

# CONCEPT NOTE

## **1. Summary of the action**

1.1 The proposed action seeks to enhance incomes and improve living standards in 13 Jamoats in 6 Districts of eastern and western Khatlon. This will be accomplished through agricultural productivity improvements, the social and economic integration of marginalized groups, improved access to clean drinking water, the promotion of community participation in local development initiatives, and the capacity-building of local administrations towards effective local governance and supporting economic growth. A strong emphasis will be placed on the proposed action's sustainability through the capacity-building of existing and newly-formed institutions and organizations. Moreover, as the geographic scope of the proposed action is limited, it intends to have a multiplying effect and lead to the social, economic and political development also of Jamoats in the region that are not directly targeted by this project.

## **2. Relevance:**

2.1 The proposal is very relevant to the needs and constraints of the target country. Poverty in Tajikistan is very much a rural phenomenon with 77 per cent of the population living in rural areas, and 65 per cent of rural inhabitants living below the poverty line. The emphasis of the proposed action is to enhance incomes and improve living standards in the rural areas of eastern and western Khatlon. Apart from improving access to such basic services as clean drinking water, this is to be accomplished both through increased agricultural productivity, and from increasing activities in other economic sectors. The proposal has also recognized that, in Tajikistan, rural inhabitants are often unaware of their rights, whether they be political, economic or social. Thus, the civic awareness dimension is an integrated part of the proposed action. Other issues specific to the Tajik context, such as women's rights, natural disasters and the environment have also been integrated into the project's proposed activities.

2.2 The problems to be resolved and needs to be met by the proposed action include: a) inefficient agricultural production due to deteriorated irrigation and drainage infrastructure, inability of farmers to exercise full control over production, sales and land rights, lack of access to agricultural support services, inputs and finance, etc.; b) food insecurity and loss of agricultural produce and income due to an inability to process and/or store surplus amounts; c) lack of popular awareness about issues of water conservation and rational water use; d) lack of community capacity to effectively assist emerging and established small businesses through business advisory services, technical assistance, and the provision of physical supplies and facilities; e) lack of employment and income-generating activities, particularly for marginalized segments of the rural population; f) lack of access to potable water and the resulting high incidence of water-borne disease; g) civil society not vibrant enough to safeguard local democratic advances; h) lack of capacity amongst local government officials and JRC personnel in designing strategic development plans, in project formulation and implementation, in cooperation and conflict resolution, etc.; i) lack of civic awareness about the role of local government institutions, civil society, and the political, economic and social rights of citizens.

2.3 The 401,600 inhabitants of the 6 districts of Baljuvon, Farkhor, Shurobod, Nosiri-Khisrav, Kumsangir and Pyanj will be the direct and indirect beneficiaries of the proposed action. In addition, the many actors involved in the proposed action, including existing and newly-established Jamoat Resource Centres (JRCs), locally-contracted partners (both private organizations and NGOs), local government authorities, and newly-created CBOs like the Water User Associations (WUAs) will have their capacity built in the process.

## **2.4 Objective #1 – The improvement of agricultural productivity and marketing chains**

The proposed action intends to establish 13 Farmer Cooperatives, each consisting of a demo and research plots based on a Farmer Field School (FFS) model, agricultural tool bank, and agro-processing workshops with auxiliary storage facilities. 4 irrigation systems and drainage networks will also be rehabilitated based on the priorities of farmers. The establishment of these entities supposed to increase agricultural production by 20%, increase the quantity of marketed agricultural produce by 20%, increase average household income by 20%, and reduce the loss of agricultural produce by 15 per cent.

### **Objective #2 – Marginalized groups socially integrated and mobilized through employment and income-generating opportunities**

In working towards this objective, the proposed action will establish 13 Business Advisory and Information Centres (BAICs) providing business advisory and counselling services to approximately 1,300 beneficiaries. 13 workshops offering apprenticeship programmes will also be established, providing 400 people from marginalized segments of the population with marketable skills. 30 per cent of the apprentices will be women, and 50 per cent will have found employment following their apprenticeships.

### **Objective #3 – Drinking water provided with the help of local resources**

6 rural drinking water supply systems will be rehabilitated/constructed, providing access to safe drinking water for almost 22,000 people and reducing the incidence of water-borne disease by 15%. All of the beneficiaries will receive training in health, hygiene and sanitation.

### **Objective #4 – Revitalization of development initiatives by promoting community participation and building the capacity of local administrations towards effective local governance**

4 new JRCs and 6 new District Development Councils (DDCs) will be established, the capacities of JRCs and DDCs as vehicles for participatory development processes at the Jamoat and District levels will be strengthened, and the views, opinions, and priorities of rural communities will be better reflected in policies designed at the highest government levels.

### **3. Methodology and Sustainability:**

3.1 In working towards the achievement of the first objective, 13 small-scale agro-processing workshops with auxiliary agricultural storage facilities will be set up to prevent the waste of surplus agricultural produce. 13 farm cooperatives will also be established to develop economies of scale and improve access to agricultural inputs and finance. Each farmer cooperative will consist of an FFS, where agricultural knowledge will be disseminated through the establishment of demonstration and experimental plots, and an agricultural tool bank, where different types of agricultural tools and supplies will be made available to farmers on a lease basis. In addition to this soft assistance in improving agricultural productivity, deteriorated irrigation and drainage systems will be rehabilitated and alternative irrigation systems, such as bucket-fed dripping and roof catchments, will be constructed, greenhouses are deemed to be the mechanism for year round supply of agricultural products for inhabitants of target areas.

In terms of the second objective, BAICs will be set up under the JRC umbrella to provide advisory services, undertake awareness raising activities and organize round tables to discuss issues such as land reform and the establishment of Dehkan Farms. The project will also work to integrate marginalized groups into employment and income generation opportunities through apprenticeships providing marketable, workshop-based skills.

To provide rural inhabitants with access to clean water, UNDP, using pre-defined criteria, will identify 6 drinking water supply systems for construction/rehabilitation. Once constructed/rehabilitated, UNDP will ensure the sustainability of the water supply systems by putting in place the appropriate structures for their operation and maintenance (O&M) and training those responsible for it. Finally, training sessions will be conducted at the household level to raise awareness amongst beneficiaries about health, hygiene, sanitation, and the benefits and rational use of clean water.

For its local governance component, the proposed action will enhance the organizational capacity of civil society by strengthening existing JRCs, establishing new ones, and encouraging community participation in local decision-making. It will also build the capacity of local government officials and JRC personnel in designing strategic development plans, in project formulation, project implementation, etc. Public awareness will also be raised about the role of local government institutions, civil society, and the political, economic and social rights of citizens.

3.2 The main implementing partners will be UNDP's Area Offices in Kulyab and Shaartuz and the existing and newly-established JRCs in the target Jamoats. The Area Offices are UNDP Tajikistan's representatives at the field level, its face to those who benefit from the projects it implements. Thus,

UNDP has had a relationship with its Area Offices in Kulyab and Shaartuz since they were set up in 1996 and 1997 respectively. The same is true of JRCs who have been the linchpin in UNDP's community development programmes since it first initiated its activities in Tajikistan in 1996. UNDP's Kulyab and Shaartuz Area Offices will be the principal actors in this proposed programme, ensuring that partner responsibilities are met and funding is used transparently, and UNDP CP office providing high calibre technical and operational support. JRCs, meanwhile, will be the day-to-day managers of most actions taking place at the local level. Moreover, many of the newly-established entities (farmer cooperatives, WUAs, BIACs, etc.) will be established under the JRC umbrella.

3.3 The project will achieve sustainability by building the capacities of existing institutions and establishing any new entities within the JRC system, which has already proven its self-financing ability. Moreover, UNDP has encouraged the active participation of local authorities in project implementation and overview, thus ensuring that they have a stake in project activities and will provide long-term support. In addition, when selecting Jamoats to target and irrigation and drinking water supply systems to rehabilitate, one of the pre-defined criteria for selection is that the community is willing to make cash or in-kind contributions to project activities and is committed to their sustainability. Finally, whether it is the creation of a new civil society organization (WUAs, farmer cooperatives) or the construction/rehabilitation of infrastructure, sustainability is given a high priority and ensured by building the knowledge and skills of organization members and infrastructure owners and operators, and by putting in place operation and maintenance plans.

3.4 The project intends to have multiplier effects by establishing sustainable community-based organizations, building the capacities of existing ones, and establishing links between these CBOs and local authorities. In doing so, the intention is to create capacity at the local level to identify and address social, economic, and political development issues. Moreover, through its proposed action, UNDP intends to create models that can be replicated throughout the region and throughout the country as a whole. It is well placed to do so due to its network of almost 100 JRCs located throughout Tajikistan. Finally, UNDP is committed to developing synergies between donor programmes so as to avoid duplication and maximize the impact of donor contributions on target populations. In this particular project, focused and complementary interventions between TACIS, BOMCA and ECHO funding will be sought in order to multiply the EC's impact while ensuring higher visibility.

#### **4. Expertise and operational capacity:**

4.1 Since 1996, when UNDP Communities Programme (CP) first began its development activities in Tajikistan under its original title, the Tajikistan Rehabilitation, Reconstruction and Development Programme (RRDP), UNDP has managed more than 1,000 sub-projects constituting an investment of well over € 25 million. The sub-projects have been in the sectors of agriculture, health and sanitation, water resource development, education, energy, gender-in-development, institution building, reintegration of former combatants and returnees, income and employment generation, small enterprise development and conflict prevention.

4.2 UNDP CP is responsible for implementing projects that fall within two of the four thematic areas outlined in UNDP's Country Programme Action Plan (CPAP), Transforming Livelihoods and Redistributing Responsibilities. Within Transforming Livelihoods, four strategies are foreseen to transcend extreme rural poverty in Tajikistan: developing lasting public and private partnerships to enhance entrepreneurial and employable skills among rural poor; stimulating equitable and sustainable capital growth and improved agricultural productivity; developing an enabling legal environment for Small and Micro Enterprises; and providing sustainable access to safe water among rural poor; strategies which are all embodied in the proposed action. The same is true of UNDP CP's focus within the Redistributing Responsibilities thematic area, i.e., to build the capacity of local governments to uplift their population out of poverty in a sustainable manner and engage the support of communities and the private sector.