



# COUNTRY FACTSHEET

February 2013

Swiss Agency for Development  
and Cooperation SDC

State Secretariat for  
Economic Affairs SECO

## SWITZERLAND'S COOPERATION IN TAJIKISTAN



water resources which the government of Tajikistan hopes to use for electricity production. These plans have however led to strain with downstream countries which depend on the water for irrigation. The country suffers moreover from frequent natural disasters such as floods and mudflows, particularly in areas which have seen large deforestation.

Main exports include aluminium, cotton, fruit and textiles. Around half of the working population is employed in agriculture, just one fifth in industry. Tajikistan's economy is also hugely dependant on money from citizens working abroad, primarily in Russia and Kazakhstan. Remittances from the approximately 1.5 Mio. migrant workers account for about 48% of the country's GDP in 2012. Apart from the economic impact, the largely male labour migration also has a considerable negative effect on women and children left behind, who are on their own to make a living and often unable to protect their rights.

Weak state institutions and civil society, insufficient reform process, lack of public participation in decision-making as well as the proximity to Afghanistan and the potentially increased insecurity after the withdrawal of NATO forces in 2014 are further challenges to Tajikistan.

### Country Facts and Figures

**Population:** 7,807,200 (2012) 

**Life expectancy:**  
female: 69.6 years, male: 63.3 years (2012)

**Literacy rate of 15–24-year-olds:** 99.9% (2010)

**Gross Domestic Product (GDP)/capita:**  
972 USD (2012)

### Country Context

Tajikistan gained its independence after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, but plunged almost immediately into a civil war which lasted until 1997. Today, the country is still recovering from the conflict; it is the poorest of the former Soviet Central Asian republics, an estimated 46 % of the population lives below the poverty line. Its current population is seven Mio., almost half of whom are under 14 years old. Tajikistan's geography is challenging: over 78 % of the country is mountainous. The country has huge

### Switzerland's support to the Republic of Tajikistan

Switzerland has been active in Tajikistan since 1993, when it delivered humanitarian aid during the civil war. In 1997 Tajikistan became a member of the Swiss led group of countries in the Bretton Woods institutions, and at this point Switzerland established a Cooperation Office in Dushanbe, marking the shift from emergency relief to long-term cooperation. The main Swiss agencies present in Tajikistan are the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) and the Human Security Division of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs. Their role has been and is to support a peaceful social and economic transition, contribute to poverty alleviation, and help build institutions and systems which respond to the population's needs.

Switzerland's cooperation strategy for 2012 to 2015 in Tajikistan focuses on four priority areas: health, safe drinking water, rule of law, and private sector development. In addition Switzerland is supporting a regional water management programme in Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.

Switzerland has been supporting the country to develop sustainable water and sanitation systems since 1998. At least 30'000 people in rural communities have already benefited from these efforts and access to safe drinking water has helped to reduce water-borne diseases such as diarrhoea by more than 50%. Moreover Khujand, the second largest city in the country, with a population of 165'000, now has access to safe drinking water.

During the next four years, the Swiss programme will build on these successes and aims to provide access to safe drinking water and sanitation for additional 300'000 urban and 70'000 rural residents to improve their living and health conditions. Financial and technical assistance is provided to water authorities and communities to build new water systems and to conduct hygiene awareness campaigns.

The successful operation and maintenance of public infrastructure also requires know-how and adequate institutions. In rural areas, local communities are being encouraged to set up water users associations: legal entities which are in charge of managing the water supply systems. In urban areas, the programme provides capacity-building to water utilities to improve their management. Finally, Switzerland is discussing with the government reforms in the drinking water sector aiming at decentralizing water management from the national to the regional level. This should ensure that the systems are run in a financially and operationally sustainable manner.

The projects are being implemented by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Oxfam, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Aga Khan Foundation.



## Health

Tajikistan has the highest infant and maternal mortality rates in the CIS region. Malnutrition and waterborne diseases are other serious challenges across the country, in particular in rural areas. The break up of the Soviet Union led to the collapse of Tajikistan's free healthcare service – a service characterised by a costly hospital based model and little attention to preventive medicine.

Tajikistan's government has defined a National Health Strategy, which aims, by 2020, to move the country towards a family medicine model, offering affordable primary health care in all areas of the country. Switzerland is supporting this reform in a number of ways, among them by working with the Ministry of Health to develop family medicine services. Re-training is being offered to health professionals, along with assistance in the renovation of primary health care facilities. In addition, advice is being provided on how to manage health services in an efficient and transparent manner. So far, family medicine has been introduced in 11 out of 58 districts, benefiting some 1.2 Mio. people. During the next four years, the model will be extended to 11 new districts, allowing an additional one Mio. people in rural areas to benefit from better access to quality primary health care services. To ensure that the family medicine model can be sustained at the national level, Switzerland also contributes to the reform of medical education, including the introduction of new courses and teaching methods. A further intervention supports local communities to get involved in health promotion. Health promoters or health community groups are set up in villages to give advice on healthy lifestyles. People in rural areas are being encouraged to identify their health needs and then to work towards solutions with health authorities.

The Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute and Aga Khan Health Services are implementing the Swiss funded projects in the health sector.

## Safe Drinking Water

Without safe and adequate water supplies, no country can thrive. However, despite the wealth of water resources in the country, Tajikistan is facing difficulties in delivering this basic service, hampering its economic development and harming the health of its people.

**Key fact:** Spending on health is just 2 % of Tajikistan's GDP – the second lowest amount in the world

**Key fact:** In Tajikistan, 48% of the rural and 7% of the urban population still do not have access to safe drinking water

**Key fact:** In 1994 Tajikistan adopted a new constitution, guaranteeing basic rights and freedoms

## Rule of Law

Tajikistan's legal and judicial system is still in transition, and needs further reforms. Progress has been made towards guaranteeing the independence of the judiciary, but much work remains to be done, in particular to ensure that the application of the law is transparent, and the justice system is accessible to all. Often, people do not know what their rights are and how they can defend them.

Switzerland has been supporting legal reform in Tajikistan for several years. An initial project helped to set up 10 legal aid centres in various parts of the country. The centres are aimed particularly at the poor and the vulnerable: in 2012 the centres provided over 4'500 people with free legal aid – over 74% were women. Legal awareness raising campaigns have been conducted to increase people's knowledge of family and land rights and how to uphold them. Another key intervention is in the field of domestic violence, a wide-spread phenomenon in Tajikistan. The Swiss programme supports crisis centres, where victims of domestic violence can seek medical, psychological and legal counselling. Information campaigns resulted in increasing the awareness of the population on how to prevent domestic violence. At the same time, Switzerland has helped to support the drafting and approval of a law against domestic violence.

Over the next four years, Switzerland will continue to develop this work. The practical experience of the legal aid centres is used to identify which laws are missing and which judicial procedures need to be improved. The programme facilitates discussions between professionals from the Tajik civil society and state authorities on legal reform. The government will then be supported in the implementation of these reforms. Prevention of domestic violence continues to be a key component of the Swiss programme. Switzerland's efforts shall contribute to better access to justice for the entire population of Tajikistan, with a legal system that is more responsive to people's needs and in which rule of law and human rights are respected.

The main implementing partners are UNDP, Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation, GOPA Consultants and UNICEF.

## Private Sector Development

Tajikistan's private sector is significantly underdeveloped; at the moment it accounts for only half the country's GDP and one third of employment. A heavy regulatory burden and the lack of access to finance for investments are among the main challenges for the sector's development. The general lack of jobs forces many - in particular young men - to work abroad.

**Key fact:** In 2012 Tajikistan ranked 141th out of 185 countries in the World Bank's 'Doing Business' Survey



Switzerland's engagement in Tajikistan's private sector therefore aims to alleviate poverty, through the development of a healthier economy in which more jobs are created, especially for young people. Key interventions include facilitating dialogue between the government and small and medium enterprises and supporting the regulatory reform process, e.g. in the area of taxes and licenses, with the aim of making it easier to start businesses which will then function profitably. While much remains to be done, Tajikistan has been ranked as a worldwide top 10 reformer in the "Doing Business" survey of the World Bank in recent years.

Switzerland is also providing assistance to expand access to finance for individual consumers and enterprises. The programme supports the establishment of a credit bureau in Tajikistan, which will allow easy access to reliable credit, enable financial institutions to reduce credit risks and offer better lending conditions for clients.

Switzerland is further helping Tajikistan's private sector to expand into international markets, by providing advice on international trading standards and regulations. These interventions have in the past helped enterprises in the fruit and vegetable and more recently the textile sectors to improve the quality of their products and to increase trade opportunities. Finally, as Tajikistan recently joined the World Trade Organisation, the Swiss programme will continue its support; e.g. for the concrete implementation of WTO requirements.

The projects are implemented primarily by the International Finance Corporation and the International Trade Centre.

## Additional Activities

### Culture:

Since 1998 Switzerland has been supporting the arts and culture in Tajikistan, and at regional level across Central Asia. This work will continue into 2015. With the aim of achieving more open, dynamic and connected Central Asian societies, support is given to a huge variety of cultural productions. Reviving cultural activities in deprived and rural areas of Tajikistan and fostering intercultural exchanges are the most characteristic interventions of this programme.

**Key fact:** Tajikistan is a crucial water source for all of Central Asia

## Water Management is a Regional Issue

Tajikistan has substantial fresh water resources, more than any other Central Asian country. Its 8'500 glaciers, together with snowmelt and rainfall, are key water sources for all of Central Asia's major rivers, and for the Aral Sea basin. Like its neighbours Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, Tajikistan depends almost entirely on irrigation for its agricultural production, and over 90 % of the country's fresh water supply is used up on irrigation systems. In addition Tajikistan has enormous potential for hydropower, but disputes over such development, and over water management issues in general have led to strain between Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, particularly in the Ferghana valley, which all three countries share, and which accounts for a third of all Central Asia's agricultural production.

Switzerland has been working in the Ferghana valley since 2001, supporting a water resource management programme which aims to boost a more efficient use of water, and to encourage local users to take part in decisions over water allocation. Efforts at the local level in Tajikistan are complemented by a policy dialogue with the government on institutional changes and agricultural policy reforms. A long term goal is to support regional stability by helping all three countries to address the complex and often troubled issue of water through open dialogue based on facts and objective analysis.

As many natural disasters are water-related, Disaster Risk Reduction is an integral part of the water management programme. The capacities of communities living along rivers to prevent, prepare for and react to natural disasters are being strengthened. As a result, their safety and livelihoods will be improved and natural resources will be managed in a more sustainable way.

## Cross-Cutting Themes

**Gender, conflict sensitive programme management (CSPM), and governance are crosscutting themes for all of Switzerland's activities in Tajikistan**

Switzerland promotes increased female representation at all levels of the public and private sector, and the participation of women at all levels of decision-making. One of the measures for achieving this is to provide access to information and knowledge about rights and procedures. It is also important that women are not victims of any discrimination when obtaining access to justice, when seeking employment, or when they require medical care.

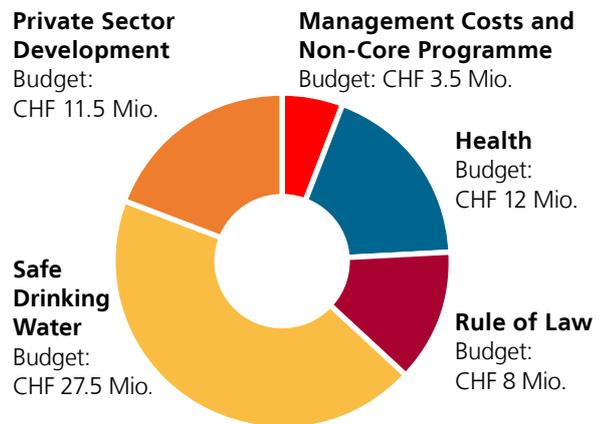
Switzerland applies an explicit CSPM approach in all its activities; state authorities and civil society are encouraged to work together towards defining challenges and finding solutions. Switzerland in particular ensures that its programme is also implemented in vulnerable and/or remote regions to reduce disparities in the country.

Switzerland promotes "good governance" as one of the conditions necessary for the country's devel-

opment. Of the five governance principles adopted by Switzerland (accountability, transparency, non-discrimination, participation and efficiency), accountability, non discrimination and participation are receiving special emphasis, for example by encouraging communities to participate in local development planning together with the authorities.

## Financial Input 2012–2015

The overall budget for Tajikistan over four years is 62.5 Mio. CHF. Based on the decision by the Swiss parliament, additional funding may be available in the course of this period.



In addition Switzerland is supporting the regional water management with a budget of 40 Mio. CHF over four years.

## Swiss International Aid

For the period 2013 – 2016 the Swiss parliament has approved the Message on International Cooperation, which outlines four main operational areas of Swiss cooperation, among them cooperation with the states of Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

This cooperation aims at strengthening human rights and democracy and promoting economic and social development. Switzerland's cooperation efforts in Central Asia are led by two government agencies, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), and the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO).

## Imprint

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