

Tajikistan Situation Update¹

Tajikistan is a landlocked country in Central Asia and the smallest by area in that region. Only 10 per cent of its territory is suitable for cultivation; 90 per cent is covered by mountains. It is the poorest of the former Soviet republics and, ranking 122nd on the [Human Development Index](#), in fact one of the poorest countries in the world.

As a result of the collapse of the USSR and the ensuing transitional period, the country faced serious economic difficulties in the early 1990s: the end of budget subsidies from the Soviet Union; aggravation of the socio-political situation and civil war, which cost the country's economy more than US\$7 billion; a steep decline in production and social infrastructure; macroeconomic instability; the emigration of qualified specialists; and rapid impoverishment of the population.

Tajikistan's population numbers 7.0 million, with a growth rate of 1.89 per cent in 2007. The



population has grown rapidly while at the same time the country lacks high-productivity employment opportunities. The resulting situation has posed a considerable challenge for the social sector. Over 73 per cent of Tajikistan's population lives in rural areas, and 40 per cent is under 18. According to 2003

World Bank data, 19.7 per cent of households are headed by a woman.

¹ Sources: Government of Tajikistan, 2007 '[National Development Strategy](#)'; Government of Tajikistan, 2007 '[Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper](#)'; UN Tajikistan, 2004 '[Moving Mountains – The United Nations Framework for Development Assistance to Tajikistan](#)'; UN Tajikistan '[Resident Coordinator Report 2006](#)'; Ilhom Akobirshoev, Jessica Anderson, Per Ronnås, and Örjan Sjöberg, [Making Pro-Poor Growth in Tajikistan Sustainable – An Integrated Economic Analysis Approach](#). Sida Country Economic Report 2007:2 ; and CIA World Fact Book, accessed May 2007.

Yet there is increased confidence in the future of the country. Indeed, peace and security have been maintained since the end of the civil conflict in 1997. With relative macroeconomic stability achieved, the economy has grown significantly and receives increased foreign direct investments. Poverty has been significantly reduced, from 81 per cent in 1999 to 64 per cent in 2003.

Out of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), five are currently predicted to be likely or possible to be achieved. For three of the goals – reducing child mortality, improving maternal health, and access to clean water – the outlook is less promising: although between 2000 and 2005 the infant and child mortality rates fell from 89 and 126 deaths per 1,000 live births to 65 and 79 respectively,² government initiative remains insufficient and threatens the attainment of these goals.

Despite these challenges, however, Tajikistan displays potential in many areas. Ranking third in per capita water resources worldwide, Tajikistan has great opportunities for producing hydropower. Its mountains also bear other resources such as coal, gold, silver, tungsten, and uranium. The country continues its complex transition from an authoritarian Soviet system to a pluralistic free market economy.

Tajikistan's Development Opportunities

- large potentials of hydropower resources and fresh water;
- diverse mineral resources;
- Strong potential for the development of tourism;
- availability of agricultural raw materials for industrial processing;
- relatively large areas of undeveloped land suitable for agricultural use;
- favourable conditions for the cultivation of environmentally sound food products;
- advantageous strategic geographical position to leverage potentials as a transit country in future regional transport and communication;
- availability of a comparatively inexpensive labour force.

A Re-elected President and a New Development Strategy

The major political event in Tajikistan in 2006 – the presidential elections of November – resulted in the incumbent President Emomali Rahmon's³ re-election for a seven-year term. New policy initiatives were advanced during the second half of 2006 as senior government officials

² UNICEF Tajikistan, 2001 'The Status of Women and Children: Tajikistan, 2000. Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey'. Dushanbe, Tajikistan; and UNICEF Tajikistan, 2007 '[The Status of Women and Children: Tajikistan, 2005. Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey. Preliminary Report](#)'. Dushanbe, Tajikistan.

³ By a decision made public on 20 March 2007, President Rahmonov changed his surname to Rahmon.

were largely reluctant to make decisions that could negatively affect their post-election longevity. The election itself, held without any significant security incidents, resulted in Rahmon garnering 79.3 per cent of the vote. OSCE election observers criticised the lack of legitimate alternatives to the incumbent, but noted improvements over the 1999 presidential poll. As had been predicted, the year ended with a large-scale reshuffling of government officials on both the national and regional levels.

With UN support, the Government of Tajikistan drafted a National Development Strategy (NDS) for 2007–2015, which lays out a plan to achieve the MDGs, with a related Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) for 2007–2009. The process brought together a network of 13 working groups, which featured the participation of a range of international and local civil society agencies, international donor organisations, and government officials. Consultations, during which initiatives on the NDS/PRSP were solicited from the grassroots, were held in four regions throughout Tajikistan. The consultative process also included a dialogue with opposition political parties. These processes have endowed the NDS with an unprecedented level of broad citizen ownership over a key development document in Tajikistan.

The NDS/PRSP document highlights the pre-eminent importance of the private sector and general economic development as the main engines for growth and poverty reduction, while maintaining MDG attainment as a focus. In particular, the approach targets three major blocks: a) administrative and legal overhauling, b) private sector and economic development, and c) the realisation of the human potential of the Republic.

Tajikistan's National Development Strategy – Goals and Principles

The following national goal has been set on the basis of the vision statement for the country's long-term development: ***to strengthen social and political stability and to achieve the economic prosperity and social well-being of the people of Tajikistan in an environment shaped by the supremacy of the principles of a market economy, freedom, human dignity and equal opportunities for each person to realise his or her potential.***

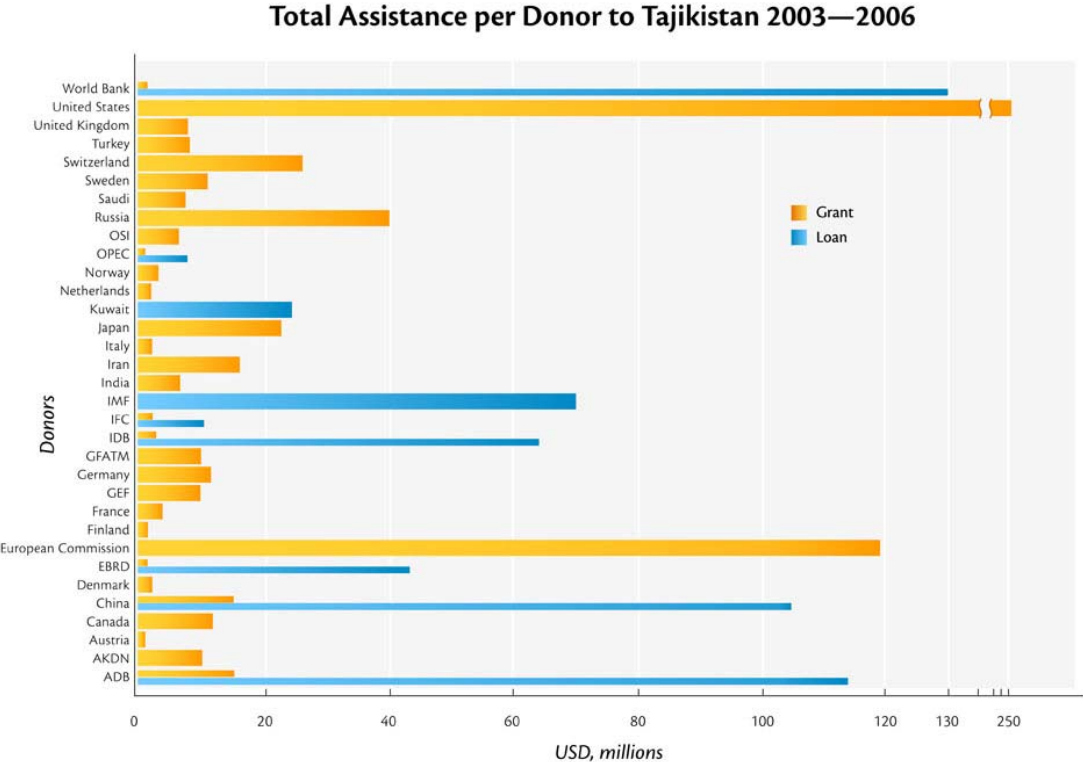
The following **national priorities** have been identified as part of the NDS for successful achievement of the overarching goal:

- 1. Reform of public administration with a view to creating a national development system in the country, the principal features of which are transparency, accountability and a focus on combating corruption;***
- 2. Development of the private sector and attraction of investments, based on the expansion of economic freedoms, strengthening property rights and the rule of law, and development of public-private partnerships;***
- 3. Development of human potential aimed primarily at increasing the quantity and quality of social services for the poor and achieving the MDGs, expanding public participation in the development process and strengthening social partnerships.***

Many of the platforms and coordination mechanisms established during the drafting of the PRSP and NDS will remain in place to be part of the implementation and monitoring tools for both strategies. This has increased the prospects for a strong system of accountability, transparency, and efficiency in the implementation of these strategies. Through this process, Tajikistan has thus become a leading nation in the region on planning for MDG attainment.

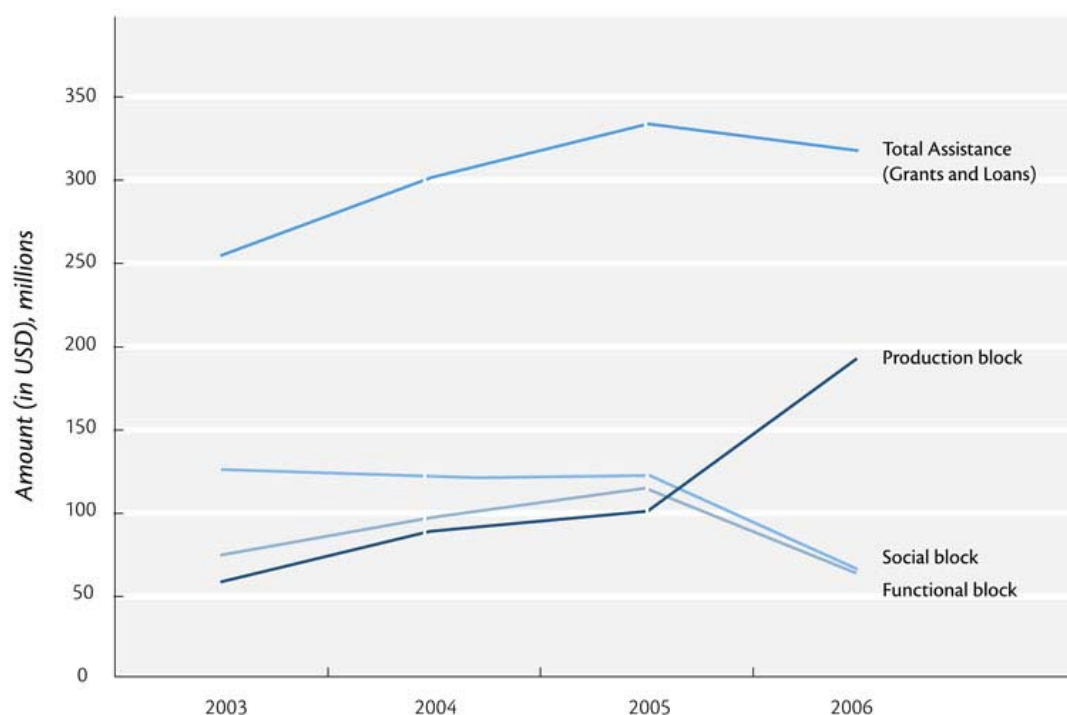
Investments in Tajikistan

The most dramatic change in Tajikistan in 2006 was the vast expansion of Chinese involvement. In 2005, only \$6 million of bilateral assistance was provided by China to Tajikistan. But in mid-2006, the Chinese committed around \$605 million to Tajikistan for a three-year period, mostly in loans, in order to upgrade roads and electrical supply systems across the country. Another \$400 million was committed in January 2007. This sum nearly matches all other bilateral and multilateral assistance to Tajikistan over the past three years combined.



Since 2003, Tajikistan has received US\$1.27 trillion in development assistance. The majority of this assistance has been grants (66 per cent) rather than loans (34 per cent). Compared by years, development assistance has been rising steadily from \$265 million in 2003 to \$380 million in 2006.

Assistance Trends 2003—2006

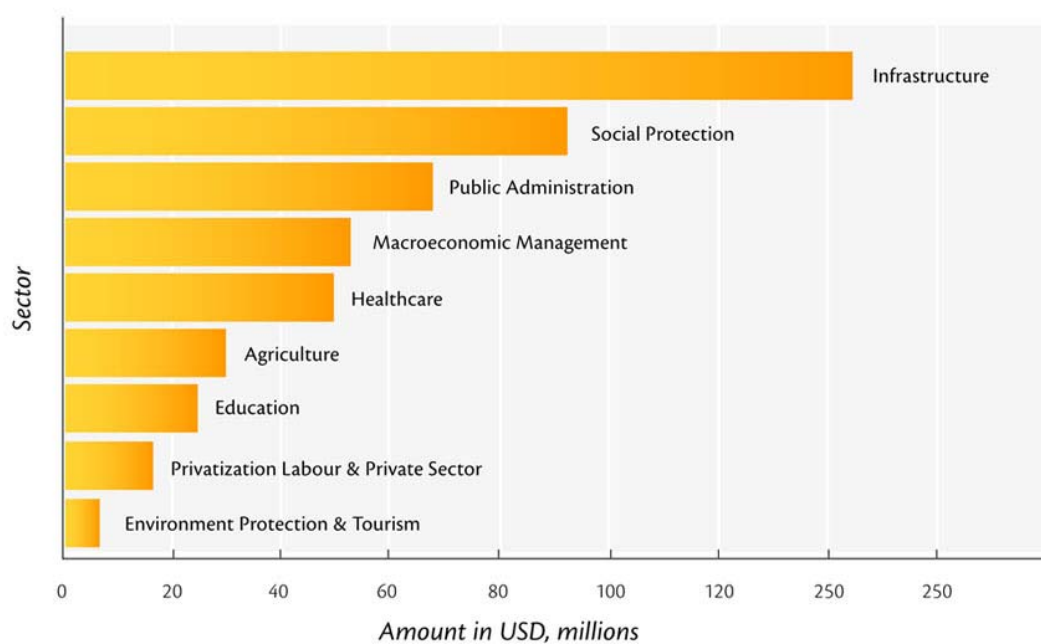


This overall increase, however, shows diverse underlying dynamics when analysed by sector.

While assistance to the infrastructure and energy sectors experienced a particularly sharp increase from 2005 to 2006, aid in the social sectors that will most strongly influence MDG attainment decreased from US\$128 million in 2003 to around US\$90 million in 2006. This compares to more than US\$170 million in 2006 for infrastructure. At the same time, after an increase from 2003 to 2005, aid to support important areas of reform in macroeconomic management, public administration, and private sector development also decreased in 2006. The Government committed a three-year contribution of US\$75 million specifically for MDG sectors. Available donor funds amount to US\$383 million specifically for MDG sectors, including entrepreneurship, food security, education, health, social welfare, water and sanitation,

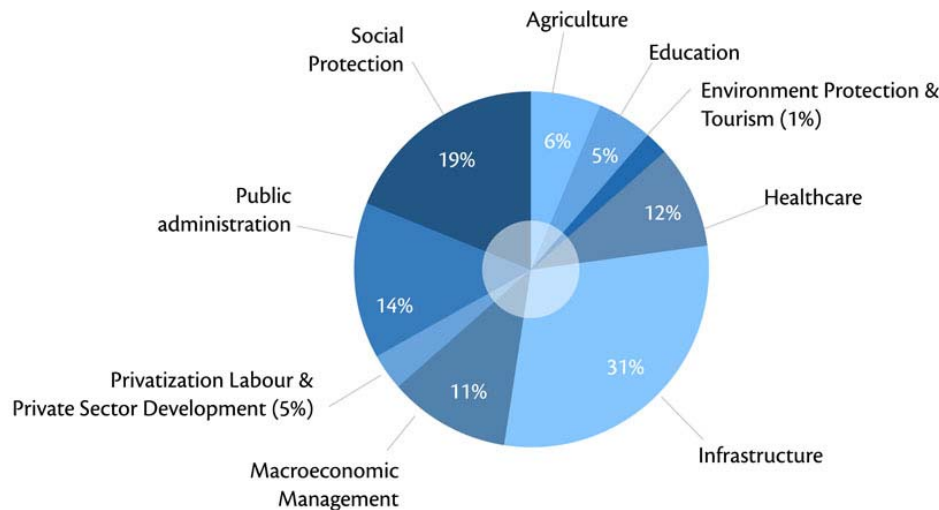
environment, and gender. The overall funding gap for MDG sectors amounts to US\$397 million, that is, 46.4 per cent of the three-year need in MDG sectors. Large investments would be needed to ensure the availability of basic social services and to rebuild the human capital base. Similarly, large inputs are of crucial importance in the agricultural sector to ensure sustainability of the basis of income for major parts of the population.⁴

Total Assistance per Sector to Tajikistan 2003—2006



⁴ Source: UN Coordination Unit of Tajikistan, [online financial tracking system](#).

Assistance distribution by Sector 2003—2006



Economic Challenges

The high rates of economic growth in the past few years have been largely triggered by the peace dividend, establishment of macro-economic stability, and a rapid increase in migrants' remittances. These factors raise questions about the sustainability of the growth. There remains a large mismatch between the human resource base (both quantitatively and qualitatively) and the size of the economy. The domestic economy is still far too small to make full and productive use of the labour force, as evidenced by a low level of labour productivity and large scale labour migration abroad. The economy is also still too small to allow for the investments in human capital needed to sustain a high quality of the human resource base.

Tajikistan has so far met debt obligations but is at a high risk of suffering debt distress in the future.⁵ Especially, the risk of failure in newly developed energy projects could have detrimental consequences, because in such cases problems with debt management would not be compensated by adequate economic benefits.

⁵ IMF, 2007 'Staff Note for 2006, Annex 1: 'Joint Fund-World Bank External Debt Sustainability Analysis'.

The informal economy, half of which is unpaid taxes by registered firms,⁶ is estimated at 61 per cent of GDP. Estimates that include illegal economic activities such as narcotics trafficking would likely be much higher.

While private sector development is one of the main pillars in the Government's NDS, Tajikistan is ranked 133 out of 175 countries for conduciveness of business environment, with poor ratings for protecting investors, starting a business, trading across borders, paying taxes, and getting credit.⁷ Firms reported that the cost of complying with official regulations was the same as the cost of informal payments, but took three times the amount of time.

**Binding Needs for Growth Oriented
Towards Poverty Reduction**

- Establishing a sound basis for a market-oriented and dynamic agriculture;
- Creating enabling conditions for private sector development;
- Investing in human capital formation through education;
- Reversing environmental degradation and the erosion of natural resources. (Sida Country Economic Report 2007)

Moving and Staying⁸



Some 600,000 to 800,000 Tajiks (an estimated quarter of the Tajik workforce) are working abroad, primarily in Russia. An estimated 12 per cent of the population has migrated for work from 2000 to 2005.⁹ The repatriated earnings of migrant workers are estimated to amount to US\$800–1,000 million annually: a truly massive amount for a country with a GDP of

merely US\$2,500 million. Indeed, rough calculations suggest that the Tajik labour force contributes more in absolute values to the GDP of Russia than to that of Tajikistan.

⁶ UNDP Tajikistan 'The Shadow Economy in Tajikistan', forthcoming in June 2007.

⁷ World Bank (2006) Doing Business Report.

⁸ Sida Country Economic Report 2007 [Making Pro-Poor Growth in Tajikistan Sustainable – An Integrated Economic Analysis Approach](#).

⁹ World Bank (2005) [Poverty Assessment Update](#).

Much of the labour migration of Tajik citizens to Russia has been and is irregular in the sense that the migrants lack proper documentation and permits. However, recently Russia has given Tajikistan a quota of 600,000 migrant-worker permits in an effort to regularise the migration. Should Russian policy change in the future and restrict labour migration, the economy and poverty reduction efforts in Tajikistan would suffer severe impacts.

Labour migration results in brain drain. Tajikistan's human capital resources, in terms of education and skills, are being rapidly eroded as a consequence of the decline of the educational system since independence on the one hand, and the loss of human capital through migration on the other. At the same time, there is arguably also a certain 'brain gain' as migrants return with new skills, knowledge, and contacts.

Labour migration entails very high social costs, as families are split for long periods of time and women and children have to assume additional economic and household roles. The number of permanently incomplete households also increases, as some migrants do not return.

Furthermore, the incidence of sexually transmitted diseases is increasing among other migrants as a consequence of the migration, with significant implications for poor rural women in particular. The high labour burden put on women and children while men are away reduces households' ability to maintain productive assets, including land, soil, common property, and infrastructure such as irrigation systems, resulting in both short- and long-term impacts especially on agricultural productivity. The labour burden also makes it harder for families to send children, often girls, to school, diminishing their future ability to escape poverty.

Basic Social Services

Many social indicators are improving, but significant challenges remain. In Tajikistan, nearly all indicators associated with long-term problems of human capital building – malnutrition, ill health, low levels of schooling – are more common among the poor. Dealing with these challenges requires effective social services, yet their quality and coverage need to be significantly improved; in fact, it is their deterioration that helps to explain many of these challenges in the first place.

Financial access to basic social services is also a serious issue, as public institutions regularly resort to informal payments from users to cover shortfalls. Public spending in both the health and

education sectors increased as a percentage of GDP from 0.95 per cent and 2.38 per cent in 2001, respectively, to 1.14 per cent and 3.51 per cent in 2005.¹⁰ Despite these increases, public spending is still below national targets, poorly targeted and delivered, and inadequately linked to policy reforms. In particular, the government has indicated that it intends to increase education spending to 6–7 per cent of GDP.



Although the most innovation and reform has occurred in the *education sector*, and Government spending there has risen in the past years, working conditions and quality of education remain low. Under-financing and poor management have aggravated the lack of resources and reduced the quality of education. Funding shortages have created a corresponding shortage of 13,000 teachers, and those that do teach are poorly paid, supplementing salaries with agricultural activities and small trade.¹¹ Approximately one fifth of all teachers have no formal training, while 38 per cent have no university qualification.

The main challenge for attendance arises in the upper grades of basic education, when drop off rates start to increase, particularly for girls. In grades 7–8, the attendance ratios are roughly 92 per cent, with 7–11 per cent differences between boys and girls. The net attendance ratios for grades 9 (age 15) and 10 (age 16) are 84 per cent and 70 per cent respectively, with gender gaps of 20 and 30 per cent.¹² The educational achievements of today's young generation – particularly girls – are lower than in the past, and constitute a long-term threat to economic growth and poverty reduction. There are also concerns about how much children learn at school. One recent study found that less than half of Grade 9 students mastered the essential competencies in natural science and mathematics.

¹⁰ World Bank communication.

¹¹ Economist Intelligence Unit, Tajikistan Country Profile 2006, p.15.

¹² [UNICEF Mid Term Review Report \(Draft\)](#)

80 per cent of operating schools are in need of major repair, and often lack heating, adequate sanitation and sewage, and electricity. The government has developed a National Strategy for Education Development in line with the PRSP and NDS and introduced reforms such as per capita financing and support of parent-teacher associations to improve the quality of education. The [Fast Track Initiative](#) will support an estimated 50 per cent increase in the education budget for 2006–2007.

The **health** sector has received less attention than the education sector and is in need of greater reform. At 1.6 per cent of GDP, health spending is low compared with other countries internationally. Health services

have deteriorated and have shifted costs to households. The health-care system is becoming increasingly dependent on informal payments for medical services and on foreign aid. The qualifications of medical personnel are declining and there is a shortage of health-care workers, particularly in rural areas. This is largely due to poor management of human resources and the low wages paid to health-

HIV/AIDS Update

The official number of HIV positive registered cases has reached 710, including 204 new cases in 2006 and the first two months of 2007. The results of the 2006 sentinel survey, conducted by the Ministry of Health, have shown high HIV infection rates among drug users, prisoners, and migrants: 15.8 per cent, 6.2 per cent, and 2.2 per cent respectively, in Dushanbe and Khujand cities. The survey results identified 0.5 per cent HIV prevalence among pregnant women. There are several officially reported HIV cases through blood transfusion. This alarming evidence indicates the rapid spread of HIV among Tajikistan's general population.

UNAIDS experts' estimates amount to approximately 10,000 HIV-infected people in the country mainly due to an increase in the number of intravenous drug users and sex workers. The country's socio-economic situation, which has led to widespread unemployment, poverty, and migration, is a prerequisite for the growing numbers of people infected with HIV.

care workers. All the above led to deterioration of the quality and access to health services, particularly for most vulnerable population groups. Private health providers have been limited, constrained by an unfavourable regulatory environment. Government reform has focused on restructuring the primary-care network and introducing per capita primary-care financing. However, government capacity remains weak, and the current absorption capacity for further foreign aid in this sector is low.

The *social protection system* does not adequately address the needs of the poor and vulnerable. It is in need of reform to ensure that its functions are performed efficiently and effectively, because a significant proportion of the population depends on these services. In spite of the fact that



budget spending on social welfare is on the rise in the country, the size of social benefits that are paid and the targeting of these benefits are still inadequate. The system of benefits and compensation needs to be optimised, as does the pension security system, and they need to be placed on a financially sound footing. There are still quite a number of children from poor,

single-headed, and/or dysfunctional households who are accommodated in institutions. Once they are accommodated, there is little monitoring over their condition, and they may stay there for many years with little contact with their families. De-institutionalisation is hindered by the lack of family-support services to address the full set of family vulnerabilities, and of family-based care alternatives which could be advanced through the establishment of a social work profession in the country's social protection system.

Access to *electricity, drinking water, and communications services* is inadequate. In spite of practically universal access to electricity, as well as an increase in the amount of electricity being generated, the availability of electricity continues to be irregular and the quality of the electricity supply is poor, particularly in the winter. As much as 40 per cent of the water consumed is not potable, and 41 per cent of the population uses water from public utilities that is of poor quality.

In spite of the fact that television broadcasting is available to 98 per cent of the population and radio broadcasting to 76.6 per cent, many people are not able to take advantage of these services because of frequent and prolonged power outages. At the same time, both landline and mobile telephone services are growing and are constantly being upgraded.

The government has begun to make a serious effort to restore the *highway system* and to build tunnels, roads, and bridges (including bridges linking Tajikistan and Afghanistan), and a number of preliminary steps have been taken to liberalise aviation and the railway system.

Rural Development

Incomplete agrarian reform constrains growth in the agricultural sector. Despite de jure privatisation, farmers do not have secure land use rights, and local government continues to interfere in free crop choices. Agricultural markets remain poorly developed and there is a large capital investment deficit. According to the State Statistics Committee, during the first ten months of 2006 the production of cotton fibre dropped by 8.9 per cent year on year, to around



100,000 tonnes. Falling cotton yields have been accompanied by a growing debt burden incurred by cotton farms under a complex system of production credit from intermediaries and the impoverishment of rural communities living in cotton growing regions. According to some estimates, the debt is nearing US\$400 million, but, as many of the lending agreements might prove not to be legally valid, a final figure is outstanding. The government now appears determined to tackle the growing cotton debt with international assistance. In September 2006 the Asian Development Bank (ADB) announced its intention to provide US\$12 million of credit to

the government to address the problem. The debt is likely to be tackled through a combination of buying out some loans and annulling others, and providing direct low-interest loans to farmers, thus bypassing intermediary companies.

Rural women are facing particularly severe problems. With so many men away on labour migration, women are the main labour force in the agricultural sector, but at the same time they do not have equal access to land and property, and are paid the lowest wages. Unemployment and the lack of coping mechanisms available to reduce vulnerability to risks and shocks are

causes of widespread poverty among women. Most women resort to seeking employment in the informal market, with little guarantee of securing a sustainable livelihood.

Natural Disasters and the Environment

Tajikistan is located in a region of high seismic activity. Earthquakes are frequent and represent a substantial threat in many parts of the country, specifically in urban environments, when potential earthquake magnitude can be as high as 8–9 on the Richter scale. In July 2006, a strong earthquake struck the district of Qumsangir, in the south of the country, destroying nearly 2,600 houses and affecting about 21,000 people. The search-and-rescue operations were immediately commenced in partnership with the international community, but covering all necessary humanitarian needs has been a problem.

Year	# of affected population	# of affected houses	# of people killed	Economic damage in TJS	Economic damage in US\$
2000	24036	3231	11	95,954,000.00	\$31,985,000.00
2001	12910	1,889	18	209,930,500.00	\$69,977,000.00
2002	145940	18542	41	130,200,500.00	\$40,547,009.00
2003	10,116	8041	20	67,558,000.00	\$22,666,667.00
2004	6725	3961	19	72,302,100.00	\$24,100,000.00
2005	9686	4789	47	103,666,000.00	\$34,555,333.33
2006	45,405	7873	30	104,625,000.00	\$30,326,086.96
Total	254,818	48,326	186	784,236,100.00	\$254,157,096.29

[table! : Summary Information on damages caused by natural disasters in Tajikistan between 2000 and 2006¹³]

In addition to earthquakes, the country endures severe recurrent floods, usually either in spring following heavy rains, or as a result of melting snow during the summer. Mudflows and landslides are also common, especially in foothills and mountainous areas. Some 85 per cent of Tajikistan’s area is threatened by mudflows, and 32 per cent of the area is situated in a high mudflow risk zone. Between 2000 and 2006, natural disasters killed 186 people and caused a

¹³ Information received from Committee of Emergency Situations and Civil Defiance at the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, prepared by UN Disaster Risk Management Project.

total damage of more than US\$200 million, showing the tremendous economic and social effects of disasters.

The country's proneness to natural disasters is not unrelated to the Soviet legacy of environmental abuses and the consequences of economic development for the country's natural resources. Since independence, the environmental situation, notably in the fields of soil erosion and water management, has continued to deteriorate to the point of posing acute problems in some areas. Tajikistan is a party to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the Government has taken steps to implement its obligations under the Convention. An ecological education programme and a National Strategy and Action Plan on Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity have been developed and are currently being rolled out. However, inadequate funding for environmental protection measures is aggravated by continuing low levels of environmental awareness among those using natural resources. Large investments combined with institutional and fiscal reforms in water management and to combat soil erosion are needed to reverse the negative trends and to make future economic development environmentally sustainable. Otherwise, environmental challenges such as soil erosion and water management will begin to constrain poverty reduction in rural areas. Economic growth will be illusory and unsustainable if it continues to be based on an inappropriate handling of natural resources.



Box: Water

The current improper management of Tajikistan's greatest capital, water, will have both short- and long-term implications for pro-poor growth. All water infrastructures, whether for supply and sanitation, irrigation or flood protection, are in poor condition. This negatively affects peoples' health, short- and long term productivity in agriculture and industry, and the productivity of ecosystem services. It leads to the alarming situation of increased numbers of waterborne diseases in the country. Long-term effects, although already apparent in many areas, will result from lack of (or ill-prioritised) investments, along with lack of reforms and coordination between relevant sectors and the water sector. To be efficient, investments in modernising the water infrastructure need to be accompanied by fiscal and institutional reforms. In addition, modernisation must be a mix of technological, managerial, and institutional upgrading that responds to stakeholders needs and integrates

Curbing Corruption and Improving Human Rights Observance

Joining the UN global initiative on *human rights* education by adoption of a Government Program on Human Rights Education, Tajikistan has achieved some significant benchmarks in this field. It introduced human rights as subject in secondary schools and developed a relevant curriculum and textbooks for grades 10 and 11, expected to be on pupils' desks in the 2007/2008 school year. Tajikistan has ratified all major human right treaties. In the last three years the country presented all national reports on their implementation engaging in dialogue with the civil society in the reporting process. The NGOs had the opportunity to express their views in alternative reports to the relevant treaty bodies.

Tajikistan has *poor governance ratings* relative to both Central Asia and the CIS. The most important institutions – the government administration and the judicial and law enforcement systems – are not performing effectively enough. There is still too much interference by government authorities at all levels, including law enforcement agencies, in the operations of economic entities as well as in the functioning of the judiciary and in activities of civil society structures, such as political parties, NGOs, religious associations and mass media. A new [law on public associations](#) has been passed on 12 May 2007 which has been received with apprehension by many stakeholders in the country's development process and civil society actors as it offers considerable leeway for the authorities to deny NGO establishment and formal registration, interfere in meetings and monitor public associations. The majority of problems in the human rights sphere arise from the weakness of the judicial system and lack of harmonisation of the country's legislation with its international human rights commitments, as well as inadequate enforcement mechanisms. Reform efforts have been slow and inconsistent especially in the area of strengthening the independence of judiciary, criminal procedure legislation and penitentiary system.

During [her visit to Tajikistan in April 2007](#), the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights noted that Tajikistan has reported under six of the major human rights instruments that it has ratified. She encouraged the government to deepen this engagement by setting up mechanisms to ensure that the recommendations from the human rights treaty bodies are fully implemented. Following the visit, President Rahmon, in his annual address to Parliament on April 30, announced plans to create a national human rights institution as a democratic institution to consolidate relations and cooperation between state agencies and civil society. Transparency International gives Tajikistan

a *high corruption score*, ranking it 17 out of 21 countries in the region. The first comprehensive study, based on Transparency International's Questionnaire, will be finalised by the end of 2007. The decision-making mechanism employed by government authorities remains complicated and is not transparent as far as the public

Gender in Figures

- Net attendance ratio, secondary school: girls, 72.7 per cent; boys, 88 per cent (MICS 2005)
- 2003 school dropout rate: twice as high among girls as among boys in rural areas and three times as high in urban areas (World Bank, TLSS)
- Share of female students in universities: 26.8 per cent (2006, National Statistics)
- Maternal mortality: 120 per 100,000 live births, with the indicator ranging from 126.3 to 842.1 per 100,000 live births in different regions (WB, 2003)
- Infant mortality: 65 per 1,000 live births; under-five mortality rate, 79 per 100,000 live births (MICS 2005)
- Share of women in local governments: 22.4 per cent (2004, National Statistics)

is concerned. Effective mechanisms for civil monitoring of government agencies have still not been developed, and the low wages earned by employees in the public and judicial sector encourage corruption. However, the Government, under the direct leadership of the President, has taken a set of serious actions to try to improve the situation and curb corruption. In



December 2006, the creation of the Agency on State Financial Control and Fight against Corruption, well staffed and empowered with a strong mandate under the President's direct control, was a major step in this direction. The National Anti-Corruption Strategy has been drafted and is currently undergoing public consultations. This document, commonly referred to as the President's White Paper,

outlines the key activities required to eradicate corrupt practices in the governmental, business, and social structures. Significant awareness-raising initiatives have taken place, aimed at strengthening parliamentary oversight, especially of budget and financial issues. The media has also become more vocal on the issue of corruption and has increasingly been exposing corrupt practices to the public eye.