



# TAJIKISTAN REPORT OF POST - 2015 NATIONAL CONSULTATIONS



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## Tajikistan Contributes to the Global Post- 2015 Development Agenda

The elaborate and highly extensive global conversations in place at different levels across the world to plan for a Post 2015 Global Development Agenda, offered the opportunity for Tajikistan to contribute to the dialogue by embarking upon a series of national consultations to reflect the aspirations and perspectives of a range of stakeholders on the Tajikistan they want to see beyond 2015. In this process, Tajikistan connected to and became a part of the global partnership to reach an inclusive and people-centred development agenda beyond 2015.

The Tajikistan National Development Strategy and its time frame are aligned with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) spanning up to end of 2015. The Tajikistan post-MDG consultations were regarded as an important contribution to the planning of the subsequent National Development Strategy of the Government and its vision beyond 2015, in particular by The Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, which holds responsibility for its elaboration.



The consultations offer an analytical base together with ideas and recommendations that would not only benefit the Government but broader stakeholders including civil society, private sector and development partners involved in Tajikistan, to better align their priorities, programming and interventions with the voices of the people from different walks of life, especially the marginalized.

### Methodology

The Tajikistan national consultations were organized by the United Nations (UN) System and involved the bulk of the UN Agencies, Programmes and Funds in the country and establishment of a special *ad hoc* Task Force. UNICEF was assigned by the UN Resident Coordinator to lead the process in close collaboration with the Office of the UN Resident Coordinator. All consultations included the participation of one or more UN Agency Resident Representatives (Resident Coordinator's Office, UNDP, UNICEF, WHO, ILO, WFP and UNHCR).

The approach involved the collective identification of key stakeholder groups for participation, and subsequently during the consultations, the selection of the globally defined thematic areas considered as priority by the participants for discussion. This approach was complemented by roundtable discussions for selected groups (Government participants and Private Sector); circulation of questionnaires (Parliament, Government and Private Sector); creating a synergy with on-going discussions on specific topics (Food Security and Nutrition, using the Food Security Classification consultations conducted by WFP) and consultations to review the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme through questionnaires; and the use of on-line surveys and social media. A set of framing questions by thematic area were developed beforehand to guide the discussion processes during all the sessions. Initial time was allocated to briefly review the

current status of Tajikistan vis-à-vis the achievement of MDGs and its implications for the future goal-setting and monitoring processes.

The consultations span from February 2013 and continued up to April for the face-to-face ones and up to mid-May 2013 for the online and social media components. A total of 1050 individuals representing different stakeholder groups and from different parts of the country actively took part in the consultations and offered their views and recommendations for shaping the future they desired for Tajikistan, and many more were informed that such a process was taking place in the country.

A Validation Conference has taken place on 3 June 2013 and all the groups participating in the consultations largely confirmed the results reflected in the current report.

## Spectrum of Consultations

#	Stakeholder Groups	Methodology	Number of participants #	Women (%)
1	Civil Society Organizations	Group works	48	54 %
2	Persons with disabilities and the elderly	Group works	34	47 %
3	Minorities	Group works	27	48 %
4	Women	Group works	29	100 %
5	Youth	Group works	52	42 %
6	Private Sector	Round table & questionnaire	23	22%
7	Government	Round table	22	33%
8	Parliament	Questionnaire	19	21%
9	Local Govt, NGOs and International Organizations (on Food Security and Nutrition)	Round tables	64	17%
10	General	On-line survey and Social media	704	
	<b>Total</b>		<b>1050</b>	

## Communication

A slogan was developed for the national consultations (“The World after 2015, the Tajikistan we Desire”) together with a logo in line with the global one, which were used throughout the process, as well as a special country-specific and simple pamphlet introducing the topic. A short video spot was prepared for use at the beginning of each of the sessions and for media to outline the rationale and process of the consultations, and to appeal to the public for their participation. A renowned Tajik authority was selected as the Goodwill Ambassador for this process, Professor Talbak Nazarov (former Foreign Minister and official participant of 2000 Millenium Summit in New York, who was featured in

the video). The start of the consultations was marked by a joint press conference involving the UN officials (Resident Coordinator and UNICEF Representative), the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, and Mr. Nazarov. Subsequently meetings were held with University students in two universities in Dushanbe, namely National University and Russian-Tajik Slavic University to raise awareness about the Tajikistan national consultations and to solicit their participation in the on-line and social media platforms. Other ongoing youth fora were also used to publicize the consultation process.

A webpage was dedicated to the National Consultation processes in Tajikistan at the UN Tajikistan website: <http://www.untj.org/talk/>, in conjunction with two main platforms where online discussions were conducted, including a specifically tailored survey and voting for Tajikistan at [www.untj.org/talk](http://www.untj.org/talk) and a UN Tajikistan facebook page: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/United-Nations-in-Tajikistan/272610259457432> to raise awareness about the consultations and to solicit feedback. UNFPA and the Office of the UN Resident Coordinator developed and coordinated the social media aspects of the consultations. Tajikistan citizens also participated in the MyWorld global voting platform.

## Partnerships

While the UN organizations were involved in the preparations and processes involved in conducting the consultations, a number of partnerships were also forged to support this process. These included the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, and the Center for Strategic Studies under the auspices of the President of the Republic of Tajikistan for the Government consultation and follow-up process; Tajikistan National Association of Managers and the Tajikistan Coordination Council of Business Associations for conducting the Private Sector consultation; The Tajikistan National NGOs' Association for facilitating participation of various stakeholders in the consultations; Youth NGOs, namely "We and Society" and Cultural and Education Center for Girls "TOMIRIS" , supporting the consultations with Youth conducted in Khujand and Kulob cities respectively; the Lower House of Parliament (Majilisi Oli) to coordinate the dissemination of questionnaires to various members of different Committees; Scientific Research Institute under the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection for coordinating the consultation with Persons with Disabilities and the Elderly.

## A Thematic Overview of Emerging Priorities for Tajikistan Post-2015

Seven stakeholder groups took part in group discussions on Tajikistan's main development challenges and future priorities: government representatives, youth, ethnic minorities, private sector representatives, women, Parliamentarians and people with disabilities and senior citizens. In addition, civil society representatives took part in all group discussions and also had a separate consultation event. The consultation process was met with a lot of enthusiasm by those who participated in it. Participants were pleased to have an opportunity to express their opinions and to have their voices



heard. Many participants felt that this consultative process establishes a model for participatory governance that deserves replicating.

In the group discussions, stakeholders took stock of existing development challenges. In that context, Tajikistan’s progress towards achievement of the MDGs was also reviewed. While it was clear that not all participants shared the same level of understanding of the MDGs and Tajikistan’s likelihood to achieve them, yet the MDGs formed an important backdrop to the discussions. In thematic discussions on health, the most explicit references were made to the MDGs. In relation to the health MDGs, participants agreed that there is a lot of outstanding work in Tajikistan, particularly on MDGs 4, 5, and 6. It was clear, therefore, that the post-2015 agenda should not be written on a clear slate, but should carry forward all unfinished business from MDGs.



After taking stock of the main development challenges and progress towards the MDGs, each stakeholder group identified its priorities for Tajikistan’s future development agenda. The emerging consensus is captured in the picture of the tree on this page. Each branch of the tree represents one of the priorities and the leaves on each branch indicate the stakeholder groups that identified this priority. From the picture, it is clear that education is seen as the top priority for the country, with seven stakeholder groups choosing this priority. Health and employment emerge as joint second priority, with five stakeholder groups choosing these topics as priority. Inequalities, food security and good governance follow, with four stakeholder groups each. Social protection was chosen by three groups, conflict prevention by two.

One group each identified energy and environment and population dynamics. In the below sections, one can get an an overview of the main issues discussed under each of the themes which at least two stakeholder groups chose as priority for the country’s future development.

It is interesting to note that the choice of priorities resulting from the group discussions is similar to the choice of priorities respondents made when responding to the survey posted on the UNTJ website. Here as well, education was chosen as the top priority, followed by health, social protection, promotion of entrepreneurship and economic growth. Respondents also attached high importance to governance issues. This is further confirmation that the outlines of the future development agenda for Tajikistan are becoming clear with the below findings, which are based on the views of participants representing different social groups and strata in the country.

## Education

Across all consultations, whether online or face-to-face, all stakeholder groups without exception highlighted the importance of priority attention to education for the future of Tajikistan. In an online survey on development priorities beyond 2015, 24% of respondents ranked education among the top three priorities – the highest of all topics listed. In the social media, many participants emphasized the importance of education, not just as a goal in itself, but also as a necessary condition for Tajikistan's future development. In a survey amongst Parliamentarians, education also came close to the top of the priority list, only surpassed by a thin margin by energy. The views that were expressed on education can be divided into four categories: access to education services, the quality of these services, financing and governance of the education sector, and education as a precondition for the achievement of other development goals for Tajikistan.

### Access to education

Access to pre-school education was highlighted as problematic particularly by women and civil society participants. Women indicated that the lack of pre-school education facilities also holds back women's participation in the labour market. People with disability pointed out that while the overall availability of early childhood education options is limited for the general population, access is even more problematic for children with special needs, as inclusive pre-school establishments are virtually non-existent. Women and civil society representatives argued strongly for rapid expansion of early learning opportunities, with women placing an emphasis on alternative models of pre-school facilities with greater involvement of parents and the wider community. Civil society participants warned that bureaucracy and burdensome taxation could get in the way of a rapid expansion of early childhood education. Both youth and women pointed to the importance of NGO and private sector involvement as a means to expand early learning opportunities. People with disability advocated for the establishment of model inclusive kindergartens, open to all children, including those with a disability.

While enrolment at basic education level is high, participants pointed to remaining barriers for specific categories of children to access basic education. Categories mentioned by participants include children with disability, girls (particularly at higher grades), children of poor families, children of labour migrants, children of refugees and children who belong to ethnic minorities and street children. Access for these children is problematic for different reasons. People with disability point out that children with physical disability struggle with the lack of appropriate infrastructure in schools. All children with disability face the absence of adapted teaching material and limited ability of teaching staff to deliver inclusive education. People with disability also highlight that people's attitudes towards disability are shaped by stereotypes. Stigma and discrimination further complicate access to education for children



with disability. Girls face problems with access to education particularly at higher grades of basic education, as well as with access to vocational and higher education. Women, youth and civil society participants put particular emphasis on gender inequalities in the access to education. Early marriage and societal gender norms and values are highlighted as key reasons underlying this problem. Youth in Sughd also mentioned the fact that the hijab is banned in schools as a potential barrier for girls' education. Children of poor families and children of labour migrants also face difficulties in accessing education, because of the direct and indirect costs of schooling. As youth in Khatlon point out, for example, schools collect money for school books, which are expensive. In addition, youth in Khatlon and participants in a host of other consultation sessions point out that there are informal payments to be made, which may be prohibitive for the poor. Youth in Khatlon also point out that some schools are located far, which can make them inaccessible, particularly for those who don't have the means to pay for transport. As pointed out by representatives of ethnic minorities, their children face access problems because of a lack of schools offering education in the mother tongue, with qualified teachers. They also complain of a lack of sufficient numbers of textbooks in minority languages. People belonging to ethnic minorities also feel excluded from decision making in education, without representation that can ensure their voice being heard in the administration.

A host of solutions was suggested to remedy problematic access to basic education for specific categories of children. For children with disability, people with disability recommend programmes to improve physical access to schools, the development of adapted textbooks and classroom equipment that facilitates inclusion, and pre-service as well as in-service training on inclusive education. The need for a campaign to address stigma and discrimination and promote a positive attitude - focused on ability - was also highlighted. People with disability also argued for the implementation of the Government Concept on Inclusive Education. These suggestions were largely echoed by women and civil society participants. Government participants in the consultation also recognized the need to promote the inclusion of children with disability in education. When it comes to girls' access to education, women suggest that one option to encourage girls to stay in school beyond grade 9 would

*"In Tajikistan, many children study up to 9<sup>th</sup> grade, their parents don't let them continue their studies. This applies particularly to girls who complete 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Due to not being educated, women cannot protect their rights."* Respondent in the UNTJ survey.

be to extend compulsory education to grade 11. They also argue that specific steps should be taken to address early marriage. Women, youth and civil society representatives highlight the importance of addressing societal gender norms, which currently attach a lower priority to education for girls, particularly beyond grade 9. Women also pointed out that there may be a

need for additional or informal education models to make education accessible to girls and others who are out of school. Representatives from ethnic minorities argued for their greater involvement in decision making in the education sector as a way to overcome their children's access problems. They also suggested that publishing mother-tongue textbooks in electronic form may be one cost-effective way to overcome the lack of these textbooks. No specific solutions were suggested in relation to the access problems faced by children from poor families and children of migrants. But some solutions offered on the reduction of informal payments in education highlighted below may also be of relevance here.

A wide range of stakeholders pointed to problematic access to vocational and higher education. Particularly when it comes to vocational education, all stakeholders, not least private sector representatives, voiced concerns about insufficient vocational training opportunities. The problems highlighted above related to access to basic education also apply to vocational and higher education, but are much more pronounced at this level. When it comes to higher education, youth in particular highlighted the level of formal and informal payments, which makes access to higher education prohibitively expensive for the poor. They also complained of lack of transparency in admission to higher education institutions and the way in which students are selected for bursaries and special programmes. Women, youth and civil society representatives pointed out that girls' dropout beyond grade 9 is high and as a result, the gender gap in vocational and higher education is considerable. Similarly, barriers to access to higher and vocational education for children with disability and children of ethnic minorities are even higher than in basic education. All stakeholders, including Government representatives, recognized the need to expand vocational training opportunities. But while stakeholders are united in the need to improve access to vocational education, some stakeholders emphasise that the content of vocational education also needs addressing. Private sector and civil society representatives in particular point out that vocational education should be closely aligned with the needs of the labour market. People with disabilities made a plea for the development of vocational education opportunities for children with special needs.



### Quality

Beyond access to education, all stakeholders groups also commented on the quality of education. The content of the school curriculum was discussed by youth, women, private sector and civil society representatives. Several stakeholder groups expressed the concern that the current curriculum does not prepare children adequately for life after school. Private sector representatives, women and youth expressed the opinion that the curriculum was not sufficiently attuned to the needs of the labour market. In this respect, youth pointed out that the school curriculum should place greater emphasis on sciences and information technology. Private sector representatives pointed out that the current quality of education harms their ability to recruit qualified personnel for job vacancies. Youth and civil society representatives also highlighted the need for the curriculum to address topics such as rights awareness. Youth also indicated a need for values such as peace, tolerance and dialogue to be incorporated into the curriculum. Stakeholders pointed out the need for a comprehensive curriculum review, with a greater accent on marketable and life skills. Civil society representatives called for the curriculum to be transformed from a knowledge-based to a competency-based one. Youth commented on the quality of textbooks and asked for greater expertise to be applied in the development of textbooks.

*"The quality of education has severely deteriorated and we risk becoming an illiterate population."*  
Entrepreneur, private sector consultation.

The quality of teaching and teaching methods were also mentioned as priority areas for attention by youth, private sector and civil society representatives. There were calls to make teaching methods

more interactive and learner-focused. But at the same time, stakeholders recognized that teachers lack both the skills, incentives and motivation to adopt new pedagogical methods. Youth in Khatlon, for example, highlighted the need to increase teacher salaries for them to be more motivated and youth in

*“Poverty is lack of electricity in winter, schools without teachers, diploma without knowledge.”*

Female participant commenting on the consultation’s Facebook page.

Sughd argued for special subsidies and incentives for recently graduated teachers, to attract and retain them in this profession. As youth in Khujand pointed out, the low welfare level of teachers leads to many of them choosing to become migrant workers in order to cater to

their families’ needs. Government representatives recognized the need to increase wages in the education sector. Stakeholders also expressed the need to improve both pre-service and in-service teacher training to equip teachers with the required skills and competencies to deliver new teaching methods. People with disability and women stressed that there is also a need for teacher training and the development of specialists focused on inclusion of children with disability. Another recommendation to improve learning conditions for children with disabilities is to help expand learning sign language for persons with hearing impairments and encourage their language self-sufficiency. It would also help including bilingual method of learning - both sign and verbal language – for better absorption of teaching materials for by children with hearing impairments.

Inadequate school infrastructure also has an impact on education quality. Both youth and civil society representatives spoke of inadequate infrastructure, including for water and sanitation. The lack of electricity is a problem, particularly in winter, when classrooms are dark and cold. When it comes to equipment, youth and civil society representatives pointed out the lack of computers and visual equipment and materials for all subjects being taught. As a way of finding a solution, women called for close monitoring of the implementation of the National Strategy for Education Development. Youth and women both stressed that private sector and NGO involvement should be facilitated and youth pointed out that licensing for private schools should be simplified.

Youth stated that the quality of the education process can be undermined by the mobilization of pupils and students for seasonal agricultural works and for public events and celebrations. They called for a ban on the diversion of pupils and students to non-educational activities during school time. Youth also highlighted their concern about a recent Ministry of Education decree limiting students’ participation in events funded and organized by NGOs and development agencies, saying that this will restrict their learning and development opportunities.

### Financing and governance

There is an overall lack of funding for the education sector, as pointed out by civil society representatives. In addition, the capacity for financial management at school level is weak. Under-funding of the sector, combined with weak financial management leads to a number of problems. Youth in particular feel that schools are not sufficiently accountable to parents and pupils about the use of funds allocated to them. One problem relates to formal and informal payments for education. As youth report in their consultations, schools collect a variety of payments, such as contributions for textbooks, for the school’s newspaper subscriptions and for other purposes. This obviously puts a burden particularly on pupils from poorer households.

Youth asked for all informal payments to be stopped. The requirement for pupils to wear a uniform also came in for criticism by youth. They complain that the cost of the uniform can be as high as TJS

*“Education is the most important issue, on which poverty reduction, cultural enrichment, health and many other aspects of life depend. If there is education, all else follows! No uneducated person can eliminate poverty, reduce mortality or fight disease.”* Female participant commenting on the consultation’s Facebook page.

400 (about US\$80) and that the schools oblige pupils to purchase the uniform from one supplier, which may inflate the cost. Youth in particular called for greater public accountability of schools and more active participation of parents in school management. They also suggested the development of ethics standards for both teachers and students.

Corruption at all levels of the education system was mentioned by youth and civil society representatives. This is related to obtaining higher grades for exams and securing a place in a particular educational establishment, particularly in higher education. Youth suggested a number of creative solutions to counter corruption, in addition to the call for greater public accountability and the development of ethics standards mentioned above. One idea brought forward in the youth consultations is to make the management of higher education institutions independent from the Ministry of Education and for the management of these institutions to be elected. They also suggested that informal payments should be eradicated and banking introduced for the payment of all regular fees, including tuition. Youth feel that if they were able to select a teacher to administer tests and exams, this would reduce the practice of paying for marks. Youth, ethnic minorities and civil society representatives all called for greater participation of parents and communities in the management of education facilities and the education sector.



### Education as precondition to achieve other development goals

All stakeholder groups looked at education not only as an important development goal in itself, but also as a precondition to achieve broader development goals. Civil society stakeholders, youth and women all pointed out that people’s low levels of awareness of their rights and entitlements harms them and that one of the ways to overcome this is to strengthen the education system. Youth specifically pointed out that low levels of education and illiteracy can create an environment in which conflicts can easily emerge.

A variety of stakeholders, including Government and the private sector, remarked that education is a pre-condition for economic development. Youth, private sector and Government all highlighted that most labour migrants from Tajikistan only have basic education with limited vocational skills and poor rights awareness. This means that the remittances they can generate are limited. Investment in their education and vocational training would increase the economic return from labour migration. Similarly, private sector representatives complain that it is hard for them to recruit adequately qualified staff.

Youth and civil society add that education does not prepare young people well to establish a business. Investments in education are therefore critical for Tajikistan's economic development.

In addition, stakeholders raise a number of development issues on which public awareness is low, which puts a brake on progress on these topics. For example, civil society representatives focus on low awareness of climate change and environmental degradation, youth speak of low levels of awareness of governance-related issues, and women highlight low awareness of health and nutrition among the population. A competency-based curriculum with greater emphasis on life skills would go a long way in addressing some of these concerns.

## Health

Health was also given high priority by participants in the post-2015 consultations. All but two stakeholder groups (private sector representatives and Parliamentarians) considered health a priority issue. In the UNTJ online survey, access to quality social services, including health and social protection, was the second most frequently mentioned topic amongst the top three priorities for Tajikistan beyond 2015, at 13%. The contributions from participants in the post-2015 consultation process on health can be clustered into four categories: the burden of disease; access to health care services; the quality of these services; and financing and governance of the health sector.

### Burden of disease

When speaking of health-related priorities beyond 2015, stakeholders were quick to point that there is still considerable unfinished business related to the health-focused MDGs, in particular MDGs 4 (child mortality), 5 (maternal health) and 6 (HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases). Women, ethnic minorities and civil society representatives all point out that maternal and child mortality levels remain worryingly high. Women and youth expressed doubt that the improvement shown in official data reflects the true situation. Youth say that there are still a significant number of home births, particularly in mountainous regions, which contributes to child and maternal mortality.



Women and civil society representatives also expressed concern about the increasing number of HIV and tuberculosis infections. Youth are concerned about the high level of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Women suggest that mandatory medical examinations before marriage may help to reduce the spread of HIV and STDs and may also highlight other health issues. Women feel that the State is not paying sufficient attention to the prevention and treatment of tuberculosis and call for special attention to the situation in closed institutions. Many stakeholders agreed that since Tajikistan has not yet reached the targets for MDGs 4, 5 and 6, they should continue to receive priority attention beyond 2015.



In addition, various stakeholders spoke of new health challenges that need attention. Women noted that they perceive an increase in the prevalence of cancer, especially among women. They feel that there is a need to establish a cancer screening and prevention programme. Representatives from ethnic minorities raised the issue of marriage between relatives and expressed the opinion that this is the cause of congenital physical and mental disabilities. They suggest that people should be educated on the risk of marriage between relatives and that religious leaders should be mobilized to discourage this practice.

*“As first priority, it is necessary to create conditions in mountain districts and to activate programmes and strategies to reduce child mortality in Tajikistan.”* Participant in the consultation with ethnic minorities in Khujand.

This opinion was echoed in the consultation with Government representatives. In the civil society consultation, occupational health and safety was mentioned as an area for more focused attention. Participants felt that private employers do not always comply with the Labour Code, for example in terms of legal provisions on working hours, and this has health implications. Private sector representatives look at the link between employment and health from a different angle, expressing the need to control the spread of HIV, tuberculosis and other significant diseases in the context of employment. Civil society representatives also noted that the impact of climate change on health is not yet sufficiently understood and should be studied.

*“Intra-familial marriages need to be reduced to bring down childhood disabilities through awareness raising and the use of the mass media.”* Government representative.

Many different stakeholder groups commented on the population’s low level of awareness on health-related issues. They see this as one root cause of a continued high burden of morbidity and mortality. Civil society representatives, women, people with disabilities and Government all agreed on this issue. Civil society stakeholders pointed out that there is a need to strengthen early childhood development through the promotion of improved parenting and care practices, in order to establish a responsive, nurturing, stimulating and safe environment for children under three years of age. People with disability were particularly concerned about the low level of awareness on reproductive health amongst their peers and are keen to see this addressed. Government representatives highlighted the need to improve the awareness of labour migrants and rural youth on HIV/AIDS and STIs.

Women also emphasized the important of awareness-raising of vulnerable populations on HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria, pointing in particular at labour migrants, youth, commercial sex workers and their families. Civil society representatives argued for the re-introduction of medical rooms in educational facilities, which used to exist during the Soviet times. They suggest such medical rooms could play an important role in promoting healthy lifestyles amongst young people. Youth agree on the importance of promoting health lifestyles. Women advocated for the introduction of healthy lifestyles as a mandatory subject into the curricula of educational institutions at different levels. Several stakeholder groups also highlighted that mass media can play a much more proactive role in promoting health lifestyles and educating the population on health-related issues. Participants in the ICPD questionnaire echoed similar concerns as noted above.

### Access to health care services

According to the stakeholders participating in the post-2015 consultations, access to health care remains problematic. Several stakeholders (youth, women, ethnic minorities, people with disability, old people and civil society) highlighted physical distance to facilities as a barrier for people to access health care services. This is particularly true for people living in rural and mountainous areas. Women who live far from a maternity department and who go into labour also face challenges. Physical access is also particularly problematic for people with disabilities, because of the difficulties they face in getting to a medical facility and because the infrastructure of medical facilities is not adapted to ensure accessibility for people with a disability. Elderly people also encounter problems with the physical accessibility of health care facilities. Youth complain about the absence of high quality ambulance services, which could help people accessing medical facilities in a timely manner.

The affordability of health care services is also a major factor. This was highlighted by women, youth and civil society representatives. The out-of-pocket expenditures in Tajikistan are high. Women warned of the consequences of the high cost of health care, which they see contributing to home baby deliveries, which in their view in turn negatively impact on child and maternal mortality. It is the poor who are hurt most by the high cost of health care, as civil society representatives point out. The high cost of medical services may prevent them from seeking treatment. On the other hand, the high costs of treatment may drive people into deeper poverty. Participants in the ICPD questionnaire argued for the expansion of contraceptive coverage and reduction of abortions. The elderly particularly suffer from soaring of prices for medical services, although if provided medical support they could still continue making contributions to society.

Civil society representatives also highlighted that due to costs involved, the poor might delay obtaining birth certificates for their children, which may be an obstacle for these children to access services. Payments for health care consist of a mix of formal and informal payments. Youth and civil society representatives explain that one main problem is the lack of clarity on which services should be provided free of charge and which are to be paid for. As a result, people are unaware of their rights and entitlements and youth participating in the consultation alleged that this may lead unscrupulous health providers to exploit this ignorance. Women complain that, even though delivering in hospital is supposed to be a free health service, pregnant women are told to buy lots of accessories just before delivering, which they feel runs contrary to the Government policy. Youth and civil society representatives advocated for the introduction of health insurance to overcome the financial barriers to seeking health care. Representatives from ethnic minorities argued that Tajikistan should develop its own pharmaceutical industry, to reduce the cost of drugs.

Apart from physical and financial barriers to accessing health care, specific population categories encounter problems either because of discrimination or because the specialized services they require do not exist. Civil society representatives noted that people living with HIV/AIDS and sexual minorities face discrimination when they seek health care, due to the stigma attached to their condition. They argue for improvements in the legal protection of people living with HIV/AIDS. People with disabilities face some degree of discrimination as well, but they also complain about the lack of specialized services. In particular, they argue for the training of health staff in early diagnosis of disability in children, which would make early intervention possible. They also advocate for the training of

pediatricians in working with children with disabilities. A third point they advocate for is the development of psychological services. Elderly people also argued that there is a lack of specialized services they require and they feel that they are not given due attention in the medical establishment. The need to develop palliative care was highlighted in this respect. Civil society representatives argue that ratification and signing of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Convention on the Rights of Older Persons will help towards getting the medical needs of these population categories duly recognized. Women highlighted the importance of ensuring access of prisoners to medical services.

### Quality of health services

Stakeholders from civil society organisations, youth and women mentioned that the infrastructure of health facilities is dilapidated. Investment in health infrastructure since independence has not kept up with the needs of the sector. The water and sanitation situation in health facilities is poor and hygiene standards are low. Youth expressed their deep concern and the fear they experience whenever they visit a medical establishment. They worry about getting infected with HIV or other viruses and bacteria due to poor hygiene and safety practices. Youth and women also point out that there is a lack of essential and modern equipment in medical facilities. Stakeholders agree that infrastructure, equipment and health and safety standards in medical facilities need addressing urgently.

All stakeholders who discussed health care pointed to the quality of medical personnel. In the eyes of youth, women, ethnic minorities, people with disability and civil society representatives, medical personnel is not sufficiently professionally competent. Youth participants add that the most skilled health professionals have left the country to work abroad, or are planning to do so. Stakeholders also recognize that medical personnel are poorly motivated and have low incentives, with low salaries. Concerns about the competency of health personnel cause stakeholders to worry about the accuracy of diagnosis, the appropriateness of prescribed drugs and therapies, and the risks of hospital-based infections and possible adverse outcomes of treatment. Three main solutions are proposed by stakeholders. The first one is to invest in the training of health staff and to boost the quality of medical education in general. The second one focuses on incentivizing health workers with appropriate salaries. And the third one is to focus particularly on creating attractive conditions for young health workers and those working in rural areas, which will motivate them to join and continue in the profession and to work in more challenging locations.

*“It is very scary for me to visit a doctor. Every time I see dirty consultation rooms, unsanitary equipment, non-use of disposable medical supplies (gloves, surgical blades, dental equipment, etc.).” Participant in the youth consultation in Khujand.*

Stakeholders highlighted the absence of specialized services for people with disabilities and the elderly. But in addition, to the extent these services do exist, participants in the consultations point out that they are of insufficient quality.

Concerns were also raised about the quality of pharmaceutical drugs. Worries were expressed that many drugs on the market are of poor quality, expired, ineffective or outright dangerous. This calls for stronger regulation of the pharmaceutical market. Young people were also concerned about the

relations between medical personnel, pharmacies and pharmaceutical companies, which may lead to the situation when doctors prescribe drugs that are too expensive or not required for treatment.

Given their many concerns raised about the quality of health care services, ethnic minorities suggested to establish a monitoring system on the quality of such services. Youth said that the Ministry of Health should control the quality of health services more rigorously. Youth saw a potential solution in the development of private health care services. Women argued for the development of the scientific potential of Tajikistan, to work towards the treatment of common diseases in accordance with international standards.

### Financing and governance

Civil society representatives expressed the view that the health sector is under-financed in Tajikistan and argued that the Government budget allocation for Health should increase to up to 6% of GDP. Government representatives in the consultation agreed with the need to increase funding for the health sector, with a focus on priorities such as maternal and child health. Women pointed out the danger of the continued reliance of the health sector on external financing. They urged Government to budget appropriately, bearing in mind that some external funding sources (for example for HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and immunization) may be coming to an end. Government needs to be ready to take over funding from domestic resources.

But apart from the overall level of funding for the sector, stakeholders are also concerned about weaknesses in the effectiveness and efficiency of public spending on health. Civil society pointed out that the financing of the sector continues to be biased towards hospital care. Representatives from ethnic minorities also feel that funds are not utilized rationally. Youth representatives call for a comprehensive financing reform in the health sector. Youth, civil society and private sector representatives are united in highlighting that there is scope for stronger public-private partnerships in the health sector. Also, there is scope for better coordination between state and non-state actors in health care and a cross-sectoral approach to health issues needs to be promoted. Legal reform is required to facilitate private-public partnerships and cross-sectoral collaboration.

*“There are many medicines that should be given to patients for free, but unfortunately, not all citizens know about this and our doctors exploit this.”*  
Participant in the youth consultation in Khujand.

The inadequacy of funding for the health sector and the inefficiencies in spending give rise to a host of problems. Under access, stakeholders highlighted the high level of out-of-pocket expenditure on health and explained how this harms the affordability of health care, particularly for the poorest. Under quality, stakeholders noted how low salaries lead to poor motivation and make it difficult to attract and retain qualified staff. They showed that this leads to a situation where medical personnel try to complement their regular salary by receiving or demanding informal payments, or enter into agreements with pharmacies and pharmaceutical companies that may provide them with financial benefits.

Youth in particular feel strongly that it is difficult to have health and medical workers accountable. They note that medical errors are a common occurrence and that health and medical personnel do not take responsibility for their errors. Similarly, youth participants complain that according to their

experiences doctors may abuse their authority. They feel that Government is unresponsive and that those who break the professional standards and boundaries are still not held accountable by anyone.

Several stakeholders expressed doubts about the reliability of medical statistics. Young people think the real facts on morbidity and mortality tend to be hidden. Women also expressed the opinion that official statistics do not reflect the real picture. Government representatives in the consultation agreed that medical statistics need improving, particularly when it comes to home births and infant and maternal mortality. Ethnic minorities suggest that many of the governance issues in the health sector may be addressed by introducing and monitoring an ethics code for health staff.

## Employment

Virtually all stakeholder groups participating in the post-2015 consultations spent at least some time discussing the problem of unemployment and the importance of creating new job opportunities. Parliamentarians confirmed that unemployment, unfavourable employment conditions and low wages are amongst the top priority issues raised with them by the electorate. Employment is critical in achieving Millennium Development Goal 1 – the elimination of hunger and poverty, which according to a third of respondents in the UNTJ Survey on priorities post-2015 should remain a priority. The views expressed on employment during the post-2015 consultation process can be divided into four categories – the current level of unemployment and inefficiencies in the labour market; employment and employment conditions; labour migration; and job creation and private sector development.

### Unemployment and inefficiencies of the labour market



Youth, civil society and private sector representatives and Government all highlighted unemployment amongst youth as a particularly pressing problem. There are simply far too few jobs for the numbers of school graduates who enter the job market every single year. Youth representatives are concerned that those job vacancies that do exist are often not filled in a transparent, merit-based manner. They explain that to obtain a job, you need to have connections or pay bribes. As a result, young people participating in the consultations reported that many of their peers had little faith in their future in Tajikistan. It is no

surprise, they report, that many young people see labour migration as the only viable livelihood strategy. As noted also in the education section, the current education system prepares students poorly for the modern labour market. In general education, the emphasis is on knowledge rather than competencies. Business and employment-related skills are not given attention. Vocational education is not sufficiently developed and not well attuned with the needs of the labour market. This leads private sector representatives to note, with despair, that despite high levels of unemployment they are unable to find suitable staff for the vacancies they have.



Youth, women, Government, private sector and civil society representatives all agree that the link between education and the labour market is broken, creating a major inefficiency in the labour markets. According to views expressed by stakeholders, the general education curriculum needs revising, vocational education needs development and students need to be encouraged to select topics for study that will prepare them better for the labour market, with a greater emphasis on sciences, economics and business skills. Youth also suggested that the spirit of voluntarism should be encouraged, creating opportunities for students to do voluntary work during their holidays, thus gaining useful experience which they may use in future employment. Women say that vocational training and professional education should also be made available to adults. In addition, youth feel that the virtual absence of recruitment agencies is also an obstacle for the smooth operation of the labour market, which should be overcome.

*“Even with so much unemployment, we can’t find adequate technical expertise.” Entrepreneur, speaking at the private sector consultation.*

Stakeholders also pointed out that fixing the broken link between the education system and the labour market requires a solid understanding of the labour market and its demands. Civil society representatives, youth and Government highlighted that labour market surveys are not conducted frequently enough in order for the education system to adjust itself dynamically to the changing needs of the market. Labour market surveys and other pieces of research on employment and unemployment need to be conducted more frequently. Youth offered the idea that even in the absence of research, simply promoting engagement between the private sector and the education sector may bring important changes. Currently, they feel, there is insufficient interaction between the two.



Where discrimination occurs, it gives rise to further inefficiencies in the labour market. Youth highlight discrimination on the basis of political convictions, religion and nationality in recruitment. Women note gender-based discrimination and people with disability report on discrimination of their peers. Women note that gender stereotypes and traditions make it harder for them to obtain jobs. They also feel that there is an unspoken ceiling of 35 years, above which it is even harder for women to find employment. Women also point out that girls tend to drop out of school earlier than boys, which also sets them back to the labour market. Industries that used to employ a lot of women, such as the textile industry, have stagnated. Women also say that the lack of pre-school facilities limits their ability to take up employment. People with disability are of the view that not enough jobs are being created specifically for them. As they discussed under education, they feel that there is insufficient attention to vocational education for people with a disability. Legal provisions on job creation for people with disability are not implemented. Not enough is being done to facilitate self-employment of people with disability at home, including through grants. Discrimination on the basis of age is also a very serious problem. People who have achieved pension age (58-63 years old) are forced to leave their work, and their huge

potential, knowledge, skills and willingness to work for the benefit of society is left unappreciated by the Government and society.

### Employment and employment conditions

Youth and civil society representatives explained that even for those fortunate to have a job, levels of wages are often not meeting minimum levels of living standards and are just too low to meet daily needs of a worker and/or his family. Gender-based discrimination also plays out at this level, with women reporting sex-based wage differentials. Government representatives recognized the need to gradually increase salary levels, particularly in critical sectors such as education. Youth point out that jobs do not come with the required social benefits and social protection measures. Work conditions are often also not acceptable, for example in terms of lack of protective clothing in certain professions. For those who work in the informal sector, conditions are usually considerably worse. Civil society representatives suggest that the low level of awareness of Labour Code and employment rights leads to rights violations of and by both employees and employers. They suggest that Trade Unions should play a more pro-active role in defending workers' rights and to encourage participatory decision making.

### Labour migration

Given the high levels of unemployment, low wages and unsatisfactory employment conditions, it is not surprising that so many citizens of Tajikistan choose to become labour migrants. Particularly young people from rural areas migrate in great numbers, according to civil society stakeholders. Participants in the post-2015 consultations recognized the importance of migration for Tajikistan's economy and for poverty reduction and noted that migration will be part of Tajikistan's economic reality well beyond 2015.

*"May migrants, who toil in the cities of Russia, where nobody protects their rights, return to their motherland, where their wives and children are waiting for them."* Participant in the UNTJ survey.

At the same time, stakeholders show their concern about the social impact of migration.

Civil society representatives point out to the stress migration places on families left behind and speculate about the impact on children's school attendance and the incidence of child labour. Several stakeholders expressed concerns about the working and living conditions of migrant labourers and stated that they may be open to right violations, given that their rights awareness is generally low and there are no strong mechanisms to defend their rights. Participants in the ICPD questionnaire stressed on measures for the prevention of human trafficking among migrants. The Government representatives in the consultation also expressed concern about this and indicated the need for a more proactive migration policy, regulating migration flows and ensuring rights awareness and social protection mechanisms for migrants. They also suggested building the awareness of migrant labourers on HIV/AIDS and other diseases, to ensure they make healthy lifestyle choices while abroad.

Stakeholders realize that migration is an ongoing reality and therefore made a number of suggestions to promote a higher return of workers from migrant labour. This includes suggestions to ensure that migrant labourers are better educated, which will allow them to earn higher wages in their destination country. Youth, private sector, Government representatives and participants in the ICPD questionnaire made this suggestion. Women and Government representatives also suggested that special measures

should be taken to encourage productive investment of remittances sent by migrant labourers. According to women, remittances are not always used to the best economic effect. Government representatives suggest strengthening the banking literacy of migrant labourers. They also suggested

*“We need to address poor women. Women are a great strength of society. Women’s entrepreneurship needs to be supported in more sophisticated areas and those dealing with technology. We don’t need grants to set up embroidery classes, we can do that on our own!”* Woman entrepreneur speaking at the private sector consultation.

extending soft loans for business development amongst migrants and the involvement of migrants in local business associations.

### **Job creation and private sector development**

For all stakeholders, it is clear that the long-term solution to Tajikistan’s employment problems lies in job creation and that

Government strategies should become more focused on employment creation as a central policy objective. Private sector representatives argue that there should be a special emphasis on promoting labour-intensive industries. Many stakeholders are agreed that special attention is needed for job creation for youth, for women and for people with disabilities. Youth argue for special incentives to be created for young professionals, to attract them to a job and retain them in the country. Women advocate for training programmes and credit schemes to help more women to become gainfully employed. Government representatives are convinced of the need to increase the legal literacy of women, to ensure women’s access to land and to promote entrepreneurship amongst women. They suggest that wives of migrants and young girls should be targeted in these efforts. For all stakeholders, it is clear that the long-term solution to Tajikistan’s employment problems lies in job creation and that Government strategies should become more focused on employment creation as a central policy objective.

Stakeholders are fully aware that job creation is only possible on the back of a vibrant private sector. But they express their concern that there are factors that hold back private sector development. These are partly related to a poor enabling environment, where credit facilities and other financial services are not readily available and electricity cuts are frequent in many parts of the country. Other factors are direct disincentives for private sector actors, such as corruption, cumbersome processes and excessive red tape, high taxation and excessive Government interventions. Stakeholders know that unless these constraints to private sector development are removed, the prospect for job creation of the scale that is required is dim.

*“As soon as an entrepreneur starts establishing his business, a gang of all sorts of inspectors arrives and he may as well forget about his intentions.”*  
Participant in the UNTJ Survey.

Civil society representatives argue for a strong social dialogue between Government, employers and workers as a precondition to tackle the problems described above.

## **Inequalities**

Participants in the post-2015 consultations recognised that development challenges and opportunities are experienced differently by different social groups and strata of the population. Four stakeholder

groups chose to explicitly focus on these inequalities in their deliberations: women, youth, people with disabilities and civil society representatives. Beyond these focused discussions on inequalities, examples of inequalities were offered by participants in all consultations. Stakeholders noted that some population categories are more deprived than others and suggestions were offered on how to address these inequalities. This section does not repeat the specific discussions on inequality under each theme. Rather, it gives an overview of the emerging consensus on which population categories face more pronounced levels of deprivation in Tajikistan. It also highlights how inequality manifests itself, the consequences it may have, and how it may be addressed in general terms.

Stakeholders identified the following types of inequality in the society and economy of Tajikistan: inequality by gender, by economic status, by disability status, by age, by region of origin, by ethnicity and by clan. Inequality manifests itself in socio-economic status, in access to social services and benefits, in access to assets and capital, in access to jobs and economic opportunities, in access to justice, and in political power and influence. In some cases, inequality is the result of differences in opportunity. In other cases, it is the result of discrimination. And often inequality is the result of the two combined. Inequality by gender, by disability status and by age received most attention in the post-2015 consultations.

*“Take away the section on what ethnicity citizens of Tajikistan belong to (in identity documents). Let them be called Tajikistanis, irrespective of their ethnicity.” Participant in the youth consultation in Khujand.*

### Inequality by gender

Gender inequality is one of the most pervasive forms of inequality in Tajikistan’s society and economy. Women listed how this inequality manifests itself. Women in Tajikistan have little or no access to land, property or financial resources. They have limited access to education beyond compulsory level and struggle to continue their vocational or higher education. Women have limited access to information and are less likely to have their voices heard in the decision making process. Women and girls are also frequently the victims of gender-based violence, be it physical, sexual, psychological or economic in nature. Large scale migration of (mainly) men has increased the burden of women and girls staying behind making them in many cases *de-facto* heads of households. Participants noted that despite many promising laws, policies and programmes, there is little progress towards gender equality. The women who participated in the consultation identify the need for further legislative reform and the development of mechanisms to enforce existing laws, such as the newly adopted domestic violence law. All new laws, strategies and programmes should undergo a mandatory gender screening before they are adopted. They would like to see enhanced representation of women at managerial positions in all branches of power and argue for the application of soft and rigid quotas in this respect. The mass media should play an important role in addressing gender stereotypes. Women say that early marriages should be eliminated as a matter of priority and opportunities for girls to complete vocational or higher education should be expanded. Special programmes should be adopted to support



women entrepreneurs. Finally, women also suggest that participatory governance with an emphasis on transparency and accountability will go a long way towards addressing inequality.

### Inequality by disability status

People with disability also face multiple deprivations. They face stigma and discrimination, have limited access to services, lack specialized services, suffer poor access to information, have limited opportunities to get an education or be gainfully employed and have limited voice in governance processes, including in elections. People with disabilities argue that the signing and ratification of the Convention on the Rights of People with Disability would be an important step towards getting their rights formally recognized.

Beyond that, people with disability identified the need for a campaign to address stereotypes. They ask for the development of a national programme to promote the free movement of people with disability, which would include adopting standards for the accessibility of public buildings and investing in infrastructure to abide by these standards. There should be public oversight of the implementation of legislation that describes the benefits and services people with disabilities are entitled to. Efforts should be made to provide people with disability with jobs and economic opportunities. Furthermore, sign language should be developed and recognized as a state language. People with disability should also be given the right to participate in elections and be elected.

### Inequality by age

In Tajikistan, young people face inequality as well. They expressed their concerns particularly about the quality of services they access, the limited economic opportunities and job prospects that they face, which forces many of them to migrate abroad for work, and the limited voice they have in governance processes. Interestingly, young people also showed deep concerns about other forms of inequality – particularly by gender, ethnicity, regional background and clan. Perhaps this is because there are many young people who face double or triple deprivations, for example being young, female and belonging to an ethnic minority. From that perspective, it is not surprising that young people also gave some strong recommendations on other aspects of inequality. For example, they suggested that the ethnicity line should be taken off national identity documents, so that a national identity is promoted over an ethnic identity. Their recommendations also include measures to promote gender equality, steps towards more participatory governance, and safeguards for the rights of people with disabilities.



## Governance



Although only a few stakeholder groups chose to have explicit, focused discussions on governance during the consultations, in fact, governance issues featured implicitly in all thematic discussions and in the surveys and online consultations. It is clear that governance issues will need to be central to the post-2015 agenda in Tajikistan. This overview draws from all the stakeholder discussions, not only those which were specifically focused on governance. Comments from stakeholders can be divided into four broad categories: civic engagement; corruption; the quality of public administration; and conflict and prevention of conflicts.

### Civic engagement

It was overwhelmingly clear during the consultations that the participants greatly appreciated the fact that their opinions were solicited in this process. Some participants in the Khujand and Kulob consultations reacted with mild disbelief that people would come from the capital to listen to their opinions and suggestions. But most were simply thrilled to be given an opportunity to share their thinking and be listened to. As many pointed out, particularly youth, women, people with disabilities and ethnic minorities, there is a lack of opportunities for them to make their voices heard. They are definitely not consulted as a matter of routine. As a result, there were many suggestions for decision makers to involve a wider range of stakeholders in decision making processes.

Civil society representatives urged Government to take civil society views into account, not to be defensive or suspicious, and not to prosecute civil society organisations for being critical. Youth perhaps felt the most pessimistic about the prospect of being listened to by decision makers, with individual young people expressing doubt that they can have any kind of influence over policy decisions. Still, youth asked for a greater role in decision-making, as individuals and through youth-led organisations. Similarly, representatives from ethnic minorities and people with disabilities highlighted the importance of participatory, or at least consultative decision-making. The post-2015 consultations have shown that the people most affected by a particular issue are able to define the most relevant and innovative solutions. This is why stakeholders want a more participatory style of governance for Tajikistan's future. Not simply because they want to be heard, but because it will lead to better development outcomes.

Stakeholders do point out, however, that the low level of rights awareness amongst the population is an obstacle to active citizenship. When people are not fully aware of their rights and entitlements, it is difficult for them to claim them, or indeed to hold Government officials accountable in case of wrongdoing. Many suggestions were raised, therefore, to boost rights awareness and build accountability mechanisms. There were calls to strengthen the rights awareness of youth, women, people with disabilities, ethnic minorities, employees and labour migrants in particular.

### Corruption

An issue that came back in virtually all discussion is that of corruption, which stakeholders note is pervasive in all sectors of the society and economy of Tajikistan. Participants in the consultation eloquently described the many consequences of corruption. Corruption in service delivery adds to the cost of these services and causes problems with affordability for the poorest. Corruption in the education system harms the belief of young people in a merit-based educational system and can lead

to under-qualified graduates. In the health sector, corruption can lead to dangerous and even life-threatening situations, when wrong or unnecessary drugs or medical interventions are prescribed. Corruption and nepotism in the labour market means that sub-optimal staff selections are made. And

*“There needs to be accountability both by Government and the private sector for fighting corruption.”*

Entrepreneur,  
private sector  
consultation.

corruption is a deterrent for foreign direct investment and also puts a break on the development of local businesses. In the eyes of stakeholders, it is paramount that corruption is tackled head-on in Tajikistan’s future.

Several stakeholders mentioned the low salaries in the civil service as one of the root causes of corruption, given that staff are not being paid a living wage and therefore will be looking for ways to supplement their income. But stakeholders also pointed out that control mechanisms are weak and that those who engage in corruption are often not held to account. A strategy to fight corruption, according to civil society representatives, should therefore combine both salary increases and tighter control. In various thematic discussions, stakeholders suggested measures to increase public accountability of government officials, which they feel will also help towards fighting corruption. Youth shared a number of ideas to reduce corruption in the education sector, including the involvement of parents and students in school management, the introduction and monitoring of an ethics code for teachers and students, introduction of banking for all education-related payments, elected management for higher education institutions, the ability for students to choose which teacher will administer their exams, etcetera. In health, there were also suggestions, including providing more clarity to patients on which services are free and which are paid, developing mechanisms to hold doctors to account for medical errors, and controlling the relations between doctors and the pharmaceutical industry. The post-2015 consultations showed that there is no shortage of ideas and creative solutions, which underlines the importance of participatory governance.

### The quality of public administration

Those stakeholders that explicitly discussed governance issues (youth and civil society representatives) commented on the quality of decision-making in the Government. They feel that decisions are not sufficiently based on available data and information. Stakeholders are of the opinion that evidence used by the State is not always reliable and does not necessarily reflect the real situation. In addition, they suspect that information is sometimes deliberately hidden, distorted or covered up. If this is the case, there is a risk that decisions taken are flawed. The second point discussed by stakeholders is that Tajikistan has a large number of laws, policies and strategies that are good in principle, but that are not

*“A conducive environment for investment needs to be created. Laws are good on paper but not working in practice.”* Entrepreneur, private sector consultation.

being implemented fully or at all. Therefore, some participants in the consultations expressed the importance of concrete action, as consultation without follow-up simply adds to people’s frustration.

Civil society representatives and youth also raised the issue of segregation of authority in the power and decision-making echelons, particularly between the judiciary and the executive powers.

Stakeholders were of the opinion that the judiciary does not operate independently, which undermines the rule of law in Tajikistan. Civil society representatives shared the opinion that public servants who

break the law, for example by taking bribes or committing torture, rarely get sanctioned. Youth argued for the Ombudsman's office to become truly independent. As an overall principle, youth and civil society representatives called for Government to adhere to the human rights commitments that it has signed up to and for human rights to become a central value within Government.

Strong concerns were raised by youth, private sector and civil society representatives about the quality of public administration vis-à-vis the private sector. The consultations revealed a widely-held opinion that Government has not yet done enough to create an enabling environment for business and to attract foreign direct investments. Comments were made on the Tax Code, which in the eyes of some stakeholders keeps taxes too high for businesses and sets out an overly cumbersome tax system, even in its pretended to be "simplified forms". There was also criticism about the many inspections that businesses are faced with, which in the views of stakeholders are not helpful and can serve to extract bribes. Several stakeholders voiced the opinion that the state is too interventionist in the private sector. The level of corruption and the failure to control it was highlighted as a deterrent for foreign direct investments and an overall brake on the development of local businesses.

## Food security and nutrition

Food security and nutrition were discussed by civil society representatives, ethnic minorities and a specially convened group of stakeholders as part of WFP consultations on food security classification in three regions. Food security was also highlighted by Parliamentarians as a priority for Tajikistan's development agenda beyond 2015.

### Reliance on imported food

Stakeholders note that Tajikistan remains heavily dependent on import of food, particularly for product groups such as grains and dairy products. Civil society representatives estimated that domestic food production meets only about 40% of the domestic food market needs. A risk of dependence on imports is that prices can change rapidly, making key product groups unaffordable for the poor and contributing to food insecurity.

Food security experts and civil society representatives agree that local production has to increase to reduce the reliance on imports, but there are obstacles that need to be addressed in terms of food production. Food security experts expressed concerns that imported food products, subsidized by exporters, undercut local production. The absence of quality control and the poor functioning of the quarantine service means that potentially dangerous imports may appear on the market in Tajikistan. Food security experts see an urgent need for improved border control of food imports, including revitalized quarantine services.

### Food production

There are constraints in food production that make it harder for Tajikistan to reduce its dependence on food imports. Food security experts set out the following issues: smallholder farmers feel unsupported by Government and do not have access to input and resources to boost productivity. Local

governments in some areas are reported to continue insisting on cotton growing, which smallholder farmers find hard to resist, not helped by their limited understanding of their rights. Smallholder farmers are land-constrained, while large areas of arable land are not yet privatized and are used inefficiently by absentee owners. Ethnic minorities noted that they are not given access to land, which limits their ability to engage in agricultural production. Even the smallholdings available to smallholder farmers are not always used optimally, given that simple tools and inputs are lacking.

Civil society representatives point out that farm labour is also scarce, due to high levels of migration. Ethnic minorities point to the problem of child labour in agriculture. Farmers report high input prices and low prices for farm produce. Smallholders have no access to storage and processing facilities, which could help achieve a higher return on their farm produce. Even though input prices are high, the quality of inputs such as seeds and fertilizer is low, partly due to poor quality control by Government. The lack of veterinary services means diseases amongst cattle go unchecked (such as persistent brucellosis) and can lead to loss of livestock. There is a lack of access to artificial insemination, which would increase livestock productivity. Civil society representatives add that there is a lack of irrigation water, partly because of decaying irrigation infrastructure and partly because of frequent and lengthy electricity cuts. This also harms agricultural productivity. Land salinity is an issue, due to an increasing ground water table and improper land use.

All these issues point to the need for Government to accelerate implementation of the Agrarian Reform Programme to enhance food production. Under this programme, support should be extended to smallholder farmers, to empower them to take independent decisions and provide them with access to grants, soft loans and tax cuts to facilitate the affordability of high quality inputs. Agricultural extension services, veterinary services and business advice services are also required. The privatization of land should be accelerated to maximize arable land available for food production. Investment programmes are needed to introduce new and more efficient technologies for agricultural production. Rural infrastructure should be developed to improve market access. Government should play a more proactive role in seed research and testing and better quality control should be exercised for fertilizer and seed imports. Finally, improvements in the availability of electricity are required for the restoration of irrigation services.

The sustainability of agricultural production also received attention in the consultations. Food security experts spoke of the need to climate-proof food production. They emphasise Government should disseminate approaches for environment-friendly growth in rural areas, including sustainable use of land and water resources and a reduction of the loss of biodiversity. Voices were also raised to promote the development of organic farming and the diversification of farming.

## Nutrition

Food security experts note that while the diet of the rural population is changing, there is limited information and education about healthy nutrition and there are no Government programmes in place to promote a healthy diet and prevent diet-related illnesses. It is of grave concern that nutrition indicators for children show little improvement over recent years. Food security experts recommend that good child feeding practices should be promoted to counter malnutrition. The media can play an

important role in promoting healthy nutrition. Experts note that baby food is not available at reasonable prices.

Civil society representatives showed concern about inadequate salt iodisation and the lack of flour fortification and oil enrichment. These measures could have a major impact on the nutritional status of the population. Government should enforce existing legislation in this respect, in particular the law on salt iodisation. Civil society representatives also note that the water and sanitation situation in rural areas contributes to the poor nutritional status of the population. The lack of clean water and safe sanitation increases the prevalence of water-borne diseases, which all have a negative impact on nutritional status, particularly for children. Concerns were also raised about food safety, in rural as well as in urban areas and ethnic minorities urged Government to intensify sanitary checks in stores and markets.

## Social protection

Three stakeholder groups chose to have detailed discussions on social protection as a priority issue beyond 2015 – ethnic minorities, people with disabilities and civil society representatives. Parliamentarians mentioned that social protection is one of the priority issues brought to them in their interaction with their constituencies. In the consultation with the representatives from the Government there was also special attention paid to the importance of social protection issues. In discussions, several categories of people were identified who are particularly vulnerable and in need of social protection. These include people with disabilities (including children), elderly people, labour migrants and the families they leave behind, and those with chronic health problems, such as HIV/AIDS.

*“Children left behind as a result of migration are vulnerable.”* Representative of a Government research institute during the consultation with Government representatives.

## Social benefits

One issue raised by many stakeholders concerned the level of social benefits, such as retirement age and disability pensions. These benefits are widely seen as being too low and are far lower than the cost of living. Also, civil society stakeholders indicate that there is no clear system for indexing pensions to the cost of the consumer basket. All stakeholders who discussed this issue agree on the need to increase the level of social benefits to reflect the actual cost of living and emphasise the need to establish a transparent indexing system to ensure the purchasing power of social benefits is guaranteed. People with disabilities report that restrictions are sometimes applied in payment of retirement age and disability pensions, which needs to be remedied. In order to achieve all this, the overall Government budget allocation to social protection needs to be increased. Civil society organisations argue that part of this increased budget should be used to ensure support for people living with





HIV/AIDS, to fund anti-retroviral therapy.

Apart from social benefits being too low, stakeholders also point out that accessing these benefits can be difficult. The process of documenting eligibility for a social benefit can be bureaucratic and complicated and stakeholders feel this could be simplified. Civil society representatives are of the opinion that the current administrative arrangements in place to provide access to the benefits guaranteed by law are weak and need strengthening. Stakeholders also commented that a low level of awareness about rights and entitlements among the population can be an obstacle to people claiming the benefits that they are entitled to. Suggestions to increase rights awareness and promote active citizenship were made in a variety of different consultations.

Given the low level of pensions and the obstacles that sometimes exist to obtaining them, ethnic minority representatives suggested that the State should allow older people to continue working after they reach their pensionable age – reacting to recent regulations that prohibit the employment of people who have reached the retirement age in public service. Ethnic minorities and people with disability pointed out that actively providing employment for people with disability and older people might be preferable to providing social benefits that are too low. People with disabilities also suggested that they would prefer to receive some of the benefits that they currently receive in kind as cash benefit instead.

*“We need to think about the poor and not only our pockets. You cannot become a patriot when you are hungry.”* Woman entrepreneur, private sector consultation.

### Social services

Stakeholders are of the opinion that social services for vulnerable people are not sufficiently developed. They feel that the “social work” profession needs to be strengthened. Civil society representatives argue for the expansion of professional training for social workers at university level. This would allow, for example, an expansion of Social Assistance at Home services and the integration of a social work function in the health service.

Civil society organisations also note that stigma and discrimination, particularly of those living with HIV or suffering from AIDS, may result in eligible people being denied access to social services. They suggest incorporating the issue of tolerance into the school curriculum and to address stigma and discrimination through the mass media in order to build a more inclusive society. At the same time, the rights awareness of those who face stigma and discrimination needs to be strengthened.

*“People who have worked all their lives for the good of the country must receive adequate social protection in their old age and not endure a miserable, slave-like quality of life.”* Participant in the UNTJ survey.

People with disability feel that there are insufficient social services for them. In particular, they feel there are insufficient day care centres for children with disability, where they may receive appropriate services. With civil society representatives, they also express the need for individual, custom-made services for adults with disability and the assignment of personal assistants to those who need this. People with disability also raised the issue of accessible infrastructure, the lack of which makes some of

the services they could benefit from inaccessible to them. They note that this also applies to older citizens with physical mobility problems. They suggest standards should be developed for the accessibility of public buildings, and architects should be trained on implementation of these standards. Civil society representatives highlighted the need to develop palliative care in Tajikistan, for those who suffer chronic and terminal health conditions. People with disability also mentioned the need to develop standards for social care to vulnerable people, which should be monitored and adhered to.

### **Governance of social protection**

Civil society representatives and people with disability pointed out that planning, budgeting and management of social protection is hampered by limited data availability on vulnerable population categories. There is no systematic data collection and analysis concerning target groups. In particular, there is no comprehensive database on people with disability. To make social protection more effective, this issue needs addressing.

People with disability feel that the many legal provisions that exist for them are not fully implemented, with specific reference to the law on social protection of people with disability. They suggest that the signing and ratification of the Convention on the Rights of People with Disability will be useful if bringing about enforcement of these legal provisions. They also suggest development of a national programme to protect the rights of people with disability and their integration into society.

All three stakeholder groups that explicitly discussed social protection raised some concerns regarding transparency and accountability of the state bodies in charge of administering social benefits and services. Civil society representatives called for more inclusive governance, by including representatives from the population categories directly benefiting from social protection provisions in the coordination mechanisms that are in place. Civil society organizations also called for tighter control of the law on non-disclosure of confidential medical information.

### **Conflict and conflict prevention**

The potential of conflict in Tajikistan in the medium-term future and measures for conflict prevention were discussed explicitly by civil society representatives, but also featured implicitly in the discussions of several other stakeholder groups. Stakeholders identified the potential causes of future conflict in Tajikistan. Stakeholders noted that more than twenty years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, there are still uncertainties about the demarcation of Tajikistan's borders, which can lead to conflict between citizens living in bordering areas and could even escalate to inter-state conflict. Stakeholders also noted difficult relations with Uzbekistan and problems in neighbouring Afghanistan, which could both lead to conflict in future. For these potential sources of external conflict, participants in the consultations suggested that international agencies should play a role. Many internal causes of potential conflict were also mentioned.

The low level of education and illiteracy is seen as a threat, not only in terms of educational achievement, but also in terms of rights awareness. Social and economic inequality and shortcomings

in social justice may also contribute to conflict. The limited social and economic opportunities, particularly for youth, may lead to discontent and may fuel conflict. Scarce water and land resources and their unequal distribution may also lead to conflict in future. Stakeholders argue that if there was a more participatory, consensual approach to governance, many of these potential sources of conflict could be contained. Civil society stakeholders note that there is currently not a strong culture for peace, dialogue and tolerance in Tajikistan, which needs to be built.

Youth also point out that it is necessary to build a stronger sense of national identity, which is not strongly based on ethnicity. As already noted above, a simple suggestion they have in this respect is to remove the ethnicity line from identity documents. It is worth underlining that a good number of the potential sources of conflict identified by stakeholders are at the heart of the agenda they have identified for Tajikistan beyond 2015 – an expansion of economic opportunities through job creation and private sector development; improvements in the relevance and quality of education; more participatory governance; fighting corruption and strengthening accountability mechanisms. This means that, in the eyes of stakeholders, implementing the emerging post-2015 agenda can put Tajikistan on a more rapid path towards development.

It is noteworthy that in spite of obvious importance of the illicit drug traffic problems in Tajikistan and neighboring countries and its huge multi-faceted negative impact on development prospectives in the country, this issue hardly emerged in any of the consultations.

## Stakeholder Groups

### Civil Society

Consultation with Civil Society Representatives was attended by a wide spectrum of Civil Society Organization from different parts of the country and also representatives from academia. UN staff from ILO, WFP, UNICEF, UNDP, WHO, UNFPA, OHCHR and the Resident Coordinator's Office were involved in the organization and facilitation of the eight working groups addressing the topics that were defined for discussions including employment, education, environmental sustainability, food security and nutrition, health, inequalities and conflict prevention.

The major issues and obstacles within all discussed themes relate to the poor quality of public services, low level of citizen's awareness and legal education, lack of mechanisms to ensure participation of citizens in decision making processes at all levels of governance, corruption in all sectors and insufficient responsiveness from the government side.

Recommendations from civil society institutions are directed to creation of sustainable mechanisms for participatory decision making, enhancing the role of parliament as a true representative body and ensuring independence and impartiality of the judiciary. Systems for monitoring of public performance and transparency of governmental institutions have to be considered as a major priority.



Different vulnerable groups such as children, youth, women, people with disabilities, ethnic minorities, the poor, persons living with HIV/AIDS and elders have to obtain equal access to all services and benefits. State has to guarantee implementation of its obligations toward international conventions, in particular those related to human rights. Corruption in all sectors of the society has to be addressed through a set of legal, economic, social and cultural measures.

## Youth

Consultations with youth took place in Khujand and Kulob involving youth from all regions of the country including Gorno Badakhshan Autonomous Region, coming from youth associations as from



amongst youth leaders, including from rural areas. UNICEF, UNFPA, WFP, WHO and OHCHR staff were engaged in the two consultations. Girls and boys were given a chance to vote for priority topics for discussion during the meetings. Results of the voting led to selection of identical priority themes for consultations in both places namely education, health, employment, good governance and inequalities. There are major systematic challenges that negatively affect the outlook of the youth.

Low quality of public services in all sectors, lack of opportunities for youth to self-realize, insufficient mechanisms for youth participation in decision making processes, and a lack of a clear and direct focus of state programmes towards youth force young people to migrate to other countries. Young people also blame themselves stating the fact that youth do not study well, do not actively participate in the social life of their communities. Some participants see the reason of youth passiveness in the low level of trust towards the society and state. They do not believe that their voices will be heard and that they can influence decision making. Recommendations that young people provide are about increasing the level of legal education of youth, systematic organization of the “open door days” in the local government buildings for youth to come and talk with decision makers, and creation of jobs for young specialists to prevent their migration to other countries. Youth organizations need greater attention and support from the government side. Special attention should be given to gender equality, altering traditional opinions and norms, in particular in rural areas, which create restrictions for girls to study and work.

## Persons with Disabilities and the Elderly

Participants in this group included persons with disabilities, parents of children with disabilities and Pensioners. UN DESA and UNICEF were involved in this stakeholder consultation. The most important message that was delivered in the discussions with people with special needs and elderly by all the participants is their strong belief and desire to equally participate in the development of their society and country. They spoke strongly about changing the perceptions and stereotypes around persons with disabilities to move away from terms like ‘incapable’ towards being viewed as valuable members of society with equal skills and knowledge.

To realize their potential, participants unanimously advocated for creating conducive and inclusive environments for the pursuit of education and work; facilitated movement through improvement of infrastructure, buildings, transport and roads, taking into account various types of disability needs, special workplaces and enterprises with an emphasis on mindful work conditions for persons with special needs, and last but not least, information awareness by means of TV, radio and social media to promote respect for persons with disabilities. Critical of the practice of separating children with disabilities from studying in general public schools, they called for bringing educational institutions up to standards that would allow children with disabilities to study alongside others and removing infrastructural, psychological and educational barriers. The importance of life-long access to education was also underlined. Persons with disabilities proposed the establishment of a Special Committee for the rights of persons with disabilities to facilitate their participation in various processes including elections. Participants also mentioned the importance of removing a word “incapable of work” in documentation for people with special needs. In addition to this, elderly consultations recommended to open special retraining courses for elderly and strengthening gerontological services in the country.

## Ethnic Minorities

Representatives of ethnic minority groups (Uzbeks, Russians, Kyrgyz, Tatars, Dagestanis and others) were brought together in two consultation meetings organized in Kulob and Khujand cities with the involvement of UNICEF, UNFPA, WFP, WHO and OHCHR staff. Participants of the meetings came from all regions of the country. The topics prioritized by the participants for discussion included Education, Health, Employment, Social Protection and Food Security. Discussions revealed a general low level of satisfaction amongst the participants in all the thematic areas. Ethnic minorities feel their suffering from the poor quality of public services experienced by the general population is compounded by their feeling of a certain level of exclusion.



One of their key concerns is insufficient opportunities for learning and access to books and materials in their native languages and difficulties in understanding official documents in particular when they fill in the forms in state organizations, which are only in Tajik. Minority groups feel they do not have sufficient opportunities to participate in decision making processes at all levels. Recommendations are about implementation of inclusive decision making processes, strengthening dialogue between state

institutions and minority groups, and provision of equal access to public services, in particular in the education sector. State mass media has to allocate more time to reflect on minorities' issues and organize programmes in different languages.

## Women

Consultation with women was facilitated by UN WOMEN and included representatives from Women's Associations, women leaders and labor migrants' wives, coming from different parts of the country. The dominant theme emerging reflects a desire for breaking out of the limitations and moving beyond



barriers imposed on women by traditions, persisting social norms, attitudes and stereotypes and using mass media to promote such changes.

Closely interlinked with traditional stereotypes, participants repeatedly referred to all other kinds of inequalities arising as a result of gender inequality including accessing material resources such as land, property, financial resources as well as inequality in accessing intangible resources such as access to education and decision-making. Of particular concern is a tendency for girls to marry early in life and being deprived of reaching her full potential. With male labour migration acquiring enormous proportions, women especially in rural areas grapple with combining the upbringing of children with employment which is usually constrained by lack of economic activity in rural places, low salaries and compounded by gender stereotypes. Women also reported about the prevalence of gender-based violence mainly in the family environment. Discussions with women echoed the same concerns voiced in other consultations on the issue of poor infrastructures and quality of services of educational and medical institutions, concerns around maternal and child mortality especially in remote mountainous areas, and women's particular vulnerability to communicable diseases.

The concluding recommendations mainly pertain to aggressive information awareness and advocacy through the most influential media outlets on elimination of gender stereotypes especially in relation to school enrolment among girls; continuation of gender mainstreaming programmes combined with strong monitoring; public-private support for promotion of women's entrepreneurship; revision of laws to strengthen gender equality components, and development and promotion of alternative forms of pre-school education.

## Government

The consultation with Government representatives conducted in Dushanbe included participants from State Ministries, Agencies and Administrations of local districts surrounding Dushanbe, in collaboration with the Centre for Strategic Studies on the President of the Republic of Tajikistan. A questionnaire was also distributed to a wider group of Government representatives and with a wider geographic coverage, but which did not receive a level of response to allow for analysis.

The format of the consultation was a round table discussion on general issues, challenges and prospects for the country's development, internal and external factors influencing the country and strategies and policies to address the challenges. An interesting observation in consultations with Government representatives pertained to their overall acknowledgement of many of the problems and issues prominently featuring in consultations with other non-Government groups. Without necessarily providing recommendations for tackling them, Government representatives nevertheless acknowledge the ever-present problem of corruption, outdated educational practices and their incompatibility with the labor market, a need for spurring women entrepreneurship and - generally, advancing women's rights-, and a persisting problem for access of farmers to land and debilitated agricultural infrastructure. The obvious difference was the Government representatives' heavy emphasis on energy and electricity issues. Although the latter were also part of discussions among other groups, nevertheless not to the extent



of overriding other priorities identified by non-Government groups. Government's recommendation for the education sector was putting more emphasis on vocational professional training rather than highly educated university graduates which the country churns out in great numbers but without appropriate quality and absence of demand for their knowledge and skills. Promoting relevant vocational training institutions would provide labor needed for the market. Another recommendation of the Government relates to tackling the problem of qualified teachers for educational institutions, especially in rural areas, and encouraging them to stay in their professions by providing non-financial benefits such as allocation of land, houses and food.

Government representatives also singled out the weak banking and financial sectors as the "blood system" of the national economy and advocated connecting it with migrant remittances for creation of local business associations, and channeling it to effective development projects in rural areas. Improvement of statistics also featured prominently in Government discussions on health, education, employment, the formal and informal labor market, as a tool for better decision-making and planning of the above-mentioned sectors.

## Private Sector

Representatives from the Private Sector came from Dushanbe and other parts of the country from business associations, private companies, private banks and leading consulting companies. The meeting was conducted in a roundtable format addressing challenges to development and businesses, areas required for economic growth and priority focus areas.

The discussions demonstrated that despite Tajikistan's developing country status, its private sector representatives give high importance to social responsibility and their role as agents of development change. The very fact that discussions from the beginning revolved around inadequate education of the young generation as one of the main obstacles to future dynamism of the private sector demonstrates that the private sector is painfully feeling the effects of a shrinking pool of an adequately educated work force and specialists which it desperately needs. Participants especially lamented outdated educational methodologies incongruous with labor market demands.

At the same time, echoing the vast labor migration patterns mentioned in other consultations – especially in consultations with women, representatives of the private sector advocated for introducing special programs for greater employment of women in rural areas and agricultural sector and boosting the involvement of women in entrepreneurial activities. They expressed discontent with a newly adopted Tax Code which has not tackled the issue of a high tax burden and created additional barriers for inflow of foreign investments. Criticism was also directed at a high number of controlling governmental institutions that mostly duplicate each others' functions and create additional unnecessary administrative burdens on the private sector. Acutely feeling the negative effects of geographic isolation and lack of genuine regional cooperation with Tajikistan's neighbours which hits national businesses and their export potential in an important way, the private sector recommended to search for alternative routes to boost exports, and engage in a genuine dialogue with Tajikistan's neighbors for removing political obstacles to regional integration for which the private sector can serve as a positive link.

## Parliament

A questionnaire was distributed to members of various Committees of the Lower Chamber of Parliament which provided additional information on the priorities from the legislative point of view and reflected the views of Parliamentarians in the course of their engagement with their constituents. The responses revealed certain shared commonalities in their vision for post-2015 priorities of Tajikistan. Around 80% of Parliamentarians responded that the most crucial issues for the population in their respective districts related to high unemployment and low salaries, lack of electricity and water supply, and social protection.

Parliamentarians believe that social and employment issues need to be tackled by means of more vigorous implementation and monitoring of approved Government strategies and policies and the rule of law. An interesting recommendation coming from some Parliamentarians related to simplification of the Parliament structure by eliminating a double-chamber Parliament and leaving only one structure. External constraints such as problems with import of fuel and its high price, insufficient investments from the outside, and an unfavorable external environment are mainly singled out by Parliamentarians as the main reasons decelerating Tajikistan's progress. Interestingly, Parliamentarians also mentioned the high burden of taxes as a constrain to development. Energy, Education, Health and Food Security were identified as the critical priorities for Tajikistan by order of their importance as perceived by the members of Parliament.

## ICPD Programme review

One of the on-going processes within the country at the outset of the Post 2015 National Consultations planning was the broad consultative review of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) supported by UNFPA. It was therefore decided to take into account the general results of the review as a contribution to the consultations. Participants of the ICPD review included members of 10 Ministries, State Agencies and Governmental Committees and 27 NGOs who filled out a set of questionnaires on a comprehensive range of issues related to population and development. The

major results were in line with the results of the National Consultations. During the validation meeting of the ICPD Review, it was stressed that one of the main achievements of the country during the last ten years has been the reduction of poverty by half. Nevertheless for sustainable economic growth and development, the participants identified poverty reduction as a remaining key priority, together with rational management of natural resources, sustainable development of entrepreneurship, food security and an exit from the transportation deadlock.

## Conclusion

In general all the consultations confirmed that there is an emerging national consensus on the priority areas for development of Tajikistan in the post-2015 period that deserve a critical review by policy makers and development partners. UN-organized meetings with different social groups and strata along with national decision- and policy-makers (Government and Parliament) provoked much interest and have also highlighted interactive ways of organizing transparent and participatory dialogues on the key issues of social and economic development of the country, both at national and subnational level. The participatory process of the national consultations underscored the great interest of all the various stakeholders, especially the young people, in being heard and more importantly demonstrating their propensity to contribute to better development outcomes for the country. The fact that people most affected by a particular issue are able to define relevant and innovative solutions repeatedly came to light. The importance of creating a dialogue with different stakeholders and between civil society and policy makers is also a contribution to mutual understanding and confidence building in society.

It is important to note that there was an attempt not only to shape the vision of the post-2015 future of the country but also to factor into this process the “unfinished business” of the current MDGs Agenda. In this regard, it is important to mention that all past and current national development plans and strategies have been well aligned with MDG priorities and the Government of Tajikistan has demonstrated its strong commitment in adhering to the Millenium Declaration and the periodic global MDG review processes organized by the United Nations at the highest level since 2000.

The consultations clearly demonstrated the centrality of the various dimensions of “Education” perceived by all participants, as the centre piece of all aspects of a balanced and sustainable development in the country. Likewise the significance of “Governance” as being critical for the post 2015 agenda in Tajikistan was a dominant theme in the consultations. The Tajikistan consultations highlighted the criticality of human rights principles and objectives, and investment in human capital.

This report offers the compiled valuable contributions of all the participants in the Tajikistan national consultations and provides an analytical base to conduct discussions with Government and other development partners, hold debates and roundtables and use all opportunities to integrate its results in ongoing development processes.

The United Nations Country Team in Tajikistan has no doubt that many findings and recommendations of this important national consultation process will not only contribute to the formulation of a new set of Internationally Agreed Development Goals (IADGs) for the period after 2015 at the global level, but also will be an important UN contribution to the development of the next national development strategy which will begin concurrently, and hopefully will be well-aligned with new IADGs, as has been the case in Tajikistan in the past.



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