

Tajikistan



Tajikistan is a landlocked country in Central Asia with a population of 7 million, and a per capita income of US\$410 a year, or just more than US\$1 a day. The economy, which has been growing an annual average at 8 percent during 2000-06, depends heavily on exports of cotton and aluminum, and on growing remittances of its citizens in Russia. Poverty, although declining, remains alarmingly high. In 2005, almost six of every 10 people in Tajikistan live in extreme poverty.

Tajikistan remains the poorest and most economically fragile of the former Soviet countries.

Since 1991, Tajikistan has experienced high levels of emigration, motivated by war following independence and, lately, by economic factors. Labor migrants' remittances have played an important role as one of the drivers of Tajikistan's robust economic growth during the past several years. The volume of official remittances has significantly increased since 2001 and was estimated at \$1.5 billion (36 percent of GDP) in 2007.

Due to armed conflict and ensuing economic collapse, housebuilding in Tajikistan has all but come to a halt. Unfinished homes are scattered across Tajikistan while existing housing stock deteriorates due to neglect. Families live in houses made of raw brick or clay with dirt floors. In cities, several generations live together in tiny apartments where heating and sanitation are often absent and water must be drawn from communal wells.

Additionally, natural disasters such as earthquakes and mudslides affect the country frequently. In July 2007, an earthquake severely damaged 19 villages. According to official government statistics, at least 1,484 homes were damaged and more than 15,000 people left homeless.

COUNTRY FACTS

Population: 7,211,884 (July 2008 est.)

Capital: Dushanbe

Area: 55,251 sq miles

Ethnic groups: Tajik 79.9%, Uzbek 15.3%, Russian 1.1%, Kyrgyz 1.1%, other 2.6% (2000 census)

Languages: Tajik (official), Russian widely used in government and business

Religions: Sunni Muslim 85%, Shi'a Muslim 5%, other 10% (2003 est.)

HABITAT FACTS

Families Served to Date*
2,436

* new houses, rehabilitations, repairs, technical, financial and other services

International Volunteers Hosted to Date
156

Habitat for Humanity in Tajikistan

Habitat Tajikistan was established in 1999, and to date more than 530 housing interventions have been completed, ranging from new house builds, completion of half-built houses, renovations, and the complete remodeling of an apartment block building. Habitat Tajikistan has also completed a disaster-response project in conjunction with Oxfam.

Habitat Tajikistan is working in partnership with both local and international NGOs and local and national governments. Future projects for Habitat Tajikistan involve scaling up the projects where it has already demonstrated success. Many

innovative projects in Tajikistan are now ready to expand and serve substantially more families.

In the area of disaster response, for example, Habitat Tajikistan has developed an intervention plan that aims to relocate within three years several families living in high-risk areas by helping them to build new, safe, decent homes. One family has finished their house and another 18 houses are under construction.

In that same vein, Habitat Tajikistan, along with the Institute of Seismology in Tajikistan, is continuing to pursue "mulberry branch" technology that can withstand earthquakes of up to 9 on the Richter scale. Branches of mulberry trees are incorporated into walls as a latticework of support for building material that might otherwise collapse during tremors. It's an affordable solution to make the homes of vulnerable communities more earthquake-resistant, and it's environmentally sustainable, as mulberry trees are found throughout rural Tajikistan and are cut seasonally to harvest silk cocoon – the mulberry branches have no other use afterward.

Only 58 percent of the 7 million people of Tajikistan have access to clean, safe water, so Habitat Tajikistan, in partnership with a local NGO, has developed a low-cost appropriate solution to the problem – the bio-sand water filter. One filter costs \$163 and provides clean and safe drinking water for two families. The technology is simple, effective and can be easily installed and maintained by families and the community. The bio-sand water filter also promises to make families healthier: A water and sanitation survey initiated by ECHO revealed



51.1 percent of the Tajik population contracts one or more water-borne illness annually.

Global Village

A unique mixture of post-Soviet, Persian and Muslim cultures is one of the attractions that brings international volunteers to Tajikistan. Global Village is the name for Habitat for Humanity's international short-term volunteering program. Global Village is an active program involving students, churches, individuals, corporations from all over the world who wish to make a difference in the communities they visit.

Wanda Smith, a Global Village team leader who typically returns to Tajikistan every year, captured a glimpse of one of her teams' experience: "What memories traveled home with our GV team to Tajikistan? Of course, we remember the fabulous food, the heat, the colorful markets and the blessings of air-conditioned accommodations. But, as is the case with all GV trips, the strongest memory we have is of the people.

The Tajiks are a people who have withstood war, various governments and difficult economic times. It was humbling to work side by side with a group of people who universally inspire us to never grumble about our lot in life. May we never forget the lessons we learned in Tajikistan about triumph over circumstances!"

HABITAT HIGHLIGHTS

- A pilot project with First Microfinance Bank Tajikistan has initially served 30 families with affordable housing loans of up to \$5,000. More than 1,000 families may be helped through the program during the next two years.
- In the remote Kumsangir district, an HFH Tajikistan partnership has served 1,530 with bio-sand water filters to improve families' health.
- In fiscal year 2008, HFH Tajikistan served 525 families, its most ever in a single 12-month period.
- HFH Tajikistan and the Institute of Seismology in Tajikistan have developed a "mulberry branch" building method to affordably strengthen houses before earthquakes occur. Uptodate, HFH Tajikistan has build, renovated, reinforced over 850 homes in earthquake - affected and vulnerable communities.

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