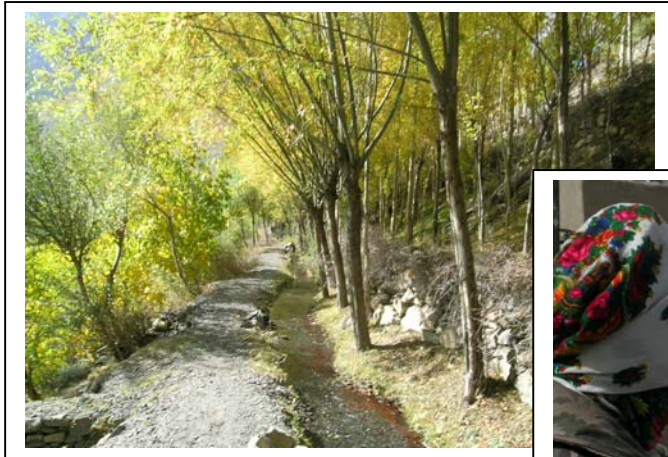




## Analysis of Peace and Conflict Potential in Rasht Valley, Shurabad District and GBAO, Tajikistan



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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.

Fieldwork was conducted in October and November of 2003 in seven locations by the following local teams:

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The GTZ project in Dushanbe and MSDSP in Dushanbe provided support. The GTZ programme structure in Dushanbe provided supervision of the fieldwork under the guidance of Christoph Zürcher (ARC GbR Berlin). Gunda Wiegmann (for ARC GbR Berlin) was a research assistant. Jan Koehler (ARC GbR Berlin) was responsible for the overall research and was in charge of the general supervision.

Kishwar Abdulalishoev and Gunda Wiegmann contributed to the report. The final report was written by Christoph Zürcher

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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.