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|  | <b>Pamir High Mountains Integrated Project<br/>Bulletin 17. 5\04.</b><br>Republic of Tajikistan GBAO  |   |  |
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| Monthly issue   |   |   |   |

**PHIP is an integrated development project implemented by the INGO ACTED. It is funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and UNESCO. It started operating in 1999 and aims at improving the livelihood of the local population by opening up sustainable economic options. Support to civil society, capacity building, and support to vulnerable population are the focus of activities. The project is organized into departments responsible for “Agriculture, Environment and Livestock”, “Community Social Infrastructures”, “Social and Poverty Alleviation”, “Support to local handicraft”, “Credit and Capacity Building” and “Culture”. The latest program aims at developing structures for community based ecotourism.**

### Key events in May

- Not connected to the project: opening of Kulma pass to Xinjiang/China on 25<sup>th</sup> of May.
- Publishing of the Pamirs map in Switzerland
- Development option for Murghab – discussion between Hukumat, MSDSP and ACTED as follow-up of PHIP Advisory Board.
- Participation in local governance workshop organized by SDC in Bishkek
- Consultancies on ‘participatory processes and interactive training’ by Nandita Jain (Ecotourism), rehabilitation, work norms and procedures by Pierre-Yves Tessier and micro finance procedures for the new loan products by James Gibson (ACTED Micro Finance advisor)
- Summer cannot be stopped: flowers have been sighted, and parts of coordination team inaugurated the open air bathing season in Murghab river during a reconnaissance trek

### Reports by departments

With the arrival of spring, implementation phase has run up to full speed. Therefore, the newsletter is a little longer than usually...

#### *The Yak House*

##### *Networking*

The Yak House manager visited Bishkek and established promising contacts with Bishkek based designers, as well as with CACSA (Central Asia Crafts Association):

- Tatiana Vorotnikova, the designer of the renown Tumar Art Gallery, expressed her interest in organizing a design workshop in September for the most active Yak House members ;
- CACSA invited a women from The Yak House to participate in a three weeks felt seminar organized in August in Hungary. The lucky lady will make the ropes tightening the yurt made during the seminar.

##### *Marketing*

The Yak House members prepared the Yak House manager’s visit to France (scheduled in June) by designing some new products and by preparing a draft catalogue to be presented to potential French clients. It is hoped that this visit to France will allow the Yak House to resume its exportation to France. This would complement the Yak House increasing sales in Tajikistan, therefore benefiting to an ever increasing number of women.

##### *The Yak House in the field*

Jumagul, the Yak House manager, and Khaziet, her assistant, continued their regular visits to villages



surrounding Murghab: women of Kona Kurghon and Alichur were trained on carpet making, whilst regular follow up visits were made to other villages of Murghab district. The Yak House is striving to involve an increasing number of Murghabi women in handicrafts making and selling. It is indeed believed that this could contribute to compensating the end of humanitarian aid in Murghab.

### **Culture**

Meetings in all rayon villages were held on the provision of sports and musical inventory. Three villages have submitted requests, the other villages are outstanding.

Meetings with all school PTAs on the new school book rental scheme were held. According to the common decision, the books will be handed out for 40% of the purchasing price in the first year, 35% in the second and 25% in the third year. Two schools (Rang Kul and Beshgumbez) have submitted requests so far.

Over May, 27 visitors used the Friday opening of the resource centre.

A competition to select the local artists who will represent the district during the launching of the map event in Dushanbe is currently being organized. It will be held at the beginning of June. Those artists will also perform over summer in the Ecomuseum/tourism information centre.

### **Micro Finance**

Reimbursements for Small Business and Support to Livestock loans is ongoing. Following training, the first two years loan for livestock development was disbursed to a six members group from Alichur. The group received a 1200 US\$ equivalent loan, with 2.5% interest, for a duration of two years.

Two Tontone groups (group credit without internal rotating fund) were organized. One group received 350 US\$ with 2% interest and 6 months duration, the second group received 400 US\$ with 2% interest for 1 year.

With the arrival of James Gibson, ACTED Central Asia microfinance adviser, the processes and credit products were reviewed, joint monitoring took place and discussion on the most vulnerable program was conducted.

### **Agriculture**

Monitoring of the preparation of gardens and distribution of seeds took place before May 26<sup>th</sup>. 117 gardens have been organized by 145 families. 7 ha are under cultivation, of which 5.3 ha are for barley and 1.5 ha for potatoes. 5 groups have received plastic sheets and training for putting up small greenhouses for growing greeneries (herbs, carrots etc). Agriculture activities have started with new beneficiaries in Shaimag and Bulun kul.

#### *Fishery*

ACTED refused to give a loan to Bulun Kul fisherman as the group cohesion was estimated too weak.

#### *Forestry*

An intensive discussion was held between the forestry department, the department for nature protection and the community of Madian on a joint forestry management plan. Since the community refused to cooperate if their participation was not paid for, and since there had been negative experiences in the past with saplings imported from Western Badakhshan, the forestation plan as designed by the departments was dropped. In contrast, an agreement on setting up a nursery in Madian with one paid guard was reached. This summer will see the preparation of the terrain (fencing, irrigation, soil improvement etc.), in autumn coppicing in the forests of Madian will be done to get and plant saplings.

### **Ecotourism**

With the assistance of the consultant Nandita Jain, a 3 days workshop was held, providing training to homestay and yurt providers ('how to cope with difficult guests' etc) and pushing forward some administrative issues like a charter for the association, clarifying membership (active, associate, supportive) as well as the use of the associations fund.

The homestays in Murghab as well as Bulun Kul have been/are being rehabilitated to better cater to the guests need, with a focus on toilets and washing facilities.

Approximately 10 tourists have received services of the association in May (accommodation, guiding on a wildlife trek, driver to archaeological sites, assistance with administrative issues)

Reconnaissance was done in Madian above the hot spring and below Kishto (valley end) in order to evaluate the



possibilities for a Madian round trek reaching Bazar Dara.

Programs for the launch of the map in Paris and Dushanbe have been elaborated, preparations are ongoing.

Partnerships with trainers for trekking have been sought. 2 guides will be sent to Kazakhstan to train with KMF (Kazakhstan Mountaineering Foundation), one mountaineer from Dushanbe will be invited to Murghab in June to perform a 1 week training with the remaining guides.

### **Rehabilitation**

The consultancy of Pierre Yves Tessier, a follow up on his visit in January, allowed reviewing progresses in the application of energy saving norms, especially concerning doors and windows. He also helped to design plans and priorities for the 6 selected worksites and to reach agreements with the communities involved and local authorities.

A new engineer has been employed and responsibilities for worksites distributed. Intensive search for an internship to supervise progress on the worksites with a 'Europe trained eye' has led to one very potential candidate, a carpenter with vast experience in worksite management.

Mobilization organized rehabilitation commissions and agreements on respective responsibilities between communities, Hukumat and ACTED for all the rehabilitation sites.

Work has started in Kuna Kurgan hospital, on the site itself and in the yard, where the community is constructing a 6 pit latrine as a community contribution.

Work is ongoing in Shaimag school, where the building design is slightly altered to better use solar passive energy (windows) and where a roof is being installed. Simultaneously, the community is producing more bricks as a contribution for the doubling of the wall (energy saving) and for constructing the remaining walls.

The small remaining works on Chechekty boarding school have been started and should be accomplished within two weeks (doubling of corridor windows, building an entrance shed to cut the wind).

Plans for the rehabilitation of Alichur hospital, Chechtebe medical point and the construction of an extra building in school # 9 (Murghab) have not been finalized yet. In Alichur and Chestebe, the question of building ownership has not been solved yet whilst the 25% community contributions for the construction of an extra building in school # 9 is still being discussed under the mediation of ACTED community mobilizer.

### **Support to Most Vulnerable Families**

The new program officer started her activities with an in depth analysis of the present situation of the running program. Based on the impact of the goat breeding scheme, some amendments have been suggested in order to pursue the objective to lead the 'most vulnerable' beneficiaries to an economic level allowing them to get involved in micro finance activities. The new plan is now to support successful goat breeders after an initial first year/5 goats with another 5 goats the second year. After 2 years, they'd reimburse half of the loan in kind and half in cash. The offspring would remain with the families.

In view of the end of humanitarian aid (flour) and the restricted access to pastures in Murghab town, a scheme to support flour trade through groups of most vulnerable families is being looked at. Some amendments to the previous flour trade scheme are being thought of, in order to further improve the impact of the project.

### **Mobilization**

Besides organizing the communities and pushing forward agreements on rehabilitation issues, the mobilizer organized village meetings to inform the population on the results of the assessment and the subsequent interventions.

Monitoring was taken up on the fulfilment of community obligations. As contributions, communities decided to build latrines, to rehabilitate other parts of the buildings and to contribute construction material. It was also suggested to implement some requested activities (e.g. construction of a public bath in Beshgumbez) as part of the 25% contribution.

In Kyzyl Rabat jemoat, a community based distribution plan for the application of foot and mouth vaccine was elaborated with jemoat, vo and ACTED mobilizer.



**special report - special report - special report - special report - special report - special report****Opening of Kulma Border crossing with China**

Family reunion on Kulma pass

On the 25<sup>th</sup> of May, the long announced border crossing to China was opened in the presence of officials of both countries. On the Tajik side, the prime minister of the republic as well as the governor of GBAO flew in by helicopter on a mildly winterish day.

The delegations of both countries met in the chilly 4360 meters wind. Besides speeches underlining the historical moment – the border had been sealed for over 50 years – and the good friendship and common interests, some folklore groups of Xinjiang and Badakhshan proved that the two regions were culturally very much related.

Many people looked for relatives, showing pictures of family members long time not seen or never met at all. Some family reunions were celebrated under the caring eyes of two leaping dragons made of plastic and hot air.

**Strategy meeting between Hukumat, MSDSP, AKF and ACTED in Murghab**

As a follow up of the discussion started during the Advisory board on future development options for Murghab district, a meeting was held on May 28<sup>th</sup> in ACTED Murghab resource centre. Topics on the agenda were the end of Humanitarian Aid and how the agencies were going to react, short and long term strategies to respond to the fuel and energy shortfall as well as economic options and how they were supported by agencies and institutions.

Of the 3100 households in Murghab, some 2000 families received last year 40 kg of wheat (= 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the yearly need according to UN standards). Some 250 families received 70 kg of wheat, equalling ½ of their yearly need. This aid is coming to an end, leaving 70% of Murghab population without a considerable part of their staple commodity. Oblast government has submitted a plan for a special economic zone GBAO, including tax advantages, subsidised food imports etc. ACTED and MSDSP presented their programs for ‘most vulnerable families’, soft in-kind credits (goats), food for work (MSDSP), group loans to support small business (“tontines” and “tontones”). Altogether, they’ll reach some 600 families – but in no way will these programs suffice to cover the needs of the poorest of populations. Regular nutrition surveys carried out by nurses for MSDSP will provide early warning, should the nutrition situation deteriorate.

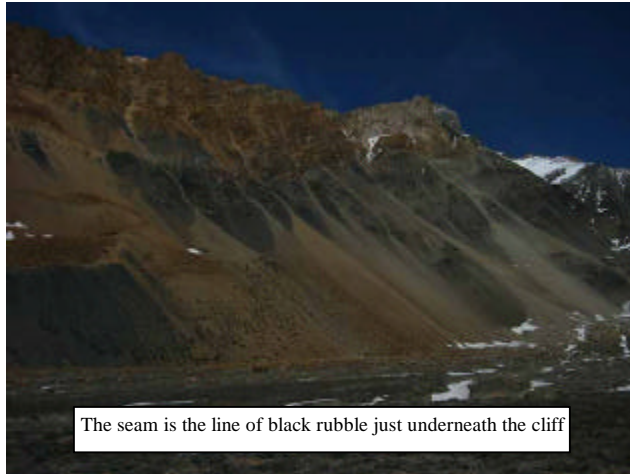
Long term options promoting small enterprises and thus creating employment/income were presented and further developed. A call to community mobilisers, Hukumat and jemoats was given to encourage people to present business plans to MSDSP and ACTED and engage in enterprises development.

For electric energy and the fuel problem, some alternatives using renewable energies and passive solar energy were presented. ACTED will invite for June an expert on renewable energies in order to design a plan for electrification of households, neighbourhoods and/or the rayon.



### Continued search: the coal missions disappointing outcome

Gauthier Weber pursued his quest for coal deposits in Badakhshan. He visited the site discovered last autumn in Gudara, upper Bartang valley. The coal in that site is of good quality, the amount of coal was estimated by him and an accompanying geologist as amounting to 800.000 tons. Unfortunately, obstacles for exploitation are plentiful: the seam touches the surface at the top of a 450m steep rubble slope. That material is too unstable to dig tunnels for exploitation. The seam, which stretches visibly over a width of some 1.5 km, is furthermore over-towered by a 50m+ cliff of solid rock, which threatens to fall and bury any attempt of exploitation. The non-stability of the surrounding mountain, the danger of collapsing of the wall above represent, according to him, obstacles too high to surmount. He therefore recommends a) to look for an end of the seam on the other side of the mountain (for which ACTED Murghab will organize a brigade) or b) to look into exploiting the deposit of Ravno, some 600 km away near Tavildara.



### Participation of PHIP team representatives in the SDC Bishkek good governance workshop

ACTED/PHIP Deputy Coordinator and Yak House manager, participated in a good governance workshop, organized by the SDC in Bishkek on May 10 and 11<sup>th</sup>.

The workshop showed the importance to pay equal attention on both supply side and demand sides of governance and community mobilization. Overemphasis of demand side (community mobilization) constrains even more government capacities and deepens citizens disbelief in state whilst overemphasis on the supply side (good governance) is a waste if citizens are unable to challenge government performance.

The attendees shared their experience with working with both the supply side (governance) and the demand side (communities) and devised practical recommendations for future activities according to the lessons learnt by their project (pick the most burning problem to engage the government, train CBOs and government officials together, use government officials to train government representatives, etc). ACTED/PHIP attendees shared these recommendations with their project colleagues. They will be taken into consideration during future project planning.



### The first tourism map of the Pamirs is now available

Sponsored by the UNESCO project "Development of Cultural and Ecotourism in the mountainous regions of South and Central Asia" and supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), the first tourist map of GBAO has been published after years of preparation and one year of intensive interaction between many contributors:



*Title:* The Pamirs – a tourist map of Gorno Badakhshan/Tajikistan and background information on the region

*Scale:* 1:500'000 *Format:* 963x660 mm (107x165 mm) double-sided  
*ISBN:* 3-906593-35-5

*Cartography:* Markus Hauser

*Publisher:* ACTED ([www.acted.org](http://www.acted.org)) and UNESCO ([www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org))

*Distribution:* Gecko Maps ([www.geckomaps.com](http://www.geckomaps.com))

The map is the fruit of a cooperation of many Pamir enthusiasts, national and international scientists, photographers, mountaineers, international organizations, local

informants and of course the cartographer, Markus Hauser.

We are grateful to all those who helped realize this ambitious project, and we invite you who contributed as well as you who might be interested in visiting this unique place to the 'launch of the Pamirs map event' at the Bactrian Cultural Centre; 26, F. Shakhobov; Dushanbe on Saturday, 12<sup>th</sup> of June starting at 5 p.m.

A similar event will take place in Paris on June 11<sup>th</sup> in the UNESCO 'batiment Bonvin', room 16, starting at 2:15 pm

### Program for the launch of the map in Dushanbe

#### Continued

- *Painting exhibition of a Murghabi painter, NodirJalonov*
- *Handicraft demonstration: how to weave with yak wool?*
- *Tea and coffee in a nomadic setting*
- *Information on the tourism offer in the Pamirs*

#### Afternoon 6 p.m.

- *Debate: community based tourism – an option for development?*

#### Evening

- *Slide show 'the Pamirs'*
- *Presentation of the Pamirs map and a Pamiri music CD*
- *Manas-chi: the Kyrgyz epic*
- *Traditional food from the high mountain desert*
- *Music and dance of the Pamiri and Kyrgyz.*

