



Pamir High Mountains Integrated Project Bulletin 18. 6\04.

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ACTED
Agence d'aide à la coopération technique et au développement.

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 June

- Launching events of 'The Pamirs' map in Dushanbe and Paris
- The Yak House goes to France: exploration into exportation options for Murghab handicrafts
- The tourism project is receiving a constant flow of tourists who do not just pass by but want to see some of the attractions of the district
- Unprecedented rainfalls and late snow turn Murghab into mud and retard the rehabilitation program (brick drying) as well as the agriculture program

Reports by departments

The Yak House

Networking

A catalogue is being prepared to strengthen the visibility of the Yak House.

During the visit to France, contacts with various potential sales outlets were made (see special report)

Contacts with CASCA regarding an expert on natural dyes, with the Pamir Institute as well as with MSDSP Khorog concerning that same issue have intensified. A joint training is being planned for later in the year.

Marketing

Sales in June have amounted to more than 4000 TJS: the major part was sold during the exhibition of Yak House products in Dushanbe (Pamir festival: 2,111 TJS), in Murghab sales reached 1,450 TJS and in Khorog, products for 476 TJS were sold.

Products from Dom Gor in Bishkek were returned to Murghab as sales had been decreasing over the past years.

With the opening of a new CAMP shop in Dushanbe, a new Dushanbe based Yak House products sale option for Yak House products will open in July.

The Yak House in the field

Chechekty, Rang Kul, Shaimag, Madian, Alichur, Beshgumbez, Bulun Kul and Kara Kul were visited. In all villages groups were organized and over 70 new Yak House members have started to produce handicrafts under the Yak House support. New Yak House members of Kuna Kurgan and Madian managed to sell first products and got their first income from handicrafts sales.

One problem arose with a 'clash of interventions': a project implemented by a local NGO and supported by the WFP promises women a salary of 2 bags of flour per month in return for handicraft products. Some of the



women who were trained by the Yak House and who previously worked with The Yak House thus prefer to work with this local NGO, as they are guaranteed at least two bags of flour per month, whilst income from The Yak House are more irregular as they depend on sales. It is deplorable that this project is a step backward in the transition from humanitarian aid to development. ACTED has contacted the WFP with a view to streamline the two agencies' activities.

Culture

The culture commission selected a group of three Pamiri and three Kyrgyz performers (musicians, 1 dancer, 1 manas chi), put together their program and trained them for the Pamiri festival in Dushanbe. This group also represents a focus group for concerts that can be arranged on request by the Ecotourism program.

All village organizations received letters giving a deadline of handing in requests for musical instruments or sports inventory. Only one village (Alichur) contributed 25%, the other 4 villages who responded will contribute before the 9th of July.

13 persons used the resource centre in the month of June.

A deadline for schoolbooks requests has been given for August, as schools are closed now for summer holidays.

Micro Finance

Reimbursements by several creditors had been delayed over the last months for various reasons. This month therefore witnessed intensive activity to enhance reimbursement. Most outstanding creditors were in a position to catch up with their debts, which increased the reimbursement ratio compared to the previous month.

The Murghab tontine group did its first internal credit rotation amounting to two times 705 TJS. All participants were satisfied.

Meetings were held with the two tontone groups and livestock group of Alichur, which were opened last month.

In Madian, the opening of a new livestock development group of six clients was postponed, as three identified clients were absent.

Agriculture

Kitchen Garden

Monitoring of the kitchen gardens and the small greenhouses is ongoing. The agriculture is threatened this year by cold temperatures, late snow and heavy rain and hailstorms. Yet, barley and potatoes have pierced the surface and are now steadily growing towards harvest. The greenhouses look promising. If they give good results, the next year will see an increase of that program.

Training

Two members of the Pamir Bio Institute have arrived in Murghab to perform a 6 days training on agriculture, fodder plants and pasture management. In cooperation with the ACTED agronomist they'll travel the rayon and hold one day trainings in each jemoat centre. The agriculture department has been invited to participate.

Forestry

The agreement with the Forestry department on the setting up of a tree nursery to grow adapted plants locally was rejected as the PHIP and the Forestry department could not agree on the respective obligations of the parties involved. ACTED will suggest to the forestry department to approach WFP for carrying some of the obligations ACTED had thought appropriate for the forestry department (payment of the warden who'd look after the nursery and the irrigation system).

Veterinary service

ACTED obtained a certificate to buy, store and sell veterinary vaccines by the agriculture department in Khorog.

The veterinary station which failed to reimburse the credit given for Foot and Mouth vaccines last autumn was given one more deadline till the beginning of July to reimburse.

Vaccination against Foot and Mouth disease for livestock in Pshart valley has started in cooperation between the veterinary department and ACTED (1 litre of vaccine). The groups (composed of the inhabitants of the summer pasture) will receive a 2 months credit for reimbursement. ACTED contributes the fuel for the mission in order to encourage people to vaccinate and thus prevent another outbreak.

Shaimag population asked for 2 litres of Foot and Mouth vaccine. When they were delivered, the population



refused to purchase vaccine for various reasons. One was the (fatal) misconception that after last year's outbreak, the livestock is now immune and does therefore not require the expensive prophylaxis.

Ecotourism

META provided services to 15 visitors staying an average of 4 days in the district. JAra Kul homestay received its first visitors, and so did Bulun Kul.

The launch of the map event promises to attract a greater number of visitors this year, in particular visitors interested in staying and exploring the region.

A new office (to be shared with the Yak House) has been identified and will be operational with the beginning of July.

Two trekking guides were sent to Almaty to receive a training by the Kazakhstan Mountaineering Foundation, a partner UNESCO supported ecotourism project.

A trainer for trekking guides from Dushanbe was contacted, and arrived on the 29th of June. 6 trainees left to the field to learn on general features of moving in the mountains, first aid, crossing of snow and ice as well as rivers, planning of trips and catering to the clients.

Two reconnaissance treks were done with pack animals and 3 tourists between Bachor and Bulun Kul (6 days) and Madian and Bazar Dara (4 days). The latter was not successful as there was still too much snow on the pass.

The rehabilitation of Murghab museum is being discussed in order to render the historical past of the region more accessible to the visitors.

Rehabilitation

For all rehabilitation worksites, agreements with the communities as well as with the Hukumat have been found on community contribution and sustainable use of the sites. A shipment of construction material reached all the worksites.

Shaimag boarding school greatly benefited of the constant presence of an engineer. Bricks as community contribution are being prepared (yet they have suffered of the wet weather), a latrine near the school building is being dug; a sports terrain has been cleared as community contribution. The new window frames for double windows have been installed, roofing is progressing including an insulating mud and hay layer and interior walls to serve as further insulation have been started.

In Kuna Kurgan hospital, the latrine built as community contribution is progressing, as is the outside improvement work also part of the community contribution. Half of the roof has been covered by an insulating layer of mud and hay in order to reduce energy losses. As soon as the latrine will be accomplished, the placing of the (small) window frames in the corridor will start, as will the construction of a wind breaking 'tambor'

Chechekty school is being upgraded to meet the PHIPs energy saving standards: window frames to double the windows in the corridor have been placed, the tambor to reduce heat losses through the entrance door is installed. The roof is receiving an insulating layer to be later on sealed with bitumen sheets.

For the Alichur hospital, the community has started with the digging of a 4 pit latrine as contribution. As soon as it will be done, the rehabilitation works will start.

In Chechtebe, an agreement was finally found between community, Hukumat and ACTED on the use of the former library as a medical point. ACTED will rehabilitate the building focussing on energy saving works (roof insulation and repair, double window, use of passive solar energy, entrance door)

With school # 9 in Murghab town, an agreement was elaborated on the construction of an additional building. The crucial point - community contribution - could finally be agreed upon. A brigade has been formed and the workers have started with the preparing of the bricks as well as with the excavations for the fundament. This worksite will serve as a demonstration worksite for designing and constructing energy efficient houses - taking into consideration the requests of communities.

A French carpenter has been contracted to help meet quality standards in the construction. Of special interest are windows and doors, classical heat exits and difficult to produce in appropriate quality in the difficult working conditions offered in Murghab.

Support to Most Vulnerable Families

The new program officer received a 10 days training in Kurgan Tube on group mobilization and procedures for in-kind credits in other ACTED bases.



Monitoring of the poultry program is completing the taking of office process. Monitoring results will be the basis for the design of further activities.

On request of Hukumat and in discussion with MSDSP, a scheme to provide the vulnerable population of the rayon with fair flour prices has been developed. The PHIP will provide flour to remote villages and to the vulnerable population of the rayon centre at purchasing + transportation cost. The flour will be sold with a small benefit by groups of vulnerable families. For a start, 10 tons will be delivered and the process tried.

Mobilization

In Alichur, Chechtebe, Chechekty, Kuna Kurgan, Shaimag and school #9, the Community mobilization department (CMD) pushed forward the agreement for the 25% community contribution and helped to arrange warehouses provided by the communities.

Various community and commission meetings were held for school #9. In the end, an agreement could be found thanks to a co-sponsor for the community contribution.

In Chechekty, the CMD tried to persuade the population to invest rather in insulation and window reparation than in whitewashing of the old school building – without success.

Monitoring of the 25% community contribution was done in all sites.

The CMD assisted the agriculture programme for the foot and mouth vaccination plan (discussion with veterinary station, organizing of lists of clients). The agreement found last month on f&m vaccine with Shaimag Jemoat was finally refused by the population based on their misconception of the threats of the disease. With Kuna Kurgan jemoat and the summer inhabitants of Pshart valley, an agreement was found and is currently under implementation.

The CMD also assisted the culture officer in collecting requests for cultural inventory. VOs of Murghab town have handed in requests, whether we can respond to them depends on the remaining budget (villages are the culture department's priority, this year.)

Other activities

Coal: A brigade from Kara Kul was sent out to look for the re-surfacing of the coal seam of Gudara. The brigade did indeed find some likely deposit in the valley bordering Gudara. During a monitoring mission by coordination, a site for deeper exploration was identified and a continuation of the work of the brigade was agreed upon. One strong constraint will definitely be the road, as it is a 15 km trek through beautiful but difficult terrain to reach the surfacing seam.

Renewable energies: A consultant for renewable energies was contracted to assess the potential and design the most appropriate plan for more potent electrification of Murghab town and the villages. His arrival is previewed for the beginning of July.

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Launch of the Pamirs map in the Bactria Cultural Centre



On the 12th of June, parts of the Eastern Pamirs descended to Dushanbe, leaving at home the cold and austerity of the arid high plateau to display the warmth of its inhabitants and the attractions of the remote and mystical mountain land. The Bactria Cultural Centre (BCC) hosted the launch of a newly published Pamir map promoting the region as a travel destination and presenting two of ACTED Murghab most successful projects, Eco-tourism and Handicraft. The detailed tourist map, produced by the Swiss cartographer Markus Hauser, supported by many experts on the region to provide background information, and with ACTED's



Pamir High Mountain Integrated Project as focal point, was funded by UNESCO and the Swiss Agency for Cooperation and Development (SDC). The intention of the map is to direct interest to that remote region and thus contribute to an alternative source of income to that marginal mountain economy: responsible tourism. (for mail-orders of the map: www.geckomaps.com)

Murghab arrived with a painting exhibition, musicians and dancers of the Western and Eastern Pamirs displaying the cultural diversity of the high mountain desert, a young Manas-Chi, the famous tellers of the epic Kyrgyz poem Manas, and products of the Yakhouse, the Murghab handicraft association with a raising reputation for its Yak wool products and traditional embroidered patterns in a modern design. The public – some 150 visitors on a hot Saturday afternoon - was furthermore given an optical impression of the beauties of the Pamirs with a slide show by the Tajik mountaineer and photographer Surat Toimastov and a taste of Badakhshani sound with a CD of music compilation produced by the BCC.

The panel discussion on the strategies of state, donors, NGOs and the private sector to develop tourism as part of the development process in mountain regions found an end with the scent of 50kg of roasting, frying, steaming Yak meat tickling the noses of the panel and the audience. Amongst music and dance, dishes of the Kyrgyz nomads were presented and judged delicious – that and the 50 sold maps promise for an increase of tourism in the years to come, starting with the international community working in Central Asia.

The event in the BCC could represent a first step for regular presentation of Eastern Pamir culture in Dushanbe, thus encouraging more exchange between the regions of the country. Until that day, Gorno Badakhshan in general and the Eastern Pamirs in particular remains a region difficult to reach for administrative obstacles and transportation shortfalls. The ACTED project is trying through its various components to contribute to the de-marginalisation of the region – the promotion of tourism is already showing promising results.

Let's go to the Pamirs! Reconnaissance trek report

Shaken after the ride in the Uaz Jeep and knowing the Tajik music cassette by heart we arrived in Murghab. The proposition of our ACTED guide to continue straight to Elli Su, a marvelous place with Yurts and a hot spring, sounded very promising - Murghab doesn't look very charming at first sight.



Wind and cold were not unexpected. But constant snowfall in June was not helpful: neither to the trekking plans, nor to the jeep tour ending in mud.

The plan was to make a reconnaissance trekking in direction of Bazar Dara Pass. After seven days a car should pick us up in Alichur. But things turned out differently. Every morning heavy snow was lying on and around our tents. Our porter's smile was largest, when we decided to turn back after three days. Nevertheless it was a very intensive time. Here a short passage out of a participant's diary.

"The typical smell of yak shit smoke is hanging in the air. People around us give a peaceful atmosphere, which spreads also in us. With heavy legs and a delighted heart we are lying in a yurt. Crossing rivers, eating Kyrgyz plov by hand, bathing in a hot spring and a long trekking make us happily dive into the feathers of our sleeping bags. Another highlight of the day was the Yak



baby, just born in front of our eyes.”

Back in Murghab we were welcomed in a very nice and clean home stay. The discussions with the open minded landlady, the hot “shower” in the “banja” and the marvelous dish out of yak meet made us ready for the next adventure.

We headed south, direction Cheshtebe. The landscape was so lovely, a pity we couldn't embrace it. During a snowstorm we found shelter in a yurt, where beautiful Kyrgyz tunes and butter tea warmed us up. The fact that our car got stuck in the mud forced us to camp in the middle of nowhere, where we were finally surprised by the sun the next morning.

Reconnaissance Tour in June 2004, Annette & Monika

The PHIP team in France

Two representatives of the PHIP team, Jumagul Ibraimova, the Yak House manager, and Marielle Leseur, the PHIP Deputy Coordinator, went to France from June 9th till June 20th. The PHIP team participated in the launch of the map of the Pamirs in UNESCO, on June 11th. In front of an audience of about 35 people, Mr Childe and Tresilian from UNESCO presented UNESCO Ecotourism project. Mrs Caley and the PHIP team from ACTED presented ACTED/PHIP ecotourism project, whilst Markus Hauser presented the map gestation process, allowing the captivated audience to get the measure of the huge work behind the first tourist map of the Pamirs. Some samples of the Yak House products were displayed in front of the conference room, allowing the attendees to get a glimpse of the secular Eastern Pamirs handicrafts traditions.

The second stage of the PHIP team's visit was dedicated to handicrafts. The PHIP team met some potential customers for the Yak House (fair trade middlemen, retail shops, etc), enquired the procedures to follow to import the Yak House products in France and visited some shops, whose products will inspire Jumagul to design new Yak House products.

