br><br>Complementary investment from Govt for ECD teachers' salaries.<br><br>High ownership of hazard maps, CRTs, emergency shelters and stocks by CoESCD, see them as their key assets as govt funds are limited. | The commonly applied ToC of donor funded programs serving as a model which can be upscaled with govt funds does not work in this context. The 'model to replication' logic needs to be adapted, and more coverage achieved with project funds.<br><br>AKF has adapted its approach to the new context of its reduced direct engagement with the teachers by measures such as offering them coaching and mentoring support by an experienced teacher. The integration of staff costs in the state budget also provides the teachers with access to pensions.<br><br>Greater collaboration on digitalization efforts such as promotion of the COESCD app or AKF hazard maps would be mutually beneficial |
| With other (I)NGO implemented activities | Only a few NGOs work in the region (GAA, CARITAS and a local NGO) but in different watersheds. | There are sectoral coordination platforms, also facilitated by SDC for sharing lessons and good practices. |

The **Steering Committee** (SC) is a mechanism to ensure national ownership, policy coherence and project steering. Three meetings have been held till date. The SC comprises representatives of the Local Development Committee (LDC), members of parliament, representatives of the SDC, AKDN, AKF, heads of Faizobod, Nurobod, Sangvor districts, and Rogun city and other development partners. The management of the SC meetings is vested with the LDC which is under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan. The first meeting was chaired by the First Deputy Chairman of the LDC. In subsequent meetings, national level government representation was significantly reduced and passive, while the district level functionaries continued to participate actively. The SC meeting is a forum for accountability where the project shares operational and financial information and for facilitating coordination, policy support (on pasture management, climate impacts on glacier by SDC for instance) and alignment with other development interventions. It is recommended that the participation of national level functionaries is stimulated by targeted invitation of national level partners with whom the project collaborates, such as CoESCD, the center for Healthy Lifestyle Development of the Ministry of Health. Senior functionaries of these entities, with whom the evaluators interacted, are very familiar with the project, priorities of the govt in these topics, similar current and past initiatives and can add significant value to the SC.

## Effectiveness

Overall, community members are actively engaged in the local development process through engagement in the process of IVDPs, IWSMPs and being members of WDGs and PGs and CERT groups. The feedback mechanism is effectively streamlined through close coordination of planning and implementation process mainly by chairmen of MC with sub-district and district authorities. Extensive capacity-building efforts have focused on improving the MC chairmen's skills in management and resource mobilization. Interviews with twelve government officials at district and sub district level indicate that they are well informed of ongoing ICR projects and most of them confirmed that data from IVDPs is being used for developing both annual and upcoming DDP for 2026-2030. The integration of IVDP priorities into annual DDPs occurs as follows: a) State budget priorities primarily focus on sectors such as health, education, WASH, ECD, and similar areas. In these sectors, IVDP and DDP priorities align well, enabling co-financing through the state budget; b) Agriculture and other NRM related needs, although reflected in DDPs, do not receive dedicated state budget allocations. In these cases, ICR-supported projects fill the gaps, a collaboration that is highly appreciated by local authorities. Despite the limited state budget for agriculture, district authorities continuously emphasize the sector's importance, especially in light of the visible effects of climate change on natural resources and the environment.

Interviews with national-level authorities further reveal that the state budget is heavily directed toward large-scale infrastructure projects, notably the completion of the *Roghun Hydropower Station*. As a result, funding for small and medium-scale projects such as rural drinking water systems and irrigation relies largely on development partners. National authorities have also emphasized the importance of allocating 85% of the budget to hard infrastructure and 15% to soft components.

Progress toward Outcome 2 is well on track at midterm, despite certain changes that were mainly outside AKF's control. Against the target of reaching 10,150 people with the DWSS system, the project has so far reached 9,248 individuals, including 4,592 women, across four DWSS systems in four watersheds. Significant progress has also been made in the registration of Water User Committees (WUCs), capacity-building initiatives, and coordination with relevant state authorities. Discussions and procedures regarding future maintenance are ongoing and well understood by stakeholders. While four of the five planned latrines have been completed to a high standard, technical modifications made by the managers will adversely affect their functionality and effectiveness.

High interest rates from financial institutions continue to impede SME development in Tajikistan, particularly in the agriculture sector. Subsidized financial schemes, offering annual interest rates between 6% and 12% under the ICR project, effectively address this gap by improving access to finance in rural areas. At the midterm stage, several business cases are showing promising results with potential for scale-up. Grassroots level engagement, including announcements in Jamoats and use of the MC network has enabled AKF to identify innovative ideas from motivated entrepreneurs, rather than individuals seeking grants. One notable example is a young entrepreneur who previously worked in the gas block industry in Russia and successfully replicated the model in his village. The business seems commercially viable, scalable, and contributes to resilience against natural hazards and improved energy efficiency, as gas block construction offers better earthquake resistance and thermal insulation. To further scale, the business should be linked with AP. While the business concept and progress are impressive, AKF should also provide training on safety standards, as current working conditions present significant health risks.

By partnering with a local machinery operator, AKF has improved farmers' access to mechanization services and, with targeted business and financial support, can enable him to scale

and provide more services that are in demand such as bale making, seeding, and IPM. At the same time, the entrepreneur should ensure the provision of a designated garage or covered stall for the machinery. Storing the equipment in an open area would significantly compromise its durability and operational lifespan

Outcome IV focuses on two interrelated areas: enhancing climate-smart agriculture (CSA) practices and strengthening disaster risk preparedness. Under CSA, agricultural inputs, tools, equipment, and machinery were provided to farmers through Producer Groups, while poorer households received support for greenhouse construction to promote food diversification. Irrigation access was improved for 261 ha through the rehabilitation and construction of two vertical wells using furrow irrigation.

However, additional elements of climate-smart irrigation should be incorporated to address water scarcity and unpredictable weather patterns. To achieve this, the AKF team should align more closely with the CSA definition in the project document, integrating practices such as direct seeding, permanent soil cover, mulching, water harvesting and storage, precision and solar irrigation, among others.

CERTs are effective in managing emergencies and disasters within their villages. Women and young people are active members and were demonstrate engagement during meetings with the evaluation team. Early warnings are primarily shared by CoESCD through WhatsApp groups. The CoESCD has also developed a software application providing weather alerts, first aid guidance, and emergency response tips. Although its use is still limited, dissemination could be expanded through CERT groups and MCs at the village level. National-level CoESCD officials expressed satisfaction with AKF's community disaster risk preparedness and response initiatives. The CoESCD General Major noted that these practices were commended by the President during his visit to GBAO and encouraged for nationwide replication.

## Efficiency

Despite delays during the start-up phase of the project, by the mid-term point, 70% of the budget for Outcome I had been disbursed. Given that this outcome primarily focuses on coordination, planning, and community mobilization, it is reasonable that a large portion of the budget was used early on. WMPs were developed for all target watersheds, and their priorities were integrated into 49 IVDPs as planned. Community mobilization, coordination with local state authorities, and the organization of training and planning sessions in 49 villages that are scattered across four watersheds demanded significant human and financial resources. This is notable considering that only 12% of the project's direct costs were originally allocated to this outcome.

At the midterm most project activities for Outcome II are progressing well, with 37% of the total budget disbursed. Construction of all four DWSS systems is on track, and budget disbursement is expected to increase over the coming year. With the completion of these four systems, AKF has already reached approximately 90% of its planned beneficiaries and is currently assessing the feasibility of constructing a fifth DWSS. This reflects effective planning and site selection, enabling efficient use of financial resources. It is too early to assess the cost-effectiveness of the systems, as water tariff rates have not yet been finalized. AKF's experience in other villages shows that DWSS systems which initially set water tariffs at 1 TJS per cubic meter have since increased rates to 2 TJS per cubic meter. While a tariff of 2 TJS may cover basic operational costs, it is unlikely to be sufficient for major repairs in the long term. However, interviews indicate that communities are resourceful in mobilizing financial support, particularly through social capital such as remittances from labour migrants and voluntary contributions from community members.

AKF also demonstrated adaptability in response to unforeseen changes in the ECD component.

The efficiency of climate smart practices, particularly irrigation, could be significantly increased by linking farmers with service providers and to the software application featuring weather forecasts, soil moisture data, and more, developed by Caritas with SDC support. With only 31% of the budget disbursed for this output, there is flexibility to scale and refine interventions. To strengthen farmers' efficiency and climate resilience, greater emphasis should be placed on water-saving measures, adoption of drought-resistant varieties, and crop rotation strategies that enable double cropping per hectare. Introducing efficient biodigester technology could significantly expand access to clean energy and organic fertilizer solutions. While AKF supports vermicompost production at the household level, this also presents a viable SME opportunity for rural entrepreneurs to process, package, and market at scale.

IHA findings show that farmers in the target watershed spend 40% of agricultural expenditures on animal feed, revealing strong business potential for rural SMEs in animal feed/silage production.

## Impact

While it is still early to assess the impacts of the project, clear positive trends are seen in the following areas:

**Gender dynamics**: There is a positive trend in women's participation in community level planning, trainings and in livelihood activities. Women are managing various production operations and also making decisions on the use of the income. Women in the honey producer group for instance collaboratively determine minimum sale prices, organize bulk sales, and share transportation costs. By mid-term, 3,313 women had benefited from gender-sensitive sub-projects, out of a target of 6,500. The high male emigration rates do bring additional responsibilities for women. However, engagement in income generating activities is not perceived as an additional burden, rather they contribute to women's economic empowerment. In total, around 3,000 people have benefited from improved land management practices of whom 50% women. Medium-scale projects such as irrigation infrastructure (covering 261 ha) and establishment of a cold storage/warehouse (100 mt capacity) are also implemented. To ensure that engagement in economic activities is translated into social empowerment and enhanced decision-making, it is important that the women are supported to be decision makers in the more complex activities (such as the cold-storage) as well, and men are not used as proxies for decision making.

**Improved access to food and a diverse diet**: A range of livelihood initiatives have been supported. These include kitchen gardens, vermicompost production, provision of high-quality wheat seeds and agricultural equipment (motorized tillers with ploughs, small carts, hillers tillage machines, sprinklers etc). They are leading to improved availability and consumption of food including fresh vegetables and fruits by the households, their neighbours and a few customers in the vicinity. While the health impacts of improved diets need to be assessed, an intermediate impact of consumption of better and more diverse food was reported during this evaluation.

**Enhanced disaster preparedness and response capacities:** A total of 240 people have been trained in disaster preparedness and response through simulations and training sessions (99 females, 141 males, 73 youth). They provide lifesaving support in a region facing numerous and recurrent hazards. The CoESCD has a strong sense of ownership of the emergency shelters and supplies, which are well maintained and replenished. Families have been housed in the shelters for extended periods of time after floods and earthquakes. They enable affected households to recover in a safe space, also providing them easy access to public services. Just over the period of January – June 2024, 51 natural disaster incidents were recorded including 7 earthquakes and 9 mudflows. Trained CERT teams with access to stockpiles of material are a key mechanism through which the CoESCD is able to respond to such emergencies.

**Innovations through involvement of adolescents**: The engagement of adolescents, a hitherto neglected group, using the HCD approach, is generating innovative ideas to address local challenges. These fresh perspectives have the potential to create new employment and enterprises, such as in tourism, building on opportunities coming up in the region.

**Unintended effects**

The bottom-up approach and strong community involvement in project design have proven highly effective. However, AKF should exercise greater oversight when communities propose interventions that are not economically viable. For example, in Arghankul village, a landslide mitigation project supported fencing and tree planting over 51 hectares. While the decision on tree types was made jointly by community members and AKF staff, the community insisted on planting fruit trees alongside drought-resistant species like rosehip and acacia. Unfortunately, due to an extended dry period, around 400 fruit trees are at risk of drying out. Community members are now requesting additional support from AKF for irrigation, which could have been avoided with more prudent planning.

Interviews in other villages demonstrate impressive community mobilization of financial resources, including contributions from labour migrants. In some cases, communities have funded large-scale initiatives themselves, such as purchasing an excavator for an irrigation project at a cost exceeding $100,000. AKF should encourage greater financial participation from communities not just through labour, but also through monetary investment, including for DRR-related projects. The current model risks to foster an “aid-dependency” mindset, even though many communities are now in a stronger position to co-invest.

**Environmental impacts**

National-level officials expressed satisfaction with AKF’s community disaster risk preparedness and response initiatives. The CoESCD General Major noted that these practices were commended by the President during his visit to GBAO and encouraged for nationwide replication.

To strengthen communities’ resilience to climate change, greater emphasis should be placed on developing and promoting “green financing products,” particularly in the agriculture sector for energy efficient technologies, climate-smart irrigation, water storage solutions etc. in partnership with the private sector. More focus should be placed on climate-smart agriculture practices, especially with available agromet advisory tools developed by CARITAS and the Hydromet dept. The agriculture machinery service provision is a strong initiative, both for creating business opportunities and for improving services to farmers. It could be further strengthened as a mechanism to promote climate-smart practices such as minimum tillage, precision agriculture etc.

## Sustainability

Local capacities and ownership have been built to such an extent that communities as well as local govt officials take responsibility for the maintenance of the infrastructure created. They can articulate their needs and for their inclusion in the district plans. Mechanisms for local resource mobilization for O&M are in place and for large, unexpected expenses, communities are also able to raise funds from migrants and the diaspora.

There are several instances where individual beneficiaries and groups have been able to mobilize additional resources and capacities to overcome risks and also reach out to the govt at different levels of the administration. Local mechanisms for fund raising and contribution to community development are impressive and growing.

WUCs are able to determine and collect both connection fees as well as user charges for water services. Similarly, there is a designated person for management of the irrigation infrastructure and services. Mahalla committees take responsibility for school infrastructure while public toilets in the marketplace run as viable business based on the user fees collected. Enterprises promoted

by MSDSP and AP are profitable and able to repay their loans and break even within 3 years even after factoring in seasonal low production due to weather or pests. Credit instruments are also flexible allowing enterprises to recover from a bad season. All of these indicate that project results can be sustained after the project period. Financial products do need to be adapted for individual enterprises to allow for growth and development.

The pending registration of AKF is a risk. AKF's institutional restructuring adds to a sense of uncertainty. A scenario-based risk management plan would be helpful in navigating through this context. The space for civil society is restricted. While the participation of national govt representatives in the steering committee is low the ownership of the project and the important gap that AKF fills in key sectors is broadly recognised and highly appreciated, especially by district govts. This is a key asset in dealing with challenging contextual factors.

## Coordination

The IHA process created a good foundation for coordination among the partners and for integration of the different sectoral and thematic foci of the project. The ongoing restructuring of AKF would further strengthen this. The coordination between AP and MSDSP on support to economic activities could be strengthened for supporting the beneficiaries and the evolution of some with potential, into larger enterprises. All government stakeholders at different levels are well informed about the project and its activities. The presence of national govt representatives at the steering committee meetings is not as planned. This is ascribed to their largely upward reporting responsibilities and workload. The ownership of the project at the district level is very high.

# 6. Recommendations

**Project level**

**Community Responsibility and Dependency**

1. The bottom-up approach and strong community involvement in project design have proven effective. However, AKF should exercise greater oversight when communities propose interventions that are not economically viable. Use of high value fruit trees for stabilization of slopes without clearly defined responsibility for the beneficiaries to provide protective irrigation as needed and ensure a good survival rate leads to concerns of 'aid dependency'.
2. Concentration of past and current project activities in a few villages leads to concerns about aid dependency ('AKF is now here to stay'). A partnership approach with clearly defined responsibilities for all activities, including DRR is recommended. In future, Integrated Habitat Assessment should also provide information on past AKF and other donor investments in the villages to avoid concentration of resources.

**WASH**

3. While hygiene awareness programs have been held on a large-scale use of soap for handwashing was not observed. Access to low-cost technical options for improved sanitation is planned to follow the construction of water supply systems. Local enterprises to fabricate low-cost toilet pans suited for pit latrines, can help bridge the gap, improving functionality of the existing latrines given that 98% of households have pit latrines. A collaboration with SaTo san could be explored. The full health benefits of improved water supply and sanitation can only be achieved through integration of these aspects.
4. The quality of construction of all infrastructures (emergency shelters, toilet blocks, EDC space) is very high. There is however a tradeoff between the cost of individual units and population coverage using less expensive, incremental improvements in functionality. This

is particularly important for school sanitation where existing pit latrines are located far from the main building due to the problem of smell and flies, challenging access during the long winter period with high snow fall. It is strongly recommended that in future years the focus shifts to improving the functionality of several school toilets through the introduction of a low-cost toilet pan, a ventilation system and fly trap for the pit (VIP latrine), dustbin and/or simple incineration system for sanitary waste and a hand washing station in all schools.

5. Since the government lacks resources for construction of WASH infrastructure and there are few other donors active in the region on this topic, the demonstration value of an improved toilet as a pilot, to be replicated by others, is not important, rather resources could be more equitably distributed to benefit many children.
6. Menstrual waste management systems stop at the use of dustbins. This can create a new challenge of solid waste management, which is currently not seen as a problem in the villages visited, and can also pose cultural barriers to the use of the dustbins. A low-cost simple incineration box / system should be part of all school toilets. There are no taboos to discuss this topic among the school administration which is a big achievement of the project and its partners.

**Digitization**

7. Community Emergency Response Teams (CERTs) have proven highly effective in managing emergencies and disasters within their villages. Women and young people are active members and demonstrated strong engagement during meetings with the evaluation team. Early warnings are primarily shared by CoESCD through WhatsApp groups. The CoESCD has also developed a software application providing weather alerts, first aid guidance, and emergency response tips. Its use is still limited; dissemination could be expanded through CERT groups and MCs at the village level.
8. Similarly, every CoESCD and CERT has paper copies of the hazard maps prepared by AKF but these can also be used in the digital format, making the household level data and information accessible and useful for the CoESCD and CERT team members. Smart phone and internet are widely used in the area even if internet speeds are low.
9. Engagement of adolescents through the HCD program has brought new ideas and concrete actions to address community priorities. While the focus on local evidence-based actions to trigger a green transition, through development of an app and collection of data on greenhouse gas emissions is laudable and ambitious, it could not be implemented due to regulatory constraints. While funds for this activity line have been diverted to DWSS, NRM and DRR with the approval of SDC, awareness of GHG emissions and options to reduce them can still be created with the engagement of the students (e.g. as a science project). Several apps and tools already exist for carbon accounting by individuals and firms. This should lead to concrete actions locally to improve practices, such as management of livestock, manure management etc.

**Entrepreneurship development**

10. For cold storage facilities, cold chain experts should be involved to support AKF staff to ensure that temperature, humidity, and ventilation control systems are properly installed and maintained, and that community members are trained in their use. At the time of field visit no devices were in place to monitor temperature or humidity, and owners had limited knowledge of proper storage management, underscoring the need for capacity building.
11. To increase efficiency, the Market Systems Development approach should be applied more rigorously to address critical constraints in remote areas, such as limited access to quality agricultural inputs and water scarcity. This requires an analysis of market functions and actors to identify gaps, incentives, and leverage points for partnership that can drive

sustainable, scalable system change. For improving the agriculture input supply chain, partnerships should be built with capable service-technology providers.

12. IHA findings show that farmers in the target watershed spend 40% of agricultural expenditures on animal feed, revealing strong business potential for rural SMEs in animal feed/silage production.
13. Financial literacy among women entrepreneurs needs to be improved. Short training videos and business coaching tutorials should be offered. While sector-specific exchange among entrepreneurs within the country and beyond has been promoted by AP, exchange within the valley, among entrepreneurs, irrespective of the sector they work in, could be very helpful for peer coaching and support on aspects of business and financial management.
14. Most enterprises supported by AKF and AP are doing well, overcoming challenges and adapting their practices. Many of them are poised for growth. The financial products of MSDSP need to be adapted to the needs of the entrepreneur, supporting financial linkages for growth. MSDSP supported projects can also serve as pipeline for AP.

**Climate and Disaster Resilience**

15. As farmers shift to more high value crops (e.g European apple varieties) and intensive practices (green houses with multiple harvests) with project support, the investments that are at risk of extreme events and climate change, are also growing. Selection of crop varieties and water management interventions also move towards greater investment and intensification. This is a positive trend as markets are growing, trade is flourishing and there is a potential for growth and improved productivity. Given the high exposure to weather and hydro-geological hazards, early warning, agromet and agricultural advisory services and access to inputs need to be integrated in the program to reduce and manage risks.
16. Weather services and agromet advisories should be integrated in the project support activities. These can be accessed through existing or upcoming services from Tajik hydromet, through collaboration with SDC partners (CARITAS) or by promoting private service providers as in many parts of Asia (Videos – VCB-N). Digital media is very widely used, and this is a clear opportunity for targeted communication and extension at a reasonable cost. The focus should be on provision of information, advisory and solutions and not only on awareness, as extreme events and associated risks are a lived reality for the communities.
17. Access to electricity in the region is very limited, more so in winter months when supply is limited to 4 – 6 hours per day and power cuts over several days are common. Therefore, it is recommended that all water pumping system are solar by default and solar energy provision, a key priority identified by adolescents through the Human Centric Design (HCD) program, is integrated in ECD and school toilet construction programs.
18. The Integrated Habitat Assessment (IHA) reports identified the use of animal manure for cooking as a key factor for deficiencies in soil nutrients in all the watersheds. While there is a potential to double agricultural productivity, 50 – 60% of households report shortage of fertilizers. Integrating biogas, vermi-composing and trials of solar cooking systems have the potential to address soil fertility, energy security and economic benefits in an integrated way.
19. AKF has initiated smart agriculture practices such as using organic manure, producing vermicompost, applying crop rotation, and improving grazing management. With only 31% of the budget disbursed for this output, there is flexibility to scale and refine interventions. To strengthen farmers' efficiency and climate resilience, greater emphasis should be placed on water-saving measures, solar-powered drip irrigation, adoption of drought-resistant varieties, and crop rotation strategies that enable double cropping per hectare.

20. Given that the region is exposed to multiple hazards and the risks are extensive, a functioning early warning system (EWS) is essential. Now it operates through multiple wattsapp groups with the risk that some messages do not reach the target or are mis-communicated. Better integration using digital tools may improve the robustness of the system.
21. Managed pastures, including those initiated by ICR are few and scattered and their impact on reducing exposure to natural disasters is limited to the specific sites, which are well selected. A broader impact will only be seen if there is policy support for management of herd sizes, controlled grazing, breed improvement and stall feeding. Partnership with other programs such as the upcoming nationwide ADB program on agriculture, dialogue at donor platforms is needed to complement local actions.

**Programmatic**

a. Springs are the most preferred source of water for drinking and irrigation by both communities and AKF. Culturally, flowing water is preferred as drinking water over ground water. Only in cases where an adequate spring source is unavailable does AKF opt for groundwater based DWSS. The upper catchments of spring sources are being degraded due to uncontrolled animal grazing. The highland areas are also the regions where migrant cattle from other regions graze. There is a 5-fold increase in individual herd sizes since Soviet times. Protection of drinking water sources may provide the necessary weight to pasture protection measures. While the principles of springshed management are similar to watershed management, they differ in some significant aspects as below:

- **Scope**: Springshed management can cover multiple micro- or meso-watersheds, while watershed management typically focuses on a single watershed.
- **Geographical Relationship**: Springs are often located outside the typical boundaries of a watershed, as their recharge zones may not align with the watershed's boundaries.
- **Approach**: Springshed management emphasizes the relationship between springs, aquifers, and watersheds, aiming to conserve water resources effectively. In contrast, traditional watershed management often overlooks the unique characteristics of springs.
- **Recharge Management**: Springshed management may implement recharge strategies that differ from traditional methods, focusing on augmenting discharge from springs rather than just managing water flow in the watershed.

SDC India has supported the govt of India in developing its policy and a guidance on springshed management in the Hindukush Himalayas[2] recognising that between 40% to 90% of domestic water needs in mountainous regions are met by spring sources which are drying rapidly. Evaluation of its applicability in Rasht and eventual integration of springshed management would deliver multiple benefits of water security at an affordable cost, protection of the landscape and reduction of landslide risks which are also triggered by excessive soil moisture, including due to melting of permafrost. Monitoring of springs and changes in their discharge is also a key step to building adaptive capacity of mountain communities.

b) There is a risk of concentration of several AKF financed activities in specific villages due to AKF's long presence in the region and the high-risk profile of settlements which creates new unmet needs. There is a high degree of local resource mobilization and self-reliance in the area with school alumni and migrants contributing substantial amounts to community and village development activities. This needs to be fostered and AKF investments distributed carefully for equity and coverage. While being comprehensive, the IHAs, do not contain information on past

[2] Guidelines for Policy Makers and Development Practitioners

investments by AKF and other donors in the watershed, and given the long history of AKF's presence in the region, this information would help avoid concentration of resources.

c) The pending registration of AKF is a risk. AKF's institutional restructuring adds to a sense of uncertainty. A scenario-based risk management plan would be helpful in navigating through this context.

d) While the participation of national govt representatives in the steering committee is low, the ownership of the project and the important gap that AKF fills in key sectors is broadly recognised and highly appreciated, especially by district govts. This is a key asset in dealing with challenging contextual factors. It is recommended that specific national entities with whom the project has a direct collaboration, such as CoESCD and the center for Healthy Lifestyle Development of the Ministry of Health, are invited to the Steering Committee to strengthen the body.

In summary, while Rasht faces many hazards, there are also many opportunities as the region is experiencing an economic and social transformation. AKF and SDC have been long term partners in the development of the region. This partnership should now take advantage of the new opportunities while taking care not to augment existing risks or creating new ones.

# Annexes

## Annex 1: ToR

Federal Department of Foreign Affairs FDFA

Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

**Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC**
Swiss Cooperation Office Dushanbe

Direct award Procedure: the contracting authority awards a public contract directly without an invitation to tender. The contracting authority is entitled to obtain comparative quotes and to conduct negotiations.

**Terms of Reference**

**Swiss Cooperation Office Dushanbe, Tajikistan**

**Project evaluation**

External, mid-term evaluation of project Improving Community Resilience through Sustainable Livelihoods in the Rasht Valley 2022-2027

Dushanbe, 25.03.2025

# 1. Introduction

This document sets out the requirements relating to the project evaluation mandate for Improving Community Resilience through Sustainable Livelihoods in the Rasht Valley (ICR), the selection process and criteria.

The Terms of Reference (ToR) describe the purpose, context, objectives (including guiding indicative evaluation questions), scope and a proposed methodology of the evaluation. They further describe the evaluation process and the expected deliverables. **The ToR will become a component of the contract for this evaluation mandate.**

# 2. Background information and context of the evaluation

## 2.1 Background and context

Tajikistan is the poorest country in Central Asia and is vulnerable to **regional geopolitics and economic shocks**. The country is heavily dependent on remittances. During the COVID-19 pandemic, remittances were substantially reduced affecting the poorest families the most as they disproportionately rely on remittances for basic needs. Despite economic sanctions against Russia, 1.28M citizens of Tajikistan entered Russia in 2023 (Ministry of Interior of Russia). The Tajik Government is looking for diversification of labour migrants' destinations (Gulf countries, South Korea, Europe). Labour emigration creates serious "brain drain" and skills deficit for the country. Tajikistan continues to play **an important role in different international fora** - lead initiative on the declaration of 2025 as year of glacier preservation, hosting the Central Asian plus Azerbaijan countries consultative meeting, meeting with heads of Russia, Germany, USA, China in different formats.

Despite the anti-Taliban stance and refusal to sign the Moscow declaration, Tajikistan announced that it strives to create favourable conditions for the stabilization of Afghanistan's social and economic life while implementing projects in the energy, transport and communications sectors. Central Asian neighbours Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, in December 2024, announced a border demarcation deal on the last contested frontier in the region, potentially ending decades of territorial disputes. Moreover, the rugged mountainous topography of Tajikistan coupled with the impacts of climate change, population growth and inequitable access to water and sanitation, limited investments in food value chains and weak local governance systems are putting a heavy strain on the livelihood systems.

Tajikistan is the **most vulnerable country to climate change in Central Asia**. Climate change in the country affects negatively water resources, the agricultural and energy sectors as well as transportation infrastructure and public health. Extreme weather events recurrently destroy infrastructure and livelihoods. Livelihoods in Tajikistan, particularly in rural areas, are highly dependent on agricultural production. However, the local communities in mountainous areas have a low adaptive capacity to cope with negative climate impacts due to lack of resources, knowledge and adequate climate information to plan their agricultural production.

The **Rasht Valley,** located in the upper central region of Tajikistan, is more vulnerable from a **socioeconomic lens** compared to all other regions in Tajikistan (poverty rate of 32% compared to 26% at national level; for extreme poverty it is 18% respectively 11%). The Rasht Valley was heavily affected by the consequences of the Civil War (1992-1997), due to which its socio-economic progress was not prioritized in the last few decades. The planned program builds on the **learnings of the Swiss funded Integrated Health and Habitat Improvement Project (IHHI)** and is designed with the aspiration that communities enjoy improved quality of life in more resilient, healthy, and sustainable environment in the Rasht Valley. The assessments conducted by the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) and the IHHI project in the Rasht Valley indicate that several cross-cutting socio-economic issues hinder the resilience of the local communities in Rasht. These issues include:

a) brain and labour drain and shortage of local qualified specialists and skilled professional;
b) inadequate access to quality education, including early childhood development;
c) unsustainable use of natural resources, including overgrazing of pasture lands leading to high
d) greenhouse gases' (GHG) emission;
e) limited investments in promotion of small and medium-sized enterprises (SME);
f) lack of access to safely managed water and sanitation services;
g) lack of good quality of seeds, other agricultural inputs and livestock breeds;

The intended **project is a contribution to the AKDN's National Social Development Program** 2022-2027 that aims to enhance the livelihoods of the vulnerable communities in the regions of Khatlon, Sughd, GBAO and Districts of Republican Subordination. In close partnership with governments, businesses and civil society a number of long-term projects will be implemented. Such program is funded by the European Commission, USAID, IFAD and AKF.

The **SDC project contribution is earmarked for the Rasht Valley only with an overall timeframe of ten years,** with two phases of five years each, starting from December 2022 until November 2032. Switzerland is a well-recognized bi-lateral donor in Tajikistan, active in the areas of water, DRR and climate change.

The project consists of two phases of five years each. The first phase of the project began on December 1, 2022 and will be completed on November 30, 2027. A possible second phase of the project is planned for the period from December 1, 2027 to November 30, 2032.

The project aims at improving the resilience of livelihoods of the remote rural communities of Rasht Valley, by providing to vulnerable people to climate change access to water and sanitation, income generation opportunities and generation and protection of their natural resources while adopting DRR measures and practices.

The **first outcome creates** the conditions where community members actively participate in the design, implementation, and feedback mechanisms of the local development processes that benefits 32,000 people. A bottom-up approach to development planning will inspire new initiatives, guide new project designs, and support the scaling up of complementary initiatives, including to facilitate the dialogue between citizens and authorities.

The **second outcome** ensures that target communities have equitable access and active use vital services (such as WASH and childcare services) that are provided by public and private actors. This will be achieved through multiple cross-sectorial interventions including the construction of safely managed water supply and sanitation service systems (benefitting 12,000 people) with sustainable mechanisms for operations and maintenance. Furthermore, day care services will be made affordable and will respect early childhood development (ECD) principles (benefitting at least 400 young children including 50% girls). This approach focuses on a holistic development of children in early years. Daycare centres not only support children's overall development but also act as one of the potential solutions to encourage female employment as the mothers leave their children knowing that they are well cared for.

The **third outcome** is designed to ensure that women and youth generate a sustainable income by being trained in relevant, in-demand technical skills and having access to financial products tailored according to the market needs. AKF will work with Accelerate Prosperity, MSDSP that aims to invest in companies that can enable social, environmental and economic growth while delivering good capital returns (detailed description of partner organisations provided in Annex 10).

The **fourth outcome** is designed to ensure that communities engage in management, regeneration, protection, and conservation of their natural resources and adopt disaster risk reduction measures. This will be achieved through climate-smart agriculture to increase

productivity and strengthening disaster preparedness of communities with a focus on ecosystem-based disaster risk reduction (eco-DRR).

The proposed project is fully in line with the Swiss Dispatch 2021-2024, the Swiss Cooperation Program for Central Asia 2022-2025 (Swiss portfolio outcome 1 – Water, Infrastructure and Climate Change) and the new Guidelines for Central Asia 2021-2024. In the Dispatch, mitigation and adaption to climate change are the first priorities for bilateral cooperation in Central Asia. This program also addresses the ambition of two Memorandums of Understanding between the governments of Tajikistan and Switzerland on Integrated Water Resource Management and Climate Change & Disaster Risk Reduction.

As mentioned above, SDC will contribute to the longer-term AKDN program on sustainable development. This program builds on the learnings of the Swiss supported Integrated Health and Habitat Improvement Project (IHHI) and is designed with the aspiration that communities enjoy improved quality of life in more resilient, healthy, and sustainable environment in the Rasht Valley. The key learnings from the IHHI program include (i) importance of adopting an inclusive approach with all key stakeholders in all stages of the program to ensure shared ownership and sustainability of all actions; (ii) creating mechanisms for promoting engagement of women and youth in building inclusive and community-led development processes; (iii) prioritizing demand-driven sub-projects to ensure buy-in from beneficiaries (particularly in the case of infrastructure projects); (iv) leading coordination with other development stakeholders to avoid duplications and build on synergies and complementarities; (v) adopting flexible modalities in calculating and collecting water tariffs to promote high recovery rates; (vi) adopting an integrated watershed management approach and to avoid geographically fragmented activities; (vii) investing in day-care centers to promote engagement of young mothers in livelihood activities; (viii) and investing in sub-projects that have proven to promote effective natural resource management and reduce disaster risks (such as emergency shelters, micro-forests and others).

# 3. Objective, scope and focus of the evaluation

## 3.1 Evaluation object

The mid-term evaluation shall focus on the mid-term progress, intermediate results as well as obstacles and challenges faced during the first phase of the project.

## 3.2 Purpose and objectives

The evaluation should contribute to the understanding of the performance of the project against the planned project objectives, expected results and targets as per logical framework. Furthermore, this evaluation should generate lessons learned for the remaining implementation period of the current phase and identify where possible best practise and innovation in the areas of intervention of the project.

In more specific terms, the evaluation is expected to:

a) Provide SDC and AKF with and independent, evidence-based assessment of how the approaches developed by the project address relevant and contemporary challenges: and how they contributed to the outcomes envisioned within the life of the project and towards attaining the longer-term goals.

b) Contribute to the understanding of the performance of the project against the planned project objectives expected results and targets as per the logical framework. Identify, issues, challenges, gaps and weaknesses and provide recommendations for making necessary adjustments. Assess the major strengths, areas for improvement and limitations of the project.

c) Provide recommendations for potential improvements in the approaches and systems developed and implemented to foster broad uptake and scaling at the level of national policy.

d) Validate positive impacts of the project in terms of national ownership and impact at the level of rural households and communities.

e) Evaluate the delivered outcomes and outputs and assess their contribution to the project's overall objective.

f) Assess the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the project implementation.

g) Assess the long-term impact and sustainability of the project interventions.

h) Identify key lessons learnt to date, particularly with regards to its chosen strategic processes, mechanisms and partnerships to achieve the project's objectives to date.

i) Assess the role, input and project ownership by the implementing government partners (the district and sub-district authorities of Rasht Valley (Governors' offices), Ministry of Energy and Water Resources (MoEWR), the Committee of Emergency Situations and Civil Defense (CoESCD), the Ministry of Agriculture MoA, Sanitary Epidemiological Service (SES), State Forest Enterprise (SFE), Local Development Committee (LDC);

j) Analyze and validate the methodologies and approaches applied;

k) Develop recommendations for each aspect to further improve efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability of the ICR (Phase-1). Make recommendations on how to best achieve all project objectives in the remaining time of the ongoing phase;

l) To assess on the levels of satisfaction of all the beneficiaries involved in the initiative and collect their recommendations to adjust eventual drifts.

The project evaluation should be guided by the **OECD/DAC Criteria**[3] relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. The relevant evaluation criteria are to be selected in order to formulating pertinent evaluation questions that will be presented in the bid. The focus on and the exclusion of criteria should be explicitly stated in the **bid of the consultant** as well as the **final evaluation report**.

## 3.3 Scope

The breadth and depth of the evaluation will be informed by the indicative evaluation questions that the evaluation seeks to answer (see chapter below). The evaluation will assess the intervention area of the ICR project and thereby provide a rationale for the best way to achieve all project objectives in the remaining time of the ongoing phase of the project. The timeframe is limited from December 1, 2022 to end of May 2025. The geographical scope includes four districts of the Rasht Valley: Fayzobod, Roghun, Nurobod and Sangvor districts.

## 3.4 Indicative evaluation questions / key focus area

During the inception phase, the evaluator(s), in consultation with the SDC, should further refine and prioritise the questions that are structured according to the OECD DAC criteria. The bidder is also expected to address these questions within the technical bid.

| | |
|---|---|
| Relevance | • How relevant are the project's thematic and geographic focus in Tajikistan?]<br>• How are the results and ongoing approaches of ICR project in line with the project partners (LDC, CoES, CoEP, MoA, MoEWR, SES ) mandate?<br>• How the applied approaches and achieved outcomes are suited to the priorities and policies of the target groups, stakeholders and project funding partner organization?<br>• What are the opportunities for addressing the climate related issues of the country? |

[3] OECD/DAC Network on Development Evaluation: Better Criteria for Better Evaluation. Revised Evaluation Criteria Definitions and Principles for Use (2019).

| | |
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| | • Has the project been based on the correct assumptions regarding risks, opportunities and challenges?<br>• Are the planned outcomes and outputs objectives and their respective indicators still relevant from the view of the project impact objective and the latest legislative development?<br>• What recommendations can be drawn for the end of Phase I? |
| Coherence | • To what extent is the project compatible with other Swiss development cooperation interventions in Tajikistan and thematic field (consistency, complementarity and synergies)?<br>• How is the project positioned among donors' and government's interventions in the climate change and DRR agenda?<br>• How the project supports the government strategies and programmes' implementation related to CC and DRR, as well improvement of the agricultural systems?<br>• What are the roles and contributions of the state agencies (mainly LDC, CoES, CoEP, MoA, MoEWR, SES) in the implementation process, in terms of taking the ownership, policy advice, staff allocation and etc.)?<br>• What is the chance of climate service mainstreaming and synergizing in/with other projects? To what extent is the intervention compatible with interventions of other actors (bilateral and multilateral donors, private sector, UN, NGOs, etc.) in the country and thematic fields (complementarity and synergies)?<br>• Are there any unintended results (outcomes/outputs)? If so, which are their effects?<br>• How is the impact of National Steering Committee meetings' influence on cooperation and coordination among relevant state institutions? |
| Effectiveness | • What is the status of the results achieved from the project start until the start of the evaluation?<br>• How the ICR intervention has been effectively applied at all levels, from national to district levels?<br>• Were the outcomes achieved as stated (or on target to achievement)?<br>• Are there any identified factors and constraints which have affected project implementation?<br>• To what extent did capacity building activities meet the needs? Did these activities address capacity gaps of all beneficiaries of the project?<br>• Should any other government sectors be involved to reach the project outcomes?<br>• Were the outputs delivered as planned? How many activities have been cancelled and why? If so, can they be brought back?<br>• Can the outcomes attained be directly attributed to project activities implemented? What major (external & internal) factors contributed to, or challenged the successful attainment of outcomes?<br>• To what degree were the expected results achieved against the objectives and indicators? And how?<br>• Were there any positive or negative effects as a result of the intervention?<br>• Does the project strengthen community participation, notably women and vulnerable groups at the local level?<br>• Are there differences in the project results between the various project locations? What were they and what lessons can be learned?<br>• To what extent were the intended results of the intervention achieved (or are likely to be achieved) at the level of output, outcome and overall goal of the intervention?<br>• What are the recommendations for the remaining time of the ongoing phase of the project? |
| Efficiency | • Were the human and financial resources are used as planned and appropriately? If not, how were these adjusted? Why and how?<br>• Support of National partners?<br>A. Involvement of International partners?<br>B. Small grants to address adolescence issues? |

| | |
|---|---|
| | C. Local staff allocation?<br>• Was the timeline for achieving the outcomes realistic? What should be extended? What is delayed?<br>• What have been unforeseen challenges/opportunities in terms of resource allocation (technical, human and financial)? How well were these handled?<br>• How do project management as well as steering and decision-making process's function? Are problems identified in good time and are practical, feasible solutions proposed?<br>• Was the project implemented on the basis of a result-oriented approach? |
| Impact | • What is the immediate impact and likely?<br>• How did the intervention cause higher-level effects (such as changes in norms or systems)? such as water use, …<br>• How will the intervention contribute to changing society for the better? Or is any improvement made in communities' livelihood? Were there unintended (positive or negative) effects for the target groups and in society?<br>• What environmental and economic impacts have been achieved (or likely to be achieved)?<br>• Which positive, lasting effects and behavioural changes can be identified?<br>• Are there any identified good/best practices? If yes how these can be replicated in other regions of Tajikistan that have similar interventions?<br>• Which unexpected and unintended positive and negative (side) effects have occurred?<br>• Did the specific part of the intervention have a greater impact than another?<br>• How did the project contribute towards innovation, capacity building, policy processes and catalazing implementation?<br>• What is the impact of the project towards resilience building of communities in the project areas (lasting effects and behavioural change)?<br>• What is the potential (today and/or expected by the end of the phase) for upscaling of the project experience in Tajikistan and beyond?<br>• Are there any unintended consequences (positive or negative) resulted from the project? |
| Sustainability | • The extent of partners involvement in project decision making?<br>• Have the partner institutions and addressed population sections embraced the aims and activities originally promoted by the project (ownership)?<br>• What potential exists, based on experience from the first phase, to sustain the ICR system beyond the project duration?<br>• What are the recommendations to make the project results sustainable until the end of the phase and beyond?<br>• Are there any unintended consequences from the project initiative (positive or negative)?<br>• Are there important synergies or complementarities to be considered with relevant/related initiatives (by SDC or other) in view of future engagement?<br>• How the project has contributed towards the achievement of national and international frameworks and strategies? (National DRR Strategy, Sendai Framework, SDGs. |
| Coordination | • How effective was the coordination within and among the organisations and with other actors during this phase of implementation?<br>• How well did the project in this phase consulted and engage stakeholders and local communities?<br>• How was information of the project disseminated?<br>• How effective was the role of the National Steering Committee Meeting in overseeing the steering of ICR project and approach? |

# 4. Evaluation process and methods

## 4.1 Evaluation methodology

At a minimum, the evaluation should be based on the following:

- Desk review of relevant documents (project proposal, budgets, project period reports, submitted to SDC including the partners' reports, communication materials developed, et cetera);
- Pre-engagement briefing (Dushanbe) prior to field visits and engagement with the project team;
- Field visits that include, semi-structured interviews and group semi-structured interviews (both based on questionnaires see above…), focus group discussions, key informant interviews, interviews with selected beneficiaries (including villagers as well as dekhkan farms, individual farmers, women and youth who benefited from financial products, adolescence who benefited from small grants), interviews with governmental partners; other discussions as relevant and requested and site visits. The consultant/evaluator (s) will propose an agenda for discussions with relevant stakeholders inclusive of type of participant as well as number of participants.

Description of the evaluation Team and other kind of resource persons (e.g., translators…)

## 4.2 Roles and responsibilities of the evaluator(s)

The evaluation will be conducted by a team composed of one international consultant accompanied by a local one. The overall responsibility will lie with the international consultant who will be the team leader. The international consultant will have a contract with the Swiss Cooperation Office in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, and in the capacity of team leader, will sub-contract the local consultant. The international consultant will report to the Swiss Cooperation Office in Dushanbe.

## 4.3 Evaluation process and timeframe

The following work plan provides suggested dates, responsibilities and resources needed for the various activities of the evaluation process. This work plan will eventually be adapted by the evaluation team, in consultation with the SDC, during the inception phase.

| Activity | Date | Responsibilities |
|---|---|---|
| **Kick-off meeting** with evaluation team and reference group | 02.06.2025 | SDC; AKF; Consultant/s |
| Interviews with stakeholders, partners and, if relevant, focus group and workshops, desk study, etc. | 03.06.- 06.06.2025 & 9.06.2025 | Consultant/s |
| Preparation of the Inception Report: evaluation objectives and questions, evaluation design, methodology | 10.06.-13.06. & 16. 2025 | Consultant/s |
| **Draft Inception Report** | 16.06.2025 | Consultant/s |
| | | |
| Feedback on the Inception Report by the evaluation manager and reference group | 16.06. – 19. 06.2025 | SDC; AKF reference group |
| Finalisation of the Inception Report (incorporation of SDC comments) | 20.06. – 20.06.2025 | Consultant/s |
| **Final Inception Report** | 23.06.2025 | Consultant/s |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Logistical and administrative preparation for data collection, evaluation workshops, field visits, etc. | 23.06. – 23.06.2025 | Consultant/s |
| **Field mission** with data collection, interviews, evaluation workshops, etc. | 23.06. - 27.06.2025 | Consultant/s |
| Debriefing | 27.06.2025 | Consultant/s June 27, National Unity Day |
| Data analysis and preparation of Draft Evaluation Report | 30.06 & 1.07-4.07.2025 | Consultant/s |
| **Draft Evaluation Report** | 4.07.2025 | Consultant/s |
| **Meeting: Presentation of findings, conclusions and recommendations** | Tbd | Consultant/s |
| Feedback on the Draft Evaluation Report by the evaluation manager and reference group | 08.07.-11.07. & 14.07. 2025 | SDC; reference group |
| **Final Evaluation Report** | 14.07.2025 | Consultant/s |
| **SDC Management Response** | August | SDC/AKF |
| Dissemination of the Final Evaluation Report | September | SDC |

Timeframe to be discussed with consultant(s), but the work will be undertaken over a timeline of approximately **22 working days** months (number of working days indicative and can be reviewed and modified in consultation with SDC).

| **Activity** | **Number of Days** |
|---|---|
| Preparatory work, data collection, meetings with partners/stakeholders | 5 days |
| Field days | 5 days |
| Report writing | 10 days |
| International travel | 2 days |
| **Total** | **22 days** |

## 5. Deliverables

The following deliverables are expected to be submitted by the evaluator(s):

- Inception Report
- Debriefing workshop (capitalization workshop) to discuss first findings
- Draft Evaluation Report
- Final Evaluation Report
- The SDC's Assessment Grid of the DAC Criteria (tool 7) must be completed by the evaluator(s) and attached to the final evaluation report
- List of interviewed persons; minutes of workshops; slides used for debriefing; videos; leaflets; case studies; etc.
- Analysis of the intervention logic (logframe or ToC): extent to which objectives have been achieved

SDC reserves the right to request changes in the structure of deliverables of the inclusion of additional information.

The report should be in English and Russian, logically structured, contain evidence-based findings, conclusions, lessons and recommendations and their correlations. All information that is

not relevant to the overall analysis belongs in an annex. The report should respond in detail to the evaluation questions and key focus areas. It should include a set of **6 to 10 specific recommendations** formulated for the project, and identify the necessary actions required, who should undertake these, and possible timelines (if any).

We recommend that the evaluation report should not exceed **20 pages**,[4] including an **executive summary (2-3 pages**), but excluding the annexes. The report should **contain clear references to** important information/data available in the annexes.

**Proposed structure of the evaluation report:**

Cover page

Table of contents

Acronyms and abbreviations

Acknowledgments

- Executive summary
- Introduction
- Description of the [project/objectives and areas of intervention]
- Scope and Methodology / limitations
- Findings, incl. results
- Relevance, Impact, Efficiency, effectiveness, accountability, sustainability, coordination
- Conclusions
- Recommendations and lessons learnt

Annexes (compulsory)

- Terms of reference
- Filled out Assessment Grid
- Complete list of stakeholders and others consulted and interviewed
- Detailed description of the review process, including data sources and possible methodological weaknesses and limitations
- Analysis of the intervention logic (logframe or ToC): extent to which objectives have been achieved

## 6. Reference Documents

After signing the contract, the evaluation manager (SDC) will share the following documents with the evaluator(s) for the evaluator's first desk review:

*A selection of documentation to share with the evaluator(s):*

- *Documents on the development intervention, e.g., project documents, project factsheets, credit proposals, financial offers, annual plans and reports for the phases, project Steering Committee meeting minutes etc.*
- *Assessment Grid for the DAC Criteria*
- *General document on the SDC, e.g., the Swiss Cooperation Programme, SDC guidance documents and policies for the sector, etc.*
- *General documents for local context as e.g., relevant local laws and policies, etc.*
- *An open list of key people to interview*

[4] The number depends on the development intervention evaluated and should be between 20-40 pages.

# 7. Competency profile of the evaluator(s)

The evaluator(s) is/are expected to bring along the following evaluation and thematic expertise and experience.

Essential qualities are:

- Thematic up-to date knowledge and experience in projects/programs/initiatives in Climate Change Adaptation, DRR, agricultural sciences, natural resources.
- Professional experience and skills in robust evaluation methodologies and in evaluating of strategies, projects, programmes, partnerships and institutional processes/change
- Confirmed experience in the management of an evaluation team comparable in size, composition and scope.
- Confirmed experience in evaluating a similar development intervention
- Strong analytical and editorial skills, ability to synthesise and write intelligibly for different audiences.
- Ability to apply the DAC/OECD[5] and SEVAL[6] evaluation standards.
- Experience in multilateral and bilateral development cooperation and proven knowledge of the international multilateral system.
- Knowledge of the Swiss development cooperation.
- Excellent interviewing skills, including ability to conduct interviews with both community representatives and high-level officials.
- Substantial experience in project implementation and project monitoring is preferred
- Team leading competencies (applied to team leader).
- Proficiency in written and spoken English, knowledge of Tajik and Russian languages (for local consultant).

Desired qualities are:

- Experience in multilateral and bilateral development cooperation and proven knowledge of the international multilateral system.
- Competency with gender, governance and «leave no one behind (LNOB) » issues (application of gender and governance sensitive evaluation methodologies).
- Ability to work and communicate in English plus excellent writing skills in requested language.

# 8. Reporting

The evaluator(s) will report to the evaluation manager and/or the Deputy Head of Cooperation of the SDC, in Dushanbe for the entire duration of the assignment. Operational support will be provided by the country cooperation offices and the National Programme Officers (NPO) in Dushanbe.

# 9. Suitability and award criteria

One important suitability criteria is that the evaluator(s) are independent[7] of the FDFA and, in particular, the SDC and were not involved in activities covered by this evaluation.

[5] https://www.oecd.org/development/evaluation/qualitystandards.pdf
[6] https://www.seval.ch/app/uploads/2018/01/SEVAL-Standards-2016_d.pdf
[7] 'Independent' means that the members of the evaluation team must not have worked for the FDFA and, in particular, the SDC, in the past five years (except in the capacity of conducting other external evaluation mandates) or have any other strong links or dependencies on the FDFA.

## 10. Application procedure

Interested consultants (companies, organisations) are welcome to submit a brief proposal to the Swiss representation by email at Shodiboy.djabborov@eda.admin.ch with copy to Franziska.voegtli@eda.admin.ch by 17:00 local time **on April 21, 2025.** Recipient

The technical proposal should not exceed 5-8 pages and should outline the service provider's:

- Presentation of the consultant (max. 1 to 2 pages); prior experience with similar mandates or work should be provided in an appendix;
- Understanding of the mandate, methodology and approaches (max. 2 to 3 pages; + indicative time chart 1 p.);
- Structure and qualifications of the proposed team (max. 2 to 3 pages), including the organization of the team and confirmation of availability of the proposed team in accordance with the time chart; CVs should be provided in an appendix.
- Appendixes:
  - Experience of the consultant with similar mandates / work
  - CVs of the proposed staff
- The technical proposals should be accompanied with a financial proposal as per budget format of SDC set out in Annex 1.

The financial proposal should be no more than one page and should clearly outline the daily rates in USD and/or CHF.

## 11. Contracting

The contract will be awarded by the Swiss representation following an analysis of technical and financial proposals received in response to these terms of reference.

## 12. Annex

Annex 1. SDC budget format/Requirements for the Financial Proposal

Relevant links

# Annex 2: Updated Log frame

| For outcome 1: Community members actively participate in the design, implementation, and feedback mechanisms of the local development processes | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Level** | **Description** | **Indicators** | **Baseline Values** | **Actual Yr 1** | **Actual Yr 2** | **Actual Yr 3** | **Cumulative till June '25** | **Target Values** | **Status** | **Means of Verification** | **Assumptions Risks** |
| Output 1.1. | New local development plans (IHAs, WMPs, IVDPs) are developed | 1.1.1 # of new local development plans aligned with principles of climate change adaptation and DRR developed | IHA-0<br>WMP-0<br>IVDP-0<br>DDP-0 | IHA-2<br>WMP-2<br>IVDP-12<br>DDP-0 | IHA-2<br>WMP-2<br>IVDP-37<br>DDP-0 | IHA-0<br>WMP-0<br>IVDP-0<br>DDP-0 | IHA-4<br>WMP-4<br>IVDP-49<br>DDP-0 | IHA-4<br>WMP-4<br>IVDP-48<br>DDP-4 | IHA Completed<br>WMP-Completed<br>IVDP-completed<br>DDP-no progress | Document review, participants list, monitoring reports, financial and progress reports, photos | Community members, particularly women and youth, together with the local authorities will actively participate in the development of IVDPs and WMPs<br><br>Community members will use their own funds to implement projects that the prioritized in the IVDPs |
| | | 1.1.2 # of target population participating in developing local development plans (disaggregated by gender, age and type) | WMP-Female-0; Male-0<br>IVDP-Female-0; Male-0; Youth-0<br>DDP-female-0; Male-0 Youth-0 | WMP-Female-19; Male-92; Youth-0<br>IVDP-Female-135; Male-237; Youth-86<br>DDP-female-0; Male-0 Youth-0 | WMP-Female-29; Male-84; Youth-23<br>IVDP-Female-350; Male-533; Youth-195<br>DDP-female-0; Male-0 Youth-0 | WMP-Female-0; Male-0; Youth-0<br>IVDP-Female-0; Male-0; Youth-0<br>DDP-female-0; Male-0 Youth-0 | WMP-Female-48; Male-176; Youth-23<br>IVDP-Female-485; Male-770; Youth-281<br>DDP-female-0; Male-0 Youth-0 | WMP-Female-32; Male-48; Youth-0<br>IVDP-Female-470; Male-490; Youth-300<br>DDP-female-2; Male-8 Youth-4 | IHA Completed<br>WMP-Completed<br>IVDP-completed<br>DDP-no progress | | |
| | | 1.1.3 # of women benefiting from the gender-sensitive sub-projects identified through gender analysis, incorporated into the | 0 | 0 | 3313 | 0 | 3313 | 6500 | On track | | |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | IWSMP, IVDP, DDP and implemented<br><br>1.1.4 % of activities implemented from the local development plans using non-project funds | 0<br><br>0 | 0<br><br>0 | 0<br><br>0 | 0<br><br>0 | 0<br><br>0 | 50%<br><br>80% | In progress<br><br>In progress | | |
| Output 1.2 | Community feedback mechanisms on local development processes are functional | 1.2.1. # of target population providing feedback on local development processes (disaggregated by gender and age) | Female-0 Male-0 Youth-0 | Female-10 Male-19 Youth-9 | Female-34 Male-50 Youth-19 | Female-0 Male-0 Youth-0 | Female-44 Male-69 Youth-28 | Female-47 Male-49 Youth-30 | On Track | Interview with participants, document review, progress reports | Communities and local authorities will show willingness to update and provide their feedback on the existing plans in their villages with limited support of the project |
| Costs of outputs for outcome 1: CHF 744,230<br>In case of joint projects: 1) amount of SDC contribution: CHF 744,230; 2) in % of total cost: 9%; 3) Total project cost: CHF 8,400,000 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **For outcome 2: Communities have equitable access to vital public and private services (such as WASH and childcare services) that are used in an effective and sustainable way** | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Level** | **Description** | **Indicators** | **Baseline Values** | **Actual Yr 1** | **Actual Yr 2** | **Actual Yr 3** | **Cumulative till June '25** | **Target Values** | **Status** | **Means of Verification** | **Assumptions Risks** |
| Output 2.1 | Safely managed water supply and sanitation service systems established | 1.2.2. # of constructed water supply systems with established and effectively operating water user committees (WUCs)<br><br>1.2.3 % of women and youth involved in decision-making in WUCs<br><br>1.2.4 % of water fees/tariffs collected | 0<br><br>0<br><br>0 | 0<br><br>0<br><br>0 | 0<br><br>0<br><br>0 | 0<br><br>0<br><br>0 | 0<br><br>0<br><br>0 | 5<br><br>40%<br><br>80% | In progress<br><br>In progress | Project documents, tender documentation, financial and progress reports, monitoring, photos, document review | WUCs members will mobilize the communities to actively participate in the construction of water supply systems and sanitation facilities and provide their contribution timely |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | for use of safely managed water services<br><br>1.2.5 # of improved public latrines constructed and managed safely | 0 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 5 | In progress<br><br>On track | | Youth will actively participate in YES Clubs and take action to contribute towards environmental sustainability<br><br>Water users agree on cost recovery tariffs and pay for water fees |
| Output 2.2 | Communities are aware of healthy sanitation and hygiene behaviours | 2.2.1 # of people participating in capacity building activities related to hygiene, sanitation and waste management (disaggregated gender and age)<br><br>2.2.2 # of households that build, rehabilitate or improve private toilets as a result of project support (i.e. technical advice, provision of designs and drawings, etc.) | Female-0 Male-0 Youth-0<br><br>0 | Female-0 Male-0 Youth-0<br><br>0 | Female -57 Male-76 Youth-0<br><br>0 | Female -407 Male-653 Youth-0<br><br>0 | Female-464 Male-653 Youth-0<br><br>0 | Female-440 Male-729 Youth-0<br><br>400 | On track<br><br>In progress | Training participants' list, project documents, document review, project statistics, financial, progress and monitoring reports, | Targeted communities will actively participate in the capacity building activities<br><br>Health care staff will maintain the operations of community health groups |
| Output 2.3 | Access to affordable day care services with ECD principles is improved | 2.3.1 # of children under six years reached through day care services (disaggregated by gender) | Female-0 Male-0 | Female-32 Male-34 | Female -168 Male-241 | Female -0 Male-0 | Female-200 Male-275 | Female-64 Male-96 | On track | Project documents, financial, progress and monitoring reports, project statistics, pictures | Targeted community members will be interested to aval? day care service |
| Output 2.4 | Small-scale grants are provided to address issues faced by adolescents | 2.4.1 # of adolescents | Female-0 Male-0 | Female-0 | Female -42 | Female -39 | Female-81 | Female-81 Male-80 | On track | HCD participants list, project | Target families will allow their |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | using a human-centred design (HCD) approach | participating in human centred design workshops (disaggregated by gender and age)<br><br>2.4.2 # of adolescents benefitting from small grants provided to implement adolescent wellbeing solutions (disaggregated by gender and age) | <br><br>Female-0 Male-0 | Male-0<br><br>Female-0 Male-0 | Male-38<br><br>Female-0 Male-0 | Male-42<br><br>Female-0 Male-0 | Male-80<br><br>Female-0 Male-0 | <br><br>Female-81 Male-80 | <br><br>In progress | documents, monitoring, financial and progress reports | children (both boys and girls) to participate in the HCD process<br><br>Adolescents will actively participate during the HCD process to identify challenges and implement joint solutions using small-scale grants |
| Costs of outputs for outcome 2: CHF 2,198,559<br>In case of joint projects: 1) amount of SDC contribution: CHF 1,929,675; 2) in % of total cost: 26%; 3) Total project cost: CHF 8,400,000 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **For outcome 3: Women and youth generate a sustainable income** | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Level** | **Description** | **Indicators** | **Baseline Values** | **Actual Yr 1** | **Actual Yr 2** | **Actual Yr 3** | **Cumulative till June '25** | **Target Values** | **Status** | **Means of Verification** | **Assumptions Risks** |
| Output 3.1 | Women and youth are trained on relevant, in-demand technical skills | 3.1.1 # women and youth reached through relevant in-demand technical skills and capacity building activities (disaggregated by gender and age) | Women-0 Youth male-0 Youth female-0 | Women-0 Youth fale-0 Youth female-0 | Women-34 Youth mMale-30 Youth female-17 | Women-18 Youth male-13 Youth female-4 | Women-52 Youth male-43 Youth female-21 | Women-35 Youth male-85 Youth female-35 | On track | Training documents, list of participants, project statistics, monitoring, progress reports | Youth and women are keen to learn new technical skills and willing actively to participate in the incubation and acceleration trainings |
| Output 3.2 | Women and youth have access to financial products | 3.2.1 # women and youth using promoted financial services and subsidized grants/get an accessed to affordable finance ( | Female-0 Male-0 Youth-0 | Female-12 Male-14 Youth-12 | Female-5 Male-7 Youth-6 | Female-3 Male-0 Youth-0 | Female-20 Male-21 Youth-18 | Female-11 Male-29 Youth-13 | On track | Project documents, project statistics, progress, financial and monitoring reports | Youth and women are willing to use financial services and received subsidized grants through |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | (disaggregated by gender and type) | | | | | | | | | the project (received concessional loan in TJS from AP) |
| Costs of outputs for outcome 3: CHF 429,480<br>In case of joint projects: 1) amount of SDC contribution: CHF 429,480; 2) in % of total cost: 5%; 3) Total project cost: CHF 8,400,000 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Outcome 4: Communities engage in management, regeneration and protection of their natural resources and adopt disaster risk reduction measures and practices.** | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Level** | **Description** | **Indicators** | **Baseline Values** | **Actual Yr 1** | **Actual Yr 2** | **Actual Yr 3** | **Cumulative till June '25** | **Target Values** | **Status** | **Means of Verification** | **Assumption Risks** |
| Output 4.1 | Climate-smart agriculture practices[8] introduced to increase agricultural productivity and build resilience to climate-change risks | 4.1.1 # of smallholder farming households trained on climate-smart agriculture practices | Female-0<br>Male-0 | Female-0<br>Male-0 | Female-0<br>Male-0 | Female-0<br>Male-0 | Female-0<br>Male-0 | Female-168<br>Male-252 | In progress | Training documents, participants list, project documents, monitoring | Farmers willing to learn about sustainable agricultural practices and will participate in the trainings which eventually will allow them to manage land and other resources effectively |
| | | 4.1.2 # of smallholder farming households benefitting from improved seeds | 0 | 50 | 19 | 0 | 69 | 100 | In progress | | |
| | | 4.1.3 # of people benefiting from climate smart and disaster resilient irrigation systems (disaggregated by gender | Female-0<br>Male-0 | Female-0<br>Male-0<br>0 | Female-1006<br>Male-969 | Female-0<br>Male-0 | Female-1006<br>Male-969 | Female-8000<br>Male-8000 | In progress | | |
| | | 4.1.4 # of people benefitting from hectares of land area brought under improved management | Female-0<br>Male-0 | Female-0<br>Male-0 | Female-1486<br>Male-1458 | Female-0<br>Male-0 | Female-1486<br>Male-1458 | Female-3200<br>Male-3200 | | | |
| | | 4.1.5 # of farmers reached through establishment of | Female-0 | Female-6 | Female-38 | Female-0 | | | In progress | | |

[8] AKF's Global Indicators categorize the following as climate-smart agricultural practices: Direct seeding, Permanent soil cover, Crop rotation/association, Reforestation and agroforestry, Cut-and-carry feed/fodder production, Natural pesticides and fertilizers use/production, Water collection/storage, Precision irrigation, Solar irrigation, Rooftop gardening, Kitchen gardening

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Producer Groups (PGs) (disaggregated by gender)<br><br>4.1.6 # of households supported to produce diversified food through kitchen gardens and greenhouses<br><br>4.1.7 # of people benefitting from climate smart agriculture storage facilities | Male-0<br><br>0<br><br>Female-0<br>Male-0 | Male-44<br><br>0<br><br>Female-0<br>Male-0 | Male-41<br><br>5<br><br>Female-0<br>Male-0 | Male-0<br><br>0<br><br>Female-0<br>Male-0 | Female-44<br>Male-85<br><br>5<br><br>Female-0<br>Male-0 | Female-200<br>Male-200<br><br>16<br><br>Female-1600<br>Male-1600 | In progress<br><br>In progress<br><br>In progress | | |
| Output 4.2 | Community disaster risk preparedness and response strengthened | 4.2.1 # of CERTs established/strengthened and operating effectively<br><br>4.2.2. # of preparedness and contingency plans established/updated. | Established-0<br>Refreshed-0<br><br>Preparedness plan-0<br><br>Contingency plan-0 | Established-4<br>Refreshed-4<br><br>Preparedness plan-0<br><br>Contingency plan-0 | Established-0<br>Refreshed-8<br><br>Preparedness plan-4<br><br>Contingency plan-4 | Established-0<br>Refreshed-0<br><br>Preparedness plan-0<br><br>Contingency plan-0 | Established-4<br>Refreshed-4<br><br>Preparedness plan-4<br><br>Contingency plan-4 | Established-4<br>Refreshed-4<br><br>Preparedness plan-4<br><br>Contingency plan-4 | On track<br><br>On track | Project documents, project statistics, monitoring reports, financial and | Communities will support establishment of CERTs and voluntarily join the groups<br><br>Community members actively participate during the |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 4.2.3 # of people trained on disaster risk preparedness and response through simulations and trainings (disaggregated by gender) | Female-0<br>Male-0 | Female-96<br>Male-144 | Female-99<br>Male-141 | Female-0<br>Male-0 | Female-99<br>Male-144 | Female-120<br>Male-120 | In progress | progress reports, handover acts/documents, field visits | implementation of DRR sub-projects and ensure their sustainability along with the responsible persons<br><br>Local authorities and communities will contribute to the construction, management and maintenance of shelters, multi-function sport facilities |
| | | 4.2.4 # of multi-use, energy-efficient, seismic-resistant emergency shelters constructed and maintained effectively | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | In progress | | |
| | | 4.2.5 # of stockpile and non-food items prepositioned/replenished | Positioned-0<br>Replenished-0 | Positioned-0<br>Replenished-0 | Positioned-4<br>Replenished-4 | Positioned-0<br>Replenished-0 | Positioned-4<br>Replenished-4 | Positioned-4<br>Replenished-4 | | | |
| | | 4.2.6 # of structural mitigation schemes implemented (disaggregated by type) | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 4 | On track | | |
| | | 4.2.7 # of emergency communication systems established/ maintained | Established-0<br>Maintained-0 | Established-0<br>Maintained-0 | Established-0<br>Maintained-0 | Established-0<br>Maintained-0 | Established-0<br>Maintained-0 | Established-4<br>Maintained-8 | In progress | | |
| Costs of outputs for outcome 4: CHF 2,209,954 | | | | | | | | | | | |

| |
|---|
| In case of joint projects: 1) amount of SDC contribution: CHF 2,057,272; 2) in % of total cost: 26%; 3) Total project cost: CHF 8,400,000 |
| **Proposed Activities:** The activities are being finalized (subject to SDC's inputs on the LogFrame) |

# Annex 3: Filled Assessment Grid

## Assessment grid for project/programme evaluations of the SDC interventions (October 2023)

This assessment grid is a mandatory annex to external evaluations (and internal assessments in the case of SECO) of SDC and SECO financed projects and programs (hereinafter referred to as an 'intervention'), be they commissioned by SDC, SECO or external partners. It is based on the OECD Development Assistance Committee evaluation criteria and guidance.[9] Its purpose it to help make results of evaluations more transparent and quantify them (transform the qualitative information in the evaluation reports into quantitative scores) in a standardized manner. This serves accountability purposes and helps for the aggregate reporting, steering and learning.

How to use this assessment grid:

- Evaluators should provide the filled assessment grid in ***Word***.
- All *applicable* sub-criteria should be scored and a short explanation provided. If the evaluation ToRs explicitly exclude some DAC criteria, they should not be filled in the assessment grid. To guarantee coherence, it is advised to match each evaluation question in the ToRs to a sub-criterion in the assessment grid.
- The 20 sub-criteria shall not be modified, however additional sub-criteria may be added to reflect specific objectives and learning interests of the commissioner.
- If specific results are not yet measurable at the time of the assessment, it requires analysing the likelihood of achieving those results (in particular for the criteria effectiveness, impact and sustainability). Please mention this in the dedicated section (evaluability assessment on p. 2).
- There are hyperlinks on each evaluation criterion in the assessment grid, which lead to the OECD guidance on each specific criterion. The guidance also includes information on the interlinkages and differences between the DAC criteria.
- When applying a gender and climate lens, evaluators are expected to use the relevant guidance.[10]
- To rate each sub-criterion, select your rating (0-4, kindly only use integers) in the column “score”:

[9] Two guiding principles were set out by the OECD DAC Network on Development Evaluation alongside the definitions of the six criteria. These are:

a. Principle One: The criteria should be applied thoughtfully to support high-quality, useful evaluation.
b. Principle Two: Use of the criteria depends on the purpose of the evaluation.

The OECD guidance Applying Evaluation Criteria Thoughtfully (2021) explains these principles and provides advice as well as examples for the use of the criteria.

[10] See for instance Applying a Human Rights and Gender Equality Lens to the OECD Evaluation Criteria

| | Relevance / coherence / efficiency | Effectiveness | Impact | Sustainability |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1= Highly satisfactory** | There were **no shortcomings** in relation to the intervention's relevance/ coherence/ efficiency. | Objectives at outcome level were (or are likely to be) **fully** achieved or exceeded. | The intervention had (or is likely to have) a **significant positive** impact. | **All** of the intervention's benefits (will) last. *Note: for this rating, clear evidence is required (not only assumptions).* |
| **2= Satisfactory** | There were **moderate shortcomings** in relation to the intervention's relevance/ coherence/ efficiency. | Objectives at outcome level were (or are likely to be) **largely** achieved. | The intervention had (or is likely to have) an **overall positive** impact. | **A majority** of the intervention's benefits (will) last. |
| **3= Unsatisfactory** | There were **important shortcomings** in relation to the intervention's relevance/ coherence/ efficiency. | Objectives at outcome level were (or are likely to be) only **partially** achieved (at a rather low level). *Note: if outputs are achieved, but do not result in the expected outcomes, consider rating effectiveness as unsatisfactory.* | The intervention had (or is likely to have) **no** impact. | **A minority** of the intervention's benefits (will) last. |
| **4= Highly unsatisfactory** | There were **very severe shortcomings** in relation to the intervention's relevance/ coherence/ efficiency. | Objectives at outcome level were **not** achieved (or are **un**likely to be achieved). | The intervention had (or is likely to have) an unexpected **negative** impact. | **None** of the intervention's benefits (will) last. |
| **0= Not assessed** | The criteria statement cannot be assessed. Please explain in the justifications section. | | | |

Along with the assessment grid, please also fill in this table with data on the evaluation, on the evaluated intervention and on the evaluability of the intervention.

| **Evaluation data** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Title of the evaluation report | Midterm evaluation of Improving Community Resilience Project, Tajikistan | | |
| Evaluation mandated by | SCO, Tajikistan | Evaluation dates (start – end) | July 10 September |
| Evaluation carried out by<br>Name of lead evaluator<br>(if relevant) Name of company | Rupa Mukerji<br>SKAT Consulting Ltd | For external evaluations:<br>Total evaluation budget (including all fees and costs) and currency | CHF |
| Has any member of the evaluation team been involved in the intervention? | No | If yes, how? | Briefly explain the type of involvement here |
| **Evaluated intervention data** | | | |
| Intervention title (including phase number) | ICR, Phase 1 | | |
| Intervention internal number (if available)<br>(e.g. 7F-…, UR_...) | Click here to enter text. | Dates of the evaluated phase<br>(start – end) | Dec 2022 Nov 2027 |
| Is it the final phase? | No | Total budget for the evaluated phase;<br>SDC/SECO contribution if applicable | 14 mil<br>8 mil |
| **Evaluability[11] assessment by evaluator** | | | |
| To which extent do you consider that the intervention can be evaluated in a reliable and credible fashion? | 1 - highly reliable | | |
| If applicable, please select the type of limitation(s) to the evaluation and provide a brief explanation<br>*Note: when assessing evaluability also consider the representativeness and participation of specific stakeholders/groups involved in the evaluation as well as the influence of conflict/fragile context on the quality and validity of the data and access to target groups (if applicable)* | ☐ Objectives are not adequately defined (e.g. weaknesses in intervention design, lack of baselines and targets)<br>☐ Results are not verifiable (e.g. too early to tell, lack of sufficiently robust data and evidence)<br>☐ Other limitation(s)<br><br>Briefly explain limitation(s) to the evaluation here | | |

[11] See definition of evaluability in OECD (2023), Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management for Sustainable Development (Second edition), OECD Publishing, Paris https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/632da462-en-fr-es.pdf?expires=1690787009&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=ED10CC16AE8370653438B9C7A52688E0

| DAC criteria and SDC/SECO sub-criteria | Score | Justification<br>(Please provide a short explanation for your score<br>or explain the reason why a criterion was not assessed) |
|---|---|---|
| **1 Relevance: Is the intervention doing the right things?**<br>Summary: The extent to which the intervention's objectives and design (at the time of design and at time of evaluation) respond to beneficiaries' and involved stakeholders' needs and priorities, and continue to do so if circumstances change.<br>*Note: Understanding gendered power dynamics and reflecting on the SDG commitment to "leave no one behind" are crucial in understanding relevance.* | *Please do not write anything here. The DAC criteria score will automatically be calculated as the arithmetic mean of sub-criteria.* | All thematic areas—WASH, ECD, DRR, and NRM—are relevant to rural communities' needs, particularly as the national government focuses on large infrastructure projects, leaving smaller initiatives to development partners. Strong community mobilization across all areas adds value through participation in planning, implementation, co-financing, ownership, and long-term sustainability. Community and state authority engagement in all ICR interventions was evident, reflecting their clear understanding of project activities and their role in addressing urgent needs unmet by rural state budgets. |
| *1.1* ***Responsiveness to needs, policies and priorities***: the extent to which the objectives (at output, outcome and impact levels) of the intervention respond to the needs and priorities of the beneficiaries (target group), involved stakeholders (involved in funding, implementing and/or overseeing the intervention) and, when relevant, to indirectly affected stakeholders (e.g. civil society, etc.).<br>*Note: A particular emphasis should be placed on beneficiaries. If there are trade-offs, please describe them in the justification.* | 1 - highly satisfactory | IHA enabled the project to direct resources to the most vulnerable communities. While drinking water is a widespread challenge across all watersheds, areas were prioritized using rigid criteria to maximize coverage per intervention. Communities actively participate in assessment, planning, and implementation, contributing both cash and in-kind support. Through WUCs, they also engage in system management decisions and coordination with state authorities on ownership and maintenance of the system. Another good example is the identification of high-risk sites through the IHA and the design of targeted risk mitigation projects for them. |
| *1.2* ***Sensitiveness and responsiveness to the context and capacities of the beneficiaries and involved stakeholders****:* the extent to which the context was considered in the design of the intervention (e.g. economic, environmental, equity, social, cultural, political economy and last but not least capacity considerations).<br>*Note: Evaluators are encouraged to describe which contextual factors are most pertinent to the intervention.* | 2 - satisfactory | Overall, this is a complex project addressing needs across multiple thematic areas. The team has done well in assessing the social, economic, and environmental context to prioritize community needs, allocate responsibilities among AKF's sectoral teams, and ensure strong coordination (e.g., integrating WASH/DRR with economic development and community mobilization). However, there is some uncertainty in the approach to livelihood and business support projects and the need to better integrate water supply with improved sanitation and hygiene behaviour. In the next phase, a clearer distinction could improve efficiency: livelihood initiatives would benefit from greater application of Human-Centred Design (HCD), focusing on community needs and achieving higher satisfaction, while business opportunities should follow a Market Systems Development (MSD) approach- analysing root causes of market failures, identifying market actors for partnerships, and leveraging contributions for |

| DAC criteria and SDC/SECO sub-criteria | Score | Justification<br>(Please provide a short explanation for your score<br>or explain the reason why a criterion was not assessed) |
|---|---|---|
| | | sustainable, scalable change. For both approaches, AKF should build internal staff capacity to ensure effective adoption during intervention design and implementation. Incremental improvements in functionality of pit latrines through use of a better pan, ventilation of the pit (VIP latrines), handwashing station with provision of soap in all schools and ECD centres may yield better and greater health impacts than the current quite expensive latrine complexes. While taboos around menstrual hygiene have reduced, school latrines should include low-cost incinerators for safe disposal. |
| *1.3* ***Quality of design****:* the extent to which core design elements of the intervention (such as objectives and their related indicators, logframe, theory of change including related assumptions, choice of services and intervention partners, exit strategy) reflect the needs and priorities of the target group, are appropriate, realistic, clearly defined, measurable and feasible (technical, organisational and financial feasibility).<br>*Note: the exit strategy should be planed from the outset of the intervention to ensure the continuation of positive effects as intended, whilst allowing for changes in contextual conditions.* | 1 - highly satisfactory | The interventions are well aligned with community needs, particularly given the government's limited capacity to address urgent climate change impacts on water scarcity, natural resources, and disaster risk management. The project design is detailed, ensuring each output contributes to the intended outcomes and, ultimately, the overall objective. The team has a robust MEL system in place to track progress against each outcome and indicator. Most planned activities are feasible, except for uncertainties in developing a data collection tool for GHG emissions and $CO_2$ sequestration, a digital application for the community feedback mechanism, and the software component of ECD projects, which are largely beyond AKF's direct control. Changes at the output level were promptly communicated to SDC and adjusted accordingly. |
| *1.4* ***Adaptation over time****:* the extent to which the intervention has meaningfully adapted to changes over the course of its lifespan (e.g. evolving policy and economic contexts, change of funding, new opportunities, outbreaks of conflict or pandemic, etc.). | 2 - satisfactory | Changes occurred in the ECD component, which is part of the WASH and childcare services outcome. Due to shifts in education policy, AKF was able to work only on the hard component of ECD. Resources were reallocated, increasing ECD support from 8 to 20 centers. Despite focusing solely on infrastructure, ECDs have helped shift parents' mindsets, increasing awareness of ECD's importance. Parents are now more willing to pay for services and help extend outreach. As such, these changes will still contribute to achieving the outcome. Similarly water supply systems have been adapted to meet local resource conditions (spring to borewell to avoid resource use conflict between drinking and irrigation needs). DRR investments are need based sometimes outside the watershed boundaries if needed. |

| DAC criteria and SDC/SECO sub-criteria | Score | Justification<br>(Please provide a short explanation for your score<br>or explain the reason why a criterion was not assessed) |
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| If an additional sub-criteria is relevant please formulate it here | select | Click here to enter text. |
| **2 Coherence: How well does the intervention fit?**<br>Summary: The compatibility of the evaluated intervention with other interventions in a country, sector or institution, i.e., the extent to which other interventions (in particular policies) support or undermine the intervention and vice versa. | *Please do not write anything here. The DAC criteria score will automatically be calculated as the arithmetic mean of sub-criteria.* | Water supply, agriculture, DRR and climate resilience are the key priorities in the country. Govt resources are invested in large infrastructure. SDC and AFK are the key actors in rural development in Rasht, a region devasted by the civil war, facing food scarcity but with the potential to produce surplus food. Thus the project is aligned with national priorities as well as gaps and needs. |
| 2.1 ***Internal policy alignment***: the extent to which the intervention aligns with the wider policy frameworks of the Swiss Development Cooperation, including the most recent Swiss international cooperation strategy overall and at country level, as well as to relevant international norms and standards to which Switzerland adheres (international law, international agreements, etc.). | 2 - satisfactory | ICR is fully aligned with the priorities of Swiss development cooperation of 1) human development, 2) sustainable economic development, 3) climate and environment, 4) peace and governance. Areas of focus in the new dispatch viz: engagement with the private sector and new technologies can be further enhanced. ICR is aligned with SDC's aim to address deeply rooted socio-economic challenges, including gender disparities and exclusion, as well growing risks for climate change, in an adaptive and flexible manner. It contributes to several of the SDGs. |
| 2.2 ***Internal compatibility***: the extent to which the intervention is compatible with other interventions of Swiss development cooperation in the same country/region and thematic field (consistency, complementarity, synergies, avoiding duplication of efforts, subsidiarity).<br>*Note: if feasible, evaluators are encouraged to also take into account compatibility with the interventions of different levels / departments of the Swiss government in the same operating context (e.g.: development, diplomacy, trade, security, etc.)* | 1 - highly satisfactory | ICR is fully aligned with SDC's current programme in Tajikistan which focuses on three mutually reinforcing topics of:<br>▪ Water, infrastructure and climate change (WICC)<br>▪ Governance, human rights and service delivery<br>▪ Inclusive and sustainable economic development<br>These in turn contribute to the overall goal of the Swiss Cooperation Programme, Central Asia (2022–25) of *contributing to peace and social cohesion*; *responsive and strengthened institutions*; and *sustainable development to improve the resilience of the population*. A key lesson learned from earlier assessments is that contextual challenges in the region hinder the achievement of policy reforms and systemic changes, making it necessary to pursue policy work through ***grassroots activities at the sub-national level and to focus more on enhancing the resilience of people***. The focus of the ICR project is fully aligned with this. Switzerland seeks to strike the right |

| DAC criteria and SDC/SECO sub-criteria | Score | Justification<br>(Please provide a short explanation for your score<br>or explain the reason why a criterion was not assessed) |
|---|---|---|
| | | balance in achieving results that are ambitious as well as realistic. ICR contributes to the expected outcome of the WICC portfolio in Tajikistan of '*People live and work – reasonably protected from natural hazards – in resilient settings and use quality public infrastructure services, and water resources are managed with a basin approach in a climate-resilient, sustainable and inclusive way*'. |
| 2.3 ***External compatibility***: the extent to which the intervention is compatible with interventions of other actors in the country and thematic field (complementarity, synergies, overlaps and gaps, value-added, use of existing systems and structures for implementing activities, harmonization, coordination, etc.). | 1 - highly satisfactory | Government investments in Rasht are mainly for large infrastructure projects. SDC fills a important development investment gap. The funding is complementary to govt investments in large infrastructure as well as to underfinanced but highly valued topics of emergency response, early childhood development, engagement of adolescents and in drinking water. Improving agricultural productivity and entrepreneurship development are national priorities to which ICR contributes in concrete ways. Outcome 1 contributes to improved quality and responsiveness of the district development plans being prepared for the 2026 – 30 period. There is harmonization of data and methodologies between ICR and local level planning. At the district and lower levels there is excellent coordination with functionaries and high ownership of the interventions, including by CBOs. |
| If an additional sub-criteria is relevant please formulate it here | select | Click here to enter text. |
| **3 Effectiveness: Is the intervention achieving its objectives?**<br>Summary: The extent to which the intervention achieved, or is expected to achieve, its objectives and its results, including any differential results across groups. | *Please do not write anything here. The DAC criteria score will automatically be calculated as the arithmetic mean of sub-criteria.* | Overall, outcome-level interventions are well on track. By midterm, Outcome I has exceeded its targets in both budget utilization and indicators, largely due to effective planning and AKF's extensive experience in engaging communities and local authorities in the planning and implementation process. Similarly, other outcomes are progressing as planned, with some activity-level changes that are unlikely to significantly affect the project's overall objectives. |
| 3.1 ***Achievement of objectives****:* The extent to which the intervention achieved or is expected to achieve its intended objectives (outputs and outcomes) as originally planned (or as modified to cater for | 2 - satisfactory | By midterm, 70% of the Outcome I budget had been disbursed. As this outcome focuses mainly on coordination, planning, and community mobilization, it is reasonable that a significant portion was spent early. Progress toward key indicators is on track: 49 IVDPs |

| DAC criteria and SDC/SECO sub-criteria | Score | Justification<br>(Please provide a short explanation for your score<br>or explain the reason why a criterion was not assessed) |
|---|---|---|
| changes in the environment), including its transversal objectives (e.g. gender, climate)<br>*Note: If some – but not all – of the objectives were achieved the evaluators will need to examine their **relative importance** to draw conclusions on the effectiveness.* | | were conducted as planned, reaching 1,255 people—484 women, 771 men, and 280 youth. Outcome II is also on track: against the target of reaching 10,150 people with the DWSS system, the project has reached 9,248 individuals. One DWSS is 70% complete, while the progress on others is between 32 – 48%. Budget disbursement expected to increase in 2025. Due to policy changes, the number of supported ECDs increased from 8 to 20.<br>Outcome III: several business cases are showing promising results with strong potential for scale-up. Grassroots level engagement, including announcements in Jamoats and use of the MC network has enabled AKF to identify innovative ideas from genuinely motivated entrepreneurs, rather than individuals seeking grants. There is potential for new business in areas such as provision of solar, biogas, and advisory as well as improved sanitary fittings and services, which may be outside the experiences of communities but awareness of which can improve DRR as well climate resilience.<br>Outcome IV: it is well on track but there is room for improvement on integrating climate smart agriculture practices such as direct seeding, permanent soil cover, mulching, water harvesting and storage, precision and solar irrigation, among others. |
| *3.2* ***Unintended effects***: The extent to which the intervention has responded adequately to the potential benefits/risks of the positive/negative unintended results. | 2 - satisfactory | Some output-level changes occurred, but AKF promptly communicated these amendments to SDC and made the necessary adjustments (e.g., focusing only on the hard component of ECD, developing a data collection tool for GHG emissions and $CO_2$ sequestration, and establishing a community feedback mechanism). Some of negative unintended results is risks of fostering an "aid-dependency" mindset, despite the fact that many communities are now in a stronger position to co-invest. AKF should encourage greater financial participation from communities not just through labor, but also through monetary investment even for DRR-related projects. Use of digital communication is widespread in the region and this can be leveraged more for EWS, short trainings on financial literacy or technical aspects as well as for promoting non traditional occupations for women. |

| DAC criteria and SDC/SECO sub-criteria | Score | Justification<br>(Please provide a short explanation for your score<br>or explain the reason why a criterion was not assessed) |
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| 3.3 ***Differential results**:* the extent to which the intervention results (outcomes) were inclusive and equitable amongst beneficiary groups and the extent to which key principles such as non-discrimination, accountability and leave-no-one-behind were taken into account during the implementation. | 2 - satisfactory | Overall, the project targets 49 villages, with some receiving up to three interventions. For the remaining implementation period, a more careful analysis of project distribution across villages is needed. There is a positive trend in women's engagement, particularly in CERT groups and in business initiatives such as beekeeping, where women are not only involved in labor but also in managing operations and making decisions on income use. In other cases financial literacy of women entrepreneurs is still seen to be weak. |
| If an additional sub-criteria is relevant please formulate it here | select | Click here to enter text. |
| **4 Efficiency: How well are resources being used?**<br>Summary: The extent to which the intervention delivers, or is likely to deliver, results in an economic and timely way. | *Please do not write anything here. The DAC criteria score will automatically be calculated.* | Overall, the intervention is on track in terms of timeline. While the use of financial and human resources varies across outcomes, AKF's extensive experience, long-standing presence, and strong planning enable efficient resource utilization. |
| 4.1 ***Economic efficiency*:** The extent to which the intervention delivered the results (inputs □ outputs; inputs □ outcomes) in the most cost-efficient way possible (including allocation of resources between target groups and time periods; available options for purchasing inputs according to market conditions, etc.). | 2 - satisfactory | Close engagement with both communities and state authorities during planning improves efficiency by optimizing human and financial resources. Community contributions have increased, addressing not only immediate needs but also larger infrastructure projects such as school rehabilitation and irrigation channels. These efforts combine voluntary contributions with remittances from labor migrants. AKF should further leverage this social capital and explore co-investment opportunities in businesses, applying cooperative management principles.<br>Efficiency has also improved thanks to AKF's extensive experience and trusted partnerships. For example, developing tailored financial products required minimal resources, as AKF could adapt an existing approach—combining grants with low-interest loans and partnering with reliable institutions.<br>IHA results helped identify optimal sites and allocate resources for maximum coverage, prioritizing disaster-prone areas and supporting them with risk mitigation projects that deliver economic benefits, enhance environmental protection, and strengthen community readiness to respond to hazards. |

| DAC criteria and SDC/SECO sub-criteria | Score | Justification<br>(Please provide a short explanation for your score<br>or explain the reason why a criterion was not assessed) |
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| | | Further efficiency gains could be achieved by responding to market opportunities and strengthening private sector engagement, particularly with agro-dealers and other agricultural supply chain service and technology providers. |
| 4.2 ***Timeliness*****:** The extent to which the intervention delivered the results (outputs, outcomes) in a timely manner (within the intended timeframe or reasonably adjusted timeframe) and the extent to which efforts were made to mitigate delays.<br>*Note: in case timeliness was unsatisfactory for reasons outside of the intervention's control, the rating should still be unsatisfactory and explanation provided in the justification field.* | 2 - satisfactory | Most interventions are on track, with only a minor delay in completing the DWSS in Faizabad, shifting from August to October 2025 due to challenges in site selection for construction of the reservoir. |
| 4.3 ***Operational efficiency***: The extent to which management, monitoring and steering mechanisms supported efficient implementation (resource allocation, spending and redirection, risk management, logistics and procurement decisions, etc.) | 2 - satisfactory | AKF's senior team is actively engaged in coordinating activities across sectoral teams. The MEL data collection tool enables tracking of activities and outputs while flagging delays for the Project Manager. MEL data use could be strengthened by analyzing contributions toward outcome-level indicators and producing semi-annual or annual outcome-level dashboards to enhance management and reporting.<br>Resources were reallocated promptly -for example, increasing ECD centers from 8 to 20 and redirecting funds from canceled activities to DWSS, NRM and DRR projects |
| If an additional sub-criteria is relevant please formulate it here | select | Click here to enter text. |
| **5** Impact: **What difference does the intervention make?**<br>Summary: The extent to which the intervention has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects. Impact addresses the ultimate significance and potentially transformative effects of the intervention. It seeks to identify social, environmental and economic indirect, secondary and potential consequences of the intervention that are longer term or broader in scope than those already captured under the effectiveness criterion. It does so by examining the holistic and enduring changes in systems or norms, and potential effects on | *Please do not write anything here. The DAC criteria score will automatically be calculated as the arithmetic mean of sub-criteria.* | Click here to enter text. |

| DAC criteria and SDC/SECO sub-criteria | Score | Justification<br>(Please provide a short explanation for your score<br>or explain the reason why a criterion was not assessed) |
|---|---|---|
| people's well-being, human rights, gender equality, and the environment.<br>*Note: depending on the timing of the evaluation and the timescale of intended benefits, evaluators can assess for both actual impacts (i.e. already evident) and foreseeable impacts.* | | |
| 5.1 ***Intended impacts*:** The extent to which the intended (planed and, where applicable, revised) 'higher-level effects' (i.e. lasting changes in the lives of beneficiaries) of the intervention were (or are expected to be) achieved.<br>*Note: also consider the extent to which the intervention contributed to "holistic and enduring changes in systems or norms" and transformational change (addressing root causes or systemic drivers of poverty, inequalities, exclusion and environmental damage).* | 2 - satisfactory | At midterm, it is too early to fully assess the impact of all interventions, though some show promising results.<br>Outcome I's impact is most visible, driven largely by effective planning and AKF's long-standing presence and expertise in community mobilization. Both local authorities and communities are actively engaged in their respective areas. The WASH component is still in its early stages, with infrastructure projects either under construction or recently handed over; greater effort is needed to raise awareness on health and sanitation standards. ECD initiatives are beginning to shift mindsets on the importance of early childhood education, with communities showing willingness to pay for such services.<br>Among economic activities, beekeeping has yielded strong results, empowering women to manage both operations and income. Disaster risk preparedness has also improved, with communities equipped with knowledge, tools, and shelters, and maintaining effective coordination with CoESCD through a well-established WhatsApp network. |
| *5.2* ***Contribution to intended impacts:*** The extent to which the intervention actually contributed (or is expected to contribute) to the intended higher-level effects.<br>*Note: results of contribution analysis, etc.* | 2 - satisfactory | The intervention is well designed, with a clear link between activities, outputs, outcomes, and the overall project objective. In terms of time and finances, all activities are on track, and no issues are anticipated in achieving higher-level results (see details in 5.1). The MEL system should place greater emphasis on analysing collected data and illustrating outcome-level achievements through dashboards, which should also be incorporated into annual progress reports. Currently, these reports tend to be more descriptive of processes rather than analyses of the data/ progress and its contribution to achieving the outcomes. |

| DAC criteria and SDC/SECO sub-criteria | Score | Justification<br>(Please provide a short explanation for your score<br>or explain the reason why a criterion was not assessed) |
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| *5.3* ***Unintended impacts***: Has the intervention brought about (or is it expected to bring about) any unintended (positive and/or negative) higher-level development results? If yes, to what extent have these higher-level effects been positive (or are likely to be positive)?<br>*Note: consider here any kind of unintended effects such as escalating or deescalating effect on a conflict or context of fragility, effect on the legitimacy of the state or non-state actors, effect on the inclusion or exclusion of vulnerable groups, unintended pollution, etc. If there wasn't any noteworthy unintended impact (higher-level effect), mark this question as non-applicable (n/a) and do not give a rating.* | 2 - satisfactory | The DRR approach, particularly the voluntary CERT groups, has been vital in disaster response. This practice has been recognized by the President and is now being promoted for nationwide replication (per an interview with the General Major of CoESCD).<br>Community-level planning, using data from IVDPs, has been widely adopted by local authorities in developing the 2026–2030 District Development Plan.<br>WASH and economic activities are expected to show stronger results toward the end of the project. Smaller-scale initiatives, such as beekeeping producer groups, are already delivering immediate benefits—women manage income, youth are actively engaged, and profits are reinvested to scale honey production. Producer Groups also collaborate on setting minimum prices, conducting joint sales, and sharing transportation costs. Women have a clear understanding of their production costs and profits. Engagement of adolescents in HCD has brought forth an important focus on solar energy in a region suffering severe energy poverty esp., in the winter season affecting education and health. This sensitivity can be further leveraged to generate new ideas and initiatives for reducing GHG emissions through concrete actions that also enable the green transition of the regional economy. There are many avenues of this such as through biogas (instead of burning cow dung), breed improvement, vermicomposting etc. |
| *5.4* ***Differential impact***: the extent to which the intervention's intended and unintended higher-level results (impacts) were (or are expected to be) inclusive and equitable amongst beneficiary groups and the extent to which key principles such as non-discrimination, accountability and leave-no-one-behind were taken into account during the implementation.<br><br>*Note: Keep in mind that positive impacts overall can hide significant negative distributional effects.* | 2 - satisfactory | Women's and youth participation varies by intervention type. Through the MC, both groups engage in planning and community activities. Women play a key role in CERT groups, confidently expressing their views; their capacity to support communities during emergencies has enhanced their confidence and credibility. Their involvement is more prominent in smaller-scale projects like beekeeping than in larger-scale initiatives such as cold storage management.<br>Applying the HCD approach with adolescents has strengthened their confidence in community engagement, with most business ideas targeting communal benefits such as solar panels for schools or street lighting.<br>Climate change and its impact on the environment and natural resources are increasingly part of community discussions and |

| DAC criteria and SDC/SECO sub-criteria | Score | Justification<br>(Please provide a short explanation for your score<br>or explain the reason why a criterion was not assessed) |
|---|---|---|
| | | planning. More spring sources are drying up, and there is a growing reliance on underground water, with no monitoring system in place to track changes in spring discharges or groundwater levels.<br>While protection of pastures is seen as the responsibility of the resident community, the degradation of hill land pastures in particular, is caused by migrant livestock herds over which local communities have no control. Such herds are growing in size and transmit diseases. This needs policy level support by multiple actors including MDBs, local governments, donors and specialists. In the absence of this some of poorest communities are held responsible for conservation of public / open access resources over the use of which they have no control. |
| If an additional sub-criteria is relevant please formulate it here | select | Click here to enter text. |
| **6 Sustainability: Will the benefits last?**<br>Summary: The extent to which the net benefits of the intervention continue or are likely to continue. Includes an examination of the enabling environment for sustainable development, i.e. financial, economic, social, environmental, and institutional capacities of the systems needed to sustain net benefits over time. Involves analysis of resilience, risks and potential trade-offs.<br>*Note: depending on the timing of the evaluation and the timescale of intended benefits, evaluators can assess for both actual sustainability (i.e. the continuation of net benefits created by the intervention that are already evident) and prospective sustainability (i.e. the net benefits for key stakeholders that are likely to continue into the future)* | *Please do not write anything here. The DAC criteria score will automatically be calculated as the arithmetic mean of sub-criteria.* | Yes. Local capacities and ownership have been built to such an extent that communities as well as local govt officials take responsibility for the maintenance of the infrastructure created. They are able to articulate their emerging needs and for their inclusion in the district plans. Mechanisms for local resource mobilization for O&M are in place and for large unexpected expenses, communities are also able to raise funds from migrants and the diaspora. |
| 6.1 ***Capacity and resilience development***: The extent to which the beneficiaries and development partners have strengthened their capacities (at the individual, community, or institutional level), have the resilience to overcome future risks and external shocks that could jeopardise the intervention's results and have improved their ownership or political will. | 1 - highly satisfactory | There are several instances where individual beneficiaries and groups have been able to mobilize additional resources and capcities to overcome risks and also reach out to the govt at different levels of the administration. Local mechanisms for fund raising and contribution to community development are impressive and growing. |

| DAC criteria and SDC/SECO sub-criteria | Score | Justification<br>(Please provide a short explanation for your score<br>or explain the reason why a criterion was not assessed) |
|---|---|---|
| *6.2* ***Financial sustainability***: The extent to which development partners have the financial resources to maintain the intervention's net benefits over time (e.g. increased national, and where applicable subnational, financial or budgetary commitments). | 1 - highly satisfactory | WUCs are able to determine and collect both connection fees as well as user charges for water services. Similarly, there is a designated person for management of the irrigation infrastructure and services. Mahalla committees take responsibility for school infrastructure while public toilets in the marketplace run as viable business based on the user fees collected. Enterprises promoted by MSDSP and AP are profitable and able to repay their loans and break even within 3 years even after factoring in seasonal low production due to weather or pests. Credit instruments are also flexible allowing enterprises to recover from a bad season. Financial products do need to be adapted for individual enterprises to allow for growth and development. |
| *6.3* ***Contextual factors***: The extent to which the context is conducive to maintain the intervention's net benefits over time (e.g. policy or strategy change; legislative reform; institutional reforms; governance reforms; increased accountability for public expenditures; improved processes for public consultation in development planning).<br>*Note: It includes assessing the trade-offs associated between instant outcomes and potential longer-term effects as well as the trade-offs between financial, economic, social and environmental aspects.* | 3 - unsatisfactory | The pending registration of AKF is a risk. AKF's institutional restructuring adds to a sense of uncertainty. A scenario-based risk management plan would be helpful in navigating through this context. The space for civil society is restricted. While the participation of national govt representatives in the steering committee is low the ownership of the project and the important gap that AKF fills in key sectors is broadly recognised and highly appreciated, especially by district govts. This is a key asset in dealing with challenging contextual factors. |
| If an additional sub-criteria is relevant please formulate it here | select | Click here to enter text. |
| **7 General comments**<br>Summary: this section is only for free text (no score). The evaluator may provide an overall assessment of the evaluated intervention, explore and reflect on relationships and synergies between different criteria (this includes considering if and how they are causally related). | | Click here to enter text. |

# Annex 4: Deviations from Plan & Implications

**Deviation from the plan: Improving Community Resilience through Sustainable Livelihoods in the Rasht Valley**

| Outcome | Activity | Deviation from the plan | Strategy to cope with the changes | Implications for Project Objective |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Outcome 1:** Community members actively participate in the design, implementation, and feedback mechanisms of the local development processes | Output 1.2: Community feedback mechanisms on local development processes are functional<br><br>Activity 1.2.2: Pilot a digital application to gauge community's feedback: The plan was to integrate a Field App developed by True Footprint that allows target community to identify and solve problems as a network, analyze data for decision making | Output 1.2: "Community feedback mechanisms on local development processes consist of two main activities: 1) integration of digital application- Field app & 2) capacity building of MC.<br>The Field app was canceled and not integrated in the project, but capacity building activities have taken place: needs assessment of MC across 4 districts conducted, trainings modules developed for MCs.<br>Total budget for this output: 126,328; 37% of this budget line disbursed. | AKF has re-allocated funding to increase outreach of drinking water supply project in line with government regulations and directive. | Cancelation of the Field App does not affect the Outcome or Objective of the project.<br>Through the MCs and IVDP process community members are well engaged in the development process. Integration of IVDP priorities in the DDP indicates that feedback mechanism works through other means such as engagement in development of IVDPs, exchange of information with state authorities, joint visits to ICR projects, community meetings and regular interaction of MC leaders with sub district authorities. These should be continued and reinforced in this important phase of finalisation of the DDPs. |
| **Outcome 2**: Communities have equitable access and equitably use vital services (such as WASH and childcare services) that are provided by public and private actors | Output 2.3: Access to affordable day care services with ECD principles is improved<br>Activity 2.3.1: Support the establishment of private and community-based day care centers | Initial plan was to set up 8 private and community school day care based ECD centers that support children's overall development. 100% financial self-sufficient rate to be reached by Y 4.<br>Due to the Education Department's shift in priorities toward ECD, several changes have taken place: ECD is no longer privately managed but primarily operated by schools; teachers' salaries are now covered by the state budget; and the training program is being developed by the Education Department.<br>86% of the budget disbursed | These shifts and changes are beyond the scope and authority of AKF. Budget was re-allocated to increase number of ECD supported from 8 to 20. | This shift is not expected to undermine the project's outcomes or objectives, which remain on track. Ongoing activities continue to improve access to affordable day-care services. The Education Department has its own ECD program and principles. Their impact on children's overall development remains to be assessed. |

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| **Outcome 4:** Communities engage in management, regeneration and protection of their natural resources and adopt disaster risk reduction measures and practices | Output 4.1: An innovative GHG emission and CO2 sequestration data collection tool is piloted and adjusted for scale up<br>Activity 4.1.1: Developing and scaling the GHG emission and CO2 sequestration data collection tool | AKF allocated $55,000 for this activity; however, in response to a government request, the activity was cancelled. GHG inventory at a national scale is a state obligation under the UNFCCC which is mandated to the Hydromet department in Tajikistan. Unlike project baselines which are created bottom-up, GHG baseline and reporting protocols are top-down. Using macro-economic data, each sector of the economy is assessed for its technology, process, energy use etc and using emission factors provided the IPCC, sectoral, national and per capita emissions are computed. It is not a 'bottom up' process given challenges of a vast number of emission sources, millions of data points, variability within them, measurement challenges etc. | Saving from this were re-allocated to increase outreach for WASH indicators: increase water supply project from 4 to 5 and number of DRR and NRN supported project. | The data collection tool could contribute to Outcome 4, but it is not a primary driver for achieving the Objective which consists of 2 parts: (1) regeneration and protection of natural resources; (2) adoption of DRR practices. While progress on DRR practices is well on track, regeneration and protection of natural resources could be further strengthened by placing greater emphasis on Climate Smart Agriculture practices, integration of agromet advisories that enhance community resilience to extreme weather events and a changing climate. Such practices may include solar-powered sprinkler and drip irrigation systems, improved water collection and storage, precision agriculture, sensors, and apps for efficient input use, reduced tillage and bio-compost at large scale, among others. The topic of climate change could be introduced among the adolescents to create awareness and generate innovative ideas for mitigation. Further, AKF could present its own Scope 1 and 2 emission data as well as its contributions to mitigation through tree planting etc which are being collected for its corporate global reporting. |
| Programmatic Consideration | Lengthy bureaucratic process to get ICR work plan endorsed by the state authorities | A Five-Year Roadmap was developed and submitted to the relevant state authority for endorsement, intended to facilitate the organization of the steering committee and streamline work at the national level. However, the endorsement process took nearly a year. This was an AKF-led initiative with no requirements from state authorities. | This has not affected workplan implementation at the field level and activities took place as per the initial plan. | There is no major delays in activity implementation |

# Annex 5: List of Stakeholders met

# Annex 6: Checklist for Stakeholder Consultation

| **Outcome 1: community participate in planning, implementation & feedback mechanism of the local dev. Processes**<br>**Outputs:** New local development plans (IHAs, VMPs, IVDPs) are developed; Community feedback mechanisms on local development processes are functional; Polit a digital application to gauge community's feedback; Conduct institutional capacity assessments and capacity building for Mahalla Committees (MCs) | |
|---|---|
| **Stakeholder** | **Topics to Explore** |
| Govt officials<br>Head of District<br>Working group<br>District chairmen (Governor)<br>Head of Jamoat (lowest unit of government - appointed)<br>Mahalla committee<br>Women and Youth representatives<br>Head of MC<br><br>Other donors<br>AKF team members | <u>Local development plans</u><br>• What are the planning processes, planning cycle of the govt and which moments does the project seek to interface with them. How successful has this been? What can be improved? What local development plans and sessions have you or your subordinates been engaged in or have been developed in your area (IVDP, WMD/WMP, DDP, etc.)?<br>• How are the various plans (disaster risk reduction, district development plans etc....) integrated and used for govt planning processes?<br>• What projects were identified as a priority, and how many were implemented?<br>• What is your level of integration with Mahalla Committees (MCs)?<br>• Roles they play (DWSS management, fee collection etc..), investments in their capacity building, membership, internal governance<br>• What feedback mechanisms are in place? Any digital applications piloted? (from community members, govt authorities), what is the progress and plan on this?<br>• What is the role, mandate and composition of the Working Groups, women's representation?<br>• What are digital governance initiatives and how does the project engage with this?<br>• Contribution of AP and MSDSP supported activities for DRR and NRM? Results? What can be improved?<br>• Engagement in local governance mechanisms, support they need from local govt entities, what support they receive, what needs to be improved and how?<br>• Digital governance – is it reaching them and what benefits does it bring, what can be improved?<br>• Cases of success and failure, Reasons<br>• What is Human Centric Development and how does it feed into local governance mechanisms (how does it relate with MSD and contribute to Outcome for 3?) |
| **Outcome 2: Communities have equitable access and equitably use vital services (such as WASH and childcare services)**<br>**Outputs:** Water supply and sanitation service systems established; Communities aware of HHS behaviors; Access to affordable day care services with ECD principles; Small-scale grants to address issues faced by adolescents using (HCD) approach | |
| Project staff<br><br><br>Beneficiaries<br>Girl students<br>School Authority | <u>DWSS Saroy village construction of Saroy WSS planned to be finished in Aug 2025.</u><br>• How was this project prioritized in your village, was it part of IVDP or any other plans? How were women engaged in the selection/decision process?<br>• How was the local govt. engaged in decision making and in the support of this project? |

| | |
|---|---|
| Early childhood Development centres (ECDs)<br><br>Govt officials<br>Field visit:<br>1 latrine in Faizabad<br>1 HCD (solar panel by MSDSP in Roghun<br><br>School latrine in Sangvor<br><br>1 DWSS project Faizabad<br><br>Contractors for latrine construction / infrastructure projects | • What are the planning processes, planning cycle of the govt and which moments does the project and the beneficiaries seek to interface with them?<br>• What is the managerial structure of WSS? Do you have women in the WUC?<br>• How often do you get together to discuss the construction process, and do you keep minutes of the meeting?<br>• What is the mechanism for collecting water fees?<br>• What are tariffs for use of water, how much do you plan to charge per cube?<br>• Have you discussed potential rates with beneficiaries?<br>• What do you think the collection rate would be, and do you have any differential tariff for the poorest?<br>• Do you have any funds from migrants for use for social needs in your village?<br>• How is the construction process progressing, and what can be improved?<br>• Does AKF have an established scheme for managing DWSS (incorporating best practices) that is applied across all 5 planned DWSS or does each WUC develop its own mechanism?<br><br><u>20 ECD set up across 4 districts & supported with essential materials.</u><br>• How many mothers use the day care facilities – seasonality? Profile of mothers – working/ single, how much are they paying?<br>• Plan for ECDs to reach financial sustainability. How will the issue of inclusion be addressed? Cross subsidy mechanisms, govt support, what is the recovery rate for now?<br>• Any management schemes and plan for financial sustainability<br>• What is the extent of community contribution – who provided it and how was it mobilized?<br>• Any training for the teachers in ECD, who develops the curriculum for ECD?<br>• Any training or support for curricular development?<br>• 8 ECD owned by private sector – elaborate on this (question to AKF staff).<br><br><u>Target 5: 4 PL constructed benefiting 19,657 people (target was 12,000)</u><br>• What is the share of the community in construction of 4 latrines? What was the water system before and what was its functionality?<br>• Hygiene education<br>• Menstrual hygiene – traditional practices and what has changed?<br>• How has HCD influenced the WASH work?<br><br><u>HCD approach</u><br>• Does AKF has a specific approach/methodology/training on HCD approach? How many adolescents participated in the training sessions?<br>• How many grants are channeled through HCD approach?<br>• Beneficiary of HCD approach: What were your impression of HCD session? What helped you improve your life? |
| **Outcome 3: Women and youth generate a sustainable income**<br>**Outputs:** Women and youth are trained on relevant, in-demand technical skills; have access to financial products, Support local enterprises for **enhancing DRR and energy-efficient (EE) products**; Develop affordable green financing products | |
| Accelerate prosperity meeting with Head of AP | <u>MSDSP: Support local enterprises for enhancing DRR and energy-efficient (EE) products (projects for women& youth)</u> |

| | |
|---|---|
| Field visit: Confectionary workshop in Roghun<br><br>Drip irrigation in Faizabad by AP<br>Gas block production plant in Sangvor | • What specific activities were supported? (land cultivation tools, mowing machine, soil tiller)<br>• How are activities selected?<br>• Explain links to DRR and EE technologies?<br>• Do the recipients of the projects generate sustainable income?<br>• How many are led by women, by youth?<br>• Are these projects linked to the green financial product?<br>MSDSP: <u>Develop affordable green financing products (greenhouse, gas block, autoloader, mini harvester, tractor)</u><br>• What green financial products were developed, with who and what are the terms of partnership with the financial institution?<br>• How many projects were supported under this activity and links with innovative, digitized, NRM and DRR solutions?<br>• Income generation, financial sustainability of the projects?<br>• What was the share of credit/loan in each project?<br>• What are the terms of these credit/ loan (time period, interest rate etc.)<br>• Will the financial institution continue providing these loans after the project ends, explain?<br><u>Accelerate Prosperity</u><br>• Were these cohorts sector specific, which sectors did each cohort cover (incubation and acceleration)?<br>• In which districts were these bootcamps held?<br>• How do you promote the call for participating in the cohort (which platforms)? Was it challenging to engage women?<br>• How many applications did you receive and how many were shortlisted?<br>• What are the most common requests for financing from applicants?<br>• 3 projects supported on crops & horticulture, what specifically was supported? Financial sustainability & scalability of these projects?<br>• Any businesses supported DRR or energy efficient products (solar panels, insulation etc.)? |
| **Outcome 4: Communities engage in management, regeneration and protection of their natural resources and adopt disaster risk reduction measures and practices**<br>**Outputs:** Climate-smart agriculture practices introduced (establish prod. Groups & develop Cluster Action Plan and Implement CAPs on post harvest handling with focus on women); climate smart irrigation system; greenhouse, nurseries, storage facility; An innovative GHG emission and CO2 sequestration data collection tool is piloted and adjusted for scale up; Community disaster risk preparedness and response capacity strengthened | |
| Head of CoESCD district office<br><br>1 greenhouse owner in Faizabad<br><br>1 greenhouse in Roghun ; 1 beekeeping project<br><br>DRR project by MSDSP in Roghun | AKF/MSDSP <u>PG & Clusters</u><br>• Developing and scaling the GHG emission and CO2 sequestration data collection tool, what is the progress, plan for this activity?<br>• How do you decide on PG selection, crop per PG? How many PG established?<br>• How are projects selected?<br>• Ownership of the equipment received through the project (motor cultivator (motorized tiller) with plough, small cart, hiller (ridge), tillage machine, sprinkle) etc.<br>• Income management generated through the use of this equipment?<br>• The relations of PG with clusters?<br><u>Irrigation system</u><br>• How were irrigations systems selected (Involvement and contribution of local government and community? |

| | |
|---|---|
| DRR project by MSDSP in Sangvor<br>Animal shelter by msdsp<br>Agric storage by msdsp<br>Agric machinery in Sangvor<br>Visit CERT by AKAH in Nurobod<br>CERT team<br>Head of Mahalla Committee. | • Vertical wells – climate smart and disaster proof aspects of this irrigation system?<br>• Management and maintenance of the system?<br>• Have you decided what other irrigation systems and where to build them?<br>Pasture Management Groups<br>• How often PMG groups meet, women, youth membership, govt involvement?<br>• Decision process on community livestock shed as part of PMP – ownership and management?<br>• How many villages served, how many households?<br>• Do all animals belong to the villagers?<br>• How many ha of pastures covered, its effect on overuse of pasture?<br><u>Diversified food via kitchen garden (seeds, tools, vermicompost, greenhouse)</u><br>• How are projects selected, are these inputs directly provided by AKF/MSDSP, any contribution from farmers?<br>• Greenhouse in Fathobod village: system of the greenhouse, contribution from farmer, links with green financing, income generation, technical support?<br><u>Climate smart Storage</u> – 100 mt:<br>• How was this selected, technical support, ownership, management, financial sustainability?<br>• How many hhs benefit, do they rent storage area or they sell their products during peak season?<br>• What was the situation before like with sale, storage, post-harvest loses of fruits, veg. potato?<br><u>Sub projects protection of forests:</u><br>• 3 landslides mitigation 1 tree planting<br>• How are they selected, govt. Community involvement and ownership?<br><u>AKAH / CERT</u><br>• Number of CERTs established, number of contingency plan?<br>• Are people easily engaged in CERT sessions/activities?<br>• What is the proportion of women & youth in CERT?<br>• Govt. engagement in CERT?<br>• What are the key messages of Climate change adaptation sessions and most common feedback from govt. and communities?<br>• Any action takes as a result of Climate change adaptation sessions by the govt., communities<br>• Emergency communication system: management, reporting, ownership of equipment?<br>• Management, maintenance, ownership of 4 new stockpiles and 1 shelter |

# Annex 7: Select References

**Annex 8: ICR project documents**

| Source | Document |
|---|---|
| 1. AKF | • Consolidate ICR Annual Report Y2 note |
| | • ICR Audit financial statement |
| | • ICR Audit management letter |
| | • ICR annual Operational report Dec 23, Nov 24, Final March 2025 |
| | • The 3rd ICR Steering Committee meeting |
| | • Cost effectiveness analysis |
| | • ICR baseline survey report |
| | • Rapid gender assessment |
| | • Risk analysis matrix |
| 2. AKF ICR Final ProDoc Nov 25_2022 | • Pro_doc_Akf_ ICR_ Rasht<br>• A. 1 Logframe<br>• A.2 Budget<br>• A.3 Workplan<br>• A.4 Organizational set up<br>• A 5. Gender Policy marker<br>• A 6. Stakeholder assessment<br>• A 7. Preliminary Gender assessment<br>• A 8. Governance policy maker<br>• A 9. Map of program area |
| 3. Other Docs | • Assessment grid evaluation<br>• CCDR Tajikistan<br>• Country report_2024 |
| 4. Watershed | • Summary of Farrukh, Obi Lurd, Sngvor and Tumandara watersheds |
| 5. SCO | 6. Country report<br>7. Swiss cooperation program central Asia |

ResourceBook-on-SpringshedManagement.pdf; Guidelines for Policy Makers and Development Practitioners Niti Ayog, Govt of India, SDC India

Adapting to water scarcity through watershed conservation - ICIMOD

(PDF) Hydrology and Sustainable Management of Springs: Understanding the Complexities and Importance

Springshed revival and management - ICIMOD

## Tool 6: Template for the Management Response

### Management response to the External mid-term evaluation of "Improving Community Resilience through Sustainable Livelihoods (ICR) in the Rasht Valley" project

#### Management Response

The Management Response (MR) states the position of the SDC and AKF Tajikistan on the recommendations of the evaluation of Improving Community Resilience through Sustainable Livelihoods (ICR) in the Rasht Valley project. The MR provides a solid basis for strategic decision-making. The relevant stakeholders should be consulted.

#### Assessment of the evaluation

The evaluation was conducted by a team of independent experts including Ms. Rupa Mukerji and Ms. Nazira Zevarshoeva, in accordance with international standards. The evaluation process was well managed and included close involvement of the SDC's reference group comprising Mr. Shodiboy Djabborov, National Program Officer from SCO, and Mr. Sirus Khujamov, ICR project Manager from the AKF office.

The main objectives – to assess the effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, impact, and sustainability of the project – have been met by the evaluators. The SDC appreciates the comprehensiveness of the evaluation report and the sound analysis of key elements of the SDC's performance in ICR project.

The report's analysis and resulting recommendations are considered to be useful for strengthening the strategic orientation of ICR project. SDC's and AKF's management thank the evaluation team for their effort in producing a substantial and comprehensive report. Both SDC and AKF Tajikistan are committed to implementing the measures outlined in this Management Response.

#### Main findings

*Shortly present an overall statement regarding the evaluation itself, especially its accuracy and usefulness, including an overall opinion on the most important recommendations in management's views.*

The overall evaluations findings are largely positive, confirming the project's relevance and effectiveness. The evaluators applied a comprehensive evaluation methodology that included desk research, interviews, and field visits. However, a key limitation of the evaluation approach was that the consultants only visited villages where the project was implemented. They did not visit any villages where the project had not been carried out. This means that the evaluation could not compare project results with a control group. This should be considered in the endline evaluation. The final evaluation should also focus more on how project outputs have contributed to the intended outcomes, which was only partly assessed in this midterm evaluation.

Although most recommendations focus on operational aspects for the implementing partner, the Swiss Cooperation Office will carefully review and address the strategic recommendations as well.

*Summarise the conclusions and the follow-up from the evaluation as described in the section below.*

The evaluation notes that AKF's pending registration status and institutional changes present potential risks and uncertainties. AKF Tajikistan would like to clarify that AKF it remains

a registered agency and continues working as per its current registration. The re-registration is required for incorporating some programmes that used to be implemented by other AKDN agencies mainly related to Education and Health. Institutional changes will not affect the implementation of the ICR project, which will proceed according to the approved work plan and without interruption.

It is crucial that SCO and AKF closely monitor the situation and act quickly if these risks arise. Implementing a scenario-based risk management plan is strongly recommended.

Most planned activities remain achievable, but regulatory restrictions have prohibited the development of the GHG emissions and CO2 sequestration data collection tool and delayed the community feedback platform. These issues are largely beyond AKF's control and have been reported to SDC and adjustments made accordingly.

There has been good and timely progress by local authorities at district and sub district levels in incorporating IVDPs data and priorities into both the annual development plans and the upcoming DDPs for 2026-2030. This reflects growing national ownership of the approaches, as well as cofinancing of WASH, ECD, DRR and NRM activities, which are relevant to rural communities' needs. This is especially important as the government focuses its budget on large infrastructure projects.

We are in full agreement with all six recommendations, all of which are marked in green. – see table below. The SDC agrees to seize this opportunity to improve its results by taking specific measures in line with the recommendations.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Community responsibility and dependency | |
| 2. | Improve WASH | |
| 3. | Further improve digitalisation | |
| 4. | Entrepreneurship development | |
| 5. | Climate and Disaster Resilience | |
| 6. | Programmatic a) improved water resources management; b) The prolonged presence of AKF in certain villages may result in a concentration of its funded activities, potentially leading to the creation of new unmet needs within those Communities: | |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Fully agree | Partially agree | Disagree |

**Overview of recommendations, management response and measures**

| **Recommendation 1 Community Responsibility and Dependency** |
|---|
| The bottom-up approach and strong community involvement in project design have proven effective. However, AKF should exercise greater oversight when communities propose interventions that are not economically viable. Use of high value fruit trees for stabilization of slopes without clearly defined responsibility for the beneficiaries to provide protective irrigation as needed and ensure a good survival rate leads to concerns of 'aid dependency'.<br>Concentration of past and current project activities in a few villages leads to concerns about aid dependency ('AKF is now here to stay'). A partnership approach with clearly defined responsibilities for all activities, including DRR is recommended. In future, Integrated Habitat Assessment should also provide information on past AKF and other donor investments in the villages to avoid concentration of resources. |

| Management response | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Fully agree** | Partially agree | Disagree |
| We fully agree with this observation. While community involvement is essential for project success, it is equally important to ensure that proposed interventions are economically viable and sustainable in the long term. We also agree that in future IHA should map past and existing donor interventions to ensure fair support distribution and avoid focusing on just a few villages. | | |

| **Measures** | Responsibility | Timing |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Looking ahead, it is important to formalise an agreement between the project and the farmers that clearly outlines each party's responsibilities after the project's conclusion. | AKF | Ongoing |
| 2. While most trees are still healthy, applying mulching around the base of young trees is an effective method to retain soil moisture and moderate soil temperature, which reduces the need for regular irrigation. | AKF | Ongoing |
| 3. During the project design, ICR should implement mechanisms that foster farmers' ownership, responsibility, and active participation, enabling them to transition from passive recipients to proactive stakeholders who ensure the sustainability of projects without relying on external support. | AKF | Ongoing |
| 4. Additionally, AKF proposes to strengthen the criteria for selecting farmers and other stakeholders is important. | | |

| **Recommendation 2 Improved Water Supply and Hygiene** |
|---|
| 1. While hygiene awareness programs have been held on a large-scale use of soap for handwashing was not observed. Access to low-cost technical options for improved sanitation is planned to follow the construction of water supply systems. Local enterprises to fabricate low-cost toilet pans suited for pit latrines, can help bridge the gap, improving functionality of the existing latrines given that 98% of households have pit latrines. A collaboration with SaTo san could be explored. The full health benefits of improved water supply and sanitation can only be achieved through integration of these aspects. |
| 2. The quality of construction of all infrastructures (emergency shelters, toilet blocks, EDC space) is very high. There is however a tradeoff between the cost of individual units and population coverage using less expensive, incremental improvements in functionality. This is particularly important for school sanitation where existing pit latrines are located far from the main building due to the problem of smell and flies, challenging access during the long winter period with high snow fall. It is strongly recommended that in future years the focus shifts to improving the functionality of several school toilets through the introduction of a low-cost toilet pan, a ventilation system and fly trap for the pit (VIP latrine), dustbin and/or simple incineration system for sanitary waste and a hand washing station in all schools. |

3. Since the government lacks resources for construction of WASH infrastructure and there are few other donors active in the region on this topic, the demonstration value of an improved toilet as a pilot, to be replicated by others, is not important, rather resources could be more equitably distributed to benefit many children.

4. Menstrual waste management systems stop at the use of dustbins. This can create a new challenge of solid waste management, which is currently not seen as a problem in the villages visited and can also pose cultural barriers to the use of the dustbins. A low-cost simple incineration box / system should be part of all school toilets. There are no taboos to discuss this topic among the school administration which is a big achievement of the project and its partners.

**Management response**

| Fully agree | **Partially agree** | Disagree |
|---|---|---|

Behavior change is challenging to adopt and maintain. The project's hygiene awareness sessions and materials have raised understanding of health risks and handwashing benefits. Yet, research indicates knowledge alone is not enough to ensure regular soap use.

The project invests in quality toilets with water seals, ventilation, septic tanks and handwashing stations. Some users still misuse the toilets due to limited understanding. For example, one user removed a water seal, thinking it caused improper waste flow and cleanliness issues. This shows the need for more user training and awareness in future projects.

The introduction of affordable toilet pans, ventilation systems and fly traps for VIP latrines is well received. This innovation should be further explored and integrated into future sanitation initiatives.

In addition to creating new challenges for solid waste management, the lack of disposal system can discourage girls from attending school and affect toilet functionality. Thus, we agree to put low-cost and simple incineration box in all school toilets. …

| **Measures** | Responsibility | Timing |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Focusing on several important behaviors, in particular using feelings of disgust and shame can be an effective strategy to encourage behavior change, particularly for handwashing with soap (highlighting the unpleasantness of germs on unwashed hands or social stigma of poor hygiene can motivate individuals to adopt regular handwashing). | AKF | Ongoing |
| 2. Integrate hygiene components into health, education and nutritional programs to enhance overall impact. The homeroom teacher can deliver an introductory session on the importance of handwashing with soap during the weekly educational hour. This can be done without requiring special approval from the Ministry of Education. | AKF | Ongoing |
| 3. Providing strategic input into national hygiene policy and strategy formulation, and contribution to their implementation and monitoring through effective partnerships with national and international stakeholders. AKF can strengthen the national hygiene policy by collaborating with relevant ministries to align priorities | AKF | Ongoing |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| and engaging international partners to integrate global best practices. AKF can also contribute by piloting scalable hygiene interventions and reinforcing supply chains for essential hygiene products (e.g., soap). **To achieve this, AKF, together with other international organizations, needs to present substantial evidence from field projects to national policymakers and legislators.** This can be done through national platforms, such as the Donor Coordination Council. While this process may be time-consuming, it might be achievable. | | |
| 4. Other strategies include the use of well-placed reminders, both physical (e.g., posters or sticky notes near sinks) and digital (phone alerts or messages) to prompt handwashing at key moments, such as after using the toilet or before eating. | AKF | Ongoing |

| **Recommendation 3 Further improve digitalisation** | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Community Emergency Response Teams (CERTs) have proven highly effective in managing emergencies and disasters within their villages. Women and young people are active members and demonstrated strong engagement during meetings with the evaluation team. Early warnings are primarily shared by CoESCD through WhatsApp groups. The CoESCD has also developed a software application providing weather alerts, first aid guidance, and emergency response tips. Its use is still limited; dissemination could be expanded through CERT groups and MCs at the village level.<br><br>2. Similarly, every CoESCD and CERT has paper copies of the hazard maps prepared by AKF, but these can also be used in the digital format, making the household level data and information accessible and useful for the CoESCD and CERT team members. Smart phone and internet are widely used in the area even if internet speeds are low.<br><br>3. Engagement of adolescents through the HCD program has brought new ideas and concrete actions to address community priorities. While the focus on local evidence-based actions to trigger a green transition, through development of an app and collection of data on greenhouse gas emissions is laudable and ambitious, it could not be implemented due to regulatory constraints. While funds for this activity line have been diverted to DWSS, NRM and DRR with the approval of SDC, awareness of GHG emissions and options to reduce them can still be created with the engagement of the students (e.g. as a science project). Several apps and tools already exist for carbon accounting by individuals and firms. This should lead to concrete actions locally to improve practices, such as management of livestock, manure management etc. | | |
| **Management response** | | |
| Fully agree | Partially agree | **Disagree** |
| Indeed, emergency deployments show CERT's vital role given CoESCD's limitations. We support digitalizing hazard maps. This will improve accuracy, enable real-time updates and strengthen disaster preparedness and response. We agree that early warnings (EWs), could be disseminated through CERTs and MCs but must include capacity-building to ensure recipients understand how to react effectively to warnings. | | |

| **Measures** | Responsibility | Timing |
|---|---|---|
| 1. To support better planning and disaster preparedness, AKAH converts the paper-based hazard map into a digital format to enhance accuracy and ease of use. | AKF | Ongoing |
| 2. Early warnings should be paired with capacity development to ensure recipients know how to respond effectively. This will improve its effectiveness and usability, making it a valuable tool for community preparedness. | AKF | Ongoing |
| 3. Close cooperation with WWCS project – another SDC funded initiative will provide access to self-service kiosks that provide up-to-date weather forecasts and early warning information. | AKF | Ongoing |
| In addition to the above measures, AKF Tajikistan proposes the following steps: | | |
| 4. To enhance coordination between the parties and strengthen the overall impact of joint activities, AKF and CoESCD are planning to issue official IDs for all CERT members | AKF | Ongoing |
| 5. For the ease of communication and to ensure operational readiness, AKF and CoESCD plan to connect—at least for the first stage—the CERT leaders with the SDI Center. This arrangement will allow CERT leaders to receive timely alerts related to weather and other relevant hazards, thereby strengthening early warning and response coordination | AKF | Ongoing |
| 6. Intend to engage with Caritas Switzerland to explore the possibility of connecting CERT members—based on their respective coverage areas—to Caritas low-cost weather stations. This collaboration would strengthen our early warning capabilities and improve the accuracy of localized weather info available to community responders. | AKF | Ongoing |
| **Recommendation 4 Entrepreneurship Development** | | |
| 1. For cold storage facilities, cold chain experts should be involved to support AKF staff to ensure that temperature, humidity, and ventilation control systems are properly installed and maintained, and that community members are trained in their use. At the time of field visit no devices were in place to monitor temperature or humidity, and owners had limited knowledge of proper storage management, underscoring the need for capacity building. | | |
| 2. To increase efficiency, the Market Systems Development approach should be applied more rigorously to address critical constraints in remote areas, such as limited access to quality agricultural inputs and water scarcity. This requires an analysis of market functions and actors to identify gaps, incentives, and leverage points for partnership that can drive sustainable, scalable system change. For improving the agriculture input supply chain, partnerships should be built with capable service-technology providers. | | |

3. IHA findings show that farmers in the target watershed spend 40% of agricultural expenditures on animal feed, revealing strong business potential for rural SMEs in animal feed/silage production.

4. Financial literacy among women entrepreneurs needs to be improved. Short training videos and business coaching tutorials should be offered. While sector-specific exchange among entrepreneurs within the country and beyond has been promoted by AP, exchange within the valley, among entrepreneurs, irrespective of the sector they work in, could be very helpful for peer coaching and support on aspects of business and financial management.

5. Most enterprises supported by AKF and AP are doing well, overcoming challenges and adapting their practices. Many of them are poised for growth. The financial products of MSDSP need to be adapted to the needs of the entrepreneur, supporting financial linkages for growth. MSDSP supported projects can also serve as pipeline for AP.

**Management response**

| **Fully agree** | Partially agree | Disagree |
|---|---|---|

We agree that effective operation of cold storage facilities requires following best practices, such as maintaining the correct temperature, optimizing energy use, and training staff. This approach ensures product safety, reduces waste and enhances overall efficiency. Application of Market System Development approach to improve access to agricultural inputs and address water scarcity is well received. We fully support the view that enhancing financial literacy among women entrepreneurs is essential.

We concur with the evaluators that most enterprises are performing well and poised for growth. MSDSP's financial products will be further adapted to better meet entrepreneurs' needs, strengthen financial linkages, and serve as a pipeline for AP financing.

| **Measures** | Responsibility | Timing |
|---|---|---|
| 6. Investment in cold storage infrastructure should be integrated with capacity-building initiatives to ensure proper operation, maintenance and sustainable utilisation. | AKF | Ongoing |
| 7. Enhance existing financial products and adopt innovative solutions, i.e., mobile banking and digital wallets to improve accessibility and convenience, especially in remote areas, provided there is a supportive environment. | AKF | Ongoing |
| 8. Continue promoting networking events to strengthen collaboration and knowledge sharing amongst women entrepreneurs. | AKF | Ongoing |
| 9. Supporting local businesses and entrepreneurs to enhance available and affordability of agricultural inputs. | AKF | Ongoing |
| 10. In addition to the above measures, AKF proposes to extend its engagement beyond the ICR project sub-watersheds. The aim of extending beyond the ICR sub-watersheds in the IHHI 1 and IHHI 2 projects eight sub-watersheds of four districts – Fayzobod, Roghun, Nurobod and Sangvor is to enhance women's and | AKF | Ongoing |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| youth role in financing enterprises in greenhouses, EE, green finance, and other sectors that strongly affect women and youth employment. During selection of sub-projects priority will be given to the four targeted ICR sub-watersheds and then to the IHHI 1 and IHHI 2 sub-watersheds of the four targeted districts. | | |

**Recommendation 5 Climate and Disaster Resilience**

1. As farmers shift to more high value crops (e.g European apple varieties) and intensive practices (green houses with multiple harvests) with project support, the investments that are at risk of extreme events and climate change, are also growing. Selection of crop varieties and water management interventions also move towards greater investment and intensification. This is a positive trend as markets are growing, trade is flourishing and there is a potential for growth and improved productivity. Given the high exposure to weather and hydro-geological hazards, early warning, agromet and agricultural advisory services and access to inputs need to be integrated in the program to reduce and manage risks.

2. Weather services and agromet advisories should be integrated in the project support activities. These can be accessed through existing or upcoming services from Tajik hydromet, through collaboration with SDC partners (CARITAS) or by promoting private service providers as in many parts of Asia (Videos – VCB-N). Digital media is very widely used, and this is a clear opportunity for targeted communication and extension at a reasonable cost. The focus should be on provision of information, advisory and solutions and not only on awareness, as extreme events and associated risks are a lived reality for the communities.

3. Access to electricity in the region is very limited, more so in winter months when supply is limited to 4 – 6 hours per day and power cuts over several days are common. Therefore, it is recommended that all water pumping system are solar by default and solar energy provision, a key priority identified by adolescents through the Human Centric Design (HCD) program, is integrated in ECD and school toilet construction programs.

4. The Integrated Habitat Assessment (IHA) reports identified the use of animal manure for cooking as a key factor for deficiencies in soil nutrients in all the watersheds. While there is a potential to double agricultural productivity, 50 – 60% of households report shortage of fertilizers. Integrating biogas, vermi-composing and trials of solar cooking systems have the potential to address soil fertility, energy security and economic benefits in an integrated way.

5. AKF has initiated smart agriculture practices such as using organic manure, producing vermicompost, applying crop rotation, and improving grazing management. With only 31% of the budget disbursed for this output, there is flexibility to scale and refine interventions. To strengthen farmers' efficiency and climate resilience, greater emphasis should be placed on water-saving measures, solar-powered drip irrigation, adoption of drought-resistant varieties, and crop rotation strategies that enable double cropping per hectare.

6. Given that the region is exposed to multiple hazards and the risks are extensive, a functioning early warning system (EWS) is essential. Now it operates through multiple wattsapp groups with the risk that some messages do not reach the target

or are mis-communicated. Better integration using digital tools may improve the robustness of the system.

11. Managed pastures, including those initiated by ICR are few and scattered and their impact on reducing exposure to natural disasters is limited to the specific sites, which are well selected. A broader impact will only be seen if there is policy support for management of herd sizes, controlled grazing, breed improvement and stall feeding. Partnership with other programs such as the upcoming nationwide ADB program on agriculture, dialogue at donor platforms is needed to complement local actions.

**Management response**

| Fully agree | **Partially agree** | Disagree |
|---|---|---|

We fully agree that high-value crops are vulnerable to climate-induced extreme weather events, increasing the need for early warning systems (EWS), agromet services, advisory support, water saving measures, crop rotation and drought resistant crop varieties. With broad smartphone access and sufficient coverage networks, timely alerts (cold & heat waves, heavy rains etc.) can enhance EWS effectiveness and community resilience.

Though already adopted by the project before the evaluation, the recommendations to expand solar energy in water supply are still commendable.

In terms of pasture management, pasture management stands out as a major challenge that can only be effectively tackled through active and committed participation of the authorities.

| **Measures** | Responsibility | Timing |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Close cooperation with WWCS project is essential. This SDC funded intervention will provide access to self-service kiosks that offer the latest weather forecasts and early warnings. These kiosks also function as platforms for buying and selling agricultural products, ordering machinery services and connecting market actors throughout the value chain. | AKF | Ongoing |
| 2. Establish collaboration with CoESCD to ensure project beneficiaries can utilise and benefit from the SOS app. | AKF | Ongoing |
| 3. Successful experiments with innovative seeds show promise, but these seeds cannot be recycled indefinitely. To ensure a steady supply, AKF should partner with private companies to ensure availability of seeds in local markets. | AKF | Ongoing |
| 4. Explore the feasibility of replicating the WWCS project's weather-based irrigation model for potato farming in the project areas, based on its success in Lakhsh district in achieving higher yields with lower water consumption. | AKF | Ongoing |

**Recommendation 6 Programatic**

1. Springs are the most preferred source of water for drinking and irrigation by both communities and AKF. Culturally, flowing water is preferred as drinking water over ground water. Only in cases where an adequate spring source is unavailable does AKF opt for groundwater based DWSS. The upper catchments of spring sources are being degraded due to uncontrolled animal grazing. The highland areas are

also the regions where migrant cattle from other regions graze. There is a 5-fold increase in individual herd sizes since Soviet times. Protection of drinking water sources may provide the necessary weight to pasture protection measures. While the principles of springshed management are similar to watershed management, they differ in some significant aspects as below:

- **Scope**: Springshed management can cover multiple micro- or meso-watersheds, while watershed management typically focuses on a single watershed.
- **Geographical Relationship**: Springs are often located outside the typical boundaries of a watershed, as their recharge zones may not align with the watershed's boundaries.
- **Approach**: Springshed management emphasizes the relationship between springs, aquifers, and watersheds, aiming to conserve water resources effectively. In contrast, traditional watershed management often overlooks the unique characteristics of springs.
- **Recharge Management**: Springshed management may implement recharge strategies that differ from traditional methods, focusing on augmenting discharge from springs rather than just managing water flow in the watershed.

SDC India has supported the govt of India in developing its policy and a guidance on springshed management in the Hindukush Himalayas[1] recognising that between 40% to 90% of domestic water needs in mountainous regions are met by spring sources which are drying rapidly. Evaluation of its applicability in Rasht and eventual integration of springshed management would deliver multiple benefits of water security at an affordable cost, protection of the landscape and reduction of landslide risks which are also triggered by excessive soil moisture, including due to melting of permafrost. Monitoring of springs and changes in their discharge is also a key step to building adaptive capacity of mountain communities.

There is a risk of concentration of several AKF financed activities in specific villages due to AKF's long presence in the region and the high-risk profile of settlements which creates new unmet needs. There is a high degree of local resource mobilization and self-reliance in the area with school alumni and migrants contributing substantial amounts to community and village development activities. This needs to be fostered and AKF investments distributed carefully for equity and coverage. While being comprehensive, the IHAs, do not contain information on past investments by AKF and other donors in the watershed, and given the long history of AKF's presence in the region, this information would help avoid concentration of resources.

2. The pending registration of AKF is a risk. AKF's institutional restructuring adds to a sense of uncertainty. A scenario-based risk management plan would be helpful in navigating through this context. In response to this concern, AKF Tajikistan would like to clarify that it is a duly registered agency andcontinues working as per its current registration. The re-registration is required for incorporating some programmes that used to be implemented by other AKDN agencies mainly related to Education and Health.

3. While the participation of national govt representatives in the steering committee is low, the ownership of the project and the important gap that AKF fills in key sectors is broadly recognised and highly appreciated, especially by district govts. This is a key asset in dealing with challenging contextual factors. It is recommended that specific national entities with whom the project has a direct collaboration, such as CoESCD and the center for Healthy Lifestyle Development of the Ministry of Health, are invited to the Steering Committee to strengthen the body.

[1] Guidelines for Policy Makers and Development Practitioners

4. In summary, while Rasht faces many hazards, there are also many opportunities as the region is experiencing an economic and social transformation. AKF and SDC have been long term partners in the development of the region. This partnership should now take advantage of the new opportunities while taking care not to augment existing risks or creating new ones.

**Management response**

| Fully agree | Partially agree | **Disagree** |
|---|---|---|

Indeed, springs are culturally preferred for drinking and irrigation, but their catchments require protection from degradation. Where springs are insufficient, AKF uses groundwater for drinking and irrigation and has rehabilitated wells to ensure reliable water supply.

The evaluation notes that AKF's longstanding presence in certain areas has led to a continued focus of interventions in those locations. It further highlights a strategic risk of overconcentration, suggesting that other villages or settlements within the project areas despite facing similar or emerging challenges may be receiving less attention or fewer resources. If this is the case, then a more balanced approach to geographic coverage may help enhance equity and impact across the project area
AKF agrees with Recommendation 6 in general. However, AKF partially agrees with section (b), which addresses the risk of concentrating AKF-financed activities in specific villages. Before developing the ICR proposal, AKF analysed the seven districts of the Rasht Valley and found that three districts – Rasht, Tojikobod and Laksh – were already being supported by other organisations such as GIZ, the EU and the WB for the next two to three years. With the agreement of the SCO, AKF therefore decided to focus on the remaining four districts – Fayzobod, Nurobod, Sangvor and Roghun City. Of the 49 targeted villages, 41 received support from the project during the first two and a half years. During years four and five of the project, AKF will mostly focus on the remaining eight villages which did not receive support, as well as on villages with fewer sub-projects.

We admit that AKF's registration creates a risk and adds to a sense of uncertainty. AKF Tjk is a registered agency and continues working as per its current registration. The re-registration is required for incorporating some programmes that used to be implemented by other AKDN agencies mainly related to Education and Health.

We acknowledge the low participation of national-level partners in the project's Steering Committee. We support inviting specific national entities directly involved in the project.

We fully agree on leveraging new opportunities while carefully managing existing and potential risks.

| **Measures** | Responsibility | Timing |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Implementing spring-shed management approaches such as restoration or planting of native vegetation, controlling soil erosion through trenches and terracing, and adopting controlled or rotational grazing systems can ensure long-term sustainability of springs and protects water quality. | AKF | Ongoing |
| 2. To address the risk of overconcentration, AKF should undertake a comprehensive assessment to identify underserved villages and emerging needs across the project area. Based on this a more balanced geo- | AKF | Ongoing |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| graphic targeting strategy should be developed to ensure equitable distribution of resources and interventions. Strengthening community engagement, coordination with local stakeholders and development partners will help prioritize areas with unmet needs. Supporting the upcoming new DWSS project in Tojikobod district is a strategic opportunity to extend assistance to an underserved area with pressing needs while fostering more equitable geographic coverage. | | |
| 3. Engage proactively with relevant government agencies to accelerate the registration and resolve any bottlenecks. Prepare contingency and/or a scenario-based risk management plans to ensure continuity of operations and program delivery in case of prolonged registration or restricting challenges. | AKF | Ongoing |
| 4. The NSC meeting is intended to serve as the high-level body guiding the ICR project and its strategic direction. Additionally, the National Steering Committee has acted as an information mechanism, AKF providing information to the main stakeholders. While this has been valuable, the remaining time in the project's first phase offers an opportunity to revitalize the NSC into a dynamic and purpose driven forum that fosters constructive dialogue and inclusive participation from local authorities, national ministries and international partners. | AKF | Ongoing |
| 5. As long-term partners in the region's development, AKF and SDC are in a strong position to use emerging opportunities to promote sustainable development initiatives that encourages growth while managing risks. Additionally, AKF uses SDC's CEDRIG tool to assess joint projects for potential risk, ensure they do not negatively impact the climate and or environment, nor create or the worsen existing risks. Furthermore, they strengthen coordination with government agencies and other partners to avoid duplication. | AKF | Ongoing |