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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 July

- Site visit for a ‘renewable energies’ feasibility study by Thomas Schulthess
- Support to the rehabilitation program: arrival of a French carpenter to oversee the quality standards of the worksites and of two architects from Kyrgyzstan to supervise the ‘energy efficient’ demonstration worksite in school # 9
- After a 6 days trek a group of 8 brave Swiss tourists inaugurated the ‘caravan project’ with the first camel trek in Ran Kul jemoat
- Murghab Yak House products sales reached a record in July
- The “support to most vulnerable families” department started its flour trade activity with four groups of 23 beneficiaries in Murghab

Reports by departments

The Yak House

The Yak House, as well as the Murghab Ecotourism Association, moved into a new office. The new office not only allowed the Yak House to have a bigger selling corner, but also increased its visibility, which is thought to be one of the reasons explaining the sales increase in July: sales in Murghab amounted to 1,637 USD equivalent in July, a record!

A Yak House members meeting to which about 60 women participated was held in Murghab on June 15th. The Yak House members were updated on the Yak House results for the first half of the year (number of members, sales amount, running costs recovery, etc). During the second half of the meeting, dedicated to discussing the future of the Yak House, the issues of institutional and financial sustainability were discussed. The women elected a commission responsible for writing the charter of the cooperative to be created during the second half of the year. They also decided to increase the percentage of the product prices used for running cost recovery. It is however believed that the high running costs associated with working in Murghab will not allow the Yak House to be financially sustainable before a few years.

The women prepared the Yak House products to be sent to Paris in August for a sales exhibition to take place in September in UNESCO Paris headquarters: this exhibition will be a big step towards demarginalizing Murghab district!

Culture



The Dostuk fund supported the participation of a Murghab delegation to a culture competition held in Khorog. The winners of the competition will participate in a Dushanbe based "GBO week". The support consisted in training the participants, as well as a financial support from the Dostuk fund.

Musical instruments for Beshgumbez, Tokhtamish, Alichur and Kara Kul were purchased in Osh according to the requests of the communities and their contributions. The 'Dostuk' fund advanced the contribution for Kara Kul and Tokhtamish. The advance will be reimbursed in September.

The resource centre received 24 visitors in July.

A group of artists was identified to provide entertainment displaying traditional arts of the region on request of tourists.

A sports event to be held on the 9th of August was planned : three competitions will be held for women and men (volleyball, racing and bicycle race). Small prizes for the winners were purchased in Osh.

A meeting was held to plan the work of the culture commission for the coming quarter. According to decisions taken during the meeting, the commission requested the assistance of Khorog museum to modernize the exhibits of the museum currently rehabilitated by the PHIP. The registration of 'Dostuk' as an independent non-profit organization is one objective for the coming quarter, the draft charter is currently being worked on.

Micro Finance

Monitoring of creditors and reimbursement are ongoing. Reimbursements have fallen below expectations partly because of quarantine imposed on the sales of livestock from Murghab in Osh and Khorog due to a foot and mouth outbreak.

Support to small business and trade loans have been disbursed to 45 clients (10000 US\$) for a duration of 6 months with 2% interest rate.

The loan officer supported the most vulnerable program to organize beneficiaries into groups.

Agriculture

Kitchen Gardening

Vegetation period is ongoing. Climatic conditions are good, the unusual quantity of rain has so far not affected the plants negatively. From all sites, promising developments are reported, both for barley and for potatoes. The first results from the greenhouses/hotbeds are also satisfying, the radishes were spicy and tasty.

Training

A training on pasture management and kitchen gardening was conducted starting on the 30th of June in cooperation with two professors from the Khorog based Pamir Biological Institute. In one week, 8 sites were visited and theoretical and practical training was conducted. Feedbacks on the training were positive, and their recommendations will help further improve the agriculture subcomponent of the PHIP in the coming years.

Forestry

A new attempt to agree on a plan for a tree nursery was launched. The agreement previews a pilot plantation of 280 willows, sea buckthorn and poplar with the Department of Nature protection as well as the neighbouring communities fully responsible for the planting, watering and caring. ACTED will provide fencing material and a first shipment of seedlings. The objective is to create a source of locally adapted trees and shrubs for future forestation activities.

Veterinary service

An agreement with the Village organization of Kuna Kurgan was met over the disbursement of 3 litres of Foot and Mouth vaccine on a credit base. One litre was given to Kulma pass pastures. The remaining vaccine has been distributed in and around Murghab town.

Ecotourism

In July, META provided services to 50 visitors (in comparison, META provided services in 2003 to 36 visitors). The average time spent in Murghab rayon was 4 days. The camel project received its first clients.

The first tour group organised by InterAssist and handed over to META in Bulun Kul was received and shown to the beauties of Kara Kul area.

The 6 days guide training in Madian allowed to identify a new trek and introduced the guides to basics on crossing glaciers and snow fields, first aid, river crossings as well as more basic services. The 2 guides who had



been sent to Almaty returned after a 10 days training.

The new office was inaugurated, and the collection for equipping an 'Ecomuseum' has started. Objects of every-day life, with a focus on livestock breeding as well as traditional handicrafts and jewellery will be displayed along with information on the people, flora and fauna of the region. A Yurt in the yard will serve as a combined exhibition hall and small café. This activity is carried out together with the Yak house and the culture department.

The rehabilitation of the Murghab museum is ongoing. It will allow for a more generous display of the objects to make them more accessible to the local population and other visitors.

Two new home stays were identified in Murghab and received an initial training. The rehabilitation of one of the houses is ongoing, the home stay should be operational by the 10th of August.

A wildlife survey was conducted in Bazaar Dara. The highlight was the sighting of one brown bear. Apart from that, one group of 32 Ibex was observed, with only 9 calves for 16 female animals. Old traces of wolf and ungulates as well as marmots were abundant.

Rehabilitation

A French carpenter arrived to help the rehabilitation program with the implementation of this year's plan with the requested insulation techniques and quality standards. Two architects from Kyrgyzstan trained by CAMP on energy saving techniques have arrived to supervise the demonstration worksite of school # 9.

The rehabilitation program has suffered of the unprecedented quantity of rain: access roads were blocked (Cheshtebe), the production of bricks was significantly slowed down (Shaimag, Murghab)

Shaimag boarding school is proceeding at a good pace: the roof insulation is accomplished to 30%, whilst the roof covering with beams and planks on the last 20% is ongoing. All window frames are installed and an outside plastering has been done. Bricks have been delivered for the doubling of the interior walls. A problem encountered is that the rehabilitation commission has for most members left to summer pastures, thus monitoring and reporting is hampered when ACTED engineers are not present on site.

Chechekty school inside work (in the corridor) was completed. The application of the bitumen roof construction was slowed down by the heavy rains and the necessity to work on a dry surface. The installation of a layer of concrete covered by bitumen is therefore still ongoing.

In Kuna Kurgan hospital, the walls of the latrine built as community contribution are accomplished. The roof of the hospital has been covered with an insulating layer of mud and hay in order to reduce energy losses. The roofing sheets have been purchased and installed. The foundation for the entrance shed has been laid.

In Alichur hospital, the roof is being covered by an insulating layer. Most construction material has been delivered, construction of the latrine (community contribution) is ongoing (the pit has been dug and walled).

In Cheshtebe, the rehabilitation of the ancient library to be used as a medical station has started. The roof has been dismantled in order to upgrade the wooden roof frame. As soon as this is done, an insulating layer will be applied on the roof and inside work will be completed.

School # 9 has started with the laying of a foundation and the walling using a sandwich wall technique: the two walls are separated by a layer of unmoved air which will serve as an insulating layer. The site is being supervised by two architects trained by CAMP in Kirghizstan. The different stages of the work will be introduced by workshops aiming at informing the population and at popularizing the use of locally available insulation techniques.

Support to Most Vulnerable Families

After a detailed assessment of the existing programs, the new officer in charge, coordination and the micro finance loan officer designed some new procedures and activities.

A meeting for goat breeding was held with the present beneficiaries. Successful beneficiaries of the past season will receive an additional 5 goats in order to engage into livestock development, which shall, starting from next year, allow them to access MFP loans. Half of the goats will have to be reimbursed in kind, half of them in cash. The purchasing of goats has started in late July, all goats distributed will receive the requested vaccines.

The department started its flour trade activities in response to the end of humanitarian aid in April 2004. Flour will be sold by groups of vulnerable families at a price below market price. PHIP is handing out 2 bags of flour per beneficiary on a group credit base. After reimbursement, they are entitled to receive new bags for sale. Despite a flour quality certificate from Osh, some bags were returned to the project by unsatisfied clients. The



beneficiaries are now selecting the flour, first checking its quality.

The poultry program was assessed as not efficient and will therefore not be continued.

Mobilization

The department worked mainly on overseeing the 25% contribution for rehabilitation sites and on assisting the agronomist for the distribution of vaccines. The outcomes of the activities are included in the relevant department's reports.

A workshop on the use and construction of solar ovens, to be facilitated by an ACTED Khatlon engineer and assisted by the CM was planned and prepared for the middle of July. Because of access problems, the mission had to be rescheduled for the beginning of August.

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Renewable Energies: Electricity for Murghab?

Electricity and lack of heating material are two of the most pressing problems of Murghab rayon.

A mission to assess the potential of using renewable energies to electrify Murghab town as well as one model village was conducted by the Swiss consultant Thomas Schulthess in the first week of July. During his mission he visited the hydro power station, the canal water catchment, the hospital of Murghab (which was selected as a model individual power unit with a combined solar heating system) and the village of Rang Kul, which offers good climatic characteristics for a hybrid micro grid, combining wind, solar and the existing generator as a backup.

His mission had the following preliminary outcomes:

The most adequate and cost effective technique for town electricity in Murghab is a hydro power station. According to data collected from the director of the power station, the water flow even in winter would be sufficient for a basic electricity supply excluding heating if it was stored properly. The suggestion would therefore be to construct a dam and install turbines near the actual dam for the hydro power station. Plans already exist dating back to soviet times, and the possibility to have access to these plans has been requested from the Ministry of Energy via Murghab Hukumat. Based on those plans, the needs for further evaluation will be defined and action will be taken accordingly.

Murghab hospital was selected for being equipped with independent power supply as it is a public building in great need for a reliable and constant energy supply. The building will also serve as a demonstration site for solar heating modules.

Rang Kul with its high exposure to wind and sun radiation provides a perfect setting for the installation of a 'micro grid'. Using the existing electricity distribution network for the existing 250 households, a hybrid solution using the sources of sun and wind which will continuously charge a battery park will be proposed.

These are ambitious plans. Cooperation with Hukumat and Ministry of Energy as well as with Pamir Energies shall be sought, and funding looked for.



Camel trekking in Rang Kul



Eight guests and nine camels inaugurated the "Caravan project" by doing a three days memorable trek in the deserted mountains and high pastures of Rang Kul jemoat at the end of July. Reception in the summer pastures' yurts was festive. Only one male camel did not seem to enjoy the experience and had to be separated from the group...

Murghab Bactrian camels are kept most of the year half wild roaming the plains. It is hoped that the project will give a incentive to camel owners to preserve this symbol of nomadism through income generation. The number of Bactrian camels in Murghab is indeed continuously decreasing, meaning that the specie is close to extinction.

