



Balochistan Rural Development and Community Empowerment Programme (BRDCEP)



Note on the Visit to the Gorno Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast of Tajikistan

October 18-21 2017

IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS FOR THE BRDCEP's GRANT COMPONENT



EU-TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PARTNERS



Note on the Visit to the Gorno Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast of Tajikistan

Disclaimer

"This Document has been produced with the assistance of the European Union. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of Rural Support Programmes Network (RSPN) and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union."

Rural Support Programmes Network

Note on the Visit to the Gorno Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast of Tajikistan (Oct 18-21, 2017)

From October 10-18, 2017, a 19 member Pakistan delegation undertook an Experience Sharing and Learning Visit to Tajikistan under the European Union supported Balochistan Rural Development and Community Empowerment Programme (BRDCEP). Delegation members included senior members of the Balochistan Assembly (ex-Chief Minister of Balochistan, Minister for Planning and Development and Minister for Local Government), senior government officials, civil society representatives and senior staff of the BRDCEP implementing partners. The Aga Khan Foundation/Mountain Societies Development Support Programme (AKF/MSDSP) kindly hosted the visit. After briefing at Dushanbe, the delegation visited Sugd Region and Faizobod district to meet with community institutions fostered by AKF/MSDSP at the village and union council/Jamoat level respectively. On October 18, 2017, the 17 members of the delegation left for Pakistan.

On October 18, 2017, two members of the delegation (Khaleel Tetlay, Chief Operating Officer RSPN and Khurram Shahzad Specialist Monitoring and Evaluation RSPN) travelled by road to the Gorno Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBO) of Tajikistan. The purpose of this visit was to:

- a. To meet with community institutions fostered by AKF/MSDSP at the village and union council/Jamoat level and see how they undertake joint planning with union council authority, and
- b. To meet with community women and to see how they participate in and benefit from community institutions fostered by AKF/MSDSP at the sub-village, village and union council/Jamoat levels.

On October 19, 2017, the two-member team met with AKF/MSDSP's Regional Team at Khorog and explained the purpose of the visit. Later the team travelled to the union council/Jamoat Tusyon of Roshtkala district. At Tusyon, the team held a meeting with representatives of District Administration, union council/Jamoat Administration, Village Organisations and Social Union for the Development of VOs (SUDVO¹).

¹ SUDVO is akin to Local Support Organisation, i.e. a federation of VOs.

SUDVO representative gave basic information about the union council/Jamoat. Tusyon Jamoat has 11 villages with a total number of 412 households with a population of 3,200. Each village has a VO, with its associated Women's Group (WG). The head of the WG is also the vice-president of VO. AKF/MSDSP had started its work in the Jamoat in early 1990s with the Humanitarian Assistance Programme (HAP). This programme was needed to mitigate the near famine like conditions of the region. In the Soviet era, over 90% of the food was imported from other parts of Tajikistan and other Soviet Republics. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and Tajikistan's independence, all food imports stopped and the people face severe food insecurity. At the request of the Tajikistan government, AKF/MSDSP launched HAP as a short-term mitigation strategy. Under the medium term strategy to boost local food production, in 1994/5, AKF/MSDSP launched the Agriculture Reform Programme (ARP), This entailed working closely with regional, district and Jamoat authorities for the:

- a. The privatisation of the state farms on per capita basis
- b. Arranging and supply of inputs for the new class of private farmers to use, e.g. seeds, fertilizers, fuel, agriculture machine repairs, etc.
- c. Setting up a credit system for agricultural inputs (initially in-kind and later on cash basis)
- d. Training of the new private farmers to increase productivity

By the end of 1990s, local food production had increased from meeting 10% of the region's needs to meeting 80%. With increase in local food production, HAP support declined over the years and finally HAP was ended.

In mid-1990s, AKF/MSDSP also set up the Engineering Programme (EP) that focused on repair and rehabilitation of irrigation infrastructure as well as supporting communities to construct new irrigation channels to bring new land under cultivation. Later, EP also undertook other projects, e.g. repairs of bridges, schools, medical facilities, etc.

In mid-1990s, AKF/MSDSP management and staff visited the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP) in Gilgit and Chitral regions of Pakistan. In 1997, a three member AKF/MSDSP spent three months in Chitral looking at how AKRSP worked with rural communities. In July 1998, AKRSP sent three-member team (Khaleel Tetlay Regional Programme Manager Baltistan, Yasmin Karim Gender Coordinator Gilgit and Muhammad Iqbal Senior Social Organiser Gilgit) to GBAO to support the planning for the launch of the Village Organisation Programme (VOP).

All VOs in Jamoat have a similar structure. All households are members of the General Body (GB). GB elects the Executive Council (EC). EC elects VO leaders. Leadership comprises three persons: President, Vice-President (head of WG) and an Accountant. VOs have also set up committees to properly manage VO's affairs. There are committees for Education, Health, Agriculture, Elderly, Women's Group, Finance, Youth and Water Users' Association.

Tusyon SUDVO representative said that since the start of VOP in 1998, AKF/MSDSP has supported local VOs to implement 110 different development projects. All projects were identified by the VOs and that the community also made contributions to meet the total cost of the project. Most of community contributions were in form of labour contribution. These projects covered various sectors including construction of new irrigation channels, repairs and rehabilitation of existing irrigation channels, vegetable production and processing, livestock development (goats and poultry), agriculture development (wheat, potatoes and fodder), honey bee production, fruit production and processing, afforestation, road repairs, wood processing, setting up a computer centre, wool processing, sewing and stitching centre, micro hydle unit, training and capacity building of community leaders, and setting up of sub-VO Community Based Savings and Loaning Groups (CBSLGs).

Over the past few years, there has been a focus on social sectors. AKF/MSDSP has constructed new repaired old medical points. Schools have been repaired. Early childhood development (ECD) has been introduced. Each VO has volunteers who ensure that all pregnant women and children are vaccinated. There is 100% vaccination coverage in all 11 villages of Jamoat Tusyon. In order to better prepare for delivery, the Aga Khan Health Service (AKHS) has introduced the ‘Mablagh Ghuzaree Jomea Brai Hifzul Sehat’ (Community Fund for Health - CFH) with VOs. To generate money for CFH, each member household of VO contributed Tajik Somoni 1.0 per month. CHF us then used to cover travel costs to hospital and also cost of medicines. VOs have nominated one volunteer to manage CHF. Now all births take place at Roshtkala or Khorog hospitals. District health authority is very supportive and appreciative of VO/SUDVO’s role in the basic health sector.

In the education sector, each VO has set up a Village Education Committee (VEC). This committee works closely with village school’s Parent Teacher Association (PTA). VEC encourages full attendance and in case of any absenteeism visits children’s homes and meets with parents. Parents are encouraged to visit school regularly to attend PTA meetings and to meet with teachers. VEC also supports the school in case of any minor repairs. Now the government provides coal to heat the schools in winter. Previously, VEC collected fuelwood to heat the schools.

The Jamoat representative said that the VOs are now the arms and hands of Jamoat. They facilitate the Jamoat and District Authorities to extend their outreach to each household. Without VOs being place, the pace of progress in the Jamoat would have been much slower.

SUDVO representative then spoke about the planning process that is followed in the Jamoat. He gave the example of his own village Langar. VO Langar has 60 households with a population of 486 (260 females and 226 males). He is VO’s President for the past nine years and by profession

he is a teacher. Each household has two members in VO, one male and one female. Every December, VO Langar has an annual meeting where the previous year's work is reviewed and the new year's plan developed. All households participate in this meeting. A representative of the Jamoat also attends this meeting. During the planning process, local problems, issues and potentials are discussed and prioritised. These priorities fall in to three categories: to be initiated through self-help; to be initiated with civil society/NGO support; and to be initiated with Jamoat/District Administration support.

In December 2016, VO Langar held a planning meeting and devised an annual plan for 2017. This plan was quite simple and prioritised activities were planned out on a monthly/season basis. For example, seasonal activities included preparations for the spring crop planting season and the autumn harvesting season. This was done so that maximise benefits can be achieved from limited agricultural resource base. On self-help basis, the planned activities related to spring cleaning and maintenance of the irrigation channels. During the winter months, snow clearing of the village roads and paths. External support was identified for major rehabilitation of an irrigation channel. This channel was a potential hazard to settlements lying below it. VO leader sought support for this rehabilitation. With the support of the Jamoat leader, FOCUS Humanitarian was approached and after a survey they agreed to provide support under its Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) programme.

At the time of fostering of VO Langar, a Village Development Fund (VDF) was also set up. Sources DF include membership fee that each member pays every month (Somoni 1 per month per member). VO leaders also mobilised money from local well off people as well as from community's migrants living and working in other parts of Tajikistan and Russia. VDF is used for activities that are prioritised by the VO general body. Previously, support from VDF has been provided to poor families and their children, especially for education, e.g. warm clothing, shoes, note books, pen/pencils, etc. Today, VO Langar's VDF stands are Somoni 13,000 (USD 1,400). Within VO Langar, two Community Based Savings and Loaning Groups have been set up and they are functional.

Jamoat representative said that that Jamoat has 15 'vekils', councillors. Out of these 15, 11 are also VO Presidents, i.e. all VO Presidents are vekils. This has helped tremendously in building and strengthening the engagement between citizens and local authority, i.e. Jamoat. One key role of Jamoat is to coordinate with SUDVO to consolidate the Village Development Plans (VDPs) that all VOs have prepared. A joint meeting of VO, SUDVO, Jamoat and District Administration representative are held and jointly the Jamoat Development Plan (JDP) is prepared. For the 2015-19 JDP, a meeting was organised and six groups were set up. Each group used the VDPs to conduct an analysis:

Group 1 conducted the Jamoat socio-economic situation analysis, e.g. demography

Group 2 conducted analysis of opportunities in the agriculture and other economic sectors

Group 3 conducted analysis of social sector related issues, problems and potentials of the Jamoat

Group 4 conducted analysis problems, issues and potentials in the physical infrastructure of the Jamoat

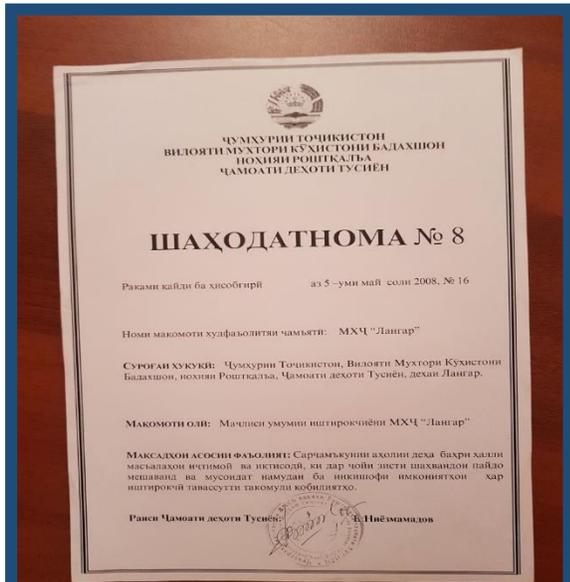
Group 5 conducted an analysis of the local ecology/environment, and

Group 6 conducted an analysis of sources of investment for Jamoat Development Plan.

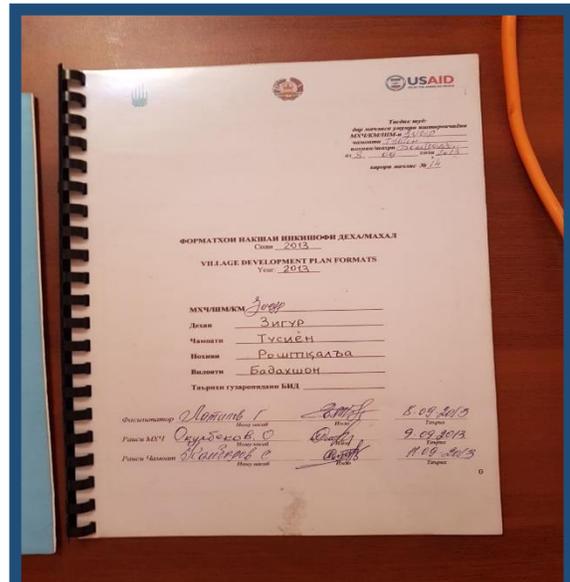
The groups then came together and made presentations. After discussions and prioritisation process, JDP was finalised along the above mentioned sectors. Efforts were made to ensure that JDP reflects the needs and potentials of all 11 villages of the Jamoat. If these efforts had not been made, then the larger villages would have dominant position in JDP. Major sources of support for the implementation of JDP were also identified: self-help initiatives of VOs/SUDVO, private sector, local authorities (Jamoat and District), local NGOs, national NGOs and donors. Once JDP was prepared and approved by Jamoat/SUDVO leaders, it was submitted to the District Authority. About 60% of Tusyon Jamoat JDP prioritised activities were included in the District Development Plan (DDP). This process then carries on to the provincial and national levels. This is the structured approach to citizens' engagement with local and sub-national and national authorities. This has only become possible by having the VOs/SUDVOs in place.

The Jamoat and District Authorities are highly pleased by the cooperation received from VOs and SUDVO. The community structures allow for structured approach to cooperation which is based on the collective needs and not individual needs. The Jamoat representative also said that the new planning system is streamlined: VO through SUDVO requests the Jamoat; the Jamoat request the District Authority; the District Authority requests the Provincial Departments. Depending on resources available with Departments, they include the proposed activities in their plans. He said that over the 20 years, the annual budget of Jamoat has gone up from Somoni 4,000 to Somoni 147,000 (from USD 2,000 to USD 16,000). Over 95% of this is recurrent budget, e.g. salaries of government employees within the Jamoat limits. Out of the 412 households of Jamoat, 110 households are receiving aid from the Government of Tajikistan's national social protection programme supported by the World Bank. Each beneficiary household receives Somoni 400 (USD 44) per year.

Jamoat concluded his remarks by saying that since the early 1990s, AKF/MSDSP have undertaken various initiatives in partnership with local authorities in agricultural development, in



VO Langar registration certificate



VO Zigar's Village Development Plan

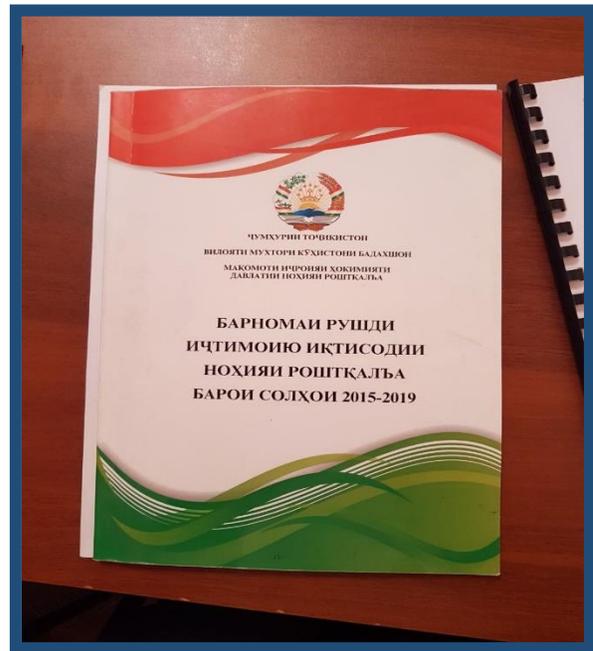
community physical infrastructure projects, in health and education and in livelihoods development. All these efforts have been very fruitful, productive and produced the desired results. And this happened because AKF/MSDSP had mobilised the people and organised them at the village level. With people having their own organisations, they were better placed to engage with Jamoat. Today the 11 VOs are quite active all across the Jamoat and with the introduction of the cell telephone technology, we are in constant contact. There is real time exchange two-way information makes the functioning of Jamoat very smooth. Jamoat authority is the gateway to higher authorities at district and province levels. By working together, Jamoat and VOs are contributing to the development of the area. At one of my calls, all 11 VOs and hence all households are mobilised for action, e.g. celebration of national and cultural days. There is now much more coherence and unity in local governance.

Тасдиқ шудааст дар маҷлиси
азоёни МХЧ Зигур аз
29.12.2016

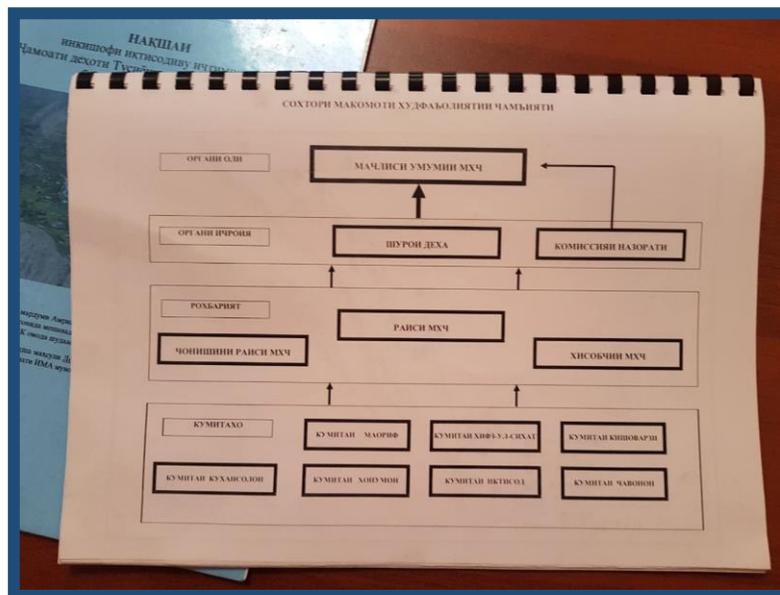
Нақшаи кори МХЧ Зигур барои соли 2017

№	Номи гунобона	Мӯҳлат	Маъсулин
б.1	Маъсалаҳо, ки маҷлиси МХЧ баррасӣ мешаванд.		
1.	Таъия ва баррасии нақшаи кори Барои соли 2017	Декабр	Раиси МХЧ кумитаҳо
2.	Насебузунӣ майдонҳои вараши	Феврал-март	Кумитани ҷавонон ва аъзоёни МХЧ
3.	Тақвими иди Навруз	Март	Раиси МХЧ
4.	Ҷамъабаста семоҳа	Март	Раис ва кумитаҳои МХЧ
5.	Омодагӣ ба китгуи кори баҳорӣ	Апрел-май	Кумитани яшновари
6.	Таймири роҳи мошингарди деҳа	Май	Раиси МХЧ ва аъзоён
7.	Таймири ҷубборҳо	Май	Раиси МХЧ ва аъзоён
8.	Сохтмони молхона	Дар давоми сол	Раиси МХЧ ва кумитаҳо
9.	Сиямур кашидани ғирду атрофи майдонҳои вараши	Июн	Кумитани ҷавонон
10.	Ҷамъабаста нимсола	Июн	Раиси МХЧ ва кумитаҳои
11.	Омодагӣ ба ҷамъовари китгуи кор	Сентябр	Кумитани яшновари

VO Zigar's 2017 work plan



Roshtkala District Development Plan



Village Organisation structure



Meeting at Jamoat Tusyon with SUDVO Tusyon leaders

On the afternoon of October 20, 2017, RSPN team visited SUDVO Zarin in the Upideh area of Khorog town. Right from 1998/99, when VOP was initiated in GBAO, AKF/MSDSP had strategized to undertake social mobilisation in Khorog town as well as in the urban areas of district headquarter towns. SUDVO President said that in Upideh, the first VO² was formed in 2000. Today, there are 17 VOs and associated WGs. AKF/MSDSP has been supporting the VO/WGs with various small projects, e.g. vegetable gardening, poultry raising, goat raising, revolving funds, fruit and vegetable process, skills training and capacity building of local leaders. Revolving funds proved to be strategic as these allowed local women to access small amounts of capital to initiate petty trading. Later some these women set up small shops as well as micro enterprises. Many women became traders in the Khorog town market. All these interventions contributed to improve local women’s livelihoods. Perhaps more importantly, these interventions contributed to significantly enhance women’s self-confidence and created more capacities and space for them to play important role in improving their families’ welfare.

SUDVO Zarin was set up in 2008 by 17 VOs. SUDVO took on the role of supporting and mentoring VOs/WGs, as well as developing good cooperation with local authorities and other SUDVOs in Khorog town. In 2010, AKF/MSDSP, with the support from MasterCard Foundation, started the Community Based Savings and Loaning Groups initiative. CBSLGs are sub-VO level bodies wherein members save regularly. As saving amount increases, small loans are given to those members who want to borrow to invest in their enterprises. At the end of the year, the books are closed and all savings and profits (from lending) are distributed to members. In 2010, 57 CBSLGs were fostered with AKF/MSDSP support having 570 members (average size 10 members). Since then, VOs/SUDVO has fostered another 52 CBSLGs. Today there are 109 CBSLGs with a total member ship of 3,336 (average size of 30 members). All these members now have developed a habit of regular savings. All CBSLGs have agreed to charge 3% per month on loans given to members from savings.

² Given the urban context, Khorog town VOs were called ‘*Tashkilot-e mohali*’ – local organisation

One CBSLG *Almacy* (Diamond) during 2016/17 financial year earned a profit of Somoni 37,355 (USD 4,160) and distributed it to members along with their savings. When the new cycle started, group members saved Somoni 100,000 in the first meeting.

Savings are generated by all members of CBSLGs. Most of the borrowing members are also set up Common Interest Groups (CIGs) around enterprises. Thus far 12 CIGs are functioning and they cover various sectors, e.g. sewing and stitching, vegetable and fruit processing, wood processing, baking and cooking, and honey production. These 12 CIGs have created employment for 40 persons. CIGs borrow from CBSLGs at 3% per month and usually they borrow Somoni 3,000 to Somoni 10,000 (USD 333 to USD 1,100) for up to six months and have to repay capital and interest well before the closing of the CBSKG's financial year. Further, loaning is also leveraged at 1:3; if a member has Somoni 3,000 as savings then she/he can borrow up to Somoni 9,000. Under this system of CBSLGs, the current total savings of all groups in SUDVO amount to Somoni 6,500,000 (USD 722,000).

CBSLGs hold bi-monthly meetings. SUDVO leaders visit the newer groups at every meeting. Older CBSLGs are visited less frequently. Sources of savings are salaries from formal employment, wages from informal work, and remittances sent by family members from Russia and other parts of Tajikistan. While CIGs borrow to invest in their enterprises, at the end of the financial year when CBSLG members receive their savings back, they use it for various purposes including house improvement, house construction, household goods, children's education especially higher education, etc.

SUDVO President concluded by saying that the CBSLGs, VOs, WGs and SUDVO provide an effective platform for women to participate in many matters that directly impact their lives and the lives of their families. Since 2000, women's role in decision making at the household and community levels has increased manifold. Women have also gained enormously from participating in their own community institutions. These gains are both tangible and non-tangible gains. While women have gained materially, they have also gained socially and culturally. There is greater recognition of the important role that the women can play in improving the lives of their families and communities. In terms of management, women are not only playing a greater role in managing their family matters but also playing a significant role in the local economy. Women are involved in petty trading, and running micro and small businesses. Some women manage enterprises that provide employment to other women. When AKF/MSDSP began the process of mobilising us in 2000, it essentially began the process of empowering us and preparing us to benefit from new opportunities. Since 2000, our prepared members have benefited from new opportunities. Without our own organisations, we could never have made such gains and the wider spread of such gains. Today, we have our own organisations, our own

capital and we have skills to engage with all stakeholders for the benefit of our members, families, community and our Khorog town.

After the SUDVO meeting, a visit was made to a nearby wood processing unit that is financed by borrowing from local CBSLGs. This unit was initially supported by AKF/MSDSP. Now this unit is producing furniture for Early Development Centres (EDC) all across Gorno Badakhshan. Colourful and sturdy furniture is produced and there is a great demand for this as there is growing awareness about the importance of EDC.

On October 21, 2017, RSPN team travelled to Dushanbe on the Aga Khan Foundation helicopter. The 13-hour road journey was completed in 70 minutes!



SUDVO President making presentation



Local wood working unit



Sturdy furniture being produced for EDCs in GBAO

