



Fast Facts

Country: Tajikistan

Duration: May 2007 to December 2008

Implementing UN Agencies: ILO; UNDP

Other Implementing Partners: The Government; workers organizations

Budget: \$1,095,038.62

Key Words: Migration; employment; female-headed households; human trafficking; economic development

BACKGROUND

Following its independence from the former Soviet Union, Tajikistan became embroiled in a civil war that lasted from 1992 to 1997, causing massive displacement and disrupting the economy. Among those impacted, the Rasht valley - one of the most war-torn yet least assisted districts in the country - suffered from declining employment opportunities with significant consequences for its long-term economic recovery. With little prospect for income generation at home, men looked abroad for employment opportunities, resulting in large-scale economic migration that left women and children

highly dependent on remittances from neighbouring countries and low-income agricultural activities at home. At the same time, as economic migrants, men were faced with the threat of forced labour, trafficking and human rights abuses, and when caught in exploitative employment situations, they were often too ashamed or unable to return home, leaving their families in more insecure and destitute situations. The cumulative effects of these developments posed a critical threat to the human security of the local population, with female-headed households and economic migrants becoming increasingly vulnerable.

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The project's overall goal was to strengthen the human security situation in Tajikistan's Rasht valley, with particular emphasis placed on improving the socio-economic and personal security needs of people on the move and female-headed households without income opportunities. More specifically, the project sought: (i) to empower both men and women through vocational training and income generation activities that helped

reverse irregular migration and reduced instances of human trafficking; (ii) to increase the capacity of national and local institutions responsible for protecting the labour rights of Tajiks abroad as well as their employment rights in the country; and (iii) to ensure that migrant workers from the Rasht valley, including victims of human trafficking, had better access to information and legal redress mechanisms.

BENEFICIARIES

The direct beneficiaries included men and women living in the Rasht valley, including potential migrant workers at risk of being trafficked, as well as female-headed households with high levels of poverty and

little access to resources. The project also benefited local and national agencies responsible for law enforcement, employment creation and migration services.



Credit: ILO



Credit: ILO

NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS

(i) Roughly 1,000 beneficiaries received business counseling and access to micro-finance opportunities. Of these, 23 per cent were migrant households and 40 per cent were women impacted by the long-term consequences of large-scale outflows of male migration. Training and financing allowed the beneficiary households to start their own businesses, increase their incomes and reduce their debt bondage.

(ii) The project also developed remittance-based sub-projects whereby communities could reinvest remittance earnings in activities that aimed to improve social services. These projects focused on constructing and rehabilitating water supplies and irrigation systems, dams, roads and bridges, as well as procuring medical equipment for health centres. As a result, seven drinking water supply systems and pump stations, among others, were rehabilitated, providing

safe drinking water to more than 5,000 community members, including 2,600 women.

(iii) By establishing close partnerships among Tajik, Russian and Kazakh counterparts in migration services, the project sought to help protect the rights of Tajik migrants abroad. In addition, more than 500 representatives from various Government ministries, law enforcement (including judges and prosecutors), private employment agencies, trade unions, and employers benefited from capacity building and advocacy measures at the national level. These measures focused on the prevention and prosecution of trafficking and forced labour; the regulation of private employment agencies; and the provision of assistance to vulnerable migrants, men and women, thereby strengthening the multiplier impact of the responses promoted under the project.

LESSONS LEARNED

Through the protection and empowerment paradigm, this project demonstrated the importance of top down and bottom up approaches that bear in mind the importance of engaging not only those who are afflicted by the consequences of migration and unemployment but also those who have political leverage at the national level to mitigate the negative

impacts of both. Furthermore, the project confirmed that strengthening institutional responses and regulatory mechanisms was crucial for the growth and sustainability of community-based initiatives aimed at reducing the negative impacts of economic migration and poor development prospects.