

Final Report

# MID-TERM EVALUATION 2016-2018

Tajik-Afghan Integration, Resilience and  
Reform Building Programme - TAIRR



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## ACRONYM AND ABBREVIATIONS

AGE	Anti-Government Element
AREU	Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit
CA	Contribution Analysis
CCCM	Camp Coordination and Camp Management
CPI	Counterpart International
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DFID	Department for International Development
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GBAO	Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast
ICG	International Crisis Group
IDLG	Independent Directorate of Local Governance
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
JHU	Johns Hopkins University
MTE	Mid-Term Evaluation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PE	Process Evaluation
QCA	Qualitative Comparative Analysis
SRS	Simple Random Sampling
TACEMEP	Tajik-Afghan Community Empowerment and Mobility Enhancement
TAIRR	Tajik-Afghan Integration, Resilience and Reform Building Programme
TB	Tuberculosis
UCA	University of Central Asia
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNMAS	United Nations Mine Action Service
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
USAID	US Agency for International Development

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mr. Elham is a Research, Monitoring and Evaluation, and Communications Specialist. With over a decade of working experience in Afghanistan, India, Indonesia, and Tajikistan, among others, he has held key positions with United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Counterpart International (CPI), Johns Hopkins University (JHU), State University of Indonesia, Marriage and Family Public Organization in Tajikistan, Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU), and the Afghanistan Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG).

His major research achievements include areas of: Afghan Women's Access to Higher Education, Youth Volunteerism/for India and her neighbouring countries, Access to Road or Electricity/A Feasibility Assessment of Rural Indonesia, and the Reproductive Age Mortality Study of Johns Hopkins. He has graduated with honors from Kardan University with a dual degree in Business Administration and Business Research, and including a MA in Mass Communications and Public Relations from Pakistan Institute of Modern Studies, and has attended numerous advanced certified training and international conferences.

## DISCLAIMER

The authors of this report has no previous affiliation or relationship with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Tajikistan, Department for International Development (DFID) Tajikistan, or the stakeholders interviewed as a part of this evaluation. This report is provided on the basis that it is for the use of IOM and DFID Tajikistan only. The authors of this report will not be bound to discuss, explain or reply to queries raised by any agency other than the intended recipients of this report. The author disclaims all liability to any third party who may place reliance on this report and therefore does not assume responsibility for any loss or damage suffered by any such third party in reliance thereon. A second external consultant was tasked to independently review the quality of the report before finalization and edit it accordingly in line with a ToR provided (language, flow).

## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The overall purpose of the mid-term evaluation, covering June 2016-March 2018, was to gauge the impact of the project against the stated outcomes through an evidence-based assessment; aiming at measuring the overall satisfaction of the project from the point of view of project's stakeholders and beneficiaries.

Financially supported by the United Kingdom Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) the Tajik-Afghan Integration, Resilience and Reform Building Programme (TAIRR) project was designed to build on the lessons learned from the 2015-16 Tajik-Afghan Community Empowerment and Mobility Enhancement Programme (TACEME) and Integrated Cooperation Programme on Tajik-Afghan Border Security and Community Stabilization (ICPTABSCS). Through this project, IOM aims to contribute to integrating Afghanistan and Tajikistan in the field of community stabilization, reducing the effects of transnational threats felt by border communities, and address inter and intra community tensions.

The mid-term evaluation applied the five Development Assistance Committee (DAC) criteria; the relevance of CSSF funded activities, their effectiveness, their efficiency, their impact, and most importantly their sustainability; and was conducted in 10 districts of Badakhshan and Khatlon oblasts of Tajikistan.

During the evaluation, the consultant assessed the TAIRR project to be making encouraging progress towards the goals outlined in the original design document, and that the project is largely on track to deliver the stated outputs in terms of physical inputs and deliverables.

The TAIRR project's activities aimed at enhancing capacity and facilitating opportunities for Tajik and Afghan border forces to be able to work together and coordinate their efforts for a better response to the security concerns of border areas has seen significant progress. Now, the Tajik border agencies possess the required facilities and equipment, and both the Tajik and Afghan border staff/forces have received relevant capacity building training programmes. Also, they have now established valuable relationships between themselves and the surrounding communities. Amongst many others, the newly established Border Management Coordination Centers (BMCCs) on the Tajikistan side are great examples of the platforms needed for such cooperation. Now, they can meet more often and much more easily considering the past, and there are no more travel burdens or complications. It is now very cost effective arranging their interventions (change to 'interviews?') at venues in Khorugh or Dushanbe, as compared to previously.

The cross-border markets and the facilities constructed in support of those, with the SME grants backing-up the idea of trading between the two sides and fulfilling the needs of the two sides, have been another major achievement of the TAIRR project. Now, more efficient systems are practiced in support of such interactions in border areas.

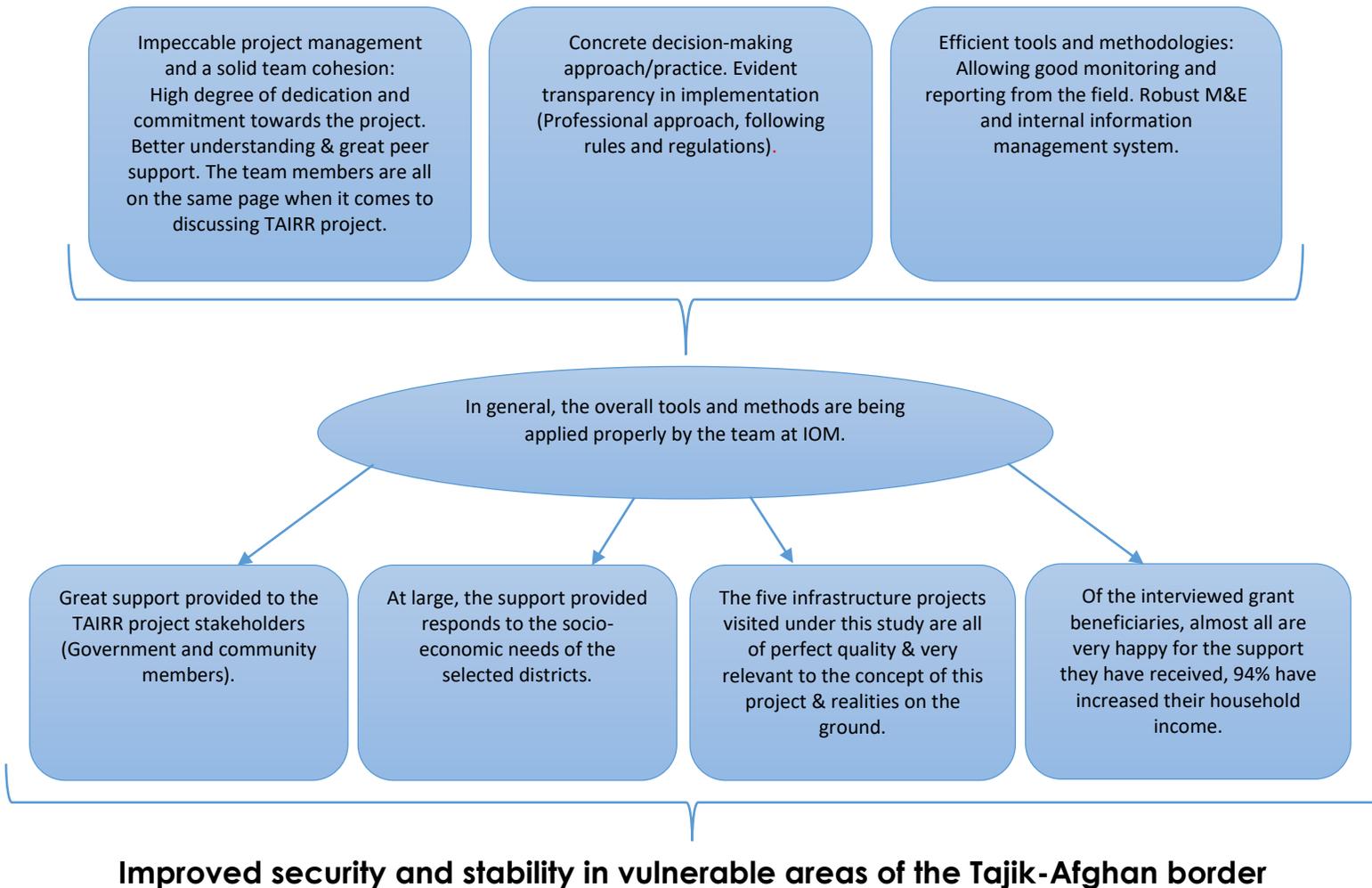
The TAIRR project's capacity building interventions along with its small in-kind grants have largely impacted people financially; they have boosted up the economy at community level, and have increased employment opportunities. A large number of jobs have been created, while they are expected to keep increasing as the project beneficiaries grow further. Now, the most vulnerable community members have skills, equipment and knowledge to utilize and make some tangible income for their families. These project activities have helped returnee migrants, female community members living in challenging conditions (including wives of migrants) and youths to make a more healthy and fruitful engagement for themselves and the people around them, inside their villages and some out in Dushanbe or Moscow. A number of respondents said that they were able to obtain better jobs and salaries using the certificates they received after attending the IOM vocational training classes. They added that prior to working as labourers, whilst having the certificate, they were able to secure proper jobs with higher monthly income.

Under this study, the evaluator visited three community infrastructures - a health point, a community level school, and an electricity supply chain. During the visits and interviews with the beneficiaries it was found that these project activities were designed and planned fulfilling the critical needs of communities living in the border areas. Communities were very happy for the support they had received and as detailed below, they commented that each of these infrastructures in turn had brought key positive changes in the living conditions of the community people.

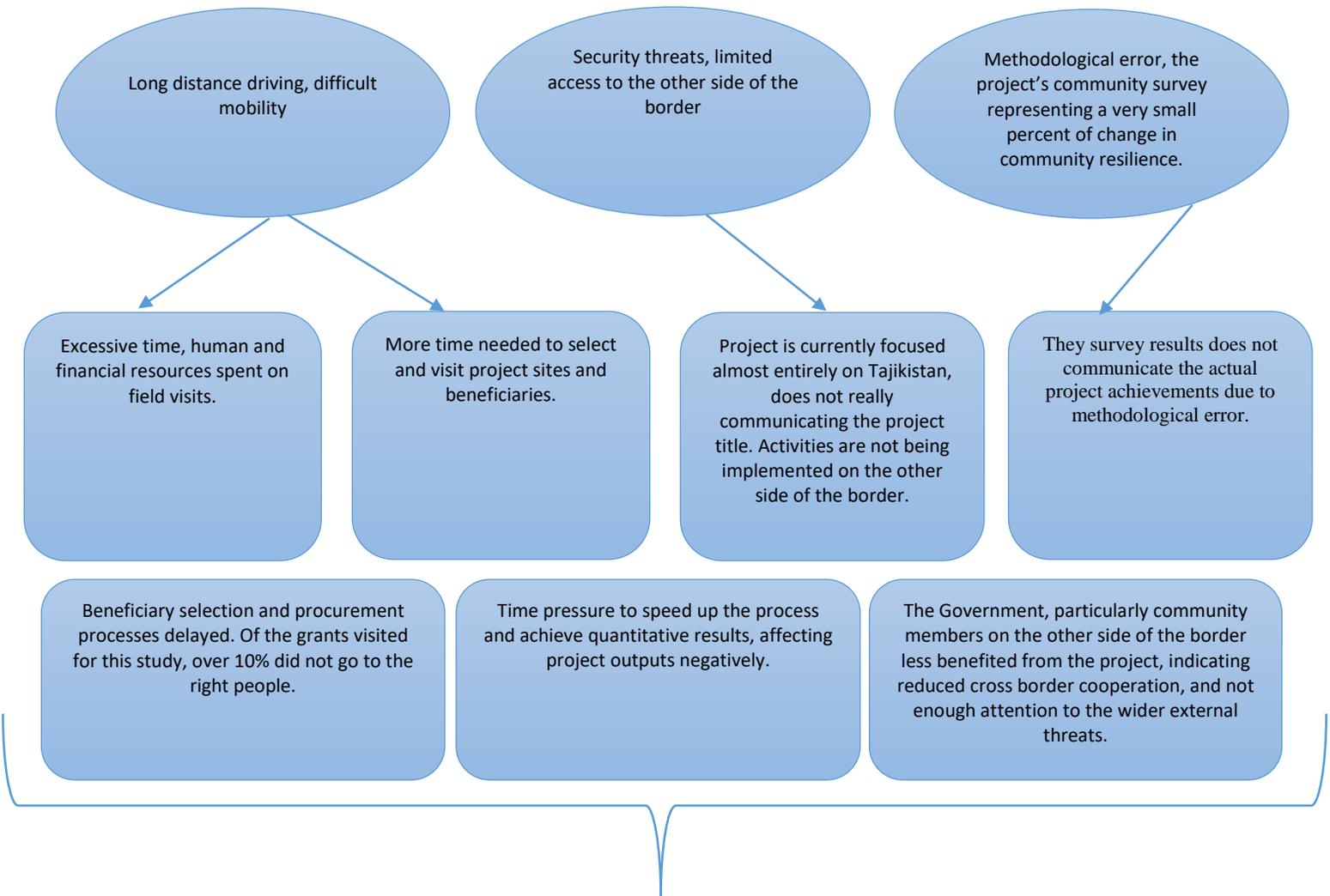
During the evaluation it was also found that the IOM legal counseling was also very beneficial in terms of the provision of case management services to migrants, who were banned for reentry to the Russian Federation. In addition to providing legal counselling, there have been cases where IOM was able to provide more accurate information to these migrants, enabling them to re-enter the Russian Federation and continue their work there.

This is a significant accomplishment taking into consideration the project's geographical coverage, which is expansive and difficult to access. There are many different and connected parts in the project, with a great level of liaising required with the government, communities and stakeholders around the border. There is a significant amount of obstacles that must be overcome on an almost daily basis. These include funding cuts from the donor side, hold-ups in procurement, extensive workloads, challenging times during the absence of the TAIRR Project Manager and the IOM Chief of Mission; in addition to widespread drought in the Khatlon and Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous (GBAO) Region. The ensuing two schemes reflect the core findings (impacts and challenges) of this mid-term evaluation (MTE) study.

## 1.1 IMPACT EVALUATION SCHEME



## 1.2 CHALLENGES SCHEME



**Uneven approach; not very efficient with more focus on quantitative progress**

## 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- To ensure effectiveness and efficiency in the project, IOM could consider assessing the possibility of opening a more appropriate regional office in Khorugh city, with the capacity to plan, implement, oversee and decide field operations.
- IOM could conduct a technical security assessment of the other side of the border for a more practical understanding of the current security situation, limitations and possibilities for potential future engagements in Afghanistan.

- It is recommended that the TAIRR project team design a pre-planned M&E field visit schedule, giving all project activities equal value/score and then randomly selecting who should visit which project and what time.
- Methodologies and instruments used for the annual community survey need to be given an expert review and modified accordingly. This is to ensure the survey results communicate the actual project achievements when measuring community resilience.
- At least five to ten successful recipients/implanters of the 2016/17 small grants could be promoted to receive and implement SME grants in 2018/19. They could be chosen amongst those who at a minimum, have a business name, and they are willing, and have the potential to grow. This will help the project to more sustainably support potential businesses to become concrete sources of employment and generate income for the communities living across the border.
- Current and future small grants/SMEs should be followed with pre-planned systematic technical support/input by IOM or a contractor. This can help ensure sustainability and the guarantee of appropriate utilization of the resources and proper realization of the business.
- Future small grants/SMEs should focus on targeting the right people. TAIRR project has a high quality due-diligence system in place, which is very important; however, it does need significant improvement to ensure resources reach the best possible destinations. There could be a two-way approach to this, not just relying on what comes from the NGO partners. After the NGO partners submit their field reports, IOM should verify those reports by calling and visiting the applications.
- Bura-e Ara (sawdust), the local made Afghan heater concept could be introduced in areas where they still use wooden heaters for warming their homes during the winter. This heating system uses sawdust, which is more reasonably available in Tajikistan and does not produce excessive smoke. It is safer for the environment, cost effective and requires less maintenance/attention.
- More creative ideas could be introduced, particularly to the capacity building packages for community members, e.g. tailoring, cooking, farming, carpet weaving, canning and so on.
- IOM's efforts in encouraging cross-border trade has been very practical and successful, however, IOM could go deeper into this topic and facilitate province-to-province, import/export businesses. IOM can work with formal business communities on both sides of the border, to find more regular and sustainable options for trading goods between the provinces close to the border and not just limit it to the cross-border markets. A channel like this needs to be supported and run for a year or two; it will then enlarge and increase itself with the efforts of two sides and possible government support facilitated under this project.

**Below is a list of recommendations from the last project evaluation report, which are still valid and require the attention of the current programme:**

- There are a number of well established civil society organizations on the Tajik side, which have played a pivotal role in the implementation of TACEME, but this is not the case for the Afghan side and therefore, this should be an area of focus for future interventions
- Future programmes should include projects that would try to bring young people from both sides in direct contact and engagement with each other through educational and cultural festivals
- The Afghan-Tajik border access is frequently closed by Tajik border authorities for long period of times and therefore, future projects should have a stronger presence on the Afghan side for the continuation of programmes.

### 3. INTRODUCTION

This report outlines the findings of a mid-term project evaluation of the TAIRR project implemented by IOM in Tajikistan. This four-year, £ 3.6 million programme funded by the United Kingdom CSSF Central Asia through DFID aims to achieve improved security and stability in vulnerable areas of the Tajik-Afghan border. The project achieves its outcomes through appropriate capacity building and increased opportunities for Tajik and Afghan border and emergency management and health agencies to cooperate and better respond to the security concerns of border communities, provision of shelter during displacement scenarios, countering tuberculosis (TB) and human trafficking, as well as providing vulnerable Tajik and Afghan community members with the most suitable knowledge, skills and tools necessary to improve their livelihoods. The TAIRR project was designed to build on the lessons learned from the 2015-16 TACEME and ICPTABSCS. The project started in April 2016, replacing the previous two programmes.

In April 2018, the IOM Office in Tajikistan commissioned Noorullah Elham, the consultant, to undertake an external evaluation of the TAIRR project. The overall objective of this evaluation was to gauge the impact of the project against the stated outcomes through an evidence-based assessment; aiming at measuring the overall satisfaction of the project from the point of view of the project's stakeholders and beneficiaries, as well as providing an analysis for the review of the donor. This evaluation applied the five globally practiced DAC criteria; relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability.

The mid-term evaluation consultant visited 24 communities in 10 Districts of Badakhshan and Khatlon oblasts. He held an extensive range of interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs) and meetings with stakeholders at all levels involving 18 individual and SME grant beneficiaries, 8 vocational training participants, 1 labor migrant who received IOM legal counselling, 3 non-governmental organizations (NGO), 10 relevant government officials, 9 IOM and TAIRR project staff, and visited 5 facilities constructed

under the TAIRR project. In addition, the evaluator also held a phone interview with one Afghan health official.

This report contains a brief bio of the project consultant, an executive summary, an introduction to the evaluation, the project background, the purpose and methodology of the evaluation, analysis, notes from numerous interviews from the field and a list of key findings and recommendations.

## 4. PROJECT BACKGROUND

Despite the extraordinary gains made in living standards in Asia and the Pacific, hundreds of millions are still excluded from the benefits of rapid economic growth. Without access to basic social services, they are vulnerable to illness, unemployment, and the region's increasingly devastating natural disasters.<sup>1</sup> Tajikistan is one among these, facing a number of socio-economic, disaster, health, political, border and overall security challenges.

Tajikistan is a landlocked country in Central Asia, known for its rugged mountains, with a population of over 9 million. Each year, nearly one million Tajik citizens go abroad for employment purposes. Over 180,000 Tajik labour migrants remained banned, as of February 2018, from re-entering Russia, the main source of income for the Tajik labour migrants.<sup>2</sup>

Tajikistan's real GDP growth accelerated to 7.1% in 2017 from 6.9% a year ago. The economy was largely fueled by private consumption, supported by remittances and net exports and boosted by metallic minerals. On the supply side, growth was supported by both the tradable and non-tradable sectors, with the highest contribution from industry followed by agriculture and services. Despite strong growth, poverty fell only slightly from 30.3% in 2016 to 29.7% by September 2017, with extreme poverty stagnant at 14.1% of the population. Income from employment and remittances remains the primary driver of poverty reduction. Food expenditure accounts for about 75% of total consumption for poorer households.<sup>3</sup>

The rapidly deteriorating security situation on the immediate southern border of Tajikistan is compounded by an economic crisis at home. Poverty levels among Tajik households are increasing with the economic downturn in Russia putting a serious strain on the Tajik economy. This is largely due to the drastic decline in remittances – up to 32% in the first six months of 2015 according the World Bank.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, the migration policy of the Russian Federation has become much stricter, and has resulted in a large

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.adb.org/themes/social-development/main>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.fergananews.com/news/28247>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/tajikistan/overview#3>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/tajikistan/publication/economic-update-fall-2015>

number of Tajik migrants being administratively banned from re-entering.<sup>5</sup> The full effects of the re-entry ban phenomenon remain to be seen, however, observers point to the fact that a large number of unemployed and disenfranchised men with no alternatives may pose a threat to stability within the country.<sup>6</sup>

On the other side, Afghanistan's political transition has entered its most complex phase, induced by the change to the presidential administration and the ending of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission. The effect of this transition on the security climate in the country has been severe, most notably in the north of Afghanistan where anti-government elements (AGEs) have focused their more regular offensives now. These offensives have caused the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to lose control of numerous districts that are either adjacent to, or near, the Tajik border. Insurgency has been at its most intense in Kunduz, Takhar and Badakhshan provinces, all of which share a border with Tajikistan.

The mountainous province of Badakhshan in northeastern Afghanistan evaded Taliban rule when hard line Islamist movements dominated the rest of the country in the 1990s. Today, however, the Taliban control large swathes of rural Badakhshan. Their growing influence there is now prompting concerns that the province will become a bastion for regional terrorism because it borders Pakistan, China, and Tajikistan.

Communities that live along the Tajik-Afghan border are adversely affected by the twin pressures of increased threats to safety and economic malaise. Border communities are by their very nature peripheral from centrally planned investment and by proximity they are now placed in the heart of a complex insurgency in northern Afghanistan. A proliferation of armed groups in northeastern Afghanistan has created contested spaces next to Tajikistan, outside the full control of the Afghan Government in which criminal networks (including human traffickers) can flourish whilst increasing the vulnerabilities of border populations in relation to livelihoods and health risks. 2015 proved that the border areas are prone to natural disasters as well as potential refugee crises<sup>7</sup>, whilst a lack of capacity in Tajikistan means the government cannot respond to displacement scenarios.

Through this project, IOM aims to contribute to integrating Afghanistan and Tajikistan in the field of community stabilization, reducing the effects of transnational threats felt by border communities, and address inter and intra community tensions. The project offers a comprehensive approach to stability and security along the Tajik-Afghan border, and thus contributes to both reform and resilience.

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<sup>5</sup> Svyshe 333 tys. grazhdanam Tadjikistana doroga v Rossiyu zakazana, 18 January 2016, <http://news.tj/ru/news/svyshe-333-tys-grazhdanam-tadjikistana-doroga-v-rossiyu-zakazana>

<sup>6</sup> International Crisis Group (ICG)(2016): Tajikistan Early Warning: Internal Pressures, External Threats - <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/78256>

<sup>7</sup> In July 2015 mudslides and subsequent flooding in border districts of GBAO displaced over 600 people and destroyed roads, bridges and other critical infrastructure. This was followed by a 7.2 scale earthquake in GBAO in December 2015 which left 4000 people displaced in harsh winter conditions close to the Afghan border.

## 4.1 PROJECT COVERAGE

The TAIRR project has seen an expansion of the geographic scope of the intervention in comparing to the 2015-16 TACEME and ICPTABSCS, with activities being conducted in all districts of Tajikistan that border Afghanistan<sup>8</sup>, which at the oblast level includes Badakhshan and Khatlon.

In Afghanistan, activities were expected to have been carried out in Badakhshan province, specifically the districts of: Wakhan, Ishkashim, Sheghnan, Maimai, Jomarji, and Ruzvai. The project proposal document stated, "Due to the current security situation, IOM cannot commit to conducting activities in Balkh, Kunduz and Takhar provinces (which border Khatlon oblast). However, throughout the length of the project, IOM will remain abreast of security developments and there may be a time in the project life cycle where implementing activities in these three provinces is possible." However, until now only on one occasion IOM has been able to conduct vocational training courses in Badakhshan Province of Afghanistan, carried out by Sohtmonchi, an IOM NGO partner based in Tajikistan.

## 4.2 PROJECT DURATION AND BUDGET

TAIRR is a four-year project that started in June 2016 and will run until the end of May 2020. The project's total cost to CSSF is £ 3,432,505. The evaluation covered June 2016-March 2018, when the project was in the middle of its implementation.

## 4.3 PROJECT IMPACT

Reformed Tajik and Afghan governmental and border management bodies that operate in a more open environment enabling stronger community level resilience to pressures linked to socio-economic instability, conflict, crime, health, and disasters through increased integration.

## 4.4 PROJECT OUTCOME

Improved security and stability in vulnerable areas of the Tajik-Afghan border.

## 4.5 PROJECT OUTPUTS

1. Tajik and Afghan border agencies have an increased opportunity to cooperate and enhance the capacity to plan and improve their responses to the security concerns of border communities.
2. Vulnerable Tajik and Afghan community members are equipped with knowledge, skills and tools necessary to improve livelihoods and strengthen community cohesion.

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<sup>8</sup> These are: Nosiri Khusrav, Shaartuz, Jilikul, Qabodiyon, Qumsangir, Panj, Farkhor, Khamadoni, Shurabad, Darvoz, Vanj, Rushan, Ishkashim, Shughnan, Khorog, and Murgab. Activities will also be conducted in Roshtqala district of GBAO, which does not directly border Afghanistan but is approximately 30 kms away.

3. Capacity building workshops, technical and high-level meetings result in improved capacity of government emergency management agencies and community actors to provide shelter and Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) during displacement scenarios.
4. Border communities, NGOs and government agencies are capacitated to counter TB, human trafficking and lack of access to rights, and disseminate prevention messages and materials.
5. Tajik and Afghan authorities possess and utilise a platform for improved coordination and sustainable cross-border community stabilization and cooperation.

## 5. PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION

Midterm evaluations are practiced to measure the continued relevance of a project. Concept, design, effectiveness, efficiency of the project implementation and results, and the progress made towards achieving its planned objectives are measured. They provide an opportunity to make relevant adjustments to ensure the accomplishment of these objectives within the lifetime of the project.

Furthermore, MTEs provide an opportunity to determine the project is still consistent with the organization's strategic objectives; is relevant and useful to the beneficiaries and the key stakeholders, and is being conducted in an efficient manner according to organization standards and the agreed project document. MTEs calculate impact of the project activities in view of their sustainability factor, and provide practical recommendations and lessons learned from the field.

The overall objective of this evaluation was to gauge the impact of the project against the stated outcomes through an evidence based assessment; aiming at measuring the overall satisfaction of the project from the point of view of the project's stakeholders and beneficiaries, as well as providing an analysis for the review of the donor.

Specifically, during the course of this evaluation, the consultant considered the following five elements when conducting the evaluation; relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, Impact, Sustainability.

The interviews, FGDs, meetings and site observations under this evaluation in addition to Dushanbe and Khorugh cities, took place in 10 Districts of Badakhshan and Khatlon provinces.

In order to assure the quality of this report, at a late stage a second external consultant was engaged to review and edit the report provided by the main evaluator according to a ToR.

## 6. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The mid-term evaluation measured the progress of TAIRR project in meeting the midterm targets for 2016-2018 and the extent to which it is on track to meet the end of project goals. According to the objectives set in this evaluation study, and in order to guarantee a qualitative evaluation, the following methods were practiced.

### 6.1 DESK REVIEW

The mid-term evaluation consultant reviewed a great number of technical documentation provided by IOM as well as conducting desk research, including a programme proposal document, project result framework, quarterly and yearly progress reports, formal meeting minutes, project case studies and other relevant project documents.

### 6.2 SITE VISITS, INTERVIEWS, AND FGDS

The consultant conducted a series of site visits to 24 communities in 10 districts of Badakhshan and Khatlon oblasts. Here, he interviewed and ran FGDS with small in-kind grant/SME beneficiaries, vocational training participants, labor migrants, partner NGOs, relevant government officials, and a number of relevant IOM staff members. He also visited five facilities constructed under the TAIRR project.

The consultant spoke with IOM Chief of Mission/OiC, and held two meetings with government high officials, the Deputy Minister of Labor, Migration and Population Employment, and Deputy Head of Adult Training Centre; in addition he had a kick-off meeting at the beginning of the fieldtrip, and a debrief meeting at the end.

### 6.3 SAMPLING METHODS

Simple Random Sampling (SRS) was practiced for selecting study communities in each province and then SRS was used one more time for selecting study respondents in each district. We assigned each member of the study population (in this case communities and beneficiaries) a known non-zero probability of being selected, then using SRS we selected the total number of people to be interviewed and communities to be visited.

### 6.4 CONSTRAINS

It is worth mentioning that the project consultant did not come across any major challenge or limitation during this evaluation study; apart from the project coverage issue, which has been already touched on above, and that almost all of the fieldwork took place in Tajikistan.

## 6.5 EVALUATION QUESTIONS

DAC EVALUATION CRITERIA	MTE QUESTIONS	TECHNIQUES USED
Relevance	1. To what extent has the programme's initiatives and results been relevant in achieving the intended outcomes?	Contribution Analysis (CA) Process Evaluation (PE)
	2. How has the programme been relevant within the changing dynamics in the target area?	CA Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA)
Effectiveness	3. To which extent has IOM made progress against the expected outputs and outcomes?	PE
	4. To which extent has collaboration between main actors been effective in meeting the expected results?	PE
	5. Are there other partners with whom IOM should engage?	PE & CA
Efficiency	6. Are the existing resources (e.g. human and financial) allocated to engaging with partners being efficiently managed/used?	PE
	7. What strategies could be implemented to ensure financial and human resources are used efficiently?	PE
Impact	8. Has IOM contributed to the objectives of the programme thus far?	CA & PE
Sustainability	9. To what extent are IOM and its partners ensuring that the intended outcomes of the programme are sustainable?	CA & QCA

## 7. ANALYSIS OF THE PROJECT EVALUATION

Overall, the evaluator assessed the TAIRR project to be making highly encouraging progress towards the goals outlined in the original project document. The project has achieved key milestones in creating platforms and increasing opportunities for Tajik and Afghan border agencies to cooperate, building capacity of community members and state actors on both sides of the border, raising awareness on countering tuberculosis and human trafficking, increasing employment and income generation opportunities for vulnerable Tajik families, constructing the most necessary foundations, and providing effective legal counseling to the Tajik migrants pursuing employment opportunities in Russia.

After the first 24-months of project implementation, completed and ongoing operations are showing positive outcomes; though the process of getting things done has been slow on some occasions. There have, however, been some budget cuts during the second year of project implementation from the donor side specifically impeding the projects health focused efforts, border management and human trafficking.

The beneficiary selection processes for small in-kind grants and SME grants have taken a long time. This has been because over 2,000 applications were received by IOM during 2017. This, of course, required a great amount of time and effort to be able to thoroughly review every applicant's documents, conduct physical assessments at the field level, and perform procurement. Let it be grants or other project activities, their monitoring field visits have been time consuming, taking a lot of effort and resources whilst keeping in mind the very lengthy and mountainous project coverage.

On two other occasions, attempts were failed to ensure taking high Afghan military officials to international capacity building workshops/conferences. The team currently working on the TAIRR project is not sufficient to a more timely response to such project needs and it, therefore, needs an expansion plan.

This programme has evolved significantly in comparison to phase one and two. The original TAIRR programme design document looks highly assertive in nature and is written at a time when IOM Tajikistan did not have in-depth knowledge of the security situation for the project focus areas in Afghanistan. This has led to a series of aspiring goals in the project design, including below in relation to project focus in Afghanistan.

As stated in the project proposal document :

"In Afghanistan, activities will be carried out in Badakhshan Province, specifically the districts of Wakhan, Ishkashim, Sheghnan, Maimai, Jomarji, and Ruzvai. Due to the current security situation, IOM cannot commit to conducting activities in Balkh, Kunduz and Takhar provinces (which border Khatlon oblast). However, throughout the length of the project, IOM will remain abreast of security developments and there may be a time in the project lifecycle where implementing activities in these three provinces is possible."

This was also at a time when IOM and the donor agency thought that there was a wider platform of civil society organizations capable of delivering services in the region. Therefore, a detailed list of sub-implementing organizations for Tajikistan was included in the project proposal, however, there was not a similar list for the other side of the border. According to the annually published Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit – AREU's A to Z Guide to Afghanistan Assistance<sup>9</sup>, in 2015 there were 24 humanitarian organizations having active sub-offices in Badakhshan province of Afghanistan with many more working remotely.

This communicates a solid interest and commitment at the planning stage of this project; however, there has not been a documented practical approach for similar deviations during the implementation phase of the project.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://areu.org.af/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/1506E-A-to-Z-Guide-to-Assistance-in-Afghanistan2.pdf>

## 7.1 NOTES FROM THE FIELD

### **SME, Bakery Business, District Center, Ishkoshim District**

Ilchibekova Hursheda

April 27, 2018

In 2012, I started producing cakes and cookies from home with the help of few basic equipment items that I had. In November 2017, IOM Office thankfully supported me with all these advanced tools and equipment enabling me to bring my work to the center of our district, turning it into a viable business. We were never able to purchase such equipment on our own prior to this.

Initially, I attended an IOM seminar in our district, at which the staff members were introducing their grant opportunities. They talked about steps involved in applying for these grants and the required paperwork. I prepared my business plan and submitted my proposal to IOM on July 31, 2017. In September 2017, we received a call to conduct an assessment. They visited our place and stated that they were not sure yet if our project will win, but they will be informing us if our project proposal was successful. Later, we received a call from IOM saying that we were the winner. Then they asked us to revisit the list of equipment we had submitted with our proposal, and provide them with specifications for each item on our list.

In Mid October 2017, after IOM had received our list with the required details for each item, they came back to us saying the project budget was not enough to cover all of the requested items, and requested that we remove some of them. In consultation with me, they removed two items from my list. The items removed from the list cost 35,000 Somoni or 3,900 USD. My initial project budget was 10,000 USD, and I had taken the prices from online sources but had tried to use increased amounts in my proposal taking into consideration the market differences and transportation cost for each item.

After IOM brought us the requested tools and equipment at the end of November 2017, we started the setup and repairing of this place for my business. It took me around four months to get the place ready. This year on first of March after completing the repair work, I was able to launch this small workplace and shop. While working at home, I was making products only after getting the request from my clients; and those were mostly for wedding ceremonies, Eid, Nowruz and few other similar occasions. I was earning around 500 Somoni a month. However, after opening the shop here, during March 2018, we were able to make a total sale of 5,223 Somoni making a net profit of 2,225 Somoni. I am expecting to have better income in the later months. I am also attending a seven-month Business Planning course at the University of Central Asia (UCA) in Khorugh, which will hopefully finish in May this year and will help me run my business even better.

We are 10 people in the family; my parents are both pensioners, my two elder brothers are currently working, one of them is married and his wife is also working, I was previously working with the Government and were all earning 2,500 Somoni a month. Now with support from IOM, in this business, I alone make around 2,500 Somoni a month. Besides, my mother and myself, I have been able to hire two additional workers

paying them 225 Somoni a month, who also take away bakery products to their home regularly.

Mr. Masroor, the IOM representative in Khorugh, visited my place only 10 days ago to monitor the set up here and the progress of my business.

I am very thankful to IOM for this great support, as I was very keen to start this business, but was never able to buy the tools and equipment myself. Now I have an independent business. If I had saved money, it would have taken me something like five years to be able to buy all these items.

Although I have studied business, understanding the IOM templates, forms and requirements for such small projects were not simple for me. I am sure it would be far difficult for others with no relevant knowledge and skills. For this, the templates could be revised and simplified, and a specific introductory training session could be considered so that applicants get familiar with the templates and requirements and are able to submit the proposal they wish.

### **NGO Partner, Sohtmonchi, Khorug City**

Ubayd Saidasanov, Manager of NGO

April 26, 2018

From 2008 to 2016, I was Manager of the UCA's Technical Vocational Education Training Center. In this center, UCA offers a one-year training program in the areas of carpentry, plumbing, welding, wall plastering, and auto mechanics. After graduation from this training center, two students and I formed and registered this NGO. The main reason for creating this NGO was to facilitate employment opportunities for the graduates of this training center. When we had more projects, we hired 50-60 UCA students working with us in many different areas; and when the projects are less, we are still able to hire 20-30 people.

It was 2014/2015 when we came to know about Zohir Asanshiev, the IOM representative in Badakhshan Oblast. He was aware of us; he visited us and was interested to work with us. He asked us if we could deliver similar vocational pieces of training outside this training center. He further said we want you to conduct similar training in Badakhshan of Afghanistan. I then visited communities on the other side of the border. I found out that there were people with similar skills and interest but they were not paying enough attention to the details of what they were producing, e.g. energy efficiency, and cost saving. German, Holland and Swiss specialists are thought to have similar techniques to us.

After conducting a market assessment in border areas of Afghanistan, we then responded positively to the IOM request to work with them. IOM asked us to develop our proposal; they sent us some questions regarding our trainers, M&E plans, equipment, and training lesson plans. We were able to work with IOM from July to September 2015. We trained almost 200 people in eight different courses. The previous IOM staff member responsible for Badakhshan Oblast of Tajikistan monitored our work. The problem we faced was to find the right people and make sure they attend the classes regularly. We

were providing lunch and coffee breaks to the participants, but no transportation or stipend was considered. We faced no security issues, no one gave us any problems.

For the future, we suggest further long-term vocational training programs for the people living on the other side of the border. It should not be a one-time effort as in the past. Then, Afghan youths graduating from schools also get the opportunity to learn some new skills. Because they usually have very limited working opportunities in Badakhshan of Afghanistan, they, therefore, travel to Kabul, other provinces of Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan to work as a laborer. Nevertheless, it would be great if they go to those places with some skills and capabilities to enjoy better jobs with higher income and support their families in a better way. This will also help support security and stability in the region.

It is not easy to make a proper vocational training center on the other side of the border, but working with locals is a good option, especially in partnership with those who are already running their own workshops. For example, if those local workshops are contracted/paid to hire at least six people during a year, it will facilitate some learning opportunities for youth who are currently living there with no hope for the future and no healthy engagement plan. I have already talked with those local workshops; they have the capacity and are willing to support this idea. I suggest that IOM continue its support and reach out to these people.

### **In-kind Grant, Tractor for Cultivation, Gardi Gulmurodov Jamoat, Dusti District**

Mavlyanov Garli

April 29, 2018

We were informed of the grant opportunity during an information session delivered by the IOM staff members in our Jamoat. My brother filled out and submitted my grant application forms. A month later, we were called by IOM that our submission was successful. Then IOM staff members organized three more sessions explaining how we move to the next steps, explaining both IOM and Government rules and regulations, taxes, etc.

In my proposal I had asked for a cultivator, it was not easy to find a good option in the range of USD 5,000, the project budget ceiling. It therefore took us 4-5 months to find and buy this tractor and its cultivator. I do not know the exact price of it, but I think it was around 5,000 dollars, which IOM paid for. IOM staff members also asked if I needed any additional accessories; I then asked for some nuts and bolts, which was also purchased costing 1,600 Somoni. IOM staff regularly visit me and have stayed in close contact with me.

I was previously working in Moscow as a laborer, I was not able to make a proper saving, and it mostly covered my living costs there and my return tickets. However, after I returned to my village, we have been able to build our own house and a storage room for our products, wheat and rice. Before having this tractor life was difficult, I was renting someone else's tractor, and now I have my own and have no stress anymore.

I have been using this tractor for two years now. Having this tractor, I am able to manage working on 7.3-hectare borrowed land. I am also providing service to other landowners in our Jamoat, and was able to make between 100 to 300 Somoni a day last year.

The only small problem I have is that this tractor is old and it regularly requires repair work. In my proposal, I had asked just for a cultivator, but when shopping in the car market, the IOM staff members proposed buying this option, which came with an attached cultivator to it. After searching a number of markets, this was the best option we came across. I agreed with them to go ahead with buying this option.

### **In-kind Grant, Fishery, Kavrak Village, Istiqlol Jamoat, Jayhun District**

Partoev Abdulfattoh - 937096996

April 30, 2018

I was working in Russia as a laborer, making around 30,000 Russian Ruble, which is he equivalent of 300 dollars a month and I was visiting my family in Tajikistan regularly. The very last time back in 2013, before buying my return ticket, I called a Tajik friend in Moscow asking him to check the status of my work permit/visa. He got back to me saying that unfortunately, I was blocked and could not return to Russia anymore.

After failing to return, I got credit from the bank and started doing business but failed and entered a big loss. I then got more credit from the bank and changed to agriculture growing onions, but once again, I failed and entered another big loss. In total, I borrowed 9,000 dollars from the bank that I have to return.

I then heard that the IOM staff had come to the school here talking about their grants. I filled and submitted my application, and my brother submitted an application as well. My application was successful but my brother failed to get an IOM grant. On February 20, 2018, IOM brought me 10,000 fishes, 15 cm long at that time. According to the initial plan, the fishes had to be delivered late last year, but the supplier/contractor said he had many other orders to take care of, therefore, could not deliver the fishes and will do it early next year.

One day after leaving the fishes in the water, it was the morning time when I visited the farm and saw that around 250 of them had died. I called the company as it was agreed, and they brought me 250 more fishes. As per the contract, an IOM contracted specialist visits my farm once every month and provides me with guidance and technical support.

I am greatly appreciative of this very kind IOM support. I have five children, was deported, failed in business and farming, and was undergoing heavy credit from the bank. But now, this life-saving project seems to be saving my life and providing a future. If nothing will go wrong, in two years these fishes will make around 200,000 Somoni in total. Growing fishes, feeding them and their take care is costly; however, I still expect about 100,000 Somoni net profit from this project.

**In-kind Grant, Goat Breeding, Zafarobod Village, Nowruz Jamoat, Nosiri Khusrav District**

Dusmuratova Muazzama

May 1, 2018

It was September 2016, when my brother-in-law filled a grant application for me and submitted that at our district office. Then on November 1, 2016, a group of three people visited our house. They were asking us about how much land we had, how many animals, and so on. Later they called us saying that our application was successful. Then on March 6, 2017, they called us to visit the Jamoat Office, where they explained everything about their offer, their rules and regulations. Eventually, they handed over the 20 goats to us.

In first days, two of the goats died and another two got sick and we killed them before they died. Later, my son had broken his arm and for his treatment, we had to sell another two of the goats.

Our life was very tough, my husband, having a second category of disability, was banned to re-enter the Russian Federation. However, with this very kind support from IOM, we are sure life will become much better and easier. The number of goats is increasing and we will be making some good income from that. It has been some time now that we are growing these goats. They are producing babies and the total number of the goats has now increased to 28, including their babies, from a total of 20 we received initially.

We are very much thankful to the President of Tajikistan and then IOM for this great support, now the number of our goats will keep increasing; besides they are producing milk and meat as well. We did not expect to be able to win such a project but were very lucky and without any difficulty, we won it. No one ever asked us for any single money and did not expect anything in return. They IOM staff has been relatively supportive, so far they have visited us three times and are in regular contact with us.

**In-kind Grant, Tyre Repair, Nowruz Jamoat, Nosiri Khusrav District**

Shokhrukh Boymuratov

May 1, 2018

According to our schedule, we were to visit and interview this grantee, but when we got to his workshop in Jamoat Nowruz of Nosiri Khusrav District, he was not available. His workshop was open and his neighboring shopkeepers said that he had just left and will be returning soon. We spent 30 minutes at his workshop waiting for him and trying to reach him by phone, but did not get an answer and were only able to conduct an observation. The items present at his workshop with the UKaid sticker included an air compressor, a wheel-balancing machine, an automatic tyre-changing machine, and a clamping set. One of his neighboring shopkeepers confirmed that he served 5 to 10 customers daily, making around 30 Somoni a day.

According to the IOM records, Shorukh is 26 years old; he was working in Moscow from 2012 to 2016. After his last visit in 2016, he was informed that he had a re-entry ban to

the Russian Federation. In Moscow, he was working in a tyre-repair workshop, and that is why he requested from IOM this kind of equipment.

### **Construction Project, Electricity Supply, Gardi Gulmurodov Jamoat, Dusti District**

Salomatshoh, Head of Mahallah – Namuna Village

April 29, 2018

In 2015, the local Government decided to distribute land to the people who did not own proper houses or enough space to build their own house. There were families living all together in one house, mostly larger in number. In 2016, some people started moving to this place building their own houses to switch to living separately, however, there were only a few people who decided to move, as we had no electricity here.

In August 2016, IOM staff members had come to the local government office presenting their project ideas and the support they could extend to our Jamoat. Then, local government officials had proposed the idea of extending electricity to this village, and the IOM team came to do their assessment of this area for a possible power supply project. The IOM team found this project idea valid and relevant to their mandate and project component's objective, which is improving livelihood of people living across the Tajik-Afghan border and promised to process the paperwork for making it happen.

After completing the project implementation that took around one month, in summer 2017, the technical project team was able to test and turn on the newly established electrical power transformer. Everything went smoothly and the families here got access to electricity. Right after completion of this project, community people rushed out here and the construction work of new houses got increased, and now we have 50 families living here with many other to come in a near future, as their houses are almost ready.

Before moving here, these families were living in large numbers but smaller facilities in nearby villages. They were facing many shortcomings, which mostly lead to family violence and moving abroad. The family members were not happy to continue such a life. However, moving to this newly established village with access to electricity, families are much happier now with hopes and plans for a brighter future in this area. They enjoy a more contented life with fewer complications in this village and are willing to stay longer here and forget struggling with challenges and thinking of moving abroad.

### **In-kind Grant, Tailoring, Margzor Village, Ghalaba Jamoat, Farkhor District**

Sharipova Farzona

April 29, 2018

I was doing tailoring at home with orders coming from the women of the surrounding areas. In addition, I was occasionally buying material myself and preparing items for the sellers in the market.

It started in 2014 after I completed a three and half month tailoring course in Dushanbe and bought one simple tailoring machine. After I was able to make some progress and saving, I bought another machine with some advanced options.

In August 2016, IOM had come to our village delivering information sessions on their grant opportunities. There were some specific application forms for these grants and a one month time frame for submitting our application. I submitted my application asking for three tailoring machines. In 2 months time, I received a phone call from IOM confirming that my application was successful. Then on April 25, 2017, they brought us all the requested items.

Prior to the IOM support, I was able to make 100 to 200 Somoni in a month, and now I make 200 to 300 Somoni in a month. IOM staff members had promised to introduce me to a tailoring training course; I would highly appreciate if we are provided an advanced training in tailoring. I also need to get a business registration certificate, which will allow me to take my business out to the market.

I, therefore, am very grateful for the kind support received from IOM. I would highly appreciate if IOM could further help me taking my business out of my house and to open a proper shop in the nearby bazaar. I am also very much interested to attend training on business management and marketing if facilitated by IOM.

## 7.2 RELEVANCE

Relevance is connected with the alignment of the programme goals, design, and implementation with the crucial needs and challenges of the project's beneficiaries and target groups. Under this evaluation, relevance was measured by answering two questions:

- 1) To what extent have the programme initiatives and results been relevant in achieving the intended outcomes?
- 2) How has the programme been relevant within the changing dynamics, political and otherwise, in the target areas?

During the evaluation, it was found that the TAIRR project has been in line with the needs of key target groups and beneficiaries. The TAIRR project's strategy, alongside income generation efforts, capacity building interventions, efforts for improving and increasing cross-border cooperation and local development priorities have been outstanding examples of the project's success. These could be inferred from relevant project documents and other written project materials, e.g. quarterly reports, case

studies, etc, but this also showed prominently in the interviews with a wide range of respondents.

The construction projects visited under this study have all been extremely vital to the needs of the communities on both sides of the border. They all give a very high return on investment and the support was very much appreciated by the respondents.

Mr. Davlatov Saidhoja, the director of the cross-border market in Sh. Shohin district (Shurobod District formerly) was very optimistic and thankful for the facilities constructed under the TAIRR project. He said, "People from both sides of the border bring their goods to the weekly bazaar in here. But most often they are not able to sell them all, thus, their goods have to be taken back miles away to their villages." He added, "We now have well designed cold storage rooms here in the Bazaar vicinity, we have a clinic and proper clean toilets." He continued, "After we officially launch/open the newly constructed facilities, people will then not need to take tons of vegetables and fruits back to their villages but would be able to properly store them here. It will save them money, energy, and time, and it will boost cross-border cooperation. It will also help in tightening the relationship and increasing trust between the two sides helping safety and stability in the region."

Grant-making projects and skills training have very positively impacted community members. Some have doubled and tripled their income, as well as providing jobs to others and facilitating businesses in their communities. Border forces and other government departments<sup>10</sup> are all satisfied with the quality results produced under the TAIRR project. They have discussed copying the design of this project for similar programmes in the future, and confirmed that they had found this project very successful.

When interviewing Ms. Ilchibekova Gulpari, Head of Adult Training Center in Rushon District, she talked about a young girl who benefited from the IOM vocational training services. Ms. Gulpari stated, "This young girl has lost her mother, her father has remarried. The girl's relationship has not been very good with the stepmother. This girl was feeling lonely and frustrated and had thought of committing suicide." Gulpari continued, "The young girl was informed of the IOM vocational training courses and the facilities they offered. She visited the center, liked everything about this opportunity, and asked to register herself." Gulpari added, "The girl continued coming to the center regularly, was able to make friends, and learn how to make cakes and other types of baking." Gulpari, with a happy smiling face and a great sense of pride told us, "You will not believe it, that young girl is the most talented and happiest student now. She is completely changed now; has many friends; has been able to make a positive relationship with her family members; is thinking of starting her own bakery and canning business, and she smiles nonstop."

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<sup>10</sup> Deputy Minister of Labor, Migration and Population Employment, and Deputy Head of Adult Training Centre in Dushanbe.

These are great examples of change in the societies this project supports. Even in the second example, not a single person's life is saved, but the family and the entire society is transformed for good. In short, the efforts under this project have definitely helped improve security and stability in vulnerable areas of the Tajik-Afghan border. The project and the teams' understanding of the situation in border areas is an added value to the successful design and implementation of this programme.

### 7.3 EFFECTIVENESS

Effectiveness is concerned with the degree to which intended outcomes were achieved, and/or the project is producing a desired result or success. Three questions were asked for assessing effectiveness:

1) To which extent has IOM made progress against the expected outputs and outcomes?

2) To which extent has collaboration between main actors met expected results?

3) Are there other partners with whom IOM should engage?

The TAIRR project is largely on track achieving its targets. The project is well designed and is going into the right direction to achieve the expected outputs and outcomes. By implementing the TAIRR project, IOM has improved or expanded access to establishing new businesses, financial services, and skills training services for a large number of community members. There has been a two-way approach to increasing stability in project-focused communities, it has included building relationship and trust, and increasing income-generating opportunities.

The project has been able to build and maintain a very positive relationship whilst working closely with the Tajikistan Ministry of Labor, Migration and Population Employment, Tajikistan State Employment Agency, Tajikistan Migration Services Agency, Tajikistan Adult Training Centers, Tajikistan Ministry of Health and Social Protection, Afghanistan Ministry of Public Health, Tajikistan Border Forces, Afghanistan Border Police, Tajikistan local government at district and sub-district levels and civil society organizations and communities. In addition, the project partnered with United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) for training of female grant recipients on improving design of carpentry and marketing, and with the UNDP for synergy projects.

H.E. Mr. Mahmadulloev Nurullo Rahmatulloevich, Deputy Minister of Labor, Migration and Population Employment of Republic of Tajikistan, in expressing his deep gratitude stated, "In the TAIRR project, activities are shared and discussed with us prior to their implementation in the field. We have often tried to align these efforts with the Tajikistan Government strategies and priorities ensuring greater benefit to the public, and I am

thankful to the team managing this project who have always been very collaborative with us." He further added, "We have never come across unexpected scenarios from this project, and have learnt a lot. We are working with many other donors and international organizations, and are copying many great lessons from this successful project."

The TAIRR project is definitely expanding access to the job market and income generating sources, countering human trafficking and TB, supporting migrants and building the capacity of government agencies. In conclusion, all these efforts support assisting the increase of community resilience in Badakhshan and Khatlon provinces of Tajikistan, however, the extent of the overall program focus on the other side of the border is unlikely to be achieved during the current lifetime of the project. Therefore, it is required to engage in a more productive relationship with the project stakeholders from the other side of the border, alongside exploring opportunities to work with Afghan NGOs and communities. IOM's efforts in encouraging cross-border trade has been very practical and successful, however, IOM should go deeper into this topic and facilitate province to province import/export businesses. IOM can work with formal business communities on both sides of the border, to find more regular and sustainable options for trading goods between the provinces close to the border and not just limit it to the cross-border markets. A channel like this needs to be supported and run for a year or two, it would then enlarge and increase itself with the efforts of two sides and possible government support facilitated under this project.

IOM lately has limited its focus to building facilities in the border area, and facilitating capacity building programmes to Afghan border police who have been responsible for managing the border. The project really needs to see what they can find beyond this group/border, they need to engage with the high-level Afghan officials for discussing strategic and policy level matters. On a few occasions, IOM has tried to reach them, but the level of effort has not been adequate for obtaining the desired result. However, such efforts should not stop and IOM should plan well and make sure they achieve the goals of the plan.

## 7.4 EFFICIENCY

Efficiency is concerned with the implementation and performance against two key resources: time and money. Two main questions were asked for assessing efficiency:

- 1) Are the existing resources (e.g. human and financial) allocated to be engaging with partners currently efficiently managed/used?
- 2) What strategies could be implemented to ensure financial and human resources are used efficiently?

Against the time dimension, progress has been slow. As discussed above, there were a number of processes that consumed too much of the team's effort. The key factor to this was the project coverage, however, this is easily manageable as elaborated below. When it comes to financial resources, value for money and the benefit margin/return on investment, the team and the project has simply been perfect. The project efficiency can increase greatly if time is managed more accurately, innovative approaches and ideas are introduced to the project, and sustainability is considered more when assessing possibilities for project engagements.

In order to reduce the cost for monitoring and ensure more effective/efficient project implementation and constant monitoring, IOM should consider assessing the possibility of opening a more appropriate regional office in Khorugh city. This could create the capacity to plan, implement, oversee and decide field operations. This office could be managed by a Deputy Project Manager or at least a Project Officer with the support of two or three technical staff members capable of delivering counseling sessions, workshops, assessment and monitoring visits. The current project structure and the team running the project is not sufficient to undertake all the project activities. However, resources are allocated properly for grants, vocational trainings courses, infrastructure and other project components.

## 7.5 IMPACT

To measure the project impact, the consultant attempted to assess the changes and improvements which could be attributed to a particular intervention of the TAIRR project. To measure this, the consultant used cause-and-effect questions to look at particular cases in more detail when the responses were highly encouraging. This was one of the reasons which allowed the project consultant to stay connected with, and talk to the respondents for over an hour in most of his interviews.

There are very obvious examples of the project impact, which would definitely attract attention if discussed with SME grant beneficiary Ilchibekova Hursheda (Ishkoshim District), SME grant beneficiary Sudurov Sherali, vocational training participants in Jorf Village (Darvaz District,) the role model Ilchibekova Gulpari, Head of Adult Training Center in Rushon District, and of course many more in the field. The change in the project beneficiaries' financial position is clear evidence of the great impact of this project as there are a number of community members who had doubled their family income with the help of capacity building and grants support received from IOM. Many of the project intervention helped with creating/increasing employment opportunities for the community members, ultimately ensuring increased security and stability in border areas.

Some of the project interventions are not carrying immediate results, and they need some time to be accurately judged. However, grants, capacity building, and the project's legal counseling have already created jobs and consequently increased

household income, which in turn will reduce the level of crime resulting from idleness. Capacity building and grants are already touched on above, and it is commonly understood that these type of project activities usually assist with increasing income generation opportunities. During the evaluation it was also found that the IOM legal counseling was also very beneficial in terms of provision of case management to migrants, who have bans for reentry to the Russian Federation. Some of them do not agree with the Russian authorities and want to clarify with them the reasons for placing a ban. There are also cases of labour exploitation, which migrants came across while in destination countries and consequently requested the government of Tajikistan and IOM to intervene to protect their labour rights. IOM together with the government and IOM representation in destination countries contacted an employer and requested the migrant salary be paid. This will build more trust between communities and the government knowing that the government will react on any problems which migrants face in destination countries.

Listening to Gulomaydarov A, in Khorugh City, he said, "I was working in Moscow, last time when I headed to Tajikistan for a holiday, on my return as everyone else, I went to the Government office for migration to check my visa status. They simply told me that I was banned from re-entering the Russian Federation." He added, "It was a very sad moment for me, and it did impact me a lot. Everyone in my family was depressed. I was getting disappointed and hopeless, with nerves about the future."

Gulomaydarov said, "I heard of the similar support offered by IOM, I had the opportunity to discuss my case with them, and after knowing every information about my case they said we will let you know your result after checking your information in our system." He further added, "After two or three days, I received their call, saying that I was actually not banned from re-entering the Russian federation. It was amazing, and I became very happy. I couldn't believe it, but I did trust them. They changed our life, and they restored my dreams and my future."

Border control, cross-border trade and the platform for the Tajik and Afghan border forces to cooperate and coordinate their efforts for improved security and stability in the region has experienced a great level of improvement with all the support provided by the TAIRR project. Construction of the Border Management Coordination Centers for the Tajik and Afghan border agencies in Nizhniy Panj and Tem border crossing points are the great example of such support. In addition to having a phone interview with an Afghan Ministry of Public Health official, it was another prime opportunity where the evaluator, besides talking to Tajik stakeholders and beneficiaries, was also able to talk to the border forces of Afghanistan. The evaluator officially crossed the border and talked to the Afghan border forces in Shughnan District of Afghanistan. As observed and listened to officials from both sides, the IOM capacity development efforts, facilities and equipment proved by the TAIRR project, has resulted in managing border-related issues in a much better, easier and more professional way. Improved coordination and cross-border cooperation between the two sides, most importantly has raised trust and

has facilitated an increased level of engagement for state actors and community members of the two sides.

The Afghan border police officer in Shughnon, said, "Now we have more open communication with the other side of the border. We regularly exchange/share information and are well aware of the situation on both sides. We feel grateful when dealing with our Tajik counterparts." He continued, "These have all been the result of the TAIRR project's capacity building interventions bringing us more closer to each other and facilitating dialogs for improving the quality of services we provide."

## 7.6 SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability narrates the likelihood that the project impact will last for a long time. When designing the TAIRR programme, significant emphasis has been placed on sustainability, especially with learning from the first two phases. A very encouraging characteristic of the TAIRR project is that it has always worked very closely with its target groups and beneficiaries. The project initiatives are mostly built on requests from the user side and there has always been a sense of ownership in every project activity from the stakeholder and beneficiary side. This itself provides ownership of the project activities, ensuring project's sustainable impact.

The construction of two BMCCs in Nizhniy Panj and Tem, a cross border market in Shohon Village, a school building in Fayzobod Village, a health point in Yakkadin Jamoat and an electricity supply chain in Namuna Village are all the project products that will be leaving a lasting impact. They perfectly respond to the region's priorities and are providing great benefits to the community living across the border. The vocational training course, grant projects, safe migration programmes and border-training programmes are all developing and building the human capital for future long-term practice. They can be utilized beyond the duration of the project, and produce results.

From an economic sustainability viewpoint, almost all of the TAIRR beneficiaries and target groups appear to have sustainable business plans and are rewarding. However, some of this profitability is not granted beyond the donor grant support to be sustaining. To consequently ensure more sustainable project impact, it is recommended that the TAIRR project consider options for creating connections between interventions, eg, organizing job fairs and engaging the recent graduates in vocational training courses. There are a number of medium and large size Tajik companies actively working in the country, they could be invited and encouraged to consider this as an opportunity towards fulfilling their social responsibility. Furthermore, the project can uphold and consider its capable training participants for small in-kind grants, and its successful small in-kind grant beneficiaries/implementers for receiving possible future SME grants.

The project should also anticipate ways that can connect the broader part of the bordering provinces and run interventions that are more public in nature, eg, launch grant projects that are larger in nature/size and do not belong to one person or family but are counted as public assets at the end. These types of projects would have more visibility and communities will feel ownership. They will provide larger and more sustainable employment opportunities to the public. Allowing the government to play a key role in such projects, take ownership and monitor the process closely.

### 7.7 KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A list of key findings and high-level recommendations is outlined below. For more detail and an overview of the project from a stakeholders' point of view, please refer to field note on page 16.

Key MTE Findings	Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Traveling from Dushanbe to project sites in GBAO (Murghob, Ishkoshim, Roshtqala, Khorugh, Shughnan, Rushon, Vanj, and Darvoz) takes between 7 to 14 hours (Overly time consuming, physically arduous and pressured trips).</li> <li>➤ On average every quarter, the project team members including their driver make an accumulative 108 staff field days, covering project activities in GBAO and Khatlon regions. This includes 18 trips (6 trips per month).</li> <li>➤ Currently there is one knowledgeable IOM consultant/focal person in Khorugh city, who mainly conducts monitoring visits in GBAO region, offers consultations and recommendations to the team in Dushanbe, and acts as liaison and coordination officer.</li> <li>➤ Currently the IOM grant-making processes from selecting beneficiaries to procuring the required machinery, tools and equipment take between 3-</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ IOM should consider assessing the possibility of opening a more appropriate regional office in Khorugh city, with the capacity to plan, implement, oversee and decide field operations. This office could be managed by a Deputy Project Manager with the support of two or three technical staff members capable of delivering counseling sessions, workshops, assessment and monitoring visits.</li> </ul>

<p>6 months.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ In the TAIRR project proposal document, under project stakeholders, for Afghanistan in addition to Afghan border police, ministries of Foreign Affairs, Interior Affairs, Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled, Public Health, Rural Rehabilitation and Development, Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock, Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority, Badakhshan Provincial Government, District-level Government, civil society organizations and community leaders are listed with medium and high influence/interest, however, recently the level of engagement with these stakeholders has been very low or not very productive and it does need to be improved.</li> <li>➤ During the first two years of the project, IOM has been able to bring Afghan health officials to a working meeting in Tajikistan, design and print a brochure on prevention of TB among people living in the border areas of both Tajikistan and Afghanistan, design and translate into Dari and print a training curriculum for female border guards, conduct training for female border guards on how to use the curriculum and conduct a vocational training course in Badakhshan Province of Afghanistan, through an NGO partner based in Khorugh. However, this is less than adequate considering the nature of this project.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ IOM should conduct a technical security assessment of the other side of the border for a more practical understanding of the current security situation, limitations and possibilities for potential future engagements. The project can facilitate group discussions with its Afghan and Tajik stakeholders to explore engaging opportunities at least in areas close to the border. For better access, IOM may also consider hiring a staff member from the other side of the border who could possibly be placed at the proposed Khorugh regional office and help facilitate implementation of the project activities in Afghanistan Districts.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The project M&amp;E efforts are not systematic and precisely planned currently, although, a sufficient number of field visits are conducted by the team. Some project activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The TAIRR project team should come up with a pre-planned M&amp;E field visit schedule, giving all project activities equal value/score and then randomly select who should visit which project</li> </ul>

<p>are visited twice.</p>	<p>and what time.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The TAIRR project's annually conducted community survey measuring community resilience is representing a very small percent of change in community resilience. The survey results do not communicate the actual project achievements.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Methodologies and instruments used for this survey needs to be given an expert review and modified accordingly.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The IOM grant-making initiative leave a very positive and rapid impact at the community level. It has grown households' income significantly, has created employment and business, and it has engaged families positively. However, it still requires a process approach instead of an ad-hoc project. Their impact in the current situation is not sustainable to ensure long-lasting impact, so it is important to design long-term engagement approaches.</li> <li>➤ Two out of ten small in-kind grant recipients were not in a good position to properly utilise the equipment they had received from the project.</li> <li>➤ Two of the eighteen small grants/SMEs visited under this evaluation have gone to people not meeting the grant-making criteria: a) women headed households b) returned migrants (with re-entry bans to the Russian Federation) c) youth at the age of 18 to 30 d) disabled or have an immediate family member with a disability e) a single parent f) an internal migrant g) live and operate in one of target Jamoats. Field</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ At least five to ten successful recipients/implanters of the 2016/17 small grants should be promoted to receive and implement SME grants in 2018/19. They could be chosen amongst those who at least have a business name, and are willing with potential to grow. If needed, they should be supported and given the opportunity to register their business and get a first-degree business license <i>patent</i>. This will help the project to more sustainably support potential businesses to become concrete sources of employment and income generation for the communities living across the border.</li> <li>➤ Current and future small grants/SMEs should be followed with pre-planned systematic technical support/input by IOM or a contractor. This can help ensure sustainability and guarantee appropriate utilization of the resources and effective realisation of the business.</li> <li>➤ Future small grants/SMEs should focus on reaching the right people. TAIRR project has a high-quality due-diligence system in place, which is very important. However, it does need significant improvement to ensure resources reach the best possible destinations. There should be a two-way approach to this, not only relying on what comes from the NGO partners' assessments. After the NGO</li> </ul>

<p>assessments conducted by NGO partners did not follow the same pattern in all districts, one was constant the other was not, one was too strict the other was lenient.</p>	<p>partners conduct their field assessment, IOM should make phone calls to verify the information shared by the NGOs, and this should happen to all potential grantees (100%). Then, between 10 to 20 percent of the potential grantees should be re-visited by IOM staff members. They could be those who get low scores during their phone call verifications.</p>
<p>➤ Three wood processing machines were visited under this study. They all said they did not make any use of the sawdust they produced. Although, they are cutting trees and big bunches of wood every day.</p>	<p>➤ Bura-e Ara (sawdust), the local made Afghan heater idea should be introduced in areas where they still use wooden heaters for warming their homes during the winter. This heating system uses sawdust and does not produce a big smoke. It is safer for the environment, is cost effective and requires less maintenance/attention.</p>
<p>➤ As mentioned in many other project reviews, there is still room for re-thinking the IOM capacity building efforts and introducing productive changes, as well as efforts that can ensure long lasting impact of these interventions.</p>	<p>➤ More creative ideas should be introduced, particularly to the capacity building packages for community members. Below is a list of globally practiced relevant vocational training ideas:</p> <p><b>Tailoring:</b> do not always train how to make clothes, but introduce innovative ideas such as making curtains, dolls, gifts, school bags, and so on. This type of training should then be followed by some sales and marketing lectures. Teach how to sell and make sales using social media.</p> <p><b>Cooking:</b> do not just focus on bakery services, but professional cooking skills that could also provide some better employment opportunities. Participants could open restaurants, considering the increased number of tourists in their region, or work in other restaurants. In addition, encourage innovative touristic business ideas for</p>

	<p>the region.</p> <p><b>Farming:</b> Take into account the region's distance from the capital city and business centres. Encourage a culture of running greenhouses/four-season farming specifically vegetables, including tomato, cucumber, lettuce, eggplant, carrots, and many more.</p> <p><b>Carpet weaving:</b> this can also be introduced to the community members under the IOM capacity-building component. You may bring specialists/teachers from the other side of the border to train people here. It creates employment, is a good income generation source, and can increase interaction/business between community members on both sides of the border.</p> <p><b>Canning:</b> train participants on producing and packing tomato paste for business and their own use in winter. You may assess the market and decide which other vegetable and fruit items to include here.</p> <p>➤ To ensure more sustainable project impact, the project should consider organizing job fairs engaging the recent graduates of its vocational training courses. There are a number of medium and large size Tajik companies actively working in the country, they should be invited and encouraged to consider this as an opportunity towards fulfilling their social responsibility. Furthermore, the project can uphold and consider its capable training participants for small in-kind grants.</p>
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Below is a list of recommendations from the last project evaluation report, which are still valid and require the attention of the current programme.

- There are a number of well established civil society organizations on the Tajik side, which played a pivotal role in the implementation of TACEME, but this is not the case for the Afghan side and therefore, this should be an area of focus for future interventions.
- Future programmes should include projects that would try to bring young people from both sides in direct contact and engagement with each other through educational and cultural festivals.
- The Afghan-Tajik border access is frequently closed by Tajik border authorities for long periods of time and therefore, future projects should have a stronger presence on the Afghan side for the continuation of programmes.

## 8. CONCLUSION

The TAIRR project has generally ensured, up to date, very positive progress in many areas and recommendations are not deemed necessary for those parts. However, in order to guarantee a more comprehensive implementation a number of key findings and recommendations are provided addressing a number of specific cases.

Time delays in moving projects from pipeline to implementation almost remained unaffected. Progress of the project activities requiring less amount of paperwork, liaising, monitoring and coordination has been positive and those with complicated processes in relatively far locations have been slow.

Last but not least, it is worth mentioning that although no section or sub-section was dedicated to the project's data analysis, information management efforts, monitoring and evaluation, this component was never forgotten or ignored. This study determines and assures, that since there is a properly maintained information management system in place and a number of key monitoring tools have been in practice, the extent of information being processed and published by the project is of high confidence. As mentioned above, the project annual community survey does need an expert review and some serious modifications to ensure the actual project accomplishments are communicated to its stakeholders.

The team's dedication, hard work and motivation has proven to result into some significant achievements, attaining the most challenging targets very smoothly. The team has been able to liaise and work very wisely with the Tajik government officials, border forces and community leaders. Their regular communication and follow ups have made it easy for them to get things done with ease so far, nevertheless, they do need to be praised and increased in number.

\*THE END\*