



## Analysis of Peace and Conflict Potential in Rasht Valley, Shurabad District and GBAO, Tajikistan



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## PREFACE

This research was conducted to provide an understanding of the peace and conflict potential in three regions of Tajikistan (GBAO, Rasht and Shurabad).

The report is part of an analysis conducted in the GTZ target regions of the programme “Promoting Food Security, Regional Co-operation and Stability in Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan”.

The findings are used for MSDSP programme activities and for the implementation of the GTZ project “Promoting Food Security, Regional Co-operation and Stability in Tajikistan”.

A one-week training workshop in Dushanbe preceded the fieldwork.

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## Executive Summary

In Tajikistan the **risk for renewed violent conflict appears to be decreasing**. There is a widely shared consensus in society that civil war must not be repeated. The single largest risk for Tajikistan's stability is the threat of a power struggle within the elites. This threat is beyond the intervention capacities of NGOs working at the local level. However, there are **no barriers and safety valves against such shocks**. Tajik society and Tajik political institutions are ill prepared to absorb any shocks due to an overall weakness of state institutions and to the weakness of civil society. There is no information flow between regions and between the political centre and society, and there are no institutions working on a nation wide scale that could help process conflicts in a non-violent way. **Developments in Afghanistan are of decisive importance for security and stability in Tajikistan**. The extent of threats from the proliferation of weapons and drug trafficking, which both provide opportunities for illegal economic activities and thus make the organisation of violence feasible, depend foremost on a continued stabilisation in Afghanistan. **Poverty, rising inequality and high dependence on labour migration and donor money are key problems and hamper structural stability**.

The general scarcity of land is recently combined with growing **uneven access to land**. There is a process of stratification under way – the rural rich are getting richer and the rural poor are getting poorer. Small conflicts between villages and within villages about disputed plots of land or about perceived unfair distribution occur often, but do not have mass character. The real conflict – that between the new rural elite and the new rural poor – is so far hidden. There are marked regional differences: The situation in GBAO is the least conflict prone, because land was distributed more evenly than in Shurabad or in Rasht. The most conflict prone situation we found in the Rasht valley where more than half of all families have no access to land and where income inequality is likely to grow. The problem is further aggravated by the fact that (a) Tajikistan's economy will in foreseeable future not be able to absorb the work force, and (b) mobility for the population of Rasht is blocked within Tajikistan, that is, for people from "former opposition regions" and it is difficult for them to get access to jobs in the economy or in the administration in Dushanbe and Khatlon. The only safety valve is thus work migration to Russia – a valve which is vulnerable to economic shocks and which can be politically manipulated by Russia.

**Water shortage** causes serious quarrels within the village and between villages in all three regions we researched. **However, the local communities are capable of dealing with the problem**. Thus, dealing with conflicts about water distribution trains and enforces the conflict management capacities of society. Interventions in order to improve water management are important, because water shortage is a serious impediment for food security. In addition, well-targeted intervention in water

management can also support and strengthen conflict management institutions that connect communities and that connect state and society.

The report finds that there is at the local level a **demand for more state**, not only as a provider of material goods but also as mediator and arbiter. State positions are, however, often misused as a means of extracting resources. NGO interventions should nevertheless engage local governments, since they are both part of the problem and part of the solution. This is especially true with regard to land use. In different regions of Tajikistan different modes of local governance that combine informal and formal institutions have emerged. For successful interventions it is essential to have clear analytical insights into how these local modes of governance work.

**Border issues** are a security concern for Tajikistan and may affect the local population. The Tajik population clearly sees the Afghan border as a security threat. Threat perception are linked to (1) drug trafficking and related violent incidents, (2) drug trafficking and possible increase in local drug dealing and consumption, (3) common violence across the border, (4) harassment by Russian border guards (5) fear of Tajik security forces. All respondents and most experts think that the Tajik army is not able to efficiently guard the borders. Despite the fact that there are many complaints about the Russian border guards, the local population wishes them to stay for the time being, not least because of the fact that the Russian troops are an economic factor which is of local importance. Changes in the current border regime will most certainly affect the population living in the border zones. An uncontrolled opening which would increase the flow of drugs would have extremely negative consequences for the border zones: Local drug markets would again emerge and local consumption would increase; competition between old and new drug trafficking organisations would be intensified which would backfire on regional stability.

There has been a marked concentration and professionalisation of the **drug trafficking business** since 1993. Free lance and petty traffickers were pushed out of the market by a few organised groups which operate under protection from high ranking figures and which co-operate with Russian and Tajik border guards, Tajik security forces and state officials. Local drug markets and local drug consumption decreased, but this does not imply that that overall drug trafficking has decreased. Drug trafficking poses a physical security threat for local population in border regions. There are many incidents of illegal crossings of the borders and shootouts between drug traffickers and border guards that lead to violent incidents; furthermore, security forces are threatening the local population. "Small drug barons" may exercise considerable influence within local communities or even within districts. Some of them take an active part in community life and in village organisations. As part of the village communities they are a stakeholder both in community development and in drug trafficking. Small barons in Rasht are relatively

more influential than in GBAO and in Shurabad. Whereas the capacity of the village communities to deal with drug trafficking are very low, their capacities to mobilise against drug use and drug dealing by means of moral mobilisation and social control is high. The “eye of the village” (the social control, exercised by the village authorities) and the influence of religious leaders have a great impact with regard to prevention of drug consumption.

**Networks of patronage** are a key element of political power in Tajikistan. Since power is mainly vested within vertical networks, there are almost no horizontal links between districts. Each district is a political system of its own, and the key determinant of that system is the vertical relations to the patrons in Dushanbe. As a consequence, the modes of governance vary greatly between the regions. Of concern is the **local mode of governance** in the Rasht valley. In Rasht, a rural elite that consists of an amalgam of former fighters, religious leader, and state officials has emerged. This elite has been successful in gaining control over a large percentage of the available land. The actual mode of governance protects an unfair, illegal and uneven informal control over land. Pressure to change this will mount and this will affect the vested interests of the elite.

**The report concludes with the following general recommendations (see chapter 10):**

- A macro-regional co-operation (comprised of two or more states) on the state level is not likely to occur in the foreseeable future. Adding to regional stability is thus best done by strengthening interregional co-operation on a project level. Inter-regional co-operation (between regions belonging to different states) on a project level should be strengthened with regard to the border zones of Afghan-Badakhshan and Tajik-Badakhshan/Shurabad, and with regard to the border regions between Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan in the Ferghana Valley.
- It is recommended that GTZ / MSDSP further develop tools for conflict and peace assessment in non-violent situations, since the available GTZ tools are designed for situations of violent conflict. It is also recommended that GTZ /MSDSP further develop a practical manual on how to conduct a do-no-harm analysis at the local level (in Russian).
- It is recommended that MSDSP’s middle management (regional managers, PEU regional managers) are trained in “do-no-harm analysis”. Conducting a do-no-harm analysis is especially important for interventions affecting land usage, the rules of water distribution, and for interventions in multi-ethnic locations.
- It is recommended that MSDSP up-dates its planned “Impact Assessment Framework” to a partial Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment. We

therefore suggest that MSDSP makes use of the data collected for the impact assessment for analysing the Peace and Conflict Impact.

- MSDSP should develop and explicitly communicate to staff and donors clear strategies on three issues of relevance: These issues are expected impact of the opening of the borders with Afghanistan, the issue of engaging local government and the issue of land use/privatisation. It is of especial importance that MSDSP develops a clear strategy with regard to privatisation in Rasht. MSDSP should assess its impact and adapt when needed its programmes in order to ensure that its interventions do not support the establishment of larger but unproductive farms thus adding to inequality and long term social problems.
- There is a need for an analysis of local governance in the areas MSDSP is active (but mainly in Rasht and in Shurabad) and assessing the implication for development programmes. Such an analysis should answer the following questions: Who controls key resources in the region? Do inputs reach the target groups? Do inputs support local "big men"? How productive are the big farms?
- MSDSP should be prepared for the opening of borders with Afghanistan. It is recommended that the regional offices in Shurabad and GBAO develop, based on the current report, positive and negative scenarios in order to (a) identify risks from which target groups (communities in border areas, local trade) should be shielded; (b) identify opportunities for target groups (trade, service exporting); (c) identify opportunities for MSDSP as a service provider.

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## Abbreviations and Glossary

AKF:	Aga Khan Foundation
CDU:	Community Development Unit of MSDSP
GBAO:	Autonomous Region of Badakhshan
Jamoat:	Sub-district
Khukumat:	Local government at district level
MSDSP:	Mountain Societies Development Support Programme
PCIA:	Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment
PEU:	Policy Evaluation Unit of MSDSP
Sovkhoz:	State owned farm within the Soviet System
VO:	Village organisation. MSDSP initiated institutions of self-governance that are aimed at mobilising the community to deal with everyday problems itself. These village organisations generally comprise over 80% of households in each village. Members hold monthly meetings and pay fees, which contribute to a revolving village development fund used for credit and grants for members and for village-wide projects.
Kolkhoz:	Collective farm within the Soviet System

# 1 Guideline to the Quick Reader

This report contains background information which may not be necessary for the quick reader.

Of importance to the quick reader may be the reports three types of recommendations:

**Recommendations with regard to specific conflict arenas can be found on:**

Water: Chapter 3.1., p. 14  
Land: Chapter 4.1., p. 23  
Drugs: Chapter 5.1., p. 30  
Borders: Chapter 6.1., p. 36  
Local Governance: Chapter 7.1., p. 43

**Recommendations of a specific nature with regard to individual cases in the programme area of MSDSP can be found on:**

Porshnev: Chapter 8.1., p. 45  
Navdi: Chapter 8.2., p. 47  
Jirgatal: Chapter. 8.3., p. 50

**Recommendations of a general nature with regard to strategic / organisational development of MSDSP can be found on:**

Chapter 9, p.. 54

## **2 Introduction**

### **2.1 Objectives**

Between 5 September and 22 November 2003 a research team consisting of MSDSP staff and foreign consultants conducted a conflict analysis in three regions of Tajikistan (Rasht valley, Shurabad and GBAO). The conflict study focused on four issues which were identified during a kick-off workshop in Dushanbe as both high risk areas and areas relevant to MSDSP's work. Therefore we focused on (1) competition over water; (2) competition over access to land; (3) drug related conflicts and (4) border related conflicts.

This mission had two objectives: The first was to gain more analytical insight into peace and conflict potential in those three regions of Tajikistan where MSDSP / GTZ are engaged. We thus focused on factors that (1) aggravate the risk of conflict, (2) on the positions and interests of stakeholders and (3) on relevant institutions (formal and informal) that have conflict transforming capacities.

The second objective of the mission was to enhance MSDSP's capacities with regard to conflict analysis and conflict transformation. The conducting of this conflict analysis by MSDSP in close co-operation with foreign consultants was a first step in this direction. During work on the study, the consultants acquainted MSDSP with basic elements of PCIA (Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment). Based on the findings of the study and considering methodological lessons learned during the fieldwork, the foreign consultants explored with MSDSP staff which elements of PCIA could be implemented.

This report presents the main findings of the conflict study and gives recommendations on implementing elements of PCIA within MSDSP's work.

The analysis was part of a regional study encompassing the GTZ programme areas in Afghan Badakhshan, South Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The research was designed and supervised by ARC Berlin in close co-operation with GTZ and its implementing partners.

### **2.2 *The Programme for Food Security, Stability and Regional Co-operation***

The *Food Security, Regional Co-operation and Stability Programme* implemented by GTZ and its partners AKF and AKDN in Southern Kyrgyzstan, parts of Tajikistan and

Northern Afghanistan is a pioneering attempt to build on the interdependence of enhanced food security and the reduced risk of crisis and conflict.

The Kyrgyz component is implemented by GTZ in the southern administrative region (oblast) Batken; the Tajik component is implemented by MSDSP in Tajik Badakhshan, Shurabad and Rasht valley and the Afghanistan component is implemented by AKDN in Afghan Badakhshan province.

The programme has the following objectives: (1) to boost agricultural production; (2) to develop small and/or medium sized enterprises (3) to rehabilitate infrastructure; (4) to foster the participative co-operation of actors in the local reform and state-building processes; (5) to strengthen the conflict transformational capacities of local state and civil society institutions; (6) to enhance regional co-operation and stability in Tajikistan, which geographically connects the projects in Northern Afghanistan and Southern Kyrgyzstan.

Conflict transformation is therefore seen as the crosscutting objective to which the food security and rehabilitation related objectives 1-4 are supposed to contribute. The overarching goal of the programme is thus to strengthen the two interdependent capacities of society which are preconditions for sustained development: (1) the capacity to process conflicts in a non-violent way and (2) the capacity of society to secure basic needs.

### ***2.3 The study in the context of post-war Tajikistan***

Since the end of the civil war (in 1996) there has been slow progress towards more stability in Tajikistan.

The consolidation of central authority is progressing, as the president is building up his network, and potential opponents are co-opted or excluded. This reduces the risk of a power struggle within the ruling elite and between competing regional elites. However, this process of strengthening central authority by investing in networks of patronage should not be confused with the strengthening of statehood – the former strengthens the personal rule of a leader, the latter strengthens the functioning of impersonal and transparent state bureaucracy.

The situation in the former opposition region of the Rasht valley is also slowly improving. Central authorities are gradually taking over control from former "local strong men". Armed militias do not play a prominent role any more, although the process of disarmament is far from complete and there is still a small weapons problem.

The material situation of the population has been slowly improving, mainly due to international donor activities.

Finally, since 2001, the situation in Afghanistan has improved. Tajikistan has a 1300km border with Afghanistan, and it was and still is very vulnerable to the overspill from drug trafficking, export of arms, fighters or ideologies. The regime change in Afghanistan and the strengthening of the border with Afghanistan have improved the security situation.

Despite this progress, the country is still far from having achieved structural and sustainable stability. Tajikistan has the poorest resource-base and the weakest infrastructure of the Central Asian states and has suffered the sharpest economic decline. Among the risk factors that currently affect stability in the country are the deeply entrenched regionalism; the omnipresent patron-client networks (which are often based on regional origins); the dire socio-economic constellation; the threat of Islamic unrest; the high dependence on income from labour migration, drug money and international donor money. However, most important is the threat of a break down of the elite coalition that forms the core of President Rakhmonov's rule.

In general, the risk of renewed hostilities between regionally affiliate groupings seems to be steadily decreasing. The risk for social unrest or ideologically-religiously motivated mobilisation is, however, still present

It should be noted that at the time of our field visit (October - November 2003) there was no open violent conflict in Tajikistan.

## ***2.4 What does the study cover?***

*Regionally*, the study covers those areas where MSDSP and GTZ programme activities are taking place, that is,

- one district in Khatlon region (Shurabad district)
- the entire region of GBAO
- the entire Rasht valley

(For the brief characteristics of these regions annex). The study does not cover the Soghd (Leninabad) region of Tajikistan.

We feel that our findings are valid for the whole GABO region and for the whole Rasht valley. In each region we had three research teams. In Shurabad which is part of Khatlon region we had only one team. The findings for Shurabad may thus not be generalised to the whole Khatlon region.

*The level of analysis* is the local level. We focused in the first place on actors and institutions that are relevant on the level of the village and the district. Our team produced seven local reports (three in GBAO, three in Rasht valley and one in Shurabad district)

*Topically*, we focused on issues that are perceived by the village population (which is the addressee of MSDSP work) and by MSDSP staff to be the most risk prone (competition about scarce natural resources, drug and border issues) and which may have a significant impact on the work of MSDSP.

Thus, our specific research focus reflects the needs and interests of MSDSP. MSDSP is working on community level. Its conflict transforming capacities are thus concentrated on actors, interests and institutions at the local level. Therefore we chose this level to be our main level of analysis.

Given this approach, it is clear that this study does not cover all relevant risk factors that may disturb the fragile stability in Tajikistan. We do not explicitly analyse potential causes of conflict at the international and national level. These are (1) competition between nation states about power and resources; (2) the intended manipulation of domestic politics by neighbouring countries, and (3) the implosion of political power in the centre and/or violent power struggle in the centre.

Addressing these issues requires an analytically different approach than the one used here. In addition, none of these three conflict potentials can be significantly influenced by local NGOs.

## **2.5 Conducting the Research**

Seven teams of local researchers carried out the fieldwork in Rasht (three teams), GBAO (three teams) and Shurabad district (one team). All teams consisted of two staff of MSDSP's regional or district offices, a gender specialist (all the gender specialists were women) and the social organisers (all social organisers were men). These research teams were supervised by the PEU (Policy Evaluation Unit) officer of the regional offices. The research teams were released from their daily work for a period of eight weeks in order to conduct the research.

None of the team members had previous experience in conducting field research or conflict analysis. The teams were trained by foreign consultants.

The methods the teams applied derive from social anthropological research and from rapid rural appraisal (adapted to conflict research for development and aid practice). Both approaches focus on qualitative data and require extensive fieldwork. A full description of the methodology is given in the annex.

In order to structure the analysis, research teams were provided with two tools:

### **Conflict Arenas / Clusters of Conflicts**

(1) We participatorarily identified conflict arenas: Conflict arenas are clusters of conflicts categorised by shared dominant features. Examples of such conflict clusters are conflicts over access to and distribution of natural resources, conflicts related to access to key positions; conflicts arising around social differences (e.g. gender, generation, identity) or conflicts connected with drug trafficking and border issues.

### **Cross-Cutting Categories**

(2) The local teams were tasked with obtaining data on pre-defined cross-cutting research categories of general importance for conflict processing.

These were (1) resources, (2) networks, (3) informal local institutions, (4) formal non-state institutions (5) local state capacities and (6) social control (see annex for definitions).

Preparation of the teams was done in a one week seminar in Dushanbe. The task of this initial seminar was to teach crucial analytical concepts, introduce the tools of conflict analysis<sup>1</sup> and provide training in methods of qualitative research (interview techniques, field diaries, participant observation).

An important part of the workshop was devoted to the participatory pre-selection of relevant conflict arenas as well as research locations. The identified areas were clustered according to previously identified conflict arenas:

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<sup>1</sup> Following Leonhardt, Manuela, 2001, Conflict Impact Assessment for development projects. A practical guideline – Draft. Eschborn, GTZ.

- competition for natural resources, such as land and water
- competition for other resources such as humanitarian aid
- youth and intergenerational conflicts
- minority conflicts
- competition for state positions
- drugs
- border issues

During the workshop, the research teams then specified the research locations.

The following table presents an overview of the research locations and research topics on which the local research teams focused.

**Table 1: Research locations and case studies:**

Region	Location	Main Focus of Case Studies
Rasht Valley	Tavildara	1) Access to land 2) Drugs
	Jirgatal	1) Access to land
	Garm	1) Intergenerational conflict 2) Access to land
GBAO	Shugnan	1) Access to land 2) Water related conflicts 3) Drugs 4) Border issues
	Darvaz	1) Access to land 2) Water related conflicts 3) Impact of new Kulyob – Pamir highway
	Murghab	1) Exploitation of <i>tersken</i> (a plant used for heating, as fodder for Yaks, and essential for preserving ecological stability) 2) Border and trade issues
Shurabad	Shurabad	1) Drugs 2) Border issues 3) Access to land

Field work was conducted in three regions of Tajikistan: The Rasht Valley, GBAO, and Shurabad.

The Rasht valley is found north-east of the capital. **Research locations in Rasht** were the village Navdi (rayon Garm); villages Khipshon, Aranghul, Shur and Rubotnol villages (Tavildara rayon); and Jamoat Jirgatal (Jirgatal rayon)

The autonomous region (*oblast*) of Gorno-Badakhshan is situated in the very east of Tajikistan, in the Pamir Mountains. It borders China in the east and Afghanistan in the south and west and is separated from Pakistan by a narrow strip of Afghan territory. **Research locations in GBAO** were villages Midenshor, Khosa and Tishor ( rayon Shugnan, Jamoat Porshnev); Jamoat Nulvand, rayon Darvaz; and Jamoat Murghab, rayon Murghab.

The Shurabod district is located in south-east of Dushanbe along the river Pyanzh on the border with Afghan Badakhshan. It is located in a poor, mountainous part of the Khatlon region of southern Tajikistan. **Research locations in Shurabad** were the villages of Sari Maghzor, Khirmanjo and Kisht (*jamoat* of Yol).

Actual field work was carried out for 1 ½ months. However, most teams could not devote the full time period to the fieldwork, but had to take care of their usual daily routine as well. The teams usually started with participant observation. All teams then moved to semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and expert interviews.

At the start of the fieldwork the research teams were visited in the field by the team leader and the foreign consultants. The consultants spent 2 – 3 days with each team in order to discuss techniques and concepts, to specify and, where needed, adapt research locations and to discuss preliminary results.

After the first round of research, we held mid-term workshops. After the end of field work period a workshop was held in Dushanbe with the three supervisors of the research teams (the PEU regional managers) in order to discuss the results and to assess implications for PCIA elements within MSDData Processing and Reporting

The teams handed in a first draft of their report before the mid-term workshops. They also handed in their field diaries, which were transcribed and used for the present reports. Final reports were handed in by all teams before the final workshop in Dushanbe. The reports are app. 20 – 30 pages and closely follow a predefined structure. (1. Introduction; 2. section on methods applied; 3. description of the relevant conflict fields in the locations; 4. case studies, including a) conflict profile, b) analysis of actors (stakeholders, strategic groups), c) analytical grid (analysing the conflict at issue according to the crosscutting themes defined during the initial seminar;), d) dynamics, e) scenarios; 5. filled in matrix.

The data collected in these reports provide the core for the present report. Additional material was collected by the authors of this report via expert interviews in the field and in Dushanbe.

### 3 Competition about Water

*“Every year during the irrigation season, I would like to die and only come to life after the irrigation season is over.” (Respondent in Khosa, 6.10.03. Source: GBAO Report)*

*“Because of the lack of water we cannot adequately work the land. Water is the problem number one. We get water every 11th day for 45 minutes for watering the orchards and kitchen gardens and for one hour for watering 10 sotok [= one hectare] of land – that is, only six minutes per sotka. We take water from the Barchid stream, it gets to us via the village Midenshora. It would be good to have pipes instead of open channels that would be efficient and convenient. It would also be good to have a pumping station, but this is difficult to maintain. It can easily break down. It’s difficult and expensive to get them repaired and maintained.” (Respondent in Khosa, 8.10.03. Source: GBAO Report)*

Lack of irrigation water, difficult access to drinking water and/or polluted water is in many locations in GBAO, Shurabad and Rasht a serious problem. Improving access to clean drinking water in the villages and improvement in the management of irrigation water for the fields is therefore a key priority for most VO in GBAO, Rasht and Shurabad. MSDSP has consequently invested in water management in many locations.

In most of our research locations there were reported cases of quarrels related to (1) access to drinking water in the villages, (2) polluted water, (3) quarrels between villages about irrigation water and (4) quarrels between farmers within the villages about irrigation water.

In Jirgatal (Rasht), the distribution of water is a source of many conflicts between households and between communities, and comes second only after the (hidden) conflicts about access to land (interview with the chairman of the Khukumat, see report Jirgatal report).

Another incident was reported in the villages of Duoba and Shukhtak (Rasht), where the two communities quarrelled about irrigation water.

In Shruabad, the village of Kisht is without access to clean drinking water and the women have to carry the water from the river Pyanzh. In the village of Yol the water is polluted and causes diseases.

In Nulvand (GBAO), where the amount of water would be sufficient for irrigation purposes, there are problems with the maintenance of the irrigation channels, which lead to water shortages. There are quarrels within the villages, and quarrels between the villages about the distribution of water.

In the jamoat of Porshnev (GBAO) a shortage of irrigation water affects almost every village.

However, we find that, for the time being, competition for irrigation water does not pose a high risk for conflict, although it is a serious obstacle to food security. This claim is exemplified by the case of Khosa, a village in the jamoat of Porshnev (GBAO) which is especially affected by water shortage (see text box). In that particular village there is a popular four-line poem that sums up the situation. It says that due to water shortage in the village, every year during irrigation time, even brothers turn into sworn enemies.

### **Example: The situation in the village Khosha**

**Source: Shugnan Report**

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The water is brought to the village by an open non-cemented channel from the mountain stream of Barchidary. The water from the Barchidary is used to irrigate the lands of six villages – Vozm, Barchid, Kushk, Buved, Midenshor and Khosa, which is the last village in this chain of supply.

The amount of water that the Barchidary carries depends completely on the precipitation during autumn and winter. If there is little rain and snow in autumn and winter then there is little water. If there is, on the contrary, a rain rich autumn, then there is lots of water. Lack of rain and snow is badly felt at the beginning and at the end of the irrigation period – in spring and in late summer. Sometimes, lack of water leads to the loss of half of the harvest.

Every year, a so-called *grafik* for all villages in the jamoat is set up by the heads of the villages and officials of the local government. The *grafik* is a written schedule for the distribution of the water: every village gets certain time periods when water is channelled to its lands; when that time is over the water is directed to the lands of the next village.

However, even such a schedule does not much help those villages which are situated furthest from the stream. For example, the village of Vozm which is closest to the stream gets water every third day, the village Buved every seventh day and the village Khosa every 18th day and at times only once a month. In Vozm and in Barchid the land is irrigated for hours, in Khosa - for 45 minutes. On average, in Khosa, a sotka (10m<sup>2</sup> of land) will be irrigated for seven minutes during every irrigation session.

Earlier, when land was the property of the state farms, two *brigadir-mirdzhuj* made sure that the irrigation *grafik* was implemented correctly and applied within the jamoat of Porshnev (a brigadier is the leader of a working brigade of a Soviet state farm; a mirdzhuj is the traditional Tajik name for the person that is responsible for the correct and fair distribution of water within a village). They made sure that the *grafik* was strictly adhered to and since there were no private farmers, there was enough water for 90% of all arable land.

The situation in the villages of Tishor and Pashor is equally dire. These villages get irrigation water from the Dzhirudzari stream, and there is an electric pump station in Pashor. Unfortunately there is no electricity so the pump does not work. Until the end of the 1990s there were similar pumps in Khosa and Midenshor, but they broke down, and neither the government nor

the villagers have the money to repair them. Most villagers in Khosa and Tishor hope that foreign donors or the government will help them repair the pumps in order to solve the water problems. The chairman of the village organisation in Khosa expressed the opinion that it would be better to replace the open channels with tubes, so that the population of other villages would not have the opportunity to “steal” water which was, according to the *grafik*, meant for Khosa. All respondents observed that there were often quarrels and conflicts with the neighbouring communities about water issues, but these quarrels did not have mass character. Many respondents believe that in Porshnev the construction of the new Central Asia University (a project of the AKF) will soon start. There is hope that there will be job opportunities, and therefore the interest in problems concerning land or water have been markedly diminished.

Quarrels about the distribution of scarce water are abundant. However, the analysis also shows that competition over scarce water does not pose a high risk for conflict for the time being. The reasons for this are:

Firstly, conflicts about water distribution are seasonal conflicts – they last only two to three months. This time limitation makes them easier to handle for the involved parties.

More importantly, the distribution of water cannot easily be politicised. Patronage, clientelism or corruption does not have an impact on the amount of water distributed to a village. The amount of available water depends foremost on the amount of rainfall and snowfall in autumn and winter. Moreover, it depends on the state of the channels and pipes that carry the water from the stream to the village closest to the stream and from there to the other villages. Contrary to the distribution of other scarce resources (land, state positions), water cannot be obtained through connections or bribes. This significantly reduces the risk of conflict.

Distribution of water cannot easily be monopolised. It is difficult to monopolise water, because the player who wanted to monopolise the water would need to gain full control over the irrigation system including all channels, pipes and pumping stations. This is usually beyond the power of one player, and even if one player attempted to do so, the coalition of those who would be deprived of water would be overwhelming. Since water is difficult to monopolise, conflict risk is thus reduced.

The amount of available water can be increased: in most locations in GBAO, Rasht and Shurabad, it is possible to increase to amount of water that can be used for irrigation by repairing irrigation channels and pipes, by building new channels, by installing pumps or simply by carefully maintaining the existing irrigation system. Indeed, local people perceive water shortage as a management and co-ordination problem that could be solved, not as a “winner-takes-all” conflict. This reduces conflict risk if properly organised; conflict might be aggravated, though, if the management and organisation of the increase in irrigation water is badly organised and hijack by exclusive patron-client networks.

It should be noted, however, that, firstly, there are situations when water distribution is indeed not a co-ordination problem, but played as a “winner-takes-all” game. We

did not encounter such a situation in Rasht or GBAO, but they nevertheless may occur. Secondly, such situations are especially dangerous when they occur in ethnically mixed regions, such as, for example, the Ferghana valley.

Proper maintenance of irrigation systems is often not done because of a lack of resources and/or a lack of co-ordination between the villages. This is particularly the case in locations where the former collective farms (which were comprised of several villages and were responsible for the irrigation system within the whole of the jamoat) were dissolved and at least on paper private farms were installed. Many of these private farms were then united into so-called Associations of Private Farmers, but these Associations are, as a rule, underfunded and do not have the capacity to organise the maintenance of the irrigation systems. Lack of water is, therefore, also a problem of missing collective action: It is difficult to co-ordinate many private farmers, and the associations and the state do not have the mobilisation capacity to do it.

Most importantly, conflicts about water distribution are common, but they are dealt with by formal and informal institutions designed to deal with them. The way conflicts about water distribution are dealt with is a textbook example of the assumption that it is not competition or scarcity per se that is the problem, but the way society deals with competition and scarcity. In the present cases, the local government (khkumat) and the water committee (vodkoz) are officially in charge of controlling/monitoring use of water; but they are underfunded and not very effective. Distribution of water is done according to a so-called *grafik*, a schedule that regulates how much irrigation time every village gets during the irrigation period. This schedule is binding for all villages in the jamoat. The heads of the villages (rais kishlaka) play the most important part: They agree on the *grafik* (together with state officials of the local government, which formalise the agreement by putting it on paper and officially stamping the *grafik* for the year), they are responsible for implementing the *grafik*, and they also mitigate quarrels about water when they emerge. Thus, they are charged within the village to implement water distribution rules, and they are charged to negotiate water distribution rules between the villages. The state merely supports this process and makes it official, but it does not initiate it and it does not have the means to sanction non-compliance with the agreed rules. This is again a text book example of formal state and informal (societal) institutions, reinforcing and supporting each other. This reduces the risk for conflict.

### **3.1 Conclusions and Recommendations**

Firstly, water shortages cause serious quarrels within the village and between villages. However, the local communities are indeed successfully dealing with the problem: water is distributed according to an agreed schedule, which is worked out jointly by the heads of the villages and by state officials every year. The villages

themselves are responsible that all players stick to the rules. Rule breaking happens and is even common, but trusted leaders of the village deal with it in a routine way. Thus, dealing with conflicts about water distribution trains and enforces the conflict management capacities of society.

Secondly, this conflict management provides an interface between villages. The leaders of the villages have to meet and agree on a common schedule. These sorts of inter-communal interfaces are very rare in Tajikistan where there is very little exchange between communities and very few conflict-solving institutions beyond the village community.

Thirdly, this conflict management also provides for interfaces between society and the state, since the rules are worked out jointly by village leaders and by state officials and then formalised in the *grafik*. Thus, state and society are linked by jointly designing norms, which in the context of Tajikistan is rare. Conflict theory predicts a decrease of conflict risk when state norms and societal norms are mutually reinforcing.

### **Recommendations:**

MSDSP has numerous interventions in water management, mainly by facilitating the maintenance or reconstruction of channels, installing small pumping stations and by providing drinking water to villages.

These interventions are meaningful, because water shortage is, according to our respondents, a serious impediment to food security. In addition, well-targeted intervention in water management can also support and strengthen conflict management institutions that connect communities and that connect state and society.

- It is therefore important that further interventions in water management should never weaken these existing institutions (for example by investing in irrigation systems without consulting with all stake holders or by imposing new distribution rules which exclude players from the negotiation table).
- Interventions should not add to a zero-sum-game in which what one party gains another party loses (for example, by helping to gain new land which then needs irrigation water that is used by another community).
- The way water problems are dealt with can be taken as a role model: Initiatives for regulation come from society, informal societal institutions are responsible for their implementation, and state agencies help formalise the agreement (the *grafik*) and “stamp it” in order to make it an official contract.
- Lastly, interventions which affect water distribution may pose a significant risk in ethnically mixed regions. MSDSP is already working in mixed settlements (in Shurabad rayon, there is Uzbek minority population, in Murghab and Jirgatal there are Kyrgyz populations). In a multi-ethnic

context, any change in availability, distribution or control over scarce resources may easily be perceived as having an ethno-political background. This increases the risk of conflict. MSDSP would be well advised to conduct a do-no-harm analysis before any intervention in water management takes place in ethnically mixed regions.

## 4 Competition about access to land

Tajikistan is an agrarian country and its population is highly dependent on subsistence farming. Food security in many regions is poor. Land is a scarce resource and the pressure on land is high. In the very beginning of the Tajik civil war, it was, among other factors, competition about access to land that led to violence between groups with different regional origins.<sup>2</sup>

Until 1991, all land was controlled by kolkhozi and sovkhosi. The collapse of the Soviet system triggered the dissolution of the kolkhozi and sovkhosi and in 1996, the Tajik state adopted a law on privatisation. In Tajikistan, all land is the property of the state and cannot be sold or used as collateral. Instead, people may receive heritable land shares for permanent use. All state farms except the seed producing and stockbreeding farms should be broken up and converted to private farms by 2005. All citizens of Tajikistan are entitled to land except those working in government administration. Those with farming experience and the ability to farm the land have first priority (Article 66 of the 1997 land code). In practice this means that former *sovkhos/kolkhoz* workers are seen as those with the strongest entitlement to land. Under the land privatisation process in Tajikistan *sovkhos* land has not been automatically distributed as in neighbouring Kyrgyzstan. Instead people have had to apply for land individually. In the Rasht region, where *sovkhos* lands have been privatised, they have generally gone to those who have had the money, foresight, and influence to apply first and seldom has land been divided equitably.

Today, the process of land privatisation is neither very much state controlled nor complete. Instead, we observe a rearrangement of property rights on land which is partly “wild” and partly state-controlled: the state retains the ownership of land (according to the law, only the state can own land) whereas the right to use and transfer land are passed to private owners. Private owners can be individual farmers, a collective of farmers or an association of individual farmers.

The state of the ongoing restructuring of access to land (which could hardly be called privatisation) can be summarised as follows:

- The process was and is not transparent; the law is unclear and it came belatedly (in 1997); it had to catch up with a process that had already taken place (especially in GBAO, where “wild” distribution of land began before

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<sup>2</sup> Mainly in the Vakhsh valley.

laws on privatisation were adopted). Farmers and officials alike are usually not well informed about their legal base.

- According to the law, the land was not distributed to each individual, but to a household. The amount of land given depended on how long the particular members of the household had worked for the *kolkhoz* or *sovkhov*. The number of years a person worked for the *kolkhoz* were multiplied by a certain coefficient which varied from village to village, depending on the overall amount of land a village had. For example, in the village Kushk this coefficient was 0.02 hectare, in the village Bardchid 0.08 hectare. Rural populations who had not worked on *kolkhozi* such as teachers and medical personnel did not usually get land which is a cause of grievance among the rural *intelligentsia*. Land distribution is usually done by a commission consisting of a representative of the *hukumati rayon* (district administration), a representative of the *jamoat* (sub-district), representatives of the villages and the representative of the *Assosiatsia Dehqanskikh Khosjaystv* (association of *dehqan* farms). However, it should be noted that this is the normative story of land distribution. There are numerous cases when land was distributed to former combatants, state officials, influential religious leaders or other influential people.
- The *de jure* rights of new landowners often cannot be exercised, because *de facto* control over land remains with influential players, very often from the former management of the *sovkhovi*. The structure of the *sovkhov* often survived as a so-called "Association of Private Farmers". Real private farming is still the exception, and most farmers rent land from the Associations or from rich landowners.
- Access to land is *de facto* very uneven. Uneven distribution of land access is highest in Garm (where approximately 50% of households do not have access to land at all<sup>3</sup>) and less high in Shurabad and GBAO. This is a dramatic change from the Soviet period, and we believe that it will be difficult to come to terms with such a high degree of inequality for Tajik society.
- Grievances and conflicts about access to land are common; they occur within villages when farmers with less access to land press for redistribution within a village. They occur also between villages about a disputed plot of land.
- The majority of our respondents seem to think that access to land depended on patronage. The well-connected got more land, the less well-connected less. As a rule, the management of the former *sovkhov* got the most land. Many respondents also think that land distribution was unfair. However, it should be noted that conflicts about access to land do not have mass character; such conflicts are usually not in the open, those with less land are in no position to challenge the rural elite which is well connected. Finally,

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<sup>3</sup> MSDSP Baseline Survey Rasht.

there is still the fear of a new outburst of violence – people fear war as much as they fear those who remained armed after the war.

- Quarrels and conflicts about access to land are common and were reported in all of our research locations: Quarrels about land between villages were reported from Tavildara, Childara, Jirgatal (Rasht valley), Darvaz and Shugnan (GBAO) and Shurabad. Quarrels about land within villages were reported from Tavildara, Navdi and Jirgatal (Rasht).

In the following sections we will discuss two issues which we think may increase risk of conflict and which may be a development barrier: (1) Uneven access to land and (2) fuzzy and weakly institutionalised property rights.

### ***Uneven access to land***

De facto access to land is highly uneven, although the degree of inequality varies considerably between regions.

In GBAO, the inequality seems to be considerably less than in Shurabad and Rasht.<sup>4</sup> The reasons for this are manifold: Distribution started earlier than in other regions, before a stratum of “big men” (influential local potentates, often operating outside legal norms) emerged. In Rasht, these local big men exercise a vast influence on land distribution. Cultural reasons may also have played a role, such as group solidarity or a preference for careers which are preferably not tied to agriculture. The economic factor proved to be the most important: In most parts of GBAO there is little land which is very hard to work and not profitable. Cash crops are usually not grown; farming is mainly for subsistence. Land is simply not profitable enough to invest heavily in control over land. Therefore influential players do not allocate resources to obtaining control over land, because it does not pay.

In Shurabad, only 3% of households had privatised land, whereas 91% were renting land. Overall, 5% of families did not get any land either for rent or for permanent tenure from the land distribution process. Of those renting 76% were renting from the *sovkhos* and the rest were renting from private farms. However, it should be noted that these large private farms which rent out land to farmers are usually the old *sovkhos* under a new name, usually now called “Associations”. The management of these Associations control the access to land, they very much influence what crops farmers grow and they receive a share of the farmers harvest and/or a fee. They have the de facto (not de jure) power to prevent individual

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<sup>4</sup> Our argument about GBAO is based on qualitative fieldwork as we do not have exact data on GBAO, whereas there is data on Rasht and Shurabad. See MSDSP baseline surveys on Shurabad (October 2003, draft, data refers to the situation in 2000) and MSDSP baseline survey Rasht (2002, data refers to the situation in 2000). These baseline surveys are excellent and valuable data collections and it is strongly recommended that the surveys are repeated.

farmers from leaving these Associations in order to start an individual private farm, by putting many bureaucratic barriers and very high (informal and thus illegal) fees in their way.

The situation in Shurabad thus differs from GBAO and Rasht (discussed below). In Shurabad there are few families without any access to land at all (approximately 5%); but there are also very few individual private farms. The overwhelming majority of farmers rent land from the *sovkhos*, which continues to operate. Access to rented land is (in contrast to the situation in Rasht where more than half of the families do not even have access to rented land) much more equally distributed. The differences in relative wealth are thus smaller. The average income levels were about 60% of those in Rasht; however, it appears that the wealth was distributed more evenly. Wheat production was essential for survival but agriculture was not a source of cash income.<sup>5</sup>

In its baseline survey on Shurabad, MSDSP states that “in order for people to escape the poverty trap it is essential that they privatise their land and that they have access to credit.”<sup>6</sup> In the same survey MSDSP asked 102 farmers why they did not have privatised land shares. The reasons given were (ranked according to number of answer) (1) Land was not available for privatisation because the *sovkhos* structures still exist (2) the family does not have the labour force to work the land and (3) other people got the land, respondents did not get a chance to apply for land.

It must also be noted that many farmers do not wish to privatise their land. Our team asked (in October 2003) farmers in the *jamoat* of Yol whether they would like to privatise the share of land which they currently rent. Only about one third stated that they wished to do so. When asked why they would not do so, they all answered that a lack of money was the reason. Money is needed to bribe officials in order to get the legal documentation and to invest in machinery.

By far the highest degree of inequality of access to land can be observed in the Rasht valley. According to the MSDSP baseline survey, 11% of households have private land, 36% are renting and all other households have only a kitchen garden and perhaps some president's land. Overall 53% of families did not get any land either for rent or for permanent tenure from the land distribution process. Accordingly, distribution of wealth is very uneven. Of the total income for the 696 households questioned by the survey, only 8% went to the bottom quartile, whilst the top quartile received 50% of the total income. The inequality of income is greater for non-agricultural income than for agricultural incomes.

Overall, of the total sample, 20% both wanted to privatise land and felt that there was the possibility of doing this. Of this group 75% did not privatise due to a lack of money whilst 25% were offered land but did not take it, as there was no water

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<sup>5</sup> MSDSP baseline survey Shurabad

<sup>6</sup> MSDSP baseline survey Shurabad: iv

available for irrigation. 9% felt that distribution had been unfair and they had not even had the opportunity to apply.

The survey also shows that access to private or rented land increases with wealth. The relationship between land and wealth seems to operate in both directions: those who were better off were more likely to get land, whilst the fact that they have land also ensures that they are more wealthy. In other words – this points to the fact that in Rasht valley there is a rapid stratification process under way.

This process is accelerated by an additional factor: The wealthier stratum, which controls most of the land, uses agriculture income to invest in non-agriculture activities, mainly trade and work migration. Generally, income from labour migration is the most important source of income for the Tajik population. According to unofficial estimates, upwards of 800,000 Tajiks earn income illegally in Russia every year, sending as much as \$400 million to relatives back home. The remittances are roughly double the most recent estimate of the state's annual expenditures in 2000.<sup>7</sup> As one MSDSP expert is quoted: "If Russia is closing its border, we are dead". Families who decide to send a family member on work migration need to make a substantial investment (starting from at least 150 US Dollars) and take a considerable risk as the family member may not find a job in Russia or encounter other problems. Accordingly, only wealthier families can afford to invest in labour migration.

Income from labour migration provides a very substantial part of household income, especially in Gharm. This income too is unevenly distributed and adds to inequality. The wealthier households profit most. 53% of overall income is from non-agricultural income. 63% of all non-agricultural income is from remittance and 76% of the all remittances go to the richest quartile.

Level of dependence on income from work migration varies between regions. It is highest in GBAO and Rasht and less in Shurabad. There are two reasons for this: The first wave of migrants consisted of those people (mainly of Gharm and Badakhsah origin) expelled from the Vakhsh Valley in the beginning of the civil war in 1993. These migrants paved the way for further migration. In addition, people from Shurabad and from Khatlon region in general have also the option of internal work migration. This option does not exist for the population of the former opposition regions. For them, access to jobs in Dushanbe and Khatlon *oblast* is usually blocked because they belong to the former opposition.

**Example: Conflict about land between two communities, Arghankul and Khipshon (Rash) Source: Adapted form report Tavildara**

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<sup>7</sup> Business & Economics: RUSSIA, TAJIKISTAN SPAR OVER ILLEGAL LABOR MIGRATION, 1/09/03. (<http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/business/articles/eav010903.shtml> 3.1.2004)

During the civil war local combatants (*boeviks*) in Arghankul took over 32ha of land of which 8ha were arable. Since this land belonged to the village of Khipshon a quarrel emerged about this land between the villages, even more so because people from Khipshon still had to pay the taxes for that piece of land whereas people from Arghankul were using it. Ever since, villagers from Khipshon have felt threatened by the former combatants. Villagers of Khipshon had the legal title for this particular piece of land, but villagers from Arghankul falsified a new certificate and also drew up a map (to show where that piece of land was actually situated).

This disagreement went up to the *khukumat* (district administration) and in November 2002 the *khukumat rayon* (the district administration) decided that the *jamoat* should take over the land, in order to use it for a children's home and a hospital. *De facto* employees of the *jamoat* (the chairman of the sub-district and the chairman of the association) are now using the land privately, but still the people from Khipshon are paying the taxes.

There is also tension about land within the village Arghankul. Since land was distributed to households and not to individuals, those families with many members feel that they did not get enough land and many people advocate a redistribution of land per capita. There are six fully privatised and relatively large farms in the village Arghankul with about 3ha each, all of which belong to former combatants or people well connected to them. The head of the village (which has no private farm) intends to redistribute the land per capita.

**Example: Property Rights on Land: Why farmers do not obtain legal titles on land (“certificate”). Jamoat Yol**

**(Source: Shurabad Report)**

“According to the Land Committee of the rayon (district) the land certificate costs 18 USD. This seemed to be a paradox because earlier all respondents, when asked why they would not acquire such a land certificate, complained about the lack of money. Why would that be so if the certificate itself costs only about 18 USD? It turns out that this price is a strictly “formal” one. We tried to find out more about the actual fees for getting a certificate and found out that the amount can easily rise to 500 USD.

The process is as follows: In order to get a certificate first of all one has to write a statement to the rais (head) of collective-private farm about creating one's own private farms. This is the first obstacle. Of course formally writing an application does not pose any difficulty. The thing is that one has to make a deal with the rais. In other words one has “to warm him up” -that is, give him a share. After he has agreed you will get an application with the signature of the rais. This application goes to the *khukumat* (local government) of the rayon (district). There a general department (“*obshchiy otdel*”) that makes a registration and sends it to the rais of *khukumat*. The rais of the *khukumat* sends it to the rais of the Land Committee. Again, one has to make a deal with the rais of the land Committee. He too needs to be “warmed-up”. However this is not the end. One has several times to visit to get the agreement of the rais of collective-private farms and the other raisi in order to get the certificate. After one finally gets the certificate and the portion of land one has to pay various quite expensive “shares” on the privatised land and do all sorts of bureaucratic work. All of this is the reason why people complain about the lack of money. In other words they can simply not afford to get the certificate themselves. Also, in some ways they

do not need it, because without the certificate they are free of all this bureaucratic work and the payment of taxes. “

**Example: Conflict about land between the villages of Khirmanjo and Anjirob (Shurabad)**

**Source: Quoted from the Shurabad report**

“During Soviet times land was worked collectively. In Yol there was the sovkhos which included almost all the villages of the jamoat. All land was controlled by the sovkhos and people from several villages worked together. After the collapse of the Soviet Union the sovkhos was dissolved and control over land was transferred to a so-called Association of Private Farms. Later this association was dissolved and instead so-called community farms were installed that were comprised of one village.

Khirmanjo and Anjirob are situated close to each other. The dispute arose when the land was distributed between the community farms. Respondents in Khirmanjo claim that Khirmanjo had not received all the land belonging to the village. People in Khirmanjo consider this distribution unfair and they consider it a potential for violent conflict in future. They also state that population growth in the village would inevitably further accentuate the conflict.

According to the respondents in Khirmanjo there are certain people from Anjirob who are living in Khirmanjo. Respondents say that Anjirob secretly took the signatures from these people, thus agreeing to give away the disputed plot of land. Respondents also say that people in Anjirob have found a common language with the Land Committee of the District *khukumat* and for this reason the *khukumat* took their side during the dispute and gave the land to them.

People in Khirmanjo claim that the village Anjirob only came into existence when migrants from the neighbouring *Moskovski* district came to settle there. Its people came recently from the *Moskovski* district of Khatlon province. They claim that it is therefore not the right decision to give the land which people in Khirmanjo had actually worked to those newcomers only because they have good relations with the *khukumat*.

Thus in this conflict the primary stakeholders are the villagers of Khirmanjo and Anjirob, both claiming the land. A secondary stakeholder is the Land Committee of the rayon (district) which has for unknown reasons sided with Anjirob. MSDSP may be seen as an external stakeholder. It does not have the legal right to interfere, but it should closely monitor the problem. Moreover MSDSP may have an influence on the *khukumat*.”

***Fuzzy and weakly institutionalised property rights on land***

According to the Tajik constitution and the Tajik land laws, land remains the property of the state, but can be obtained for lifelong use, including the right to bequeath it. All state farms except the seed producing and stockbreeding farms should be broken up and converted to private farms by 2005. Under the land privatisation process in Tajikistan *sovkhos* land has not been automatically distributed as in neighbouring Kyrgyzstan. Instead, people did have to apply for land individually if they wanted to privatise their plot. However, there are only a few real private

individual farms so far and these are run by people who had the foresight, but also the money and especially the connections to put up a successful application. Many farmers rent land from the successors of the sovkhov, the so-called “Associations”.

There are two different types of legal titles on land, the so-called *udostoverenie* (Russian) or *shahodatnoma* (Tajik) and the “*certificate*” (to add to the confusion: *udostoverenie* and *shahodatnoma* also translate into English as certificate).

The first one, the *udostoverenie*, is seen as a sort of provisional version of the second one. The *udostoverenie* was given to the farmers when the land of the sovkhov was distributed to the former workers of the sovkhov. In these *udostoverenie* the name of the farmers and the amount of land that they have the right to work is mentioned. It was assumed that this provisional *udostoverenie* would be changed into a full legal title on private land as soon as the laws on privatisation were ready. However, as of today only very few farmers have up-dated their *udostoverenie* into a certificate. There are many reasons for this: High informal fees have to be paid; there are higher taxes on the land once it is privatised and the management of the former sovkhov which rents out land to farmers is opposed to individual farmers going private.

It is not clear whether there are legal differences with regard to property rights between *udostoverenie/shahodatnoma* and *certificate*. It is clear, however, that people think that the *certificate* is a much stronger legal title. “The *hukumat* can take away the land any time, that’s why I got the *certificate*” (respondent in Darwaz). Still most farmers do not aspire to obtain the certificate. De facto, in those regions where land brings profit, the land of the former sovkhov is now mainly held by “Associations” (the legal status of these associations being absolutely unclear) or by a few “big men”, whereas most farmers rent land from this new rural elite. It remains; however, unclear who *de jure* is entitled to hold the legal titles.

#### **4.1 Conclusions and Recommendations**

De-facto access to land is very uneven. There is a process of stratification under way – the rural rich are getting richer and the rural poor are getting poorer. Small conflicts between villages and within villages about disputed plots of land or about perceived unfair distribution occur often, but do not have mass character. The real conflict, that between the new rural elite and the new rural poor, is so far hidden.

There are marked regional differences: The situation in GBAO is least conflict prone, because land was distributed more evenly than in Shurabad or in Rasht. The main reason for this is because land is not profitable enough; therefore important players did not try to get control over land.

In Shurabad, the *sovkhos* structure still survives and there is hardly any privatisation under way. The former management of *sovkhos* is still in charge and control, mostly in coalition with local government, de facto access to land.

In Rasht we observed by far the highest degree of inequality of access to land and of distribution of wealth. Overall, 53% of families did not get any land either for rent or for permanent tenure from the land distribution process. Relatively speaking there is a lot of land in Rasht and there are cash crops (mainly potatoes). It therefore pays for the new rural elite to control access to land. In marked difference to Shurabad and GBAO, the rural elite in Rasht have been shaped by the civil war: Local big men such as influential religious figurers and/or former combatants, many of whom have protection from those members of the former opposition who were co-opted into high positions in Dushanbe, heavily influence the process of land distribution in their favour. The state is even more absent in Rasht than in other regions. Therefore the wild distribution of land became “wilder” - which has benefited the new rural elite. These factors explain the extremely high degree of uneven access to land that we observe in Rasht.

State capacities are very weak and the state does not act as the arbiter in the disputed process of distribution, but more often as an involved party. It does not put any conflict solving mechanism in place. We heard of very few cases where the state was actually solving a dispute, and when it did, respondents usually perceived this to be an arbitrary action. Rule of law is a scarce good.

Finally, property rights on land are very fuzzy and weakly institutionalised. Access to land is de facto controlled by the rural elite. The pattern of governance varies between regions.

The most conflict prone situation was found in the Rasht valley, where more than half of all families have no access to land and where income inequality is likely to grow. It is easy to predict that this will lead to the emergence of a large stratum of rural poor, locked in a structural poverty trap. The problem is further aggravated by the fact that a) Tajikistan's economy will not be able to absorb the work force in the foreseeable future b) mobility for the population of Rasht is blocked within Tajikistan, that is, for people from “former opposition regions” it is difficult to get access to jobs in the economy or in the administration in Dushanbe and Khatlon. The only safety valve is therefore work migration to Russia – a valve which is vulnerable to economic shocks and which can be politically manipulated by Russia.

For the future, we see three possible scenarios for the Rasht valley:

(1) The current situation of de facto inequality is reversed and land is redistributed. This scenario is not very likely. It would require decisive state action and involves a high degree of risk, since it would alienate the local rural elite, many of whom were or are in the opposition camp. However, it would be, in the long run, the best development.

(2) The current situation of high de facto inequality and a very unclear legal situation (“legal vacuum”) is preserved. This scenario also bears considerable risks.

(3) The current situation of high inequality is legalised. This scenario bears in the short run the least conflict risk, since it would please local elites. In the long run, however, it may become a major developmental barrier and create a high risk for social conflict. However, this scenario is in our opinion the most likely one. (we elaborate on this strategic dilemma in the integrated regional report)

An MSDSP key strategy in the field of food security is to “continue the process of land reform and develop a market for the transfer of land”<sup>8</sup>. Recognising that food security to a large extent depends on land reforms, MSDSP is encouraging land privatisation. MSDSP was a key promoter of the spontaneous privatisation in GBAO and seems to draw on that successful experience. However, the specific situation in Rasht and in Shurabad may require tailor made approaches.

### ***Recommendations:***

- MSDSP needs to develop a clear strategy with regard to privatisation in Rasht that is based on an impact assessment. The three questions outlined below should serve as a base
- Supporting privatisation in Rasht only makes sense if an impact assessment positively reveals that (1) MSDSP inputs reach poor farmers, (2) that the number of families without access to land can be reduced and (3) that privatised farms are more productive than other farms (from our qualitative research we gained the impression that large private farms were mainly designed for rent-seeking - making money by renting out land - and not for increasing productivity).
- All three issues can and need be clarified by a punctual follow-up of the baseline survey conducted in 2002. If an analysis reveals that inputs do not reach poorest farmer, that the number of landless families are not reduced and that large privatised farms are less productive than small farms, then it is recommended that MSDSP reassess its strategy in Rasht and considers the exit option.

## **5 Drug related conflicts**

Afghanistan is by far the largest producer of opium in the world. According to the UN, Afghan poppy fields in 2003 are expected to yield between 1,900 and 2,700 tons of opium. That level of cultivation is equal to the production levels reached in Afghanistan during the mid 1990s. A significant part of the drug is transported to consumer markets via Tajikistan (other, allegedly more important routes are via Dubai, Turkmenistan and Iran). In the first 10 months of 2003 Russian border

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<sup>8</sup> Quoted from the MSDSP baseline survey in Rasht

guards confiscated 2,420 kilograms of narcotics, more than half of which (1,650 kilograms) was heroin.

Drug related conflict in border regions was seen by MSDSP staff as a potential risk to local stability. Therefore we included this topic in the research. For obvious reasons, our approach is limited:

The security of the research teams had to be guaranteed, which influenced the selection of research locations and of respondents; all researchers reported that drug trafficking issues are very much a “taboo” topic and respondents were extremely reluctant and fearful about sharing their opinions with the researchers. Especially in Shurabad (the main transit route) respondents were clearly afraid to talk.

We limited our focus to the question of how drug trafficking affects everyday life within the communities in the border regions. We therefore pursued a strictly localised approach.

The information presented below is based on qualitative interviews with respondents from the region and therefore reflects only the perceptions of the local population. We had no opportunity to verify these findings.

Our teams did research with a special focus on drug related conflicts in:

- Shurabad district (sub-district of Yol). This sub-district borders Afghanistan; the borders are guarded by Russian and Tajik border guards. Shurabad is said to be Tajikistan’s major drug trafficking route. The sub-district of Yol is, however, of less importance than other sub-districts in Shurabad region.
- Shugnan district (sub-district of Porshnev) in Tajik Badakhshan (GBAO). The sub-district borders Afghan Badakhshan. Tajik Badakhshan used to be a major drug trafficking route, but has become less important since 2000.
- District of Tavildara (sub-district of Childara). The sub-district is situated in the Rasht valley and has no international borders.

The teams gathered secondary evidence on drug related issues in:

- Murghab district. The district borders Kyrgyzstan. There is a drug exporting route leading through Murghab.
- Jirgatal district. The district border Kyrgyzstan. There is a drug exporting route leading through Jirgatal.

The following sections provide the main findings based on the interviews:

The drug problem became virulent on a massive scale in 1992 in GBAO, following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the strict border controls on the Soviet-Afghan border; in 1993, drug trafficking and consumption also became a massive problem in Shurabad. The situation at that time has been described for both regions as a bonanza for everybody willing to take up the opportunity:

Everyone who wanted to could engage in drug trafficking. Reportedly, the drug trafficking business was unorganised, spontaneous and unregulated, driven by a large amount of petty traffickers. Afghan suppliers brought the drug over the border to Tajik middlemen who transported the drugs further, mainly to Dushanbe. Profits were shared. Local consumer markets only emerged with a certain time lag. A factor that triggered the emergence of local drug consumption was reportedly the tightening up of the Uzbek and Kyrgyz borders in 1994. Local drug traffickers had more difficulties in exporting the drugs to consumer markets abroad and therefore created local consumer markets. Subsequently the number of drug addicts rose significantly. In Porshnev, respondents reported that “every village had its drug addicts and its drug dealers”. Drugs were openly sold in central markets. Heroin, which was largely unknown before 1992, soon became the most important drug.

Both regions report significant changes since 2000 in connection with the strengthening of the border controls. The much tighter border control is exclusively attributed to Russian border troops. The Tajik border troops (which guard some sectors jointly with the Russian guards) are seen by all respondents as incapable of protecting the borders: Poorly equipped, poorly trained and vulnerable to corruption and pressure from relatives, friends and powerful local potentates, they are seen in Shurabad and in GBAO as a security threat.

Both regions report a reduction of local drug markets and a substantial reduction in the number of addicts. It should be noted that according to official Tajik figures drug addiction is still rising. This may either point to the fact that consumption has gone clandestine, or, more probably, that consumption has been moved from the border villages to the capital Dushanbe, where the main Tajik market for drugs is.

Both regions also report a very substantial reduction in free lance or petty drug trafficking since 2000 and an increasing professionalism and concentration of the drug trafficking organisations. In both regions respondents think that there are now only a few, well organised and well connected organisations controlling the drug business, and that there is no longer place for small “free lance” drug traffickers. Respondents assume that these organisations have a “*krysha*” (Russian, literally a “roof”), that is protection by powerful state agencies and / or powerful criminal organisations) in the political centre. For Shurabad regions, this protection is seen to be in Dushanbe; for GBAO, respondents think that drug traffickers operate with protection from the local government of GBAO. In both regions respondents assume that local big men, state officials and Russian and Tajik border troops and are involved in drug trafficking. It is not clear whether the Russian border guards operate on their own or collaborate with local drug traffickers. It is clear, however, that the Russian border guards do have the means to operate on their own at a large scale, independently from middlemen. They are by far the most powerful players in the border regions, operate unchecked by external control and have their own communication and transportation.

Finally, there is a reported change of main export route. Apparently, the main flow of drugs is through Shurabad region, whereas the route through GBAO to Kyrgyzstan

or through Rasht to Kyrgyzstan has become less important. However, we have no means to verify these assumptions.

The stricter border regime notwithstanding, people in Shurabad still perceive the border and the drug trafficking as a massive security threat. Today borders are controlled but by no means “sealed off”. In Shurabad, there is indeed a massive security concern for the local population living near the border. There are complaints about raids and cattle theft by the Afghans. Many respondents say that at night they do not go out because they are afraid. The threat is attributed to Afghan drug dealers coming over the border and to Russian border guards. There were shootouts between Russian border guards and local drug dealers reported in Shugnan and Shurabad. Additionally, because of the alleged involvement of high-ranking state officials and security forces on the ground in drug trafficking, people are very afraid to talk about drug related issues and people are physically afraid of Russian border guards and local security forces. State-society relations are very strained because of the alleged involvement of state bodies in drug trafficking.

Neither in Shurabad nor in Shugnan nor Jirgatal is there evidence that much of the profit from drug trafficking stays in the region or that drugs traffic is a source of income that is available to many. The more or less visible signs of drug profits are extremely modest: new (Soviet) cars, a refurbished house or a 2-storey house. However, in the context of rural Tajikistan such “small drug barons” may exercise considerable influence within their communities. There are quite a few of such “small drug barons”. According to one respondent, there are 2 – 3 in each *jamoat* of GBAO. During our fieldwork in Shurabad district, we visited a village where three households were significantly better off than the average, which was attributed by respondents to income from drug trafficking. These households were very respected in the village, not least because of the fact that they are able to donate money to common village endeavours such as building the mosque or donating to the village development fund which is used, for example, for building schools or health stations.

The situation in Rasht differs from the situation in Shugnan and GBAO. The Rasht valley serves a transit route for bringing drugs to Kyrgyzstan; it does not border Afghanistan and is thus less exposed to security threats that stem from Afghan drug traffickers and Russian and Tajik border guards. The Rasht-route is run by a few small drug barons, most of them former fighters for the oppositions and with connections to Afghanistan. They operate with protection from those opposition leaders who were co-opted into the political elite in Dushanbe, and some of them exercise considerable influence at the district level.

After the initial shock in 1993, communities slowly began to react to the negative consequences of drug consumption, dealing and trafficking. Drug use (and much less so drug trafficking) were publicly ostracised; during community meetings or during prayers in the village's mosque, famous singers, sportsmen and religious authorities started to agitate against drug consumers and drug dealing. There are reported cases from villages in Shugnan district (GBAO) when village communities tried to cure addicts by locking them up and providing medical assistance, or when local communities tried to expel “their” local drug dealers. In GBAO the Imam, Agha

Khan, in public demanded that his followers no longer engage in drug use and drug trafficking. This allegedly had a great impact and helped mobilise societal resistance against drug use and drug traffickers.

There is an impact of moral mobilisation of communities against drug trafficking, although it should not be overestimated. One should also bear in mind that successful drug traffickers (and in general successful “entrepreneurs”) enjoy, among wide parts of society, prestige and authority. According to many respondents in Shurabad, the local population admires those who are successfully making profit from drug dealing (“*umeyut zhit*” - they know how to live). Finally, the reported 100 USD that a drug courier can earn for one transport is in rural Tajikistan a lot of money, and there are no other income options available.

Example: Drug trafficking in Yol (Shurabad)

Source: Quoted from the Shurabad Report

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“In recent years, drug related issues at the border were a concern for the local population and for the local government. Various incidents happened on the boarder in the past that increased this concern. Firstly, two villages in Yol have been totally abandoned because of fear of Afghan trespassing. Some respondents also claim that the villagers left because they were all engaged in drug trafficking and for some reasons could not pay back Afghan drug suppliers and left because they were afraid of the Afghans. Secondly, villagers complain that their cattle are stolen during the night. Thirdly, the jamoat of Yol became a drug transit route and many people were imprisoned for drug trafficking. Fourthly, a number of violent incidents happened on the boarder between the so-called Afghans and the border guards.

It is important to note that all of these incidents are attributed by the people to drug trafficking. During Soviet times no one was interested in this [drugs]. Even the notion of drugs was not known among the people in Soviet times. However, now everybody is talking about it. “Drugs” has become the most often used word in everyday life, and the border has become a main threat to the life of people.

The notion of “drugs” came into existence only after the collapse of the Soviet Union, which lead to a dramatic rise in poverty. Drugs meant a lot of money. It was a luxurious life and prestige in society. During these years drugs were freely trafficked by everyone. Borders were open and no one interfered.

Afghans [that is, Dari speaking Tajiks living across the river Pyanzh in Afghanistan) would bring drugs to a Tajik middleman who took it from Yol to Kulyab and then to Dushanbe.

When middlemen were imprisoned and could not pay their Afghan suppliers, Afghans came to the village of that middleman and carried away his possessions. After a while, the Afghans changed their procedures. Now they do not give the drugs in advance. They are now sell them for cash. In 2000 the situation has changed. The government has become stable. Checkpoints are now everywhere from Kulyab to Dushanbe. The boarder is also closely watched by Russian and Tajik bases. Many who were dealing were captured and imprisoned.

It would be interesting to know how drugs are now brought across the border, given the fact that Russian border guards strictly watch the border.

It is clear that today not just anybody can engage in drug trafficking. The business is run by a group that is strong, well organised and well connected. Afghan drug providers are seen as the primary stakeholder. It is not clear whether they produce the drugs or only bring them into Tajikistan, but most respondents think that they are also buying the drugs. Afghans are perceived as playing the primary role in incidents that happen at the border. “

## **5.1 Conclusions and Recommendations**

There has been a marked concentration and professionalisation of the drug trafficking business since 1993. Free lance and petty traffickers were pushed out of the market by a few organised groups which operate under protection from high ranking figures and which co-operate with Russian and Tajik border guards, Tajik security forces and state officials. Local drug markets and local drug consumption has decreased, but this does not necessarily imply that overall drug trafficking has decreased.

Drug trafficking poses a physical security threat for local population in border regions. There are many incidents of illegal crossing of the borders and shootouts between drug traffickers and border guards that lead to violent incidents. Furthermore, security troops threaten the local population.

“Small drug barons” may exercise considerable influence within local communities or even within districts. Some of them take an active part in community life and in village organisations. As part of the village communities they are stakeholders both in community development and in drug trafficking. Small Barons in Rasht are relatively more influential than in GBAO and in Shurabad.

The capacity of the village communities to mobilise against drug use and drug dealing by means of moral mobilisation and social control is high. The “eye of the village” (the social control exercised by the village authorities) and the influence of religious leaders have a great impact with regard to the prevention of drug consumption.

On the other hand, the capacities of village communities to deal with large scale drug trafficking are very low. There is no local civil society to engage the corrupt and criminal state. Corruption of state officials and security guards has led to widespread fear and distrust among the population. The criminal involvement of state agencies in drug trafficking is undermining statehood and increasing the influence of networks. Law enforcement is low to very low.

At present the situation in the border regions to Afghanistan has markedly improved compared to the 1993 – 2000 period. However, the situation is extremely fragile. The main threat to local stability is a softening of the border regime and/or a break down of the well organised monopolies of drug traffickers. This would most certainly

lead to the emergence of local drug markets and local consumption and to violent competition over the control of drug routes. It should be noted that drug trafficking in Shurabad and GBAO is mainly supply driven. The situation in the border areas of Tajikistan is thus fully dependent on developments in Afghanistan and on the quality of the border guards. The warlord economy that has fuelled civil war in Tajikistan can easily be revived, if the supply of weapons and drugs from Afghanistan increase.

### ***Recommendations:***

- MSDSP should support social mobilisation against drug consumption. Village Organisations are powerful institutions for mobilising communities. The threat of MSDSP withdrawal from villages where drug traffickers are active may also be an incentive for communities to mobilise.
- MSDSP (or AKDN) should invest in opportunities in working across the border, reaching Afghan Badakhshan. The expected opening of the border is a risk - but also an opportunity for transnational programmes. In the long term, the negative impacts of drug trafficking can be reduced best by co-operation with communities across the border. As a starter, Tajik-Badakhshan communities could export to Afghan-Badakhshan communities their experience with community mobilisation against drugs, information and awareness raising campaigns
- MSDSP needs to elaborate its strategy in those regions where small drug barons observably exercise significant power over local politics. It should be assessed (1) whether such a pattern of local governance creates barriers for development, and (2) to what extent interventions unintentionally support the positions of small barons. A regions where such an involvement of small drug barons may be suspected is Jirgatal.

## **6 Border related risks**

All three of our research regions are border regions: Five (out of six) districts of GBAO border Afghanistan, one district of GBAO (Murghab) also borders China and Kyrgyzstan. Shurabad district borders Afghanistan (150km) and the Jirgatal district in the Rasht valley borders Kyrgyzstan.

Whereas the borders to Kyrgyzstan and China mainly deserve attention because of trade issues, the situation at the Afghan border require attention also with regard to real security threats to the population living in the border areas. The situation in the Tajik-Afghan border areas may be affected by two developments:

Firstly, there are currently five bridges over the river Pyanzh being constructed. The five new border crossings between Afghanistan and Tajikistan will provide for a flow of people, goods, services and ideas between regions that have separated by one of the best guarded and most impermeable borders in the region.

Secondly, there may be a change of border regime imminent: Since the Soviet collapse in 1991, Moscow has viewed the security of the Tajik border as vital to Russia's national security – effectively serving as a bulwark against the destabilising influences of Afghan-harvested narcotics and radical Islamic ideology. Accordingly, Russian troops have assumed most of the responsibility for patrolling the frontier ever since. The 10 year framework agreement governing Russia's role in the protection of Tajikistan's borders expired in May 2003. Under this agreement Russian troops bear the main responsibility. Financing is provided 50% by Russia and 50% by Tajikistan. Negotiations on a new agreement have been continuing since April 2003, without results so far (January 2004). A new agreement between Russian and Tajikistan under which the Tajik army would take over main responsibility for border patrolling would most likely have significant effects on the security situation.

Based on the research conducted in the border regions, we see four relevant issues which are worth the attention of GTZ/MSDSP:

1. Security threat from Afghanistan, mainly related to drug trafficking and related criminal activities;
2. Trade opportunities;
3. Linking Up with ethnic / religious kin groups across the border;
4. Opportunities for transnational, interregional co-operation; primarily the opportunity of provision of services across the border.

### ***Security threat from Afghanistan***

We have discussed the drug trafficking related issues in chapter 6 of this report. In Shurabad and in GBAO people perceive the border with Afghanistan to be a real security threat. The main actual threats stem, according to respondents, from drug dealers coming across the border settling accounts with middlemen on the Tajik side who did not pay (usually, these settling of accounts is reported as “robbery” committed by Afghans); furthermore, there have been reported shootouts among traffickers and between traffickers and border guards. Finally, there is an indirect security threat, because of the involvement of border guards and state officials in the narcotics business, the local population is afraid of the security forces.

However, despite the widespread complaints about the behaviour of the Russian border guards, all respondents state unanimously that they feel that the Tajik army was not (yet) able to efficiently guard the border. The following reasons were given: The Tajik army is underfunded and poorly equipped, it is thus in no position to check the agile and well equipped traffickers. Secondly, the extreme poverty of the Tajik soldiers and officers makes the army extremely vulnerable to bribes. Thirdly, Tajik

soldiers are more vulnerable to pressure from family members and by “old friends” than “foreign” Russian soldiers would be. Thus, all respondents unanimously expected a dramatic deterioration of the security situation if Tajik forces were to take over control of the borders. Specifically they expected drug trafficking to increase and linked to that, an increase in violent competition between rival drug traffickers. Clearly the local population is still very much under the impression of chaos and violence that were widespread between 1992 and 1997, when borders were essentially open for drugs, weapons and fighters. Even though they complain about the Russian troops, they clearly prefer them, for the time being, to stay. There is also an economic incentive to this: The Russian army is a major consumer of local products (for example in Yol all small traders make their living from the Russian army), and the Russian army provides job opportunities. From most villages there are a few Tajik men who serve in the Russian army on a contract base. They earn about 100 Somoni per month (app. USD 30) which is more than the average wage.

### ***Trade Opportunities***

The overwhelming majority of respondents in GBAO and Shurabad were concerned in the first place about security threats. An opening of the borders is thus perceived only as a risk and as undesirable.

In the Shurabad border region, there were no local markets where the population could sell their products (mainly fruits, particularly mulberries, pomegranates). Respondents expressed their interest in getting access to local markets. However, the idea of trading with the population of the Afghan side of the border is not favoured. Rather, they wish to get access to markets in the district centre.

We felt that the population in the border zone lacks information about the situation across the border; there is no reliable information about the economic situation or about available or needed products. It is therefore not possible for the Tajik population to assess the potential trade opportunities.

Cross-border petty trade exists in Murghab between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan: Trading with Kyrgyzstan (mainly bringing consumer goods from Osh to Murghab) provides one of the very few income opportunities for the population of Murghab centre. Around 150 families are involved in shuttle trading (app. 15% of the 6000 population of Murghab centre depend on shuttle trading). Traders report that they have to pay heavy formal (taxes) and informal (bribes, extortion) duties to various branches of Russian and Tajik state officials. There are 12 checkpoints on the highway between Murghab and Osh, and every checkpoint collects formal and/or informal taxes. Among the population and allegedly (we could not check) among the state officials there is little knowledge of the actual content of the tax laws.

Kyrgyz traders feel that the checkpoints (which are manned by either Russian or ethnic Tajiks) treat them unfairly. They claim that Tajik traders (from Khorog or from Dushanbe) are treated much better and have to pay less. Overall conditions in

Murghab are catastrophic. The mood among the Kyrgyz population is extreme despair.

There is a road from Murghab to the border of China (the autonomous province of Xinjiang) So far this border is closed. We have no judgement on potential trade opportunities. Respondents in Murghab seem to be rather uninterested in this road. For the time being, the border is guarded from both sides. Respondents mentioned that China wishes to keep this border closed due to their fear of drug trafficking and importing political radical Islam into the Autonomous republic of Xinjiang (which is populated by Muslim Uigurs).

**Example: Economy of despair in Murghab**

**Source: Based on Murghab report**

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Climatic conditions in Murghab rayon, which is situated at 3600m and higher, are extreme. Agriculture is not possible and the only sources of income for the approximately 17,000 population are stockbreeding and trade. Heating, electricity, minimal social security, radio and television were provided by the Russian military garrison to the approximately 6000 inhabitants of Murghab centre. After the Russian garrison was closed down in spring 2002, Murghab centre was virtually left without access to basic services. Especially the lack of heating materials poses a great problem. The population is forced to use *tersken* as a heating material.

“Tersken” is a root, which is not only used for heating but is also basic fodder for the yaks in Murghab. Demand for tersken has been rapidly growing due to a lack of alternative energy sources. Only 2% of the population can afford to buy coal. Most families do not have enough yaks to use yak dung as a heating materials, and most people cannot even afford to buy yak dung from those farmers who would sell. A truckload of yak dung costs about 50 Euro and is sufficient for one heating season which lasts 10 months.

Therefore, most people use tersken, which can be harvested “wild”. Alternatively, some buy tersken from diggers. A wheelbarrow of “tersken”, which is enough for one day of heating and cooking, costs 5 Soumoni.

“Tersken” needs a minimum of 40 years in order to re-grow. The increased demand for tersken has lead to a fast reduction of tersken in the region, and biologists warn that the ecological balance will be disturbed. Tersken prevents erosion of the soil.

According to the Tajik laws, digging tersken is forbidden, but the law enforcement agencies do not prevent people from digging tersken, since this is the only way of obtaining heating material.

In order to dig “tersken” the people from Murghab centre already have to go more than 80km from Murghab centre.<sup>9</sup> In Rankulsky and Kislovabadsky *rayon* (district) there is already not enough “tersken” left to feed the livestock (sheep and yaks) anymore.

The digging of tersken will produce serious problems in the near future: tersken will become a scarce resource, and conflicts between “diggers” will emerge. Since tersken is also fodder for yaks, conflicts between “diggers”

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<sup>9</sup> People from the centre of Murghab dig already 80-120km from the centre. The villagers dig 20-60km from their villages away.

and yak owners will emerge. Lastly, the digging of tersken causes ecological problems which will further aggravate the situation in Murghab.

In Murghab, a vicious circle of poverty and ecological disaster has gained momentum. There are no sources of income for the population, with the exception of selling cattle. Since 1990, the amount of small cattle and yaks has been steadily decreasing, because the population is forced to sell their cattle in order to buy basic products. Overall assets of the Murghab population are rapidly diminishing. With no alternative income, the demand for tersken will rise. Border trade with Osh provides a small part of the population of Murghab centre with a very modest source of income, but this trade is seriously damaged by the many road posts, where state officials of various government branches collect formal and informal fees from the traders.

### ***Linking Up with ethnic / religious kin groups across the border***

The imminent opening of the borders between Tajikistan and Afghanistan will have an impact on the relationship between the populations living on both sides of the river Pyanzh which demarcates the border between Afghanistan and Tajikistan. As of today, the population in GBAO and in Shurabad refer to the population living on the Afghan side mainly as "Afghans". However, these "Afghans" are ethnic and religious kin of the population living across the border in Tajikistan. Many families on the Tajik side have relatives on the other side and still remember these family ties, they know where their relatives live and so on. Between 1993 and 2000, when borders were de facto open, these ties were renewed. Today borders are much more tightly controlled, but are by no means sealed off. There is clear evidence of small and clandestine movements across the border. In the future, the notion of "Afghans" could be gradually replaced with a notion of "our ethnic and religious kin". It could also be that the tensions between "Tajiks" and "Afghans" remain, which would be a barrier for future regional co-operation. Development agencies working in the border regions on both sides are advised to monitor the development of the relations between the groups and to make sure that their interventions do not contribute to the emergence of a situation of competition between the groups.

### ***Provision of Services across the border***

The Tajik side, especially in GBAO, is, in relative terms, much better equipped with infrastructure such as schools, energy systems, irrigation systems, roads and especially medical infrastructure. Providing services across the border would be an entry point for development activities in Afghan Badakhshan; Tajik Badakhshan would benefit as a service provider.

As of today, "Afghans" already use medical infrastructure in GBAO and in Shurabad. In GBAO, there seems to be a formal procedure in place: Afghans can apply for a

visa with the local branch of the Tajik security services and get access to medical treatment in GBAO. In Shurabad, we are not aware of legal possibilities for crossing the border.

## **6.1 Conclusions and Recommendations**

Tajik population clearly sees the Afghan border as a security threat. Threat perception is linked to (1) drug trafficking and related violent incidents, (2) drug trafficking and possible increase of local drug dealing and consumption, (3) common violence across the border, (4) harassment by Russian border guards (5) fear of Tajik security forces.

All respondents and most experts think that the Tajik army is not able to efficiently guard the borders. Despite the fact that there are many complaints about the Russian border guards, the local population wishes them to stay for the time being, not least because the Russian troops are an economic factor which is of local importance. The future border regime depends on the outcome of the negotiations between the Russian and the Tajik state. The outcome cannot be influenced by NGOs.

Changes in the current border regime will most certainly affect the population living in the border zones. An uncontrolled opening which would increase the flow of drugs would have extremely negative consequences for the border zones: Local drug markets would again emerge and local consumption would increase; competition between old and new drug trafficking organisations would be intensified which would backfire on regional stability. In other words, the export of insecurity from Afghanistan to GBAO would increase. It should be noted, firstly, that disarmament has not taken place in Afghan Badakhshan and has only partly taken place in GBAO. Secondly, most of the military commanders of the Tajik opposition had and may still have contacts to Afghans. During the war they got weapons and financing from or through Afghanistan, and most of these commanders were or still are linked to drug trafficking. These commanders could benefit from an uncontrolled opening of the border. In case of renewed instability in Tajikistan (a scenario which cannot be excluded) this may be pose a substantial security threat.

A successful controlled opening is also not risk free: It could add to rising tensions between "Afghans" and "Tajiks". For example, the stronger (drug related) purchasing power of Afghans may lead to a strong distortion of local markets in GBAO, which would then be attributed to the "Afghans". Such a development would close the window of opportunity for regional co-operation.

Petty cross-border trade between Osh (Kyrgyzstan) and Murghan (GBAO) is seriously suffering from the informal taxes that different Tajik and Russian state

agencies collect on the highway to Osh. The local population perceives these informal taxes as unfair and directed disproportionately against Kyrgyz traders.

The controlled opening of the borders opens up a window of opportunity for interregional co-operation between Afghan and Tajik Badakhshan.

### ***Recommendations:***

Regional cross-border co-operation between Afghan and Tajik Badakhshan is an opportunity to contribute to the development of Afghan Badakhshan and to contribute to a positive development of the relations between “Afghans” and “Tajiks”. MSDSP should

- promote cross-border trade in those zones where the bridges are being built. The promotion of cross-border trade should be targeted in such a way that Afghan-Tajik relations do not turn into competition.
- Invest in the possibility of exporting services to Afghan Badakhshan (access to health, education, know-how or transportation).
- study the possibility of exporting development experience to partner NGOs in Afghan Badakhshan.
- Cross-border trade between Murghab and Osh is one of the very few sources of income in a region which is on the brink of disaster. MSDSP / GTZ should promote this cross-border trade which suffers from informal taxation by various Russian and Tajik state bodies by lobbying local authorities in Murghab and by providing small credits to traders.

## **7 Patterns of Local Governance**

The term “local governance” refers to the way political and economic power is organised at the local level, and how this specific organisation of power affects society. Local governance is exercised by a system which involves state officials and state agencies, but also individuals and groups which have influence on public life because of their material or moral resources. (Thus local governance is not the same as local government, which refers exclusively to the official state structures).

Why is an analysis of the mode of local governance relevant to the daily work of development agencies? We see three reasons for this. It is important to know (1)

who extracts the resources available, and how; (2) who can block or who can implement projects on the local level by mobilising support for or against a planned intervention, and (3) who gains and who loses from a planned intervention. Understanding the local mode of governance provides us with information about these issues.

It was not the main purpose of our research to fully analyse the specific modes of governance in all three research regions. However, the research framework used by our researchers helped collecting information that adds up to an - admittedly sketchy – picture of some relevant features of local governance.

In general, we found state capacities (defined as the capacity of the state to provide public goods such as social security, physical security and enforced legal rules) to be low; consequently the rule of law was equally low; networks of patronage are of great importance for political players at district level; finally we found that there are considerable differences between GBAO, Rasht and Shurabad. These differences are relevant enough to call for tailored made approaches on programming,

The following section highlights our basic findings. It should be noted that our findings present the view from below, that is, it reflects the perspective on the local level. Secondly, it should be noted also that the quality and amount of information that we received from each region varies: We know most about the Rasht valley, less about Shurabad and least about GBAO. There are two reasons for this: First, in Shurabad we had only one team, whereas in GBAO and Rasht we had three in each region. Secondly, in the Rasht valley, the MSDSP researchers were interested in finding out more about the local system of governance, because they themselves needed this information. In GBAO, our researchers were insiders to that system, and were consequently not keen to share this intimate knowledge with outsiders. This once again points to the well known difficulties of research that is conducted by insiders on their own society.

### *State capacities and rule of law*

We defined state capacities as the capacity of the state to provide public goods such as social security, physical security and enforced legal rule. State capacities at the local level were found to be very low in all three regions.

The state has only very little problem solving capacity due to its lack of funds. In general, respondents often expressed the opinion that the state should exercise greater influence. This may be partly seen as a reflex of nostalgia for the Soviet type state that provided material goods at low cost or even for free. However, we gained the impression that the demand for a state that was expressed by many respondents was not confined purely to the supply of material goods, but also to the regulatory power of the state. This is especially the case with regard to regulating water management. Many respondents in GBAO expressed the opinion that it would be good if the state would help solve the co-ordination problems of the communities

more actively, as they are seen as an impediment for more efficient water management.

Our research also shows that the state is very rarely a mediator or an arbiter in conflicts about land. Only very few cases are reported when conflicts about a disputed plot of land (be it disputed between communities or between individuals) were brought before a court and resolved there. On the contrary, we gave above (see Ch. 5) two incidents when local state agencies actually took sides in a conflict and decided the problem in a way that was perceived to be arbitrary.

State positions are often a means of extraction for the occupier of these positions: In our reports there were many incidents reported when informal fees for obtaining legal titles on land had to be paid to those in the bureaucracy who is responsible for issuing these titles. Another very lucrative official position seems to be collecting legal and illegal custom and trade taxes. Finally, state agencies seem to be a source of fear for the local population in Shurabad. Many respondents seem to fear the state agencies which are allegedly involved in drug trafficking on the one hand, and on the other hand cracking down on local drug dealers and traffickers.

Summing up, we can conclude that there clearly is a demand for more state at the local level, not only as a provider of material goods (a Soviet state), but also as mediator and arbiter. De facto, state positions are often misused as a means of extracting resources (in the reports there are numerous incidents with regard to obtaining land titles and to illegal customs and trade taxes).

### *Networks of patronage*

All reports clearly point to the fact that patronage is the key element of political power in Tajikistan. Anecdotal observation suggests that by far the most important network of patronage is the presidential network.

Currently the president is mainly investing in his network, and not in statehood. As resources and positions are distributed mainly within the network, the importance of the network is strengthened, while the importance of state institutions is weakened. Co-optation into the network seems to be the key strategy of the president for checking possible opposition forces. At least in the short run this strategy seems to be working rather well. Co-opting players from the former opposition or from regions other than the president's regions into the ruling network is a way of stabilising the post-conflict situation.

The district governors form the backbone of the presidential network. At present, the president appoints all 62 district governors, and they report to him. Regional governors are thus very important players.

Apart from the presidential network there seems to be other, parallel networks of patronage. They are owned by high positioned political figures in Dushanbe, some

of which belong to the former opposition and were as a part of the peace agreement co-opted into the central leadership in Dushanbe. It is not clear how much independence these networks of patronage de facto have with regard to the presidential network. However, evidence from the regions suggest that patronage of high positioned figures of the former oppositions is, especially in the Rasht valley, a very important factor: According to anecdotal observation, most regional big men in the Rasht valley depend on patronage from patrons placed in Dushanbe.

The prevalence of networks of patronage as the most important mechanism of power, determines the political economy of Tajikistan's districts:

The distribution of power within a given district depends on the political weight the patrons of the local big men have. The higher placed the patron, the better the position of the local big men within the district.

The power within a district depends on the vertical relations with influential patrons in Dushanbe. Therefore, of less importance are the other institutions within the district such as the district's legislative assemblies.

Since power is mainly vested within vertical networks, there are almost no horizontal links between districts. Each district is a political system of its own, and the key determinants of that system are the vertical relations to the patrons in Dushanbe. The political system thus repeats what we know from other social spheres in Tajikistan: There are no horizontal links on the level of society, very few inter-communal relations, no linking infrastructure and no common information space. The districts are atomised, and the perspectives for the development of civil society bleak.

The vertical networks of power usually do not reach the villages, because the village is of little interest to political players. Only very few people in the village are connected to a network of patronage. This does not mean, however, that the villages are not affected by the patterns of local governance that emerge. Relevant issues such as access to land are directly dependent on the network structure.

### *Regional patterns of local governance*

As already pointed out, with regard to patterns of local governance we know most about the Rasht valley, less about Shurabad and least about GBAO. What follows is a very sketchy picture on regional differences:

The situation in Shurabad district could be characterised as a merger between state and networks. State positions are clearly the most efficient resource extractors in the region, and these positions are merged within a position in the network of patronage. In other words: A profitable position in the network of patronage means automatically a profitable position in state service. Network members are awarded state positions. Consequently, statehood is weak, but state authorities (*vlast'*, in Russian) are relatively strong (what is labelled "state" may in fact not contain any state). State officials are not easily lobbied by NGOs; instead, they may exercise

considerable pressure on NGOs. We may expect that state officials do have some leverage to “tax” development projects, and there is anecdotal evidence that this actually happens. MSDSP has a good record of being immune to informal taxation by the state, but we may expect that the pressure in Shurabad is higher than in Rasht and GBAO.

Control over land is most important in those areas where cash crops are grown. This is rarely the case in Shurabad district (but it is in other part of Khatlon). However, control over the former sovkhos is still a way of rent seeking. In Shurabad the sovkhos structure seems to be intact, and access to land is controlled by the former management, in coalition with state officials. However, the position of this rural elite is much weaker than in Rasht, and they are clearly second to state officials.

In a wider context, the competition between parallel networks seems to be more intense in Khatlon region than in other regions of Tajikistan. The perception of Khatlon as being a unified region that has basically won the civil war may be deeply misleading; actually, there are parallel competing networks of patronage with a mostly regional base that compete about control over state positions and state resources.

In GBAO there is little land and no cash crops to be exploited; consequently, has no rural elite emerged there. By far the most important player in GBAO is MSDSP / AKF. It owns and distributes almost all resources that reach GBAO. It is the only available “lift” for social mobility, and it is clearly in a position to successfully lobby the regional (oblast) government.

We are in no position to assess the actual importance of the district governors or their standing vis-à-vis the population. Our impression is that the governors are not perceived as “foreign”, whereas the commanders of the security structures are as a rule, not from the Pamir regions.

Finally, we could not assess the actual influence of the “small drug barons”, however, they are much more visible than in Rasht or Shurabad.

The situation in the Rasht valley is both more complicated and more conflict prone than in Shurabad or GBAO. Land is an important resource in most parts of the Rasht valley, and consequently political players are trying to gain control over access to land.

The Rasht valley was an opposition region during the war and the centre is only slowly building up a presence in the Rasht valley. A rural elite has emerged there that consists of an amalgam of former fighters, religious leader, and state officials. This elite has been successful in gaining control over a large percentage of the available land. Land distribution happened when the state was still virtually absent and local big men, many of whom having protection from those members of the former opposition who were co-opted into high positions in Dushanbe, heavily influenced to process of land distribution. As a result, access to land is very uneven, and this inequality is growing.

Interestingly, there is no single network governing the Rasht valley, and there are almost no horizontal ties between the districts. The modes of governance vary

considerably from district to district. Every district is governed by a specific coalition of important players. However, these specific power cocktails are mixed from the same ingredients: district governors, former fighters and small drug barons (some of whom were granted lucrative official positions, such as commanders of border guards), religious authorities (some of whom are former collective farm directors) and rich land owners (many of whom are linked to former fighters).

Thus, the local modes of governance in Rasht districts depend on an unstable coalition between various key players (governors, former fighters and religious leaders). This coalition is almost by default shaky because players on the district level depend on protection from influential figures in the centre. They may lose their positions which could trigger a break up of the coalition on the ground. Furthermore, the actual mode of governance protects an unfair, illegal and uneven informal control over land. Pressure to change this will mount and this will affect the vested interests of the elite. However, changing the mode of governance means engaging former fighters (which are still armed) and religious authorities (with the potential to mobilise followers and attract money from Islamist donors), and both are risky.

#### **Example Local governance in the jamoat Childara**

**Source: Adapted from Tavildara report**

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The Rasht valley districts are run by “local big men” religious leaders, former combatants (*boeviki*) and/or small drug barons. The *jamoat* of Childara is a good example of how local power is *de facto* structured in the Rasht valley. Here, a man who is referred to as the Sheikh (the term denotes a religious leader who lives a pious life) is the key player. He controls most of the land in the jamoat.

The *sheikh* is well connected up to the republican level. He enjoys the patronage of the minister for emergency situations, a former commander of the opposition forces co-opted into the power elite in Dushanbe. The *sheikh* is also a good friend and relative of the chairman of the sub-district level, also a former opposition commander.

During Soviet times the *sheikh* used to be the director of the sovkhos; the current chairman of the jamoat also worked for this sovkhos. Today the *sheikh* is head of the “Association”. This formally seed-producing association was founded in 2000 and it has 129ha of arable land, but only the director of the association himself, the sheikh, uses all this land. The structure of the association is basically the same as the structure of the *sovkhos* was. Farmers in the jamoat are highly dependent on the *sheikh*; they have to rent land from his association.

In the same jamoat, there are reportedly cases of cannabis cultivation. This is done by women who have lost their husbands and are now forced to grow cannabis. They state that, if they had more land, they would not need to grow cannabis.

## **7.1 Conclusions and recommendations**

There is a demand for more state at the local level, not only as a provider of material goods but also as mediator and arbiter. Actually, however, state positions are often misused as a means of extracting resources

Networks of patronage are a key element of political power in Tajikistan. Since power is mainly vested in vertical networks, there are almost no horizontal links between districts. Each district is a political system of its own, and the key determinants of that system are the vertical relations to the patrons in Dushanbe.

There are marked regional differences with regard to local governance. The situation in Shurabad district could be characterised as a merger between the state and networks; a profitable position in the network of patronage automatically means a profitable position in state service. In GBAO, MSDSP/AKF is by far the most important network. It owns and distributes almost all resources that reach GBAO. In Rasht, a rural elite has emerged that consists of an amalgam of former fighters, religious leaders, and state officials. This elite has been successful in gaining control over a large percentage of the available land. The actual mode of governance protects an unfair, illegal and uneven informal control over land. Pressure to change this will mount and this will affect the vested interests of the elite.

### **Recommendations:**

- Local governments should be engaged, since they are both part of the problem and part of the solution. This is especially true with regard to land use. (see chapter 4) There is a need for developing terms of collaboration with the local government and assessment of its readiness based on objective criteria.
- There is a need to analyse local governance in the areas where MSDSP is active (but mainly in Rasht and in Shurabad) and to assess the implication for development programmes. Such an analysis should answer the following questions: Who controls key resources in the region? Do inputs reach the target groups? Do inputs support local big men? How productive are the big farms? Do local big men collect informal taxes? What are the sanction capacities of MSDSP if there are cases of defiance?
- Before moving into new regions (especially cotton-growing regions) MSDSP is advised to gather information about local patterns of governance beforehand.

## **8 Recommendations with regard to specific cases**

Seven case studies were conducted by local teams. The research locations and the topics were selected by MSDSP during the initial workshop, and seven local teams were then tasked with conducting the fieldwork. We provided the Russian original and the English translation to MSDSP and to the GTZ office in Dushanbe. Because of their length we did not include the case studies in the text.

The consultants feel that the data collection was quite successful, given the fact that the teams had no previous experience with this kind of research. The preparation seminar, the tools that were given to the research teams and the coaching visits in the field by the consultants ensured sufficient data collection. Processing the data and writing the analytical text proved to be the task for which most research teams needed more experience. Thus we feel that further capacity building is necessary for analysing the data and to present the findings in an analytical and structured way.

The quality of the reports vary: Shugnan, Murghab, Garm, Tavildara and Shurabad met most requirements that were agreed during the kick –off meetings, Jirgatal and Darvaz reports lack analytical depths. In addition we feel that Darvaz was a wrong choice as a research location, because there are no clear cut conflict lines of which we are aware. Finally, the report on Jirgatal does not reveal - the many and clear-cut – conflict lines present in that location. It is advised to conduct follow up research in Jirgatal.

The following sections give action-oriented recommendations with regard to three specific cases.

## **8.1 Porshnev – Managing Water shortage**

### *Conflict Profile*

The core of the conflict is the shortage of water in the villages downstream the mountain river Barchidary. Water shortages affect the villages Vozm, Barchid, Kushk, Buved, Midenshor and Khosa. This is a seasonal conflict that gains high intensity (non-violent, though) during irrigation season. All households are affected.

### *Background and current stage (see also ch. 3 of this report)*

Lack of water is a serious problem in the region. The amount of water that the Barchidary carries depends on the precipitation during autumn and winter. Lack of rain and snow is badly felt at the beginning and at the end of the irrigation period – in spring and in late summer. Sometimes lack of water leads to the loss of half of the harvest.

Every year, a water *grafik* for all villages in the jamoat is set up by the heads of the villages and officials of the local government. The *grafik* is a written schedule for the distribution of the water: every village gets certain time periods when water is channelled to its lands; when that time is over the water is directed to the lands of the next village.

Earlier, when land was the property of the state farms, two brigadir-mirdzhuj made sure that the irrigation *grafik* was implemented correctly and applied within the jamoat of Porshnev (a brigadier is the leader of a working brigade of a Soviet state farm; a mirdzhuj is the traditional Tajik name for the person that is responsible for the correct and fair distribution of water within a village). They made sure that the *grafik* was strictly adhered to and since there were no private farmers, there was enough water for 90% of all arable land.

The break-up of the state farms has made the task of monitoring water distribution agreements more complex: Today, there are seven villages which have to stick to the agreement, that means that the costs of monitoring the agreement are now sevenfold.

The fact that the seven villages together with the responsible office at the local government have managed to agree on a water distribution agreement and to stick to it is a major achievement that should be rewarded.

### *Conflict processing institutions*

Conflicts about water distribution are common, but they are dealt with successfully by formal and informal institutions designed to deal with them. The way conflicts about water distribution are dealt with is a textbook example of the claim that it is not competition or scarcity per se that is the problem, but the way society deals with competition and scarcity.

The *grafik* is worked out by the heads of the villages and is binding for all. Then the local government (*khukumat*) and the water committee (*vodkhoz*), which are officially in charge of controlling/monitoring use of water, formalize the agreement by writing down and stamping it. Although local government is underfunded and not very effective, it still plays an important role as formalizer of informal agreements.

The heads of the villages (which are very often also VO leaders) are responsible for implementing the *grafik*, and they also mitigate quarrels about water when they emerge. Thus, they are charged within the village to implement water distribution rules, and they are charged to negotiate water distribution rules between the villages. The state merely supports this process and makes it official, but it does not initiate it and it does not have the means to sanction non-compliance with the agreed rules. This is again a text book example of formal state and informal (societal) institutions, reinforcing and supporting each other.

### *Stakeholders*

In general the population of the villages are main stakeholders, because they depend on the agreement. More specific stakeholder are those player that work out, implement and monitor the agreement. These are the head of villages, the *mirdzhuy* of the villages, the representatives of the water department of the local government and *khukumat* and *vodkhoz* and the development agencies investing in irrigation

### *Causes of conflict*

The cause of conflict is water shortage, amplified by worn-out irrigation infrastructure.

### *Analysis of the peace and conflict potential*

Water shortage is a serious cause for bitter fights within and between communities, but leads seldom to inter-group violence beyond the level of the communities. The risk for escalation to large scale violence is low.

However, if water shortage cannot be eased then mid-term negative effects will be felt: Food security is endangered, and migration will increase. Incentives for taking up income opportunities in illegal occupations will increase, too.

### *Recommendations*

- Document the working of the institutions step by step and make this documentation available to other communities. Include all written documents (the grafik). Make sure that informal authorities that play a role in the process are not omitted!
- Make this documentation available to all stake-holders, thereby enhancing the authority of the procedures already in place.
- Make this documentation also available to MSDSP staff of other regions charged with the amelioration of irrigation structures. This can serve as “best-practice-manual”.
- Make provision of new irrigation structures conditional of the establishment of such procedures.
- Reduce water shortage by providing better infrastructure (covered channels and pump station)

## **8.2 Navdi – Clash of Generations, Clash of Institutions**

### *Conflict Profile*

The core of the conflict is the competition between an organized youth and the elder generation in the village Navdi about influence within the community and about control over the MSDSP initiated VO. At the beginning of the conflict the youth wanted to have a meeting place (youth centre), then they wanted to assume control over the VO and then they aspired to take decisions of development of the village

Protagonists of the conflict are the mullah of the community and the leader of the younger male generation. The conflict came to the open during a VO voting in spring 2003 meant to establish the communities development priorities. The youth, together with part of the older generation, voted the rehabilitation of the youth centre the first priority, the mullah and part of the elder generation wanted rather to build a second mosque in the village, and most elder people were in favour of additional classrooms, additional water pipes and improving the provision of electricity.

Since then, the two “parties” e.g. the youth and the elder rival for influence. In April 2004 it came to a violent argument between the leader of the youth and the mullah, after which the mullah left the village. A representative of the youth (and a relative of the leader of the youth) has assumed in the meantime the position of the chairman of the VO. The village Navdi is at present without *aksakal* (village elder with a wide

range of responsibilities), because none of the elder wishes to assume such a position in a village which they see as ungovernable.

### *Background and current stage*

MSDSP initiated VO (which consist of at least 80% of all households) decide in open and transparent voting the development priorities of the community. VO work through procedure (voting, elections). These procedures require that conflicts are dealt with in the open. The procedures of the Village Organisation require that the members of the Village Organisation put forward their arguments during an open meeting and then decide by voting. In that particular case, the faction that wanted the mosque actually lost to the faction that wanted to refurbish the youth centre. By traditional standards, this open defeat of the “religious established” vs. the “secular youth” is outrageous and would never have happened, had the village dealt with this issue in a traditional way. Nobody would have even asked the young men for their opinion. The voting procedure shifted power from the group of the “religious and older” to the group of the “younger and secular”. The “religious” faction openly announced that they disapprove of the procedure itself. Thus, the final outcome – a voting victory of the younger – has increased tensions between groups and has lead to hostilities.

The VO of Navdi has set the following priorities for the village: 1. rehabilitation of youth-centre, 2. rehabilitation of school, and 3. installation of transformer station.

These priorities reflect the wishes of the younger members of the community, and is in opposition to what the mullah – traditionally a figure of authority – preferred. Within the context of rural, traditional Tajikistan, it is close to revolutionary that the younger generation gets its way.

This conflict has come to the open only because a new institution – the VO – was brought to the village: The VO has provided procedures for decision making which are based on voting and not on the prestige and authority of (elder) individuals.

The risk of further escalation or spread of violence is very low. Nevertheless, this conflict should be monitored, because it reflects two very important aspects of rural Tajikistan today: First, the conflict between generation about competing visions of what is good for the community and second, the impact of new, democratic institutions. It is a text book example of the fact that new institutions, even if they are designed to provide peaceful and transparent decision making, can actually promote conflict. The question is whether this will be “good conflict” (such that unlocks development barriers) or bad conflict (such that disrupts society and makes development impossible).

### *Conflict processing institutions*

At the core of this conflict is the clash between traditional informal institutions (the prestige and decision making power of the elders and of the mullah) and the new, democratic institutions of the VO which finds decision by voting, where each household has a voice. Conflict arose because part of the community does (not yet?) accept that decisions taken by a new institution – the VO – are binding and morally justified. Thus, Navdi is a case where the institutions itself are the object and the arena of conflict.

### *Stakeholders*

Stakeholders are:

- the youth organisation (for people from 16 to 30 years of age, officially registered by the authorities as an organisation). It has about 300 members, half of which are working in Russia but keep in touch with the leaders of the organization and support the organization financially). The members of this youth organization pay a membership fee of 20 Diram (app. 6 cents). Currently the organization has a fund of 748 Soumoni (app. 220 Euros).
- The mullah who “lost” in the conflict and left the village.
- The elder generation of farmers and respected villagers. From this group the *aksakal* is chosen
- The chairman of the jamoat. He explicitly does not want to get involved in the conflict because he himself lives in the village Navdi and does not want to take sides and spoil his relation with his co-villagers.

### *Causes of conflict*

The triggering cause of the conflict is the establishment of the new VO institution that gave the youth “voice” and allowed them to express and pursue their vision of the community’s development.

Underlying cause are more general the lack of meeting place for youth, the marginalisation of the younger generation and the very limited options for participation in community life.

### *Analysis of the peace and conflict potential*

The risk for violent escalation of this conflict is very low. Nevertheless, a successful transformation of this conflict should be sought, because this conflict is in two regards relevant beyond the very small scope of the village Navdi:

First, it is a typical example of a conflict between the generations and thus reflects the situation in all Tajikistan and indeed post-Soviet Asia. A breakdown of the social

bonds that link the generations (a bond that is traditionally extremely strong in Central Asia and that is often perceived as “bonding” the aspiration of the younger) would indeed put all society at risk. We know from many examples in the Caucasus and in Central Asia that the organisation of violence was always preceded by such a break down of intergenerational institutions.

Second, at the centre of the conflict is the clash between the traditional / informal and the new institutions (VO). This clash must not lead to either disruptive conflict (that is, one part of the community does not take part anymore in events that are structured by these new institutions), or to a break-down of the new institutions.

### *Recommendations*

- All actions must be directed at a) preventing the breakdown of the new institutions (VO) and b) preventing disruptive conflict within the community.
- Ease the pressure by supporting the establishment of structured meeting places for the youth (refurnish the youth centre)
- Provide special professional guidance to the new leaders of the VO, thereby enhancing the quality of the work of the VO and the acceptance of leadership
- Provide mediation between youth and elder generations focusing on interests and not on positions. Interests should be predefined as interests towards the best possible community development.

## **8.3 Childara: Land Dispute within and between villages of Aranghul and Khipshon**

### *Conflict Profile*

Core of the conflict is competition between the villages of Aranghul and Khipshon about a 8 ha plot of land. This plot of land is said to belong to the village Khipshon; it was taken by force in August 2000 by a group of villagers from Aranghul. In November 2002 the local authorities (*khukumat*) have transferred the disputed land to the *jamoat*. Revenues from the land were said to go into the budget of the *jamoat* in order to finance a boarding school. Actually, the revenues are channelled to the members of the *jamoat* and used for private purpose.

Secondary conflicts arise within the village Aranghul about alleged unfair land distribution and between the villagers of Aranghul and the chairman of the Associations of Private Farms “Okhunbobo” about the amount of taxes of land which the chairman collects on behalf of the local authorities. De facto he collects 45 somoni per hectare, whereas the official tax is 13 somoni.

### *Background and currents stage*

All conflicts date back to the largely unregulated distribution of land that took place in 2000 and that was heavily influenced by former fighters, having achieved a position of authority within the village Aranghul and which considerably influence local authority. At that time the chairmen of the jamoat was a former fighter.

The conflict is unresolved and latent. The level of violence is, however, low. Villagers from Khipshon say that they fear the former fighters in the village Aranghul (said to be nine former mujahedeen), because they are still armed. They also see the fighters of Aranghul as being part of a network that link them to the local authorities, part of which were also fighters.

### *Conflict processing institutions*

Within the village respondents say that the VOs and MSDSP are respected and authoritative institutions that help find resolutions to conflicts within the village. The analysis shows that there are, however, no conflict processing institutions between the villages. The one institution that should be charged with solving the conflict – the state – has become party to the conflict and is actually beneficiary of the dispute.

### *Stakeholders*

Main stakeholders are the chairman of the jamoat (who benefits from the use of the disputed plot of land); the villagers of Khipshon and Aranghul who both claim the land. The villagers of Aranghul are not homogenous. There are a nine farmers who are better off than the rest and have succeeded to obtain private farms. All owners of private farms are former fighters or are closely linked to them.

Secondary stakeholders are the poorer farmers (among them the chairman of the VO) who are in favour of a land redistribution within the village). The richer farmers and the *jaomaat* are against such redistribution.

Indirectly, those who have profited from the “wild” land distribution after 2000 in Childara - mostly former fighters and religious authorities, many of which now occupy a position within the local government – are stakeholders in this conflict: They oppose any land redistribution, because it may set a precedent.

### *Causes of conflict*

The root cause of the conflict is the wild distribution of land and the fact that the local state agencies are a party to that conflict and a beneficiary and are thus unwilling to resolve the conflict. A secondary cause is the general competition for land which is scarce. It must be noted, however, that land in Childara is, compared to other regions of Tajikistan, considerably less scarce. Here is again an example of the fact that not scarcity per se is the problem, but the rules of distributing.

### *Analysis of the peace and conflict potential*

At present, the conflict is latent and non-violent. The immediate threat of violence is low.

The conflict is typical and symptomatically for the wider problem of the land question in Rasht valley. In a mid term perspective it is important that the state becomes a mediator and conflict solver; at present it is a party to the conflict and in alliance with the local elite of former fighters and religious figures. Investing in building up conflict solving capacities at local level including the state and including inter-communal mechanism would be a great contribution to conflict transformation in general in Rasht.

### *Recommendations*

- MSDSP should use this case as a text book example, to be included in a manual. This example proved to be of great interest to our workshop participants, and they clearly saw the benefits of a conflicts analysis and a do no harm check before investing in new projects.
- MSDSP should never contribute to the amelioration of contested land. This would increase the worth of the land and would make it more difficult to transfer it to the owners.
- MSDSP / GTZ should inform the local jamoat about the allegations that a plot of land that allegedly belongs to the village Khipshon is actually used by the jamoat and raise its concern.
- If possible, the viability of the claim of the village of Khipshon should be established (for example with the help of Soviet land cadastre or kolkhoz maps).
- Since law enforcement is not likely, the conflict should be processed by means of mediation. Mediation could be initiated by MSDSP. Such mediation would only make sense if representatives from the *khukumat* could be included. It is also important that all above mentioned stakeholder groups would be present.
- Mediation should be directed at a **reaching a binding decision** by the land committee of the khukumat, **formalisation** of the decisions in written form, and **implementation** of the decision and a **monitoring so** that parties stick to the agreements and 'play by the rules'.

## 9 General Recommendations to MSDSP

1)

MSDSP's main mandate is food security. The focus on community based development implies that in the first place intra-communal conflict processing mechanisms are strengthened by the establishment of VOs. It has to be acknowledged that there is not necessarily a connection between conflict processing capacities on the community level and structural stability on the regional and on the national level. Key priorities for MSDSP with regard to PCIA therefore must be to make sure that its interventions do not increase conflict risks on the local level. It cannot and should not be expected that MSDSP with its current profile contributes to stability on an regional or even national level.

It is recommended that a "do-no-harm analysis" is included in those areas of daily work which were identified as especially conflict prone. These are: Access to land and patterns of local government.

2)

MSDSP is on the brink of expanding / changing its profile. MSDSP should develop and/or explicitly communicate to staff and donors clear strategies on four issues of relevance. These issues are (1) whether to expand its activities in Khatlon; (2) the anticipated impact of the opening of the border with Afghanistan (3) the issue of engaging with local government and (4) the issue of land privatisation.

*Expanding its activities into Khatlon:*

If MSDSP decides to expand its activities in Khatlon oblast, it is recommended that a risk appraisal and capacity analysis is conducted beforehand. Helpful tools are provided in the chapters on "Risk Appraisal" and "Capacity analysis" in the GTZ manual "Conflict Impact Assessment for Development Projects",<sup>10</sup> and by the methodology that was applied in the present study. Working in Khatlon region implies (a) working in multi-ethnic areas, (b) working in a region with a different mode of local governance to those of MSDSP's current programme areas: cash crops (wheat and especially cotton) are available, local elites are closely linked to patrons in Dushanbe and closely intertwined with state agencies. (c) MSDSP is a double stranger in Khatlon because of (subtle, not explicit) different regional

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<sup>10</sup> Leonhardt, Manuela, 2001, Conflict Impact Assessment for development projects. A practical guideline – Draft. Eschborn, GTZ.

belonging and different religious affiliation. All of these factors would have an impact on the work of MSDSP.

*Expected opening of the border with Afghanistan:*

MSDSP cannot influence the mode and time of the opening of border crossings, but it should be prepared to react to their possible impacts. It is recommended that the regional offices Shurabad and GBAO develop, based on the current report, positive and negative scenarios in order to (a) identify risks from which target groups (communities in border areas, local trade) should be shielded; (b) identify opportunities for target groups (trade, service exporting); (c) identify opportunities for MSDSP as a service provider.

It is thus recommended that regional offices study the potential of cross-border trade in those zones where the bridges are being built. The promotion of cross-border trade should be targeted in such a way that Afghan-Tajik relations do not turn into unchecked competition.

It is recommended that regional offices study the possibility of exporting development experience to partner NGOs in Afghan Badakhshan.

*Issue of engaging with local government*

In general, there is need for MSDSP to define its strategy towards engaging the state, because there is a long-term necessity to co-operate with local government.

It has been previously recommended in other reports that MSDSP links up with the state and seeks to co-operate with local government, when possible. It has to be acknowledged that there are objective difficulties in so doing. This report found that local state capacities are extremely weak and that local government offices are often abused for private purposes (mainly the enriching of public servants). On the other hand, the report also finds that there is a demand for more statehood, and that a range of problems need to be solved by local government, probably in co-operation with NGOs. Among the issues that were of importance to MSDSP programmes and that require co-operation with local government are: (a) More even access to land in Rasht and Shurabad; (b) cross-border trade in Murghab; (c) co-ordination of irrigation procedures and maintaining irrigation systems in all irrigation regions; (d) the fight against drug abuse and drug trafficking in border regions.

This report indicates the necessity of engaging with local government in these five areas: (a) any change in formal access to land requires action by the local government; (b) settling disputes in court requires action by the local government; (c) government agencies in Murghab are the main impediment to cross-border trade; (d) local government is essential in building up sanction mechanisms which are essential for maintaining irrigation arrangements; (e) local government and NGO should jointly mobilise against drug abuse. It is recommended that MSDSP identifies, based on the findings of this report, areas of desired co-operation with local government. This co-operation would be implemented only when certain

criteria are met. MSDSP should develop criteria for every field of co-operation that allow defining when the appropriate moment for co-operation is reached. Such criteria could be the problem solving and problem causing capacity of local government; the accountability of local government; or the professionalism of local government.

The strategic goal should be to engage the state as a partner for problem solving.

#### *Issues of land privatisation*

It is recommended that MSDSP develops a clear strategy towards the issue of land privatisation in Shurabad and in Rasht. This report indicates that de facto access to land in these regions is extremely uneven and that the gap between rich and poor is widening. In addition, this report also indicates that large farms may be less productive than small farms.

It is recommended that MSDSP assesses its impact and adapts its programmes when necessary by researching the following issues:

- Do inputs reach poor farmers or do they support the “big men”?
- Do MSDSP inputs help decrease the number of families without access to land?
- How productive are large private farms? From our qualitative research we gained the impression that large private farms were mainly designed for rent-seeking (making money by renting out land) and not for increased productivity.

3)

It is recommended that MSDSP’s middle management (regional managers, PEU regional managers) are trained in “do-no-harm analysis”. Conflict mapping and stakeholder analysis are tools that are by now familiar and trained. These techniques may serve as a base. In addition, during the fieldwork the local teams have conducted conflict mappings and stakeholder analyses of their regions which can now be used. However, additional training may be needed. In this context it should be noted that there is no GTZ do-no-harm analysis manual available. It is recommended that such a manual is developed, together with MSDSP, in order to make sure that it takes into consideration a) context of post-Soviet Central Asia and b) the fact that there is no open violent conflict, but structural instability (the latter aspect is often overlooked by do-no-harm analysis manuals).

Conducting a do-no-harm analysis is especially important for interventions affecting land usage, interventions affecting the rules of water distribution, and for interventions in multi-ethnic locations.

4)

It is recommended that MSDSP disseminates the findings of this report; that it encourages the regional teams to share their results with the other teams in a workshop; it is further recommended that the local teams be given additional tasks by their PEU managers in the field of conflict and peace analysis in order to practice and in order to deepen their understanding of their region. We suggest that the teams do a follow up of their research in 6 months time and report any significant changes.

It is also recommended that PEU initiates awareness building about PCIA within MSDSP, for example by delivering a series of presentations to MSDSP staff at all levels about PCIA and the importance of the introduction of its elements into MSDSP programming.

5)

It is recommended that MSDSP up-dates its planned "Impact Assessment Framework" to a partial Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment. We therefore suggest that MSDSP makes use of the data collected for the impact assessment for analysing the Peace and Conflict Impact.

MSDSP is about to collect data on indicators to measure the outcome and impact of its agricultural activities that have a direct link to land issues. The following outcome/impact indicators could be used dually to measure the elements of PCIA as well:

- (a) increase in yields of staples;
- (b) access to land and secure land tenure;
- (c) and overall average income levels increase.

It is recommended that additional indicators should be developed that measure de facto land control, de facto distribution, dynamics of control and distribution.

MSDSP is about to collect data on indicators to measure non-agriculture incomes. The following outcome/impact indicators could be used dually to measure the elements of PCIA as well:

- (a) Increase in off farm employment and increase in income from non-farm sources.

There are currently no indicators that measure modes of local governance. There is only anecdotal evidence on issues such as accountability of local governance; state capacities such as the functioning of courts; sanction capacity; social security; and the influence of big men. Information on modes of local governance is important in order to assess potential development barriers and the potential risk of interventions.

There are currently no indicators that measure working migration. Information on the scale and dynamics of working migration is important in order to assess the vulnerability of the population.

It is recommended that MSDSP develops indicators (alternatively guidelines for qualitative case studies) in order to regularly monitor these issues (modes of local governance and patterns of work migration).

6)

To develop an Impact Assessment system and to put it into practice requires one to three years, analytical skills, the will to change organisational procedures and human and material resources. It is recommended that MSDSP develops a realistic strategy with regard to PCIA elements that need to be integrated into the daily work of MSDSP, under the *losung* “as much as is needed and as little as possible”.

7)

Inter-regional co-operation level (between regions belonging to different states) on the project level should be strengthened with regard to the Afghan-Badakhshan and Tajik-Badakhshan/Shurabad border zones, and with regard to the border regions between Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan in the Ferghana valley. On the other hand, a macro-regional co-operation (comprised of two or more states) on the state level is not likely to occur in the foreseeable future. Adding to regional stability is thus best done by strengthening inter-regional co-operation at a project level.

## 10 Quoted Literature

Business & Economics: RUSSIA, TAJIKISTAN SPAR OVER ILLEGAL LABOR MIGRATION, 1/09/03.  
(<http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/business/articles/eav010903.shtml>  
3.1.2004)

Leonhardt, Manuela, 2001, Conflict Impact Assessment for development projects. A practical guideline – Draft. Eschborn, GTZ

MSDSP, 2002 Baseline Survey of Rasht Valley, Tajikistan for the Tajikistan Poverty Reduction Project JFPR9008-TAJ (funded by Asian Development Bank and the Government of Japan) 2003, January

MSDSP, 2002 Baseline Survey of Shurabod district, Tajikistan, for the Tajikistan Poverty Reduction Project, JFPR9008-TAJ (funded by Asian Development Bank and the Government of Japan). Draft Report October 2003

**Annex**

# Conducting the Research

## *The Analytical Framework*

The methods we applied derive from social anthropological research and from rapid rural appraisal (adapted to conflict research for development and aid practice). Both approaches focus on qualitative data and require extensive fieldwork.

In order to structure the analysis, research teams were provided with two tools:

### **Conflict Arenas / Clusters of Conflicts**

(1) We participatorarily identified conflict arenas: Conflict arenas are clusters of conflicts categorised by shared dominant features. Examples of such conflict clusters are conflicts over access to and distribution of natural resources, conflicts related to access to key positions; conflicts arising around social differences (e.g. gender, generation, identity) or conflicts connected with drug trafficking and border issues.

### **Cross-Cutting Categories**

(2) The local teams were tasked with obtaining data on pre-defined cross-cutting research categories of general importance for conflict processing.

These were (1) resources, (2) networks, (3) informal local institutions, (4) formal non-state institutions (5) local state capacities and (6) social control (see text box).

We then compiled the collected data in

#### **Text Box 1: Analytical Concepts**

**Resources** are material and immaterial means actors may acquire and use in order to progress their interests and secure their needs. Examples of material resources are money, weapons, land, water, fertiliser. Examples of immaterial resources are information, education and prestige. Resources are not only an important object of conflict. They are also an important means of conflict. The ability to mobilise resources is of particular importance in sustained violent conflicts.

A **network** is the structure of regular interaction between a larger number of individual or collective actors. A network in itself is not an actor and not an institution. It is not the same as those participating in it and it is not the same as the rules governing the interaction between the participants. A network can be used by the participants/actors to organise collective action. It is like a telephone network that can be used just to chat, to organise support, exchange information or organise a demonstration.

To determine the significance of a network in conflicts it is important to identify the social basis of the network that supports its cohesion and sets the rules of interaction. A network based on kin-relations may be more persistent than a network based on shared interests or on patron-client relations rooted in work-history.

**Institutions** are the rules of the game in society. In other words they are the constraints which shape interactions between collective or individual actors. Formal or official institutions are usually constituted in writing and protected/implemented by the state. Informal institutions are constituted by routine, tradition, upbringing, habit or custom and protected by social control, often exercised by informal authorities. Official institutions and informal institutions can be intimately linked: a court, a body of local self government, an election may all at the same time work according to official and unofficial rules. For the analysis of conflict it is important to examine whether informal and official institutions contradict each other, compete with each other or support each other.

Communities usually have mechanisms in place that punish deviation and encourage conformity with existing rules. If these mechanisms are not enforced by official state bodies we call them **social control**. Social control can be used for

a table that contained the conflict arena and the cross-cutting categories. We refer to this table as the “**matrix**”.

The benefits of such an analytical grid is to have a shared research agenda focussing on resources and organisational capacities that are highly relevant for conflict processing but that are at the same time applicable to research undertaken in the absence of violent escalation.

A secondary but most welcome benefit was that this relatively open analytical grid yielded data on a crucial questions: how efficient are local arrangements of governance – often hybrids of official and informal institutions that “work” in the absence of effective statehood and civil society – in terms of conflict control? Do they facilitate conflict transformation or just temporarily contain conflict by blocking mobilisation and development? In essence, the matrix proved to be an analytical tool to account for peace and conflict potentials within such local modes of governance.

the mobilisation of collective action (e.g. *hashar*, demonstrations or attacks on a neighbouring community). It can also be used to check mobilisation (controlling the hot-heads in a conflict, controlling the access of young men to weapons...). Social control can be either social capital and a powerful barrier to development and adaptive change.

For the analysis of conflict the scale of social control, the sanction capacity of social control and the rules of control are all important.

**State capacities** are defined as the capacity of the state to provide **public goods** such as social security, physical security and rule of law. A public good is characterised by inclusiveness (everybody within the constituency can consume the good, even if he or she has not contributed to the production / financing of the good) and by non competition in consumption (the consumption of the common good by an individual does not reduce its worth for another individual). Social security, physical security and rule of law are vital preconditions for stability. For the analysis of conflict it is important to see how many of these public goods are provided by the state. If the state does not provide these public goods it is important to know whether or not there are alternative providers.

**Research Team**

Seven teams of local researchers carried out the fieldwork in Rasht (three teams), GBAO (three teams) and Shurabad district (one team). All teams consisted of two staff of MSDSP’s regional or district offices, a gender specialist (all the gender specialists were women) and the social organisers (all social organisers were men). These research teams were supervised by the PEU (Policy Evaluation Unit) officer of the regional offices. The research teams were released from their daily work for a period of eight weeks in order to conduct the research.

None of the team members had previous experience in conducting field research or conflict analysis. The teams were trained by foreign consultants.

## Preparation

The preparation of the teams was done in a one week seminar in Dushanbe. The seminar was directed by the team leader (Koebler) and facilitated by a foreign consultant (Heitmann). The seminar was attended by the research teams and by PEU staff.

The task of this initial seminar was to teach crucial analytical concepts, introduce the tools of conflict analysis<sup>11</sup> and provide training in methods of qualitative research (interview techniques, field diaries, participant observation).

An important part of the workshop was devoted to the participatory pre-selection of relevant conflict arenas as well as research locations. The identified areas were clustered according to previously identified conflict arenas:

- competition for natural resources, such as land and water
- competition for other resources such as humanitarian aid
- youth and intergenerational conflicts
- minority conflicts
- competition for state positions
- drugs
- border issues

During the workshop, the research teams then specified the research locations.

The following table presents an overview of the research locations and research topics on which the local research teams focused. It should be noted, however, that the findings of these local case studies are by no means confined to the rather narrow topics. It was our intention to gain insight into conflict potentials and conflict processing institutions by focusing on a singular aspect. Therefore, a thorough analysis of conflicts over access to land may yield very valuable and general information on the overall situation with regard to peace and conflict potential.

The following table gives an overview of case studies and research locations:

**Table 2: Research locations and case studies:**

Region	Location	Main Focus of Case Studies
Rasht Valley	Tavildara	1) Access to land 2) Drugs
	Jirgatal	1) Access to land
	Garm	1) Intergenerational conflict 2) Access to land

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<sup>11</sup> Following Leonhardt, Manuela, 2001, Conflict Impact Assessment for development projects. A practical guideline – Draft. Eschborn, GTZ.

GBAO	Shugnan	1) Access to land 2) Water related conflicts 3) Drugs 4) Border issues
	Darvaz	1) Access to land 2) Water related conflicts 3) Impact of new Kulyob – Pamir highway
	Murghab	1) Exploitation of <i>tersken</i> (a plant used for heating, as fodder for Yaks, and essential for preserving ecological stability) 2) Border and trade issues
Shurabad	Shurabad	1) Drugs 2) Border issues 3) Access to land

## **Fieldwork**

Actual field work was carried out for 1 ½ months. However, most teams could not devote the full time period to the fieldwork, but had to take care of their usual daily routine as well.

While working in their research locations the teams relied on MSDSP infrastructure when available. Thus, they usually found accommodation with the chairmen of the VOs.

The teams usually started with participant observation. All teams then moved to semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and expert interviews.

The first round of data collection followed the analytical matrix introduced during the initial seminar. The researchers structured their interviews according to the crosscutting topics provided in the matrix (resources; networks; local informal institutions; formal non-state institutions; state capacities; social control).

At the start of the fieldwork the research teams were visited in the field by the team leader and the foreign consultants. The consultants spent 2 – 3 days with each team in order to discuss techniques and concepts, to specify and, where needed, adapt research locations and to discuss preliminary results.

After the first round of research, we held mid-term workshops. Due to difficult logistics, we had to conduct two separate workshops. One was conducted in Dushanbe for the teams in Rasht and the team in Shurabad, a second in Khorog (GBAO) for the teams in GBAO. During these workshops information and experiences were shared and the tools critically discussed. The review of the matrix revealed gaps, which were filled during a second phase of fieldwork. In the context of the analysis, the teams identified additional specific topics of importance, and

prepared their further exploration. Especially fruitful was, in our opinion, the exchange of experience between the different regional teams.

A one day workshop on the basics of PCIA was held for MSDSP and AKF staff in Dushanbe. This workshop was not originally planned, but the consultant thought it important in order to raise consciousness.

After the end of field work period a workshop was held in Dushanbe with the three supervisors of the research teams (the PEU regional managers) in order to discuss the results and to assess implications for PCIA elements within MSDSP.

**Table 3:** Activity report (Workshops and Field Visits)

Date	Activity	
3.9. – 8.9.:	Preparation for kick-off workshop in Dushanbe	Team Leader (Koehler) Consultant Tajikistan (Zürcher) Consultant Assistant Tajikistan (Wiegmann)
8.9. – 15.9.:	Kick-off <b>workshop</b> in Dushanbe: Training of local staff	Team Leader (Koehler) PEU senior staff Local Teams Consultant Assistant Tajikistan (Wiegmann)
16.9.	Begin preparation for fieldwork at locations	Local Teams
18.9 - 20.9.:	Field trip to Rasht valley Tavildara, Jirgatal and Gharm	PEU senior staff Consultant Assistant Tajikistan (Wiegmann)
22.9 - 23.9.:	Field visit to Shurabad	PEU senior staff Consultant Assistant Tajikistan (Wiegmann)
29.9. - 5.10.:	Field visit to GBAO (Shugnan and Darvaz)	PEU senior staff Consultant Assistant Tajikistan (Wiegmann)
29.9.-2.10.:	Field visit to research teams in Rasht and Shurabad	Team leader (Koehler)
01.10.:	Official start of systematic fieldwork by all research teams	All research teams
9.10. - 11.10	Field visit to Shurabad	Consultant Tajikistan (Zürcher) Consultant Assistant Tajikistan (Wiegmann)
14.10.-18.10.	Field visit to GBAO: Shugnan, Murghab, Darvaz	Consultant Tajikistan (Zürcher) Consultant Assistant Tajikistan (Wiegmann)
22.10-25.10.	Field visit to: Gharm, Jirgatal and Tavildara	Consultant Tajikistan (Zürcher) Consultant Assistant Tajikistan (Wiegmann)
30.10 – 31.10.	<b>Mid-Term Workshop</b> in Dushanbe for Teams in Rasht (Garm, Tavildara, Jirgatal) and Shurabad: Discussion of preliminary results	PEU senior staff Local Teams in Garm, Tavildara, Jirgatal and Shurabad Consultant Tajikistan (Zürcher) Consultant Assistant Tajikistan (Wiegmann)
7.11 - 8.11.	<b>Mid-Term Workshop</b> in Khorog for Teams in GBAO (Darvaz, Shugnan and Murghab): Discussion of preliminary results	Team Leader (Koehler)

		PEU senior staff Local Teams in Darvaz, Shugnan and Murghab Consultant Tajikistan (Zürcher) Consultant Assistant Tajikistan (Wiegmann)
14.11.	<b>Workshop on PCIA</b> for MSDSP by Christoph Zürcher in Dushanbe	PEU senior staff Consultant Tajikistan (Zürcher) Consultant Assistant Tajikistan (Wiegmann)
18.11-19.11.	<b>Final Workshop</b> in Dushanbe: Discussion of results; PCIA measures for MSDSP	Team Leader (Koehler) PEU senior staff Consultant Tajikistan (Zürcher) Consultant Assistant Tajikistan (Wiegmann)
20.11.	Follow-up meeting	PEU senior staff Consultant Tajikistan (Zürcher) Consultant Assistant Tajikistan (Wiegmann)

## ***Data Processing and Reporting***

The teams handed in a first draft of their report before the mid-term workshops. They also handed in their field diaries, which were transcribed and used for the present reports. Final reports (6 in Russian, the report from Shurabad in English) were handed in by all teams before the final workshop in Dushanbe. The reports are app. 20 – 30 pages and closely follow a predefined structure. (1. Introduction; 2. section on methods applied; 3. description of the relevant conflict fields in the locations; 4. case studies, including a) conflict profile, b) analysis of actors (stakeholders, strategic groups), c) analytical grid (analysing the conflict at issue according to the crosscutting themes defined during the initial seminar;), d) dynamics, e) scenarios; 5. filled in matrix.

The data collected in these reports provide the core for the present report. Additional material was collected by the authors of this report via expert interviews in the field and in Dushanbe.

The consultants feel that the data collection was quite successful. The preparation seminar, the tools that were given to the research teams and the coaching visits in the field by the consultants ensured sufficient data collection. Processing the data and writing the analytical text proved to be the task for which most research teams needed more experience. Thus we feel that capacity building is necessary for analysing the data and to present the findings in an analytical and structured way.

The quality of the reports vary: Shugnan, Murghab, Garm, Tavildara and Shurabad met all requirements that were agreed during the kick –off meetings,

Jirgatal and Darvaz reports lack important parts (especially the filled in matrix). In addition we feel that Darvaz was a wrong choice as a research location, because there are no clear cut conflict lines of which we are aware. Finally, the report on Jirgatal does not reveal - the many and clear-cut – conflict lines present in that location. It is advised to conduct follow up research in Jirgatal!

## ***Lessons Learned***

- Mixed teams (men and women) produced better results than purely male or female teams. Tajikistan is a traditional society, and the social spaces of women and men are strictly separate. For a man, and especially for an outsider, it is almost impossible to conduct interviews with women. Teams consisting of only male researchers would not have access to women's knowledge and perceptions – which may differ for men's perceptions. In our experience, the women's view gave additional and valuable information,

because often women told less normative stories than men (that is, they do not present the world as it should be according to “tradition”, but rather as they perceive it), Often they talked more openly about “taboo-topics” such as drugs, for example.

- Monitoring and training in the field is crucial. It proved to be difficult for all local teams to apply the methods and the concepts, even though all teams were quite convinced and enthusiastic during the training workshop about the suggested approach. We did as many field visits as possible, trying to spend as much time as possible in the field with the teams. We also spent a lot of time debriefing the teams with regard to their preliminary results and then discussed these with our researchers. These efforts proved to be very useful. We feel, however, that it would have been good to spend even more time in the field with the teams, but this was not possible due to time limits and difficult logistics.
- The analytical matrix proved to be a useful tool since it allowed for the quick collection and organisation of conflict relevant information. The matrix facilitates quick gathering of relevant information on formal and informal institutions, state capacities and state society relations. We clearly feel that this is a very valuable tool that, in combination with other tools (such as: conflict profile, stakeholder analysis, conflict mapping) is well suited for rapid conflict analysis. It should be noted that the matrix, other than the just mentioned analytical tools, is also suitable for gathering information when there is no violent conflict to be observed. The other tools are designed foremost for situations when conflict is visible or even acute. We generally feel that the standard tools for conflict and risk assessment of GTZ<sup>12</sup> are well suited for violent conflict situations, but less helpful for analysing situations which are unstable but lack clear cut conflict lines. However, some of the example questions in the matrix were too abstract. It is advisable to put some effort into making the matrix simpler and easier to use. It would also have been advisable to have a good Russian translation.
- It is preferable to mix teams and, if possible, to bring in foreign / non-local researchers and pair them with a local researcher. Local knowledge and local networking is crucially important, but local researchers may also be blind towards some issues of importance which they do not like, or they may be unwilling to share their knowledge about such “hot” issues with outsiders.
- There are numerous and convincing arguments for conducting a conflict study in a participatory manner. In our case, the research teams consisted of MSDSP staff, and all steps of the project were agreed with MSDSP leadership and intensely discussed with PEU, which had the responsibility for implementation. We feel that by choosing this approach we achieved good results with regard to capacity building (MSDSP staff at local and

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<sup>12</sup> Leonhardt, Manuela, 2001, Conflict Impact Assessment for development projects. A practical guideline – Draft. Eschborn, GTZ.

regional level were trained in analytical skills; PEU staff was trained in conflict analysis and elements of PCIA). We also feel that it was a good way to build ownership. However, we also need to be clear about some of the more problematic aspects of participatory approaches:

- When selection of research topics and locations is done in a participatory way, the final selection may also be influenced by factors which are not directly linked to conflict aspects. In other words, research may be done not in those locations and on those topics which are most relevant to conflict analysis, but where organisational and logistical advantages make the research “cheaper” – but less relevant. The choice of research locations does not in every case correspond with the degree of conflict risk. From the perspective of conflict risk, relevant regions were left out such as Tajikabad or the Moskovskii rayon in Shurabad.
- Participatory approach also leads to high dependence on local staff with its high variation in qualification and motivation. Furthermore, when overall responsibility lies with the beneficiary, there is not much leverage by the foreign consultants in case some aspects of the project needed adaptation.
- There is in every organisation an inbuilt reluctance to think about its own potentially negative impact (with regard to stability). It may therefore be difficult to embark on an open discussion on potential negative impacts of the organisation – but exactly this discussion is key of PCIA.
- MSDSP regional managers were advised by MSDSP general manager to relief the researchers from daily work and to have them fully work for the conflict study during one month. This proved to be a problem for the regional managers, who needed their staff for daily work. Therefore, the conflict study got considerably less input (in working time) than envisaged. In addition, not all teams spent as much time as agreed in the field, because their daily routine work was to be carried out in the regional offices.
- The local MSDSP researchers are dependent on the MSDSP regional managers. Regional managers are often a part of the local pattern of governance. They belong to the local elite. An important aspect of our (and indeed, every) conflict study is the analysis of local patterns of governance. In other words, our local researchers were often in a position to do research on issues in which their superiors are stakeholders.

# Characteristics of Research Locations

## ***Rasht Valley***

The Rasht valley is found north-east of the capital Dushanbe and is made up of seven districts: Faizabad, Roghun, Nurabad, Tavildara, Rasht, Tajikabad and Jirgatal, which are distributed along the Surkhob river. The total number of villages is 512, with a total population of 350,000 people. The length of the valley is over 250km and districts are arranged in a linear fashion, with the exception of Tavildara, which is located in a side-valley of strategic importance, because it controls the connection between Khatlon region, GBAO and Rasht region.

The Rasht Region was a stronghold of the (Islamic) opposition during the civil war. It has continued to be a major flashpoint in Tajikistan as rival parties continue to vie for power. The area has no provincial administrative structure. All districts report directly to the president and are designated *Rayon's of Republican Subordination* (RRS).

In general, access to land in the Rasht valley is highly relevant for conflict potential, much more so than in Badakhshan and Shurabad. Firstly, the quality of the land is much better than in Badakhshan and Shurabad. Secondly, there is more land and thirdly, the people grow cash crops, such as potatoes, which provide them with a significant income. Therefore, land is an important resource which may be well worth fighting for it. Land distribution in the Rasht valley is very uneven and 50% of the population does not have any access to land whatsoever (not even rented).<sup>13</sup>

### **Research location 1: Village Navdi (rayon Garm)**

The village of Navdi belongs to the *jamoat* (sub-district) of Navdi and it is located 5km from the centre of the *rayon* (district). There are 427 households in the village and the total population is 2,118.

### **Research location 2: Khipshon, Aranghul, Shur and Rubotnol villages (Tavildara rayon)**

The rayon (district) of Tavildara is situated in the south of Gharm on the border with Tajik Badakhshan. Tavildara district consists of three *jamoat*: Tavildara, Childara and Sangvor. The centre of the *rayon* (district) is Tavildara itself. The main sources

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<sup>13</sup> See the MSDSP baseline survey on Rasht conducted in 2002.

of income for the *rayon* (district) are potatoes and other vegetable cultivation, haymaking and bee-keeping.

The research team was based in Tavildara and worked mainly in four villages: Aranghul (61 households, 482 people), Khipshon (36 households, 324 people) Shur (60 households, 492 people) and Rubotnol (65 households, 525 people).

### **Research location 3: Jamoat Jirgatal, in Jirgatal rayon**

The Jirgatal rayon borders the republic of Kyrgyzstan in the north. The jamoat of Jirgatal is situated in the centre of the rayon (district) Jirgatal. It consists of nine villages with a population of 13,720 people. The majority of the population in Jirgatal are ethnic Kyrgyz. Of the two researchers working there one was Kyrgyz (the social organiser) and the other Tajik (the gender specialist). Both researches spoke both Tajik and Kyrgyz.

## ***Autonomous Region of Gorno-Badakhshan (GBAO)***

The autonomous region (*oblast*) of Gorno-Badakhshan is one of the three administrative regions (*oblast*) of Tajikistan and covers about 40% of the Tajik territory. It has an approximate population of 167,100 people (estimated in 1991). The area of Gorno-Badakhshan is 63,710km<sup>2</sup>. Gorno-Badakhshan is situated in the very east of Tajikistan, in the Pamir Mountains. It borders China in the east and Afghanistan in the south and west and is separated from Pakistan by a narrow strip of Afghan territory. The line of demarcation towards Afghanistan is the river Pyandzh. The eastern section (East Pamir) is a high plateau, and the western part (West Pamir) is cut by high mountain ranges and deep, narrow valleys. The mountain ranges rise up to 7495m (Pik Soumoni). Khorog is the capital of GBAO. The population is mainly Tajik, with Kyrgyz<sup>14</sup> and Russian minorities. Gold, salt, mica, limestone, and coal are mined. In the east of GBAO livestock is raised (yaks, sheep, cattle, and goats), and in the western valleys grain, vegetables, and beans are grown. Formerly, the region was under the control of the Mongols and the Arabs, the region passed to Russian control in 1895. The Gorno-Badakhshan autonomous region was formed in 1925. When the provision of goods from Moscow ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the civil war broke out in Tajikistan in 1992, large parts of the population were close to starvation.

Over the last four years the *Aga Khan Foundation* (AKF) has provided 70 tons of food per day to Badakhshan. Prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union, more than 80% of the food, all fuel and other heating materials for the 215,000 inhabitants came from outside the province (“Moskovskoe obespechivanie” -supply from Moscow). When the subsidy system collapsed, the Government of Tajikistan could

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<sup>14</sup> In Murghab, the eastern district of Badakhshan, which covers approximately 60% of the area of Badakhshan, approximately 80% of the population are ethnic Kyrgyz.

not any longer maintain sufficient deliveries to the inaccessible Pamir Mountains. The population began to suffer from dramatic shortages of food and other essential goods and services before a massive humanitarian aid operation was launched, spearheaded by Aga Khan related organisations.

### **Research location 1: rayon Shugnan, Jamoat Porshnev, villages Midenshor, Khosa and Tishor**

The Shugnan *rayon* (district) is one of the biggest districts of Badakhshan. The area of Shugnan amounts to roughly 4,000 km<sup>2</sup> at an altitude ranging from 1,800 to 4,000m above sea level. It has an 80km long border with Afghan Badakhshan. The size of the population is 38,431.

The *jamoat* of Porshnev, where two researchers were carrying out the fieldwork, is situated in the north of the regional centre Khorog, on the river Pyanzh, the border with Afghan Badakhshan. Russian border guards are patrolling the border. This constellation might change, as a new border agreement will be concluded in January 2004. Porshnev is the biggest *jamoat* (sub-district) in the *rayon* (8,531 people).

The research team was carrying out fieldwork in three villages: Midenshor (population 1566, arable land 30ha); Khosa (population 1566, arable land 30ha); Tishor (population 1566, arable land 30ha). Additional interviews were conducted in the villages of Kushk (population N/A, arable land 8ha); Pashor (population 1136, arable land 20ha); Vozm (population 962, arable land 16ha); Buved (population 917, arable land 18ha); Barchid (population 864, arable land 29ha). In all 59 interview were conducted.

### **Research location 2: Jamoat Nulvand, rayon Darvaz**

The *jamoat* (sub-district) of Nulvand borders Afghanistan. The team conducted fieldwork in the villages Shkev, Eged and Shrugavad. Shkev consists of 29 households; the village of Eged consists of 124 households (780 people). In the village of Shurgavad there are 31 households (192 people).

### **Research location 3: Jamoat Murghab, rayon Murghab**

The *rayon* (district) Murghab is situated in the very east of Tajikistan and borders Afghanistan in the south, China in the east and Kyrgyzstan in the north. The *rayon* (district) centre is located 3,670m above the sea level. The average annual temperature is -1°C. During the winter the temperature drops to -50°C. Therefore

the heating season lasts from September to June, but even in July and August heating materials<sup>15</sup> are needed to prepare food.

During winter the road to Osh and also to Khorog is often closed. The total population of the district is 17,035 people, of whom 3,402 are ethnic Tajiks and 13,633 are ethnic Kyrgyz. The research team worked in the *jamoat* (sub-district) of Murghab, the centre of the Murghab *rayon* (district), which has a population of 6,992 people, of whom 4,698 are ethnic Kyrgyz and 2,337 are ethnic Tajiks. Our researchers themselves were ethnic Kyrgyz.

The main source of income for people in the district is livestock, e.g. yak, sheep and goat breeding. Due to the difficult climatic conditions, grain, vegetables, fruits etc. do not grow. A few families earn additional income as petty traders, importing goods mainly from the Kyrgyz town of Osh and selling them at the local market. The unemployment rate in Murghab is 70%. There is not even enough electricity to serve the centre of the *rayon* (district). Until 2002 there was a Russian border guard base (*pogranvoiska*) in Murghab and this provided more than 500 jobs. Back then there was a large demand for the bazaar because the Russians used to shop there. The Russians provided coal, telephone lines and also television. Since the Russian base left in spring 2003 Murghab is close to humanitarian and ecological disaster.

## ***Shurabad***

The Shurabod district is located in south-east of Dushanbe along the river Pyanzh on the border with Afghan Badakhshan. It is located in a poor, mountainous part of the Khatlon region of southern Tajikistan. The economy is characterised by rain fed agriculture, and thus the production of vegetables, fruits and potatoes is extremely limited. Agricultural activities focus mainly on the production of rain fed wheat and livestock. The population of 43,000 dwell in 118 villages, which are an average size of 51 households. Although the district centre is only 1 hour by road from the regional centre of Kulyab the district as a whole is very large, and is comprised of many remote and isolated villages. MSDSP began work in the district only in 2002, when it set up a local office there, following the suggestion of the Tajik government.

In 2001 wheat production generated 38% of the total income of all households which was mostly used for consumption rather than sale. The second most important source of income was from livestock. Non-agricultural income made up about 16% of the total, consisting mostly of pensions and salaries. Remittances from people working in other parts of Tajikistan or abroad were significantly smaller than in the Rasht valley. 94% of the households are engaged in farming as they had access to some kind of land share whilst 5% of households have no land other than their kitchen gardens. Only 3% had privatised land shares, 91% are renting land either from collective farms or from new private landowners. To summarise, in 2001

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<sup>15</sup> In Murghab there are three types of heating material: coal, yak dung and "tersken" (a root).

Shurabad average income levels are about 60% of those in Rasht, however it appears that the wealth is distributed more evenly. Wheat production is essential for survival but agriculture is not as yet a real source of cash income.

The *jamoat* (sub-district) of Yol is one of seven *jamoats* in the Shurabad *rayon* (district). The *jamoat* borders Afghanistan and the demarcation line is the river Pyanzh. The climate is warm during the winter and hot during the summer. In Yol there are 227 households (1508 people). Westwards from the *jamoat* centre of Yol there are some other villages that are even closer to the Afghan border. According to the local people nobody lives there anymore, because it is said to be too unsafe to live there.

The research team carried out the fieldwork in the villages of Sari Maghzor, Khirmanjo and Kisht (42, 73 and 93 households respectively).