



Sindh Union Council and Community Economic Strengthening Support (SUCCESS) Programme



SUCCESS Programme Regional Experience Sharing and Learning Visit to Tajikistan



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7th-15th April, 2017

Acknowledgment

RSPN would like to express sincere gratitude and thanks to Aga Khan Foundation/Mountain Societies Development Support Programme (AKF/MSDSP) teams for facilitating the RSPN team and our guests for the exposure visit in Tajikistan.

We are very thankful for the planning, effort and time spent by all focal persons and their unparalleled hospitality to make this trip for our partners from the province of Sindh an enjoyable and truly enriching experience by visiting several MKJs (VOs) and SUDVOs (LSOs), and experiencing the work they have done over the last two decades with an opportunity to ask questions and learn lessons.

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Acronyms

AKF	Aga Khan Foundation
AKRSP	Aga Khan Rural Support Programme
ARP	Agricultural Reform Programme
CBSGs	Community-Based Savings Groups
CIs	Community Institutions
CIF	Community Investment Fund
CO	Community Organisation
CPI	Community Physical Infrastructure
CDD	Community-driven Development
EU	European Union
GBAO	Gorno Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast
GoS	Government of Sindh
HAP	Humanitarian Assistance Programme
INGOs	International Non-government Organisations
IGG	Income Generating Grants
LSO	Local Support Organisation
LSO-N	Local Support Organisation – Network
NGOs	Non-governmental Organisations
MAP	Monitoring Action Plan
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MHI	Micro Health Insurance
MLO	Micro-Lending Organisations
MIP	Micro Investment Plan
MSDSP	Mountain Societies Development Support Programme
NRSP	National Rural Support Programme
PM	Programme Manager
RSPs	Rural Support Programmes
RSPN	Rural Support Programmes Network
SRSO	Sindh Rural Support Organization
SUCCESS	Sindh Union Council and Community Economic Strengthening Support
SM	Social Mobilisation
SO	Social Organizer
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SUDVOs	Social Unions for the Development of Village Organisations
TVST	Technical and Vocational Skill Training
TRDP	Thardeep Rural Development Programme
UC	Union Council
UCDP	Union Council Development Plan
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialists Republic
VDP	Village Development Plan
VDF	Village Development Fund
VMP	Village Management Planning
VO	Village Organisation
VOP	Village Organisation Programme
VTP	Vocational Training Programme
WASH	Water Sanitation & Hygiene

Overview

The Rural Support Programmes' (RSPs) approach of community driven development (CDD) through social mobilisation is derived from the first Pakistan's RSP – Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP) in Gilgit, Baltistan and Chitral. The concept was taken to Tajikistan in the 1990s and embraced by the Mountain Societies Development Support Programme (MSDSP) of the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF).

Under the European Union (EU) supported Sindh Union Council and Community Economic Strengthening Support Programme (SUCCESS), a 12-member team from the Rural Support Programmes Network (RSPN), National Rural Support Programme (NRSP), Sindh Rural Support Organisation (SRSO), Thardeep Rural Development Programme (TRDP) and Government of Sindh (GoS) undertook an experience sharing and learning visit to Tajikistan. The visit was kindly hosted and facilitated by AKF/MSDSP. The team met with AKF/MSDSP senior management, representative of EU Tajikistan, international non-government organisations (INGOs), and undertook field visits to meet with members and leaders of the Community Institutions (CIs) fostered by AKF/MSDSP in Faizobod and Garm districts of the Rasht Region and Mominobod district of the Khatlon Region.

The exposure visit, from April 7, 2017 to April 15, 2017, allowed the participants to directly observe the work of community institutions in the villages of Tajikistan, and learn from the leaders of the institutions, of their grassroots communities and networking with local government, over the last two decades. The visit gave the opportunity to visiting government official to engage with and understand the benefits of sustained government support to social mobilisation.

Such experience sharing visits are pertinent for evidence based advocacy and will feed into the development of the GoS's proposed Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) and help support GoS in scale up of CDD approaches in the country.

Background

The Aga Khan Foundation (AKF)'s activity in Tajikistan began in 1993, when, with the support of the international donor community, a response was mounted to imminent food shortages in Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO) resulting from the collapse of the Soviet Union. In parallel with this emergency programme, AKF initiated a rural development programme, using the model of the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP) in Northern Pakistan, implemented by Mountain Societies Development Support Programme (MSDSP), which was established in 1993 to coordinate relief and humanitarian assistance in the wake of Tajikistan's civil war. Programmes for reform in the social sector were introduced in 1997, aiming to assist the Government to cope more efficiently with reduced resources while at the same time benefiting from new approaches to education and health.

Currently, the Foundation's programmes in Tajikistan are focused in four areas: rural development, health, education and civil society. Many of its initiatives address cross-cutting concerns including gender issues, pluralism, human resource development and public awareness of development issues. The AKF Tajikistan programme area has expanded geographically over the past years. Today, AKF covers 32 districts in four regions of Tajikistan including GBAO, Rasht Valley, Sughd, and Khatlon, with a total beneficiary population of 1.4 million people. One of the hallmarks of AKF's approach in Tajikistan is its long-term commitment.

During the first five years of operations, MSDSP established three major programmes, i.e. Humanitarian Assistance Programme (HAP) in 1993, the Agricultural Reform Programme (ARP) in 1994 and the Village Organisation Programme (VOP) in 1998. These programmes contributed to enhancing food security through increased local production, targeted humanitarian assistance and through diversification of agricultural activities. The MSDSP evolved from a humanitarian relief programme into one of the most respected local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in country.

The MSDSP trains VOs and SUDVOs to develop village development plans (VDPs), which define local priorities for social and economic development. Many identified priorities have been taken up by MSDSP with donor funding, or through village development funds. However, over the past five years, MSDSP has increasingly sought to link VDPs more closely with government budgeting processes so that capable community-based institutions are able to attract government resources to address their priorities.



Women at a skills learning center

The first major effort was the **Humanitarian Assistance Programme (HAP)**, which focused on meeting the basic food needs of the population. This was followed by another programme, the **Agricultural Reform Programme (ARP)**. MSDSP intensified its focus on improving productivity in high-value livestock and horticultural products. The programme worked with the government and privatised state farms, provided innovative technology trainings to farmers and set up supply systems for agricultural inputs. The programme resulted in significant local food production increases and led to a halt of HAP over time.

The third major programme that MSDSP initiated was focused on social mobilisation through **Village Organisation Programme (VOP)**. The programme started in GBAO in 1998, and expanded to Rasht Valley (2000), the Khatlon Region (2002), and over the past few years to Sughd Region of northern Tajikistan. The VOP followed the AKRSP's three tiered approach to social mobilisation and community driven development (CDD) that the organisation pioneered in 1982 in the northern areas of Pakistan.

MSDSP's 2002-2006 strategy for building local capacities for sustainable development at the local level was built around the Village Development Planning Process (VDPP). The major purpose of this strategy was to build the capacities of communities for playing a greater role in local development. The VDPP included Village Management Planning (VMP) wherein VO members analysed their local context and situation, explored opportunities and then developed a three-year plan for the village, Village Development Fund (VDF), Village Organisation Assessment Exercise (VOAE), and learning through networking. The VOAE highlighted the importance of leadership, participation and planning, record keeping, building own development funds, and collaborations with other agencies as the key indicators. Networking with other organisations led to MSDSP learning about the importance of working at 'below the VO' level and 'above the VO' level. The importance of development as a learning process is recognised. By end of June 2004, 817 VOs had been fostered in the three regions of GBAO, Rasht Valley and Khatlon. VOs are covering 100%, 50% and 25% of rural localities in the respective regions.

In 2003, an approach was developed for the clustering of VOs at the Jamoat (Union Council) level. This approach was developed in order to allow VOs to move along the 'institutional continuum' and to take greater responsibility for their own self-management, and to develop more productive relationship and cooperation with the Jamoat administration (the lowest tier of the government structure). The new social structure was called Social Union for the Development of Village Organisations (SUDVOs). All VOs are represented in SUDVOs via a general body (GB), the GB then elects an executive committee (EC), and EC then selects the SUDVO leaders, i.e. President, Vice-President, Manager and Accountant. On need basis, SUDVO can set up various committees.¹

¹ <http://www.rspn.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Note-on-a-Visit-to-the-Community-Institutions-fostered-by-the-Aga-Khan-Foundation-Mountain-Societies-Development-Support-Programme-in-the-Gorno-Badakhshan-Autonomous-Region-of-Tajikistan-Apr-17.pdf>

Since the late 1990s, MSDSP has fostered a network of over 1,600 village organisations (VOs) and 105 Social Unions for the Development of Village Organisations (SUDVOs), reaching almost 700,000 people (55 percent of the total population) in targeted regions.

As per the law passed in 2008, all the VOs are now registered and recognised by government; they have legalisation certificate and rubber stamp. This has given them greater recognition and authenticity. VOs are registered under the Self-Acting Social Bodies law (Mokomoti Khudfaoliyati Jamiyati – MKJ), thus the VOs are known as MKJ².

Proceedings

Over the course of one week, the 12 member team undertook field visits to meet with members and leaders of the Community Institutions (CIs) fostered by AKF/MSDSP in Faizobod and Garm districts of the Rasht Region and Kulob and Mominobod district of the Khatlon Region. The team also met with AKF/MSDSP senior management, and representative of the European Union (EU) Tajikistan.

The purpose of the visit was to meet with the AKF/MSDSP and community institutions to understand their achievements in the last two decades, since the start of social mobilisation programme in 1998. The key objectives of the EU/RSPN/RSPs SUCCESS programme are to:

1. To increase household income levels
2. To diversify the sources of household income
3. To contribute to poverty reduction
4. To contribute to improve access to public services, particularly to:
 - a. Education
 - b. Health
5. To develop cooperation with local government
6. That the Community Institutions (CO/VO/LSO) should be sustainable the new Village Organisations – will they be useful, will they be sustainable?

The visit thus, was helpful and important to witness first-hand these longstanding community institutions and learn from them.



Mr Khaleel Ahmed Tetlay, COO RSPN, presenting award to the government official for their cooperation in Rasht Valley

The first district the team visited was Faizobod, and met with the Regional Manager of MSDSP, Ms. Mahe Jahan, in Garm Town. Ms. Jahan gave a brief history of the work MSDSP has been doing in Rasht region since 1997, which has evolved from a humanitarian relief programme into one of the most respected local non-governmental organizations in country. The initial strategy

² For the purpose of clarity, MKJs will be referred to as VOs in this report.
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for development work by MSDSP revolved around providing humanitarian aid and carrying out agriculture development. However in 2008 a new strategy was formed, which shifted the focus to building capacities of the people to play their role in development.

Rasht Valley is home to a population of 500,000 and 17,500 households roughly, in seven districts. Ever since the VOP programme came to Rasht Valley, 530 VOs, 54 SUDVOs have been formed.

In 2016, another new strategy was developed, focusing on three key things:

1. Building the capacity of local civil society (VOs and SUDVOs)
2. Natural Resource Management (Environment management)
3. Provision of services through the private sector

The role and strategy of MSDSP and operations have continued to evolve as the local socio-economic context has changed. Earlier MSDSP was service delivery oriented whereas now it has amore facilitative role that allows other set of actors and organisations to come forward and play their due roles. This has led to a decrease in the staff members as well. Ms. Jahan said: "In old days of AKF/MSDSP, I had 24 staff members in my district working on three major programmes: HAP, ARP and VOP. With maturing VOs and SUDVOs in place and taking on more responsibilities, today there is only me!"

MSDSP facilitates and supports community institutions to link up and get benefits from private sector as well as government departments. Since the strategy of 2008, the direction of the programme has been focused on five areas: poorest households; gender; youth; environment/ecology; and working through partnership for better accountability and transparency.

To ensure that the youth is involved in the development process, the MSDSP arranges exposure visits for the youth. As per law in the country, to keep the youth away from extremism, children 18 years of age and below are not allowed to go to any religious place including mosques. This shifts the focus on youth development through other activities such as sports events, celebration of festivals, exposure trips to other areas of the country, as well as to different countries.

The mainstreaming of gender is a priority for the President himself, and has been a focus for MSDSP as well. There has been positive discrimination to employ more women in the workforce. In 2016, around 2,600 employment opportunities were created out of which 800 were women, and 57 of the women were given permanent positions. MSDSP has carried out 114 training events since last year attended by 4,000 participants out of which 1,500 were women. In addition to this, 106 physical infrastructure projects/schemes were started whose tenders for contracts were done through the government. For the schemes, 237 contracts were granted, and 2 were given to women contractors, which is unconventional. In the 54 SUDVOs, 7 Presidents are women. The participation of women is increasing in every economic sector, including the livestock and pasture industry.

To ensure accountability and transparency, the MSDSP in Rasht Valley has started a new exercise at the district level of awarding a “Best VO” award to a VO that has exceeded expectations in self-help initiatives and sustainability of the projects. The first position VO is awarded TJS 800, second position gets TJS 600, and third position holder gets TJS 500. This is a voluntary exercise for the VOs, and to make sure there is transparency in the process, the evaluation team includes district government officials, other SUDVO members and MSDSP staff. The volunteer VOs that apply for assessment are visited by the team and their assessment is carried out according to a checklist. This exercise albeit new, is a good way to ensure accountability, institutional development and sustainability of the VO.

Questions by the Team

1. How are the poor targeted/identified for social mobilization interventions?

- a. The identification of poor is done through wealth ranking, which is one of the tools of Participatory Rural Appraisal. There is not a defined target of number of people, however if membership is low in one area, then the teams go back and have dialogues again with the community. There is roughly 80% household membership in the district of Vahdot. The involvement of government line departments in the process results in a positive response from the people as well.



Ms Mahe Jahan, Regional Manager, MSDSP, debriefing the team on MSDSP's work in Rasht Valley

2. Do VOs save?

- a. The VOs were an informal body till 2008 and had a system of Village Development Fund (VDF). The VDF was sourced by donations, membership fees, and a revolving fund of the VOs. The membership fee acted as savings in an informal way. The VDF was utilised for the purposes of social protection, various community events, as well

as internal lending (microcredit) to community members. However, in 2008 a new law was introduced that institutionalised formalised VOs and the law only allowed those organisations registered with the National Bank of Tajikistan to engage in microcredit.

As the VOs and SUDVOs could not engage in micro-lending to provide funding to the poor and vulnerable, MSDSP decided to establish micro-lending organisations (MLOs). It has established five MLOs so far that have benefitted over 7,000 people (36% women). VOs and their federations (SUDVOs) own the MLOs, which enables the latter to take advantage of trust within the community to reduce the risks of financial service provision to households with limited collateral. Approximately half of the loans are for agriculture.

The credit services provided by MLOs are supported by the European Commission (EC) and United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and have been complemented in recent years by 2,600 community-based savings groups (CBSGs).

CBSGs generally reach poor women and offer savings and small loans that can meet immediate consumption needs. CBSGs respond directly to the financial service needs of the remote and rural poor by providing a secure, convenient place to save and take small loans on flexible terms. The CBSG savings opportunity is particularly well suited to the remote rural poor. CBSGs are self-managed groups of 15-25 people and systems are kept simple and transparent to promote independence from AKF, and maintain transparency for members. CBSGs work under 'mutual self-help' cover of the law, hence they do not use conventional microfinance language, e.g. members are not lent money but helped, *khidmat* (service) charges are charged rather than interest rate, etc.

3. Do VOs resolve disputes/conflicts in the villages?

- a. The VOs have been involved in resolving smaller level conflicts. The VO leaders would invite the parties to conflict in the 'Choi Khana' (community center), and try to resolve the conflict. However, bigger level disputes are addressed by the police or government.

Over the next few days the team met with a few SUDVOs and VOs, and visited the sites where the organisations are working. The meetings with the leaders of the community institutions and their presentations showcased the achievements of these community institutions.

Social Union for Development of the Village Organizations (SUDVOs)

The SUDVOs are Jamoat (union council) level organisations, equivalent to RSPs' Local Support Organisations (LSOs) in Pakistan, also formed under the EU-funded SUCCESS Programme in Sindh. The village level organisations, VOs are federated into SUDVOs at the Jamoat level and are represented in the organisation via a general body. The general body elects an executive committee (EC), and EC then selects the SUDVO leaders, i.e. President, Vice-President,

Manager and Accountant. On need basis, SUDVO can set up various committees. The SUDVO has linkages with the government line departments. The profiles for four of the SUDVOs visited are as follows:



SUDVO Paivand presenting on their activities to the team.



Mr Shehryar Memon, Deputy Secretary (Admin), Planning and Development Department, Government of Sindh, Presenting award to SUDVO Buston

Date of setting up:
September 2009,
Date of registration:
22-10-2009,
Ministry of Justice

Social Union for Development of the Village Organizations “Kochoni bolo”

Rasht District

Background of the organization

Social Union for Development of the Village Organization “Paivand” was set up by 11 Village Organizations of the Navdee Jamoat for coordinating, supporting and institutional strengthening VOs.

Objective of the organization

To unite people of Navdee Jamoat villages for improving their well-being, facilitation of institutional development of VOs, contribution to socio-economic and culture development through effective and efficient utilization of internal resources in cooperation with public, private and civil society institutions.

Achievements of the SUDVO

- 11 operational and government recognised Village Organizations that consist of elected leaders and deputies, management committee and representative groups;
- VOs facilitation in determining three- to five-year priorities captured in Village Development Plans through inclusive and consultative approach;
- Facilitation of VOs members in contributing towards implementation of VDP priorities;
- 2 functional Community Based Savings Groups;
- 3 Common Interest Group;
- 2 Water Users Committee operating and maintaining Water Supply Systems;
- 4 Village Technology Group;
- Provide access to fruit seedlings for farmers of Rasht district.

Our partners

Sub-district and district Governments, SUDVOs, MLO “Rushdi Kuhiston”, Dekhkan Farms, MSDSP, AKHS, Local NGOs, WFP, Mercy Corps.

Date of setting up: March
2010,
Date of registration: 22-
04-2010, Department of
Justice, Khatlon oblast

Social Union for Development of the Village Organizations “Paivand”

Mominobod District, Khatlon Region

Background of the organization

Social Union for Development of the Village Organization “Paivand” was set up by 8 Village Organizations of the Balkhobi Jamoat for coordinating, supporting and institutional strengthening VOs.

Objective of the organization

To unite people of Balkhobi Jamoat villages for improving their well-being, facilitation of institutional development of VOs, contribution to socio-economic and culture development through effective and efficient utilization of internal resources in cooperation with public, private and civil society institutions.

Achievements of the SUDVO

- 8 operational and government recognised Village Organizations consist of elected leaders and deputies, management committee and representative groups
- VOs facilitation in determining three- to five-year priorities captured in Village Development Plans through inclusive and consultative approach
- VOs members contributions towards implementation of VDP priorities
- 17 functional Community Based Savings Groups
- 1 Common Interest Group
- Shareholder of Micro-lending Organization “Rushdi Kuhiston”
- Provided access to agriculture machinery for farmers through VOs
- Facilitate VOs to manage agriculture machinery.

Our partners

Sub-district and district Governments, SUDVOs, ASUDVO “Muminobod”, MLO “Rushdi Kuhiston”, Dekhkan Farms, MSDSP, AKHS, Caritas, Oxfam, UNDP, Local NGOs,

Date of setting up: April
2008,
Date of registration: 30-
05-2008, Department of
Justice, Khatlon oblast,

Social Union for Development of the Village Organizations “Buston”

Mominobod District, Khatlon Region

Background of the organization

Social Union for Development of the Village Organization “Paivand” was set up by 16 Village Organizations of the Dehibaland Jamoat for coordinating, supporting and institutional strengthening VOs.

Objective of the organization

To unite people of Dehibaland Jamoat villages for improving their well-being, facilitation of institutional development of VOs, contribution to socio-economic and culture development through effective and efficient utilization of internal resources in cooperation with public, private and civil society institutions.

Achievements of the SUDVO

- 16 operational and government recognised Village Organizations that consist of elected leaders and deputies, management committee and representative groups;
- VOs facilitation in determining three- to five-year priorities captured in Village Development Plans through inclusive and consultative approach;
- Facilitation of VOs members in contributing towards implementation of VDP priorities;
- 20 functional Community Based Savings Groups;
- Shareholder of Micro-lending Organization “Rushdi Kuhiston” ;
- 3 Water Users Associations operating and maintaining Water Supply Systems;
- Provided access to agriculture machinery for farmers through VOs
- Facilitate VOs to manage agriculture machinery.

Our partners

Sub-district and district Governments, SUDVOs, ASUDVO “Muminobod”, MLO “Rushdi Kuhiston”, Dekhkan Farms, MSDSP, AKHS, Caritas, Oxfam, UNDP, Local NGOs.

Date of setting up:
February 2008,
Date of registration: 15-
03-2008, Ministry of
Justice, Dushanbe,

Social Union for Development of the Village Organizations “Manotiq”

Faizobod District

Background of the organization

Social Union for Development of the Village Organization “Manotiq” was set up by 6 Village Organizations of the Vashgird Jamoat for coordinating, supporting and institutional strengthening VOs.

Objective of the organization

To unite people of Vashgird Jamoat villages for improving their well-being, facilitation of institutional development of VOs, contribution to socio-economic and culture development through effective and efficient utilization of internal and external resources in cooperation with public, private and civil society institutions.

Achievements of the SUDVO

- 6 operational and government recognised Village Organizations that consist of elected leaders and deputies, management committee and representative groups;
- VOs facilitation in determining three- to five-year priorities captured in Village Development Plans through inclusive and consultative approach;
- Facilitation of VOs members in contributing towards implementation of VDP priorities;
- 14 functional Community Based Savings Groups;
- 1 Common Interest Group;
- Shareholder of Micro-lending Organization “Rushdi Kuhiston” ;
- 1 Water Users Associations/1 Water Users Committee operating and maintaining Water Supply Systems;
- 4 Pasture Users Groups;
- Member of Mountain Societies Alliance of Central Asia (MSACA).

Our partners

Sub-district and district Governments, SUDVOs, ASUDVO “Rahnamo”, MLO “Rushdi Kuhiston”, Dekhkan Farms, MSDSP, AKHS, MSACA, Local NGOs, Sino project.

Meetings with the VOs

The team met with VO leaders from VO Shul in Rasht Valley district, and VO Bagh-e-Habib in Mominabad district. The VOs briefed about the various village development projects they have carried out and have achieved. The VOs have been working closely with the government line departments and have been successful in agricultural as well physical infrastructure projects.

In the country, it is mandatory for the government to provide a school in every village. In one village in Rasht Valley, the school provided by the government could not house enough children. The VO took it upon itself to build another school. All the community members got together and donated money as well as material resources and labour, and the government contributed a little financially as well.



The visiting team at the school that the VO is building

Through the help and funding of other INGOs such as International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), VO Bagh-e-Habib got two agriculture equipment including thrashers, tractors, etc.

Over the past four years, MSDSP has helped the VOs with community-identified infrastructure including small bridges, local roads, village school and clinic rehabilitation and small village drinking water supply schemes. These have been implemented primarily with funding from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the European Commission (EC) and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), and have benefitted 108,000 people. The MSDSP has

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also been active in riverbank stabilisation projects that have increased the area of protected arable land by 2,500 hectares since 2012.



Mr Khaleel Ahmed Tetlay, COO RSPN, presenting award to MSDSP staff

Achievements under Social Mobilisation approach (VO/SUDVOs)

The VO and SUDVOs have had far greater achievements in the last two decades than expected. Some of the achievements are as follows:

- Community mobilization and ownership by local governance
- Agricultural development
- Productive physical infrastructure
- Enterprise development
- Increase in irrigated land
- Increase in access to clean drinking water
- Microfinance services through Micro Lending Organisations
- Health and education sector reform
- Institution building
- Provision of social and productive infrastructure
- Increased local government and community collaboration
- Increased responsibility and accountability of local government
- Increased capacity of local government and community institutions

- Set up of Common Interest Groups (CIGs) at the sub-VO level. CIGs are groups of VO members with one common economic interest (vegetable production, processing and marketing, poultry rearing)
- Model for replication across country

The team members also met with the MSDSP team in the Khatlon Region and AKDN team at their office in Dushanbe. Both the teams briefed and updated on the activities and current projects.



AKF/MSDSP staff presented with traditional Sindhi patterned 'Ajrak' shawls

Takeaways from the Visit

The team members were most impressed by the work and achievements of AKF/MSDSP in partnership with the organized communities. The team appreciated several aspects of AKF/MSDSP's work in Tajikistan:

- Organizing the communities in a structured manner to allow people to take on greater role in their own development
- Capacitating the new organisations of the people (VOs/SUDVOs)
- Continuous innovation (e.g. Community Based Saving and Loaning Groups, Common Interest Groups, etc)
- Continuous support for capacity development people's organisations
- Working closely with government at all levels (Centre, District, and Jamoat)
- Real driver of the system is the government. However, the challenge in the relationship between civil society and the government is the fact that the government has absolute power.
- Continuous reflection and change in MSDSP's strategy as context evolves (move from direct service delivery to a facilitative role)
- Continuous efforts on part of AKDN/AKF to mobilize resources for communities from government and donors
- Encouraging the spirit of self-help among VOs/SUDVOs; mobilization of local resources (there were numerous examples of self-help in all three regions)
- As the Government of Tajikistan passed the law in 2008 to legalise the community institutions, it gave the system legitimacy as well as strengthened it against any manipulation.
- From the community meetings, there was a strong sense that AKF/MSDSP and VOs/SUDVOs (and various sub-groups) have significantly contributed:
 - a. Increase in incomes
 - b. Diversification of incomes sources
 - c. Reduction in poverty levels
 - d. Improvements in education
 - e. Improvements in health
 - f. Improved relationships with local governments, and
 - g. Improved likelihoods of sustainability of VOs/SUDVOs

All VOs/SUDVOs/CBSLGs had built up a capital base, and this has given them autonomy to undertake small measures that they themselves identify and prioritise.

While significant achievements have been made, it was great to see that AKF/MSDSP is not sitting on its laurels but continuing to move ahead to address new areas, e.g. ultra poverty, value chain development, increasing involvement of youth, etc.

Comments by Team Members

“The way community institutions are working in collaboration with the government, and have presence in their offices (which is important), will yield better results.” – Tahir Waqar, M&E Manager NRSP.

“The process of transformation from relief and humanitarian work to a facilitative role by the MSDSP has been a captivating transformative process.” – Allah Nawaz Samoo, CEO TRDP.

“There are many lessons to take away from here. The unity of people, early warning systems, and the self-help initiatives by the community are commendable.” – Jamal Mustafa Shoro – Programme Manager, SUCCESS, SRSO.

“The major difference I observed between our programme and this programme was the household coverage. We are focusing on 70% household coverage, while they have 100% household coverage. The reason could be support from the government in recognising these organisations.” – Ghulam Mustafa Jamro, Programme Manager, SUCCESS, NRSP.

“As I have observed in Tajikistan, fostering VOs has resulted in better community and economic development. Therefore, our focus should be on VOs instead of COs, when the programme has been around for a few years.” – Jai Prakash, Programme Manager, SUCCESS, TRDP.

“I was particularly impressed by the community radio system that is present in all the villages.” – Mohammad Noor, Communications Officer, SUCCESS, RSPN.

“Tajikistan, after witnessing turbulent times in the last decade of 20th century, learnt a phenomenal lesson: Only peace would ensure prosperity of the local masses and their motherland. The strong relationship of civil society, development partners and the people of the land with the incumbent government, in order to fulfil the developmental needs, is an epitome for others to follow.” – Shehryar Memon, Deputy Secretary (Admin), Planning and Development Department, Government of Sindh.

“The social mobilisation approach adopted in Tajikistan two decades has proved the sustainability of the approach to development. However, for the success of the SUCCESS Programme the most important factor to consider is the involvement and ownership by the government.” – Filza Nasir, Documentation and Reporting Officer, SUCCESS, RSPN.



The team from Pakistan and team from AKF/MSDSP