



25  
YEARS  
IN TAJIKISTAN

*Empowered lives. Resilient nations.*

# 25 YEARS OF UNDP CONTRIBUTION TO THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN TAJIKISTAN

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INSPIRED BY THE BEIJING DECLARATION AND PLATFORM FOR ACTION  
ADOPTED IN 1995

DECEMBER, 2019



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Design and layout: Jahongirkhon Osimov



# FOREWORD

As UNDP marks 25 years of work in Tajikistan, we thought it would be a good time to reflect on the achievements of the past quarter of a century assisting the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

This anniversary also offers an opportunity to identify persistent shortcomings and, as we look to the future and chart the path ahead, define ways to accelerate progress toward equal opportunities for women and men, in line with the objectives set in the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which also celebrates its 25-year anniversary.

As this publication highlights, Tajikistan has taken important legislative steps over the years to reduce gender inequalities and ensure that women, girls, youth and people from marginalised groups have a voice and they can actively participate in building a sustainable future for the country.

Over the years, UNDP has focused on ensuring that its wide range of programmes, implemented in coordination with government and civil society partners, fully take into account the specific needs of women, build their skills and capacity to gain paid employment and enable them to participate in decision-making at all levels of society.



Much work remains to achieve de facto gender equality. Accelerating the pace of women's empowerment will not only benefit individuals, but Tajik society as a whole.

Tajikistan must capitalise on the demographic advantage that its young population offers. The National Development Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan for the Period Up to 2030 calls for unleashing the entrepreneurial potential of young women and men by enhancing their vocational skills and boosting the capacity to support sustainable growth through innovation.

These young women and men are the children of the digital revolution. By supporting their aspirations and unleashing their innovative spirit, Tajikistan can achieve a sustainable, prosperous and equitable future, with continued assistance from UNDP.

**Dr. Pratibha Mehta**  
Resident Representative  
UNDP Tajikistan



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**UNDP Tajikistan 2019**





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# ABBREVIATIONS

AfT	UNDP “Aid for Trade” project
AS	Agency of Statistics under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CWFA	Committee on Women and Family Affairs
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
DOTS	Directly observed treatment, short course
ECFA	Eurasia Foundation Central Asia
EU	European Union
GDI	Gender Development Index
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GGI	Gender Gap Index
GII	Gender Inequality Index
HDI	Human Development Index
HIV	Human immunodeficiency virus
ILO	International Labour Organisation
JRC	Jamoat Resource Centre
LFS	Labour Force Survey
MAPS	Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support to SDGs
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MEDT	Ministry of Economic Development and Trade of the Republic of Tajikistan
MtDP-2020	Mid-term Development Program of the Republic of Tajikistan 2016-2020
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NDC	National Development Council under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan
NDS 2030	National Development Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan for the Period up to 2030
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PHIV	People living with HIV
PWD	People living with disabilities
RT	Republic of Tajikistan
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
TB	Tuberculosis
TMAP	Tajikistan Mine Action Programme
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework 2016-2020
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VNR	Voluntary National Review



## INTRODUCTION

For the past 25 years, UNDP has been working in partnership with the Government of Tajikistan to promote sustainable and inclusive economic and social development in the country.

Gender equality and the empowerment of women are core components of the UNDP approach to development. When women and girls reach their full potential and take part in decision-making, society as a whole reaps the rewards.

Removing institutional and societal barriers that stand in the way of the active participation of women at all levels of public and economic life is a powerful accelerator for sustainable and equitable development. Involving women in decision-making at all levels of society—within the family but also in business, in local administration and national political institutions—promotes peace and stability.

Following its independence in 1991, Tajikistan, a mountainous country with a current population of around 9 million, experienced several years of civil conflict that affected the social and economic fabric of the country. Lack of employment has forced thousands of people to migrate for work, mostly to Russia.

The majority of labour migrants, but not all, are men. As a result, many women, particularly those living in rural areas, have been left to manage their families and farms. This crucial role, however, has not significantly raised their status in traditional communities.

In the past 15 years, Tajikistan has undergone positive change, experiencing one of the fastest poverty reduction rates in the world. Poverty declined from 81 percent in 1999 to 29.7 percent in 2017 while extreme poverty was reduced from 73 percent to 14 percent.

Economic growth in Tajikistan has been steady in recent years, but its benefits are not shared equally in society. Women, children and marginalised groups remain most vulnerable to poverty and regional disparities subsist.

Unemployment remains particularly high among women and young people under 30, who account for 66 percent of the population. Ensuring that they have equal access to opportunities is therefore critical to sustainable and equitable development.



## What is the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action



In September 1995, government representatives and women's rights advocates from all over the world gathered in Beijing for the Fourth World Conference on Women. Two weeks of intense debate resulted in the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, a visionary roadmap for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

The recommendations of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action focus on the following 12 critical areas of concern:



Women and poverty



Education and training of women



Women and health



Violence against women



Women and armed conflict



Women and the economy



Women in power and decision-making



Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women



Human rights of women



Women and the media



Women and the environment



The girl child

Several of the critical areas of the concern of the Beijing Platform for Action were later incorporated into the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. Today, the Beijing Platform for Action remains a powerful source of inspiration and a beacon for a new generation of women's rights advocates.

### The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action states that:

- Women's rights are human rights.
- Women's empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision-making process and access to power, are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace
- Equal rights, opportunities and access to resources, equal sharing of responsibilities for the family by men and women, and a harmonious partnership between them are critical to their well-being and that of their families as well as to the consolidation of democracy
- Eradication of poverty based on sustained economic growth, social development, environmental protection and social justice requires the involvement of women in economic and social development, equal opportunities and the full and equal participation of women and men as agents and beneficiaries of people-centred sustainable development.



Along with other international commitments such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action guides the national development agenda of the Republic of Tajikistan. The UNDP Strategic Plan and Gender Equality Strategy are aligned with these frameworks and agendas.



## SUMMARY ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SELECTED CRITICAL AREAS OF THE BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION



### WOMEN AND POVERTY

**ACHIEVEMENTS:** The level of poverty and extreme poverty has declined significantly. Households recognised as poor receive social assistance.

**CHALLENGES:** Lack of sex- and age- disaggregated data makes it hard to measure poverty by gender and develop a gender analysis for key issues. Analysis of sources of livelihoods shows greater socio-economic vulnerability of women. Women are particularly dependent on labour migration remittances.



### VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

**ACHIEVEMENTS:** The State Programme on Prevention of Family Violence in the Republic of Tajikistan for 2014–2023 was adopted in 2014. Law enforcement agencies have stepped up efforts to investigate cases of domestic violence, resulting in more criminal cases and administrative protocols. A government resolution supports the provision of free legal aid and public bureaux of legal affairs have been created. In 2018, a Resource Centre was launched under the Committee on Women and Family Affairs to provide legal and psychological assistance to victims of family violence.

**CHALLENGES:** In spite of numerous awareness raising campaigns, there are few signs of a significant shift in society's response to domestic violence, due to lack of a comprehensive and cross-sectoral approach and lack of understanding in society of the scope of the issue. There is no legal definition of gender-based violence and harassment, including sexual harassment. The State Programme on Prevention of Family Violence does not include measures against gender-based violence in a comprehensive way. No statistics are available on sexual harassment or forced marriage.



### EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF WOMEN

**ACHIEVEMENTS:** The share of girls in secondary specialised educational institutions and in universities has increased. The Presidential quota was introduced in 1997 to overcome unequal access of rural girls to higher education. The government has started training girls and women in non-traditional professions.

**CHALLENGES:** While the level of men's education has increased, women's level of education has declined, especially in professional education. The number of women with higher education per 1000 persons aged 15 years and older is almost 2.5 times lower compared to men. A strong gender imbalance in different areas of specialisation persists in secondary and higher education. Access for women with disabilities remains limited.



### WOMEN AND HEALTH

**ACHIEVEMENTS:** A range of programmes and strategies is being implemented to expand women's access to health services, including reproductive and sexual health, HIV/AIDS prevention and HIV treatment. Several indicators on women's access to health services show positive trends.

**CHALLENGES:** Many women still struggle to access medical care. Funding appears to be one of the main problems. People living with HIV are entitled to receive specialised medical care free of charge in public healthcare facilities, including medication. However, those norms are not fulfilled in practice. Pregnant women living with HIV need special care and support from the state.






## WOMEN AND THE ECONOMY

**ACHIEVEMENTS:** The government is continuing to create conditions that will enable the expansion of economic opportunities for women with measures such as Presidential grants to support women entrepreneurs. The share of women among loan recipients reached 39.5 per cent. With support from international partners, financial institutions have more actively supported women's entrepreneurship through micro-credits.

**CHALLENGES:** Many of the planned measures have not been implemented. The underdeveloped cross-sectoral approach has made it impossible to achieve objectives and shifts in ongoing changes in labour market and employment have not been sufficiently considered. While the proportion of men has increased among the employed population, the share of women has significantly decreased in recent years. The labour market is still segregated into 'male' and 'female' professions. The gender gap between men and women's salaries remains wide. Women still perform most of the unpaid care work.



## WOMEN IN POWER AND DECISION-MAKING

**ACHIEVEMENTS:** The Procedure for Competitive Admissions for Public Service Openings was amended to support the employment of women. The State Human Resources Programme aims to increase the share of women among civil servants up to 40 per cent, and up to 30 per cent at managerial level by 2022.

**CHALLENGES:** The effectiveness of the special measure to support women applying for civil service jobs remains difficult to assess. Despite efforts by the Government and civil society organisations to promote women in leadership positions, men continue to dominate in decision-making. Women managers mainly occupy lower and middle management positions.



## WOMEN AND THE ENVIRONMENT

**ACHIEVEMENTS:** The National Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy for 2019–2030 of the Republic of Tajikistan integrates gender issues in all its sections.

**CHALLENGES:** The elimination of gender inequalities in the environment field and in the risk and impact of natural disasters is closely linked to the position of women in the society and the effective implementation of the SDGs and gender policy in general.



## THE GIRL CHILD

**ACHIEVEMENTS:** A Deputy Commissioner for Human Rights—the Commissioner for Children's Rights (CCR) was appointed, which strengthens national institutional mechanisms to protect the rights of the child, particularly, the girl child. In 2014, the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan adopted the National Programme for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour in the Republic Tajikistan for 2015–2020.

**CHALLENGES:** Policies related to children and youth show a predominantly gender-neutral approach, lacking a comprehensive gender analysis. Girls' access to the various levels of the education system remains more limited. Harmful practices of early and forced marriages remain relevant and no effective mechanisms have been developed to eliminate them. The legal age of marriage is 18; however, the Family Code allows the age of marriage to be reduced by court decision in exceptional circumstances.

Source: Alternative Report of the Coalition of Non-Governmental Organizations of the Republic of Tajikistan "From Equality de jure to Equality de facto" on the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action+25



## GENDER AND THE SDGs

In 2005, the international community adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The Sustainable Development Agenda provides an ambitious blueprint for global sustainable development with the objective to “Leave No One Behind”.

The SDGs, which incorporate elements of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, underpin the work of UNDP in Tajikistan and around the world.

**Gender equality is central to the Agenda 2030 vision for global development. It is a standalone objective in Goal 5: “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.”**

The empowerment of women and girls, and ensuring they enjoy the same opportunities as men and boys is also reflected across the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 45 targets and 53 gender-specific indicators and is a key element of Goal 8 (“Decent work and opportunities for all”), Goal 10 (“Reducing inequality”) and Goal 16 (“Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions”).





# LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORKS FOR GENDER EQUALITY IN TAJIKISTAN

## GENDER EQUALITY AGENDA OF THE REPUBLIC OF TAJIKISTAN

In 1994, the Government of Tajikistan first committed to the goal of gender equality. Over the years, the country has enacted a series of laws to improve protections for women's rights, combat domestic violence and eliminate social and economic barriers to the empowerment of women and girls. The principle of equality and non-discrimination is enshrined in the Constitution.

In recent years, the Government of Tajikistan has stepped up its efforts to empower women. Gender equality is a cross-cutting theme in the National Development Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan for the Period up to 2030, closely aligned with the global Sustainable Development Agenda 2030, which seeks to reduce gender disparities, combat violence against women and girls, and promote greater involvement of women in all aspects of public and economic life.

Thanks to presidential quotas, more girls access higher education, but a gender gap subsists at all levels and areas of specialisation differ by gender. New measures, such as micro-grants offices, have been introduced to remove some barriers preventing women's equal access to finance.

### Tajikistan is a signatory to the following international treaties promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women

- UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), ratified in 1993 and the optional protocol, adopted in 2014.
- International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families in 2002.
- International Covenant on Political and Civil Rights, 1999;
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1999;
- Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1993.



### STATE MECHANISMS TO PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY

The Committee on Women and Family Affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan, established in 1996, is the main body coordinating efforts to promote gender equality, prevent discrimination against women, girls and vulnerable groups, and eliminate gender-based violence.

Strategies introduced to advance toward these objectives include:

- State Programme for the Prevention of Domestic Violence in the Republic of Tajikistan for 2014–2023.
- National Strategy for Enhancing the Role of Women in the Republic of Tajikistan 2011–2020.
- National Development Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan for the Period up to 2030 (NDS 2030), largely aligned with the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, and the country's Mid-Term Development Programme 2016–2020.
- Working Group on the Improvement of Legal Acts on the Elimination of Gender Stereotypes, Protection of Women's Rights and Prevention of Domestic Violence, set up in June 2017.



About one third of entrepreneurs are women, although their businesses, mostly service-oriented, tend to have a lower turnover.

With support from its development partners, the Government of Tajikistan has started training young women in non-traditional occupations such as electrician, technician or bricklayer to expand opportunities for women. These are still constrained by patriarchal perceptions that limit employment outside agriculture and low-paid fields such as health and education, traditionally considered suitable for women. Women still shoulder most of housekeeping and unpaid care work.

The Government is promoting greater inclusion of women in decision-making in local and national government as well as in the economy. Legal aid offices, both government- and NGO-run, are improving access to justice.

The Government has also adopted the comprehensive State Programme for the Prevention of Domestic Violence in the Republic of Tajikistan for 2014-2023 to combat domestic violence, which remains a pervasive issue in Tajik society. With the rise of religious extremism, patriarchal norms have become more entrenched in some areas. Harmful practices like polygamy and early or forced marriages persist.

### Legal steps taken by the Government of Tajikistan to promote gender equality, empower women and girls, and prevent domestic violence

- Law on State Guarantees of Equal Rights and Opportunities for Men and Women (2005).
- Law on Protection of Breastfeeding Children (2006)
- Law on State Social Orders (2008)
- Amendment of the Family Code of the Republic of Tajikistan, raising the legal marital age from 17 to 18 years (2010)
- Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence (2013)
- Law on Combating Human Trafficking and Assisting Victims of Trafficking (2014).



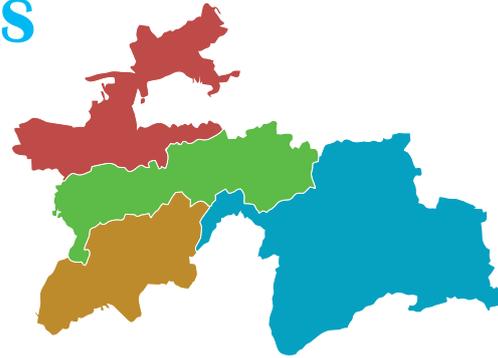


# TAJIKISTAN IN FIGURES

**POPULATION** 9 million<sup>1</sup>

**GDP per capita** US\$ 826.6<sup>2</sup>

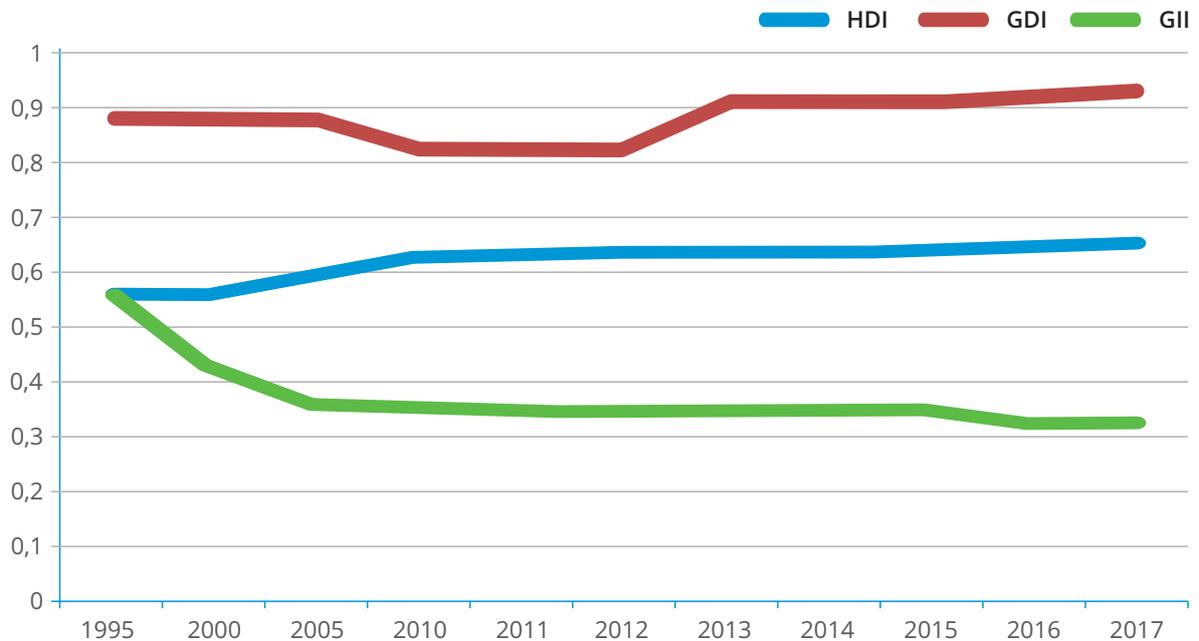
**Rural share of the population:** 72.8%<sup>5</sup>



## Global Gender Gap

Tajikistan ranks 123rd out of 149 countries with a score of 0.638 in the World Economic Forum Gender Gap Index 2018 (based on economic participation and opportunity for women, educational attainment, health and survival and political empowerment)<sup>4</sup>

**PROPORTION OF WOMEN-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS:** 23%<sup>5</sup>



## Evolution of HDI, GDI, GII indices

**HDI:** The Human Development Index is a summary measure of average achievement in key dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, being knowledgeable and have a decent standard of living. The HDI is the geometric mean of normalized indices for each of the three dimensions.

**GDI:** The Gender Development Index measures gender gaps in human development achievements by accounting for disparities between women and men in three basic dimensions of human development: health (measured by life expectancy at birth for women and men), education (measured by expected years of schooling for girls and boys and mean years for adults aged 25 and older); and command over economic resources (measured by estimated Gross National Income per capita for women and men).

**GI:** The Gender Inequality Index can be interpreted as the loss in human development due to inequality between men and women's achievements in three dimensions: reproductive health (measured by maternal mortality and adolescent birth rates); empowerment (measured by the share of parliamentary seats held by women and attainment in secondary and higher education by each gender); and economic activity (measured by the labour market participation rate for women and men).

<sup>1</sup> National Report on Implementation of Strategic Documents of the Country in the Context of the Sustainable Development Goals  
<sup>2</sup> World Bank 2018  
<sup>3</sup> World Bank, 2018  
<sup>4</sup> World Economic Forum Gender Gap report 2018  
<sup>5</sup> World Bank 2017



## WOMEN AND EDUCATION

### PRIMARY EDUCATION

Girls account for

**48,5%**

of students enrolled in primary schools

### SECONDARY EDUCATION

The proportion of girls enrolled in secondary education increased from 44.3% in 2000/2001 to

**60%**

in 2015/2016. Data about the dropout rate of girls is not available.

### TERTIARY EDUCATION

Girls' enrolment in universities rose from 24% in 2000/2001 to

**35%**

in 2015/2016

### VOCATIONAL EDUCATION:

Vocational school is the most common educational path for girls who accounted for almost

**59%**

of all students in 2016/2017.

The trend is associated with a high concentration of girls in teacher training (72% of all students) and healthcare colleges (70%)

## WOMEN AND EMPLOYMENT

### LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION:

In recent years, the labour force participation of women has declined.

In 2016, women accounted for

**40,5%**

of total employed population. In 2004, this ratio was

**46,6%**

The labour force participation of men increased from 53.4 to 59.5 percent during the same period.

**Woman labour** is highly concentrated in agriculture and unpaid care work.

Women account for

**75,8%**

of careers and carry out most of the unpaid care for children, the elderly and the disabled.

### GENDER WAGE GAP:

Between 2014 and 2017, the ratio of women's salaries compared to that of men remained largely unchanged.

At the end of 2017, it stood at

**59,6%**

### DEPENDENCE ON REMITTANCES

Women

**65%**

men 35%.

## WOMEN IN PUBLIC LIFE

### REPRESENTATION IN PARLIAMENT

Women make up

**20,2%**

of total members of **both** chambers of **Parliament** (19.4 percent in the Lower Chamber–Majlisi Namoyandagon – and 20.5 percent of Upper Chamber–Majlisi Milli)

## WOMEN IN CIVIL SERVICE:

In ministries, the proportion of women employees vary greatly from

**72,2%**

in the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (MHSP) to

**15,2%**

15.2 percent in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and

**18,1%**

18.1 percent in the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA)

## WOMEN AND HEALTH

### MATERNAL MORTALITY RATE:

The maternal mortality rate has declined from

**45 to 25**

per live 1000 births between 2010 and 2017. It remains one of the highest in Central Asia.

### RATIO OF WOMEN RECEIVING ANTENATAL CARE:

Percentage increased from 79% in 2012 to

**92%**

in 2017

### HIV REGISTERED CASES:

As of 31 March 2019, there are

**3,252**

women living with HIV in Tajikistan

Statistical Agency under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan

National Report on Implementation of Strategic Documents of the Country in the Context of the Sustainable Development Goals

From "Monitoring of the implementation of the Law of the Republic of Tajikistan "On state guarantees of equal rights for men and women and equal opportunities for their implementation", conducted by the Committee on Women and Family Affairs under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan in 2018

Labour Force Survey 2016

Labour Force Survey 2016, cited in the "Alternative Report of the Coalition of Non-Governmental Organizations of the Republic of Tajikistan "From Equality de jure to Equality de facto" on the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action+25"

National Report on Implementation of Strategic Documents of the Country in the Context of the Sustainable Development Goals

Statistical Agency under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, cited in the "Alternative Report of the Coalition of Non-Governmental Organizations of the Republic of Tajikistan "From Equality de jure to Equality de facto" on the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action+25"

Voluntary National Review (VNR) on the implementation of the Agenda 2030, 2017

From "Monitoring of the implementation of the Law of the Republic of Tajikistan "On state guarantees of equal rights for men and women and equal opportunities for their implementation", conducted by the Committee on Women and Family Affairs under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan in 2018

National Review of the Republic of Tajikistan on the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), 2019

National Report on Implementation of Strategic Documents of the Country in the Context of the Sustainable Development Goals National Review of the Republic of Tajikistan on the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), 2019 From "Monitoring of the implementation of the Law of the Republic of Tajikistan

"On state guarantees of equal rights for men and women and equal opportunities for their implementation", conducted by the Committee on Women and Family Affairs under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan in 2018



# GENDER EQUALITY AGENDA OF THE REPUBLIC OF TAJIKISTAN

## PERSISTENT AND EMERGING CHALLENGES

- Entrenched patriarchal norms and gender stereotypes that limit the empowerment of women and girls.
- Lack of a comprehensive cross-sectoral approach in the development of policies to empower women and ensure mainstreaming of gender across all policy areas supported by reliable and comprehensive gender statistics in line with SDGs.
- Incomplete consideration of structural causes of inequality of rights of women and men in laws and practice (limited access to various types of resources, decision-making, violence against women).
- Insufficient mechanisms for the implementation of legislative norms on women's rights and gender equality and weak institutional mechanisms for protections.
- Low awareness of women's rights and gender equality in the society and in government agencies.
- Lack of gender-responsive budgeting and shortage of financial resources for addressing gender equality policy and programme priorities.
- Lack of obligatory gender analysis in new legal and regulatory acts.
- Gender stereotypes that impede the promotion of women's rights in all areas.
- Limited involvement of civil society organisations in planning, implementing and monitoring policies to ensure they are gender-sensitive.
- Persistence of harmful practices like polygamy and early marriages as well as widespread domestic violence and sexual harassment.
- Insufficient consideration of new challenges such as unregulated migration, worsening impact of climate change and strengthening patriarchal norms, and their impact on women.

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: A PERVERSIVE ISSUE

**24%**

of women age 15–49 have experienced physical violence since age 15, and 17% experienced **PHYSICAL VIOLENCE** in the 12 months preceding the survey. Two percent of women have ever experienced sexual violence.

**29%**

of ever-married women reported that their current or most recent husband had ever exhibited at least three types of specified **CONTROLLING BEHAVIOURS**.

**39%**

of ever-married women say that they are **AFRAID OF THEIR CURRENT OR MOST RECENT HUSBAND** most of the time, and 5% say that they are afraid of him some of the time.

**31%**

of ever-married women have experienced **PHYSICAL, SEXUAL, OR EMOTIONAL VIOLENCE** by their current or most recent husband. The prevalence of spousal violence has increased by 7 percentage points in the 5 years since the 2012 Tajikistan DHS.

Among ever-married women who have experienced spousal physical or sexual violence,

**23%**

have sustained some form of **INJURY**.

Only

**1 in 10**

women **SOUGHT HELP** to stop the violence they had experienced. Three in four women neither sought help nor told anyone about the violence.



In its review of the sixth periodic report of Tajikistan in 2018, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women urged the Government to “expedite the adoption of legislation to criminalize all forms of gender-based violence, including domestic violence, marital rape and sexual assault within and outside marriage.”



# UNDP WORK IN TAJIKISTAN

Since 1994, UNDP has been working with the Government of Tajikistan to reduce poverty and encourage inclusive and sustainable economic development in the country. The promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women is a core element of UNDP approach to development.

With no natural resources and limited employment opportunities, Tajikistan remains one of the poorest countries in Central Asia, in spite of significant progress in poverty reduction in recent years. Thousands of people, the majority of them men, seek employment abroad. Numerous families in Tajikistan rely on labour migration remittances for financial survival.

Labour migration, however, has a significant impact on local communities, particularly on women and children. Women, who carry out most of the agricultural work, head nearly a quarter of households in Tajikistan.

The promotion of women's empowerment is crucial to ensure sustainable economic and social development in Tajikistan. Although gender equality has been enshrined in legislation since 1994, in reality, women still face discrimination and are poorly represented at decision-making level in public and economic life. Traditional gender stereotypes and patriarchal perceptions of women's role remain strong in Tajik society.

UNDP is supporting efforts by the Tajikistan authorities to make gender equality a reality and ensure that no woman or girl is left behind. The projects developed and implemented by UNDP and its partners—government ministries, UN agencies, international organisations, private sector



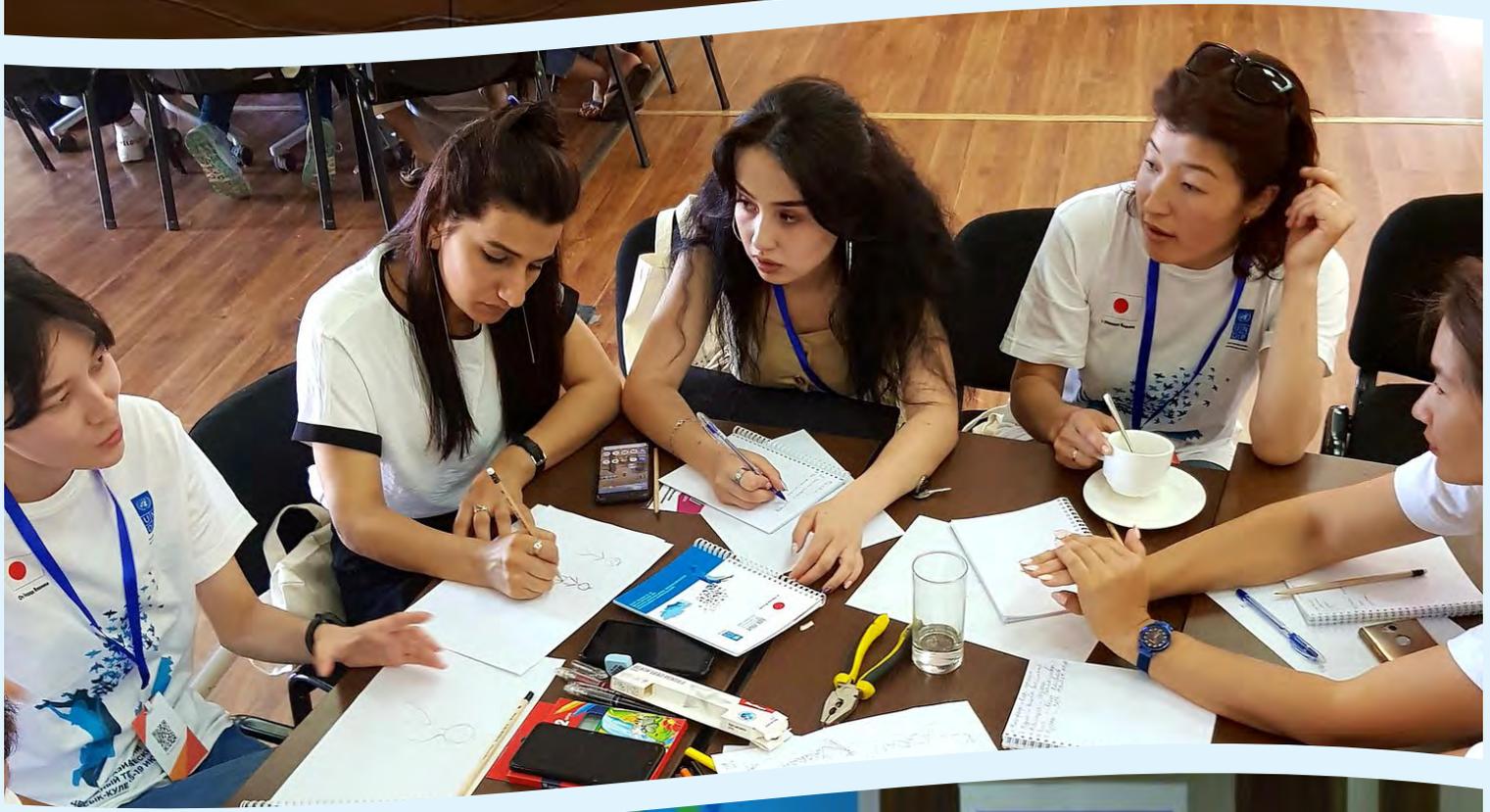
companies, civil society organisations and donor countries—aim to empower women, youth and people with disabilities by advocating for equal rights, combating discrimination and harmful practices, and challenging stereotypes.

With its partners, UNDP works to remove barriers that prevent women and girls from reaching their full potential and benefiting from the same opportunities as their male counterparts. Projects in Tajikistan focus on improving livelihoods in rural areas, strengthening governance and access to justice, fostering employment and entrepreneurship, building the resilience of rural communities and promoting environmental sustainability.

UNDP Tajikistan supports the country's progress toward achieving the SDGs and addressing the critical areas of concern of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for action through poverty-reduction strategies and policies that address the needs of women as well as men and promote their active participation at all levels of society. Its work focuses on four priority areas:

- Governance, rule of law and access to justice
- Sustainable and equitable economic growth
- Social equity and protection of vulnerable groups from violence and discrimination
- Resilience and environmental sustainability







## RELATED CRITICAL AREAS OF THE BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION



Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women



Women in power and decision-making



Human rights of women



Violence against women

## GOVERNANCE, RULE OF LAW AND ACCESS TO JUSTICE

For the past 25 years, UNDP has promoted effective, transparent, accountable and responsive governance to secure greater development benefits for all in Tajikistan. It does so by working the Government of Tajikistan to ensure that policies redress growing inequalities in the society and prevent exclusion.

By strengthening the capacity of national and local institutions to implement these policies and ensuring more equitable access to services for the poor and excluded, this work also contributes to building trust in public bodies. Policies and legislation that support better planning, budget allocation and public procurement to ensure sustainability and accountability also contribute towards this objective.

*“Today, women and girls live in the harsh times of globalization, and therefore must develop a sense of self-esteem in early childhood. Women and girls have to reject any form of violence. Every woman and girl must love herself, do everything to be healthy, physically and spiritually. But for that, they need to have access to social, economic and political services to be able to express their opinion. Women must have a strong voice in decision-making and for that, we must unite our forces. To do this, society must provide the conditions for gender equality. The existing stereotypes of the subordinate role of girls and women must be broken.”*

*Kurbongul Kosimova, Head of Public Organization Najoti Kudakon, Member of Access to Justice and Rule of Law Network*

*“An important direction of the policy of the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan is the continuous improvement of the status of women in society. As a result of these efforts, today 13 women deputies are working in the lower chamber of parliament (Majlisi Manoyandagon) and their role is significant in the development and adoption of normative legal acts of the Republic of Tajikistan.”*

*Ms. Khairiniso Yusufi, Vice Speaker of Majlisi Namoyandagon (Lower Chamber) of the Tajik Parliament*

UNDP supports improvements in the equitable delivery of public services across society, including to marginalised groups like people living with HIV or people living with disabilities, through improved management and effective monitoring of services in both urban and rural areas.

Reform of the civil registration system will ensure that life events such as births, deaths and marriages are recorded in a timely manner, enabling the authorities to identify people in need and target policies more accurately. UNDP also seeks to scale up the engagement of civil society in the development, implementation and monitoring of policies and services.

UNDP supports the implementation of effective institutional and legal measures, as well as broader government and civil society engagement, to identify and tackle practices of corruption.





To promote gender equality and the empowerment of women, UNDP works with the Government of Tajikistan, UN agencies and civil society organisations to challenge entrenched perceptions of gender roles that continue to limit the participation of women in political life and decision-making processes at national and local level. It does so by supporting gender mainstreaming in policies, legislation, programmes and projects as well as government institutions.

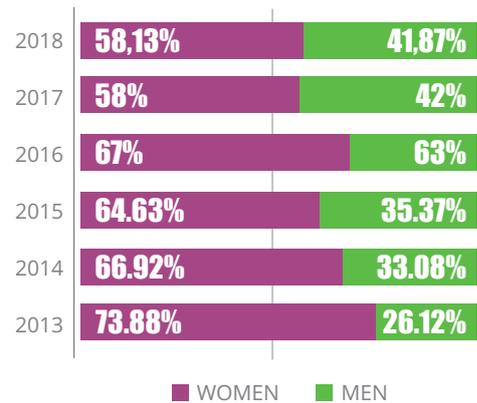
UNDP assisted in the preparation of the National Development Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan for the Period up 2030, which embraces gender equality as a crosscutting objective. Through training, UNDP support the Tajik authorities' efforts to sensitise the personnel of government agencies to gender equality

and the empowerment of women, and promote gender mainstreaming in all institutions. Expanding the collection of disaggregated data is important to assess the different needs of women and men, identify vulnerable groups and monitor the impact of policies.

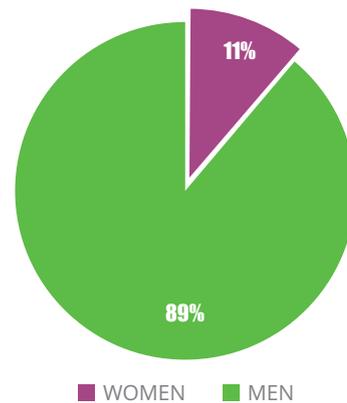
In its programmes and projects, UNDP seeks to enhance the participation of women in decision-making, including through quotas, and ensure that women benefit equally. A range of activities such as training workshops on women's rights, leadership, negotiation and other empowerment skills, are designed to strengthen women's decision-making role, particularly in rural communities where patriarchal norms are still deeply rooted. Free legal aid centres support women's access to justice.

## IMPACT

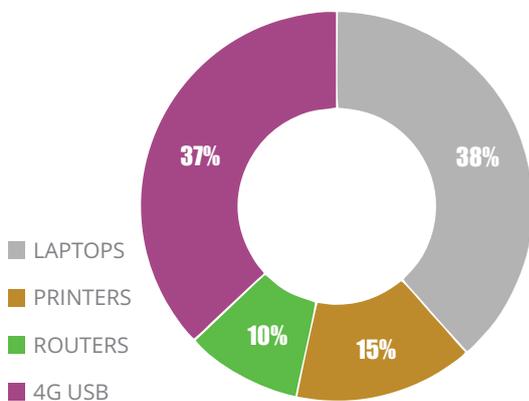
NUMBER OF MEN AND WOMEN RECEIVED LEGAL AID



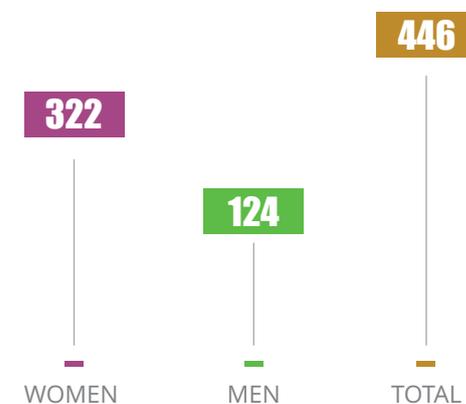
BORDER MANAGEMENT CAPACITY BUILDING



TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO CIVIL REGISTRATION OFFICES



CAPACITY BUILDING OF CIVIL REGISTRY OFFICES





## TECHNOLOGY FOR WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

### HACKATHON 2019: FINDING IT SOLUTIONS FOR QUICK RESPONSE TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

When Ahmadjoni Muhamad, Zamir Greziev and Dilovar Fidoev heard about the Hackathon for IT developers aimed at developing rapid response solutions to prevent and report domestic violence, they immediately decided to participate. The Dushanbe natives are part of a generation that grew up in the Information Age, comfortable in the use of social media and digital technologies.

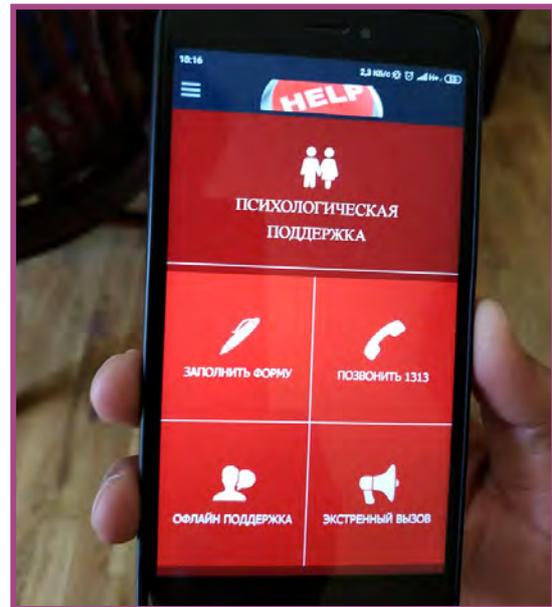
Their winning application was one of twenty-five projects, submitted by 22 men and three women that were shortlisted for the competition.

Before embarking on the project, the young members of Team Tojweb were only vaguely aware of domestic violence. Ahmadjoni knew of a neighbour who had suffered domestic abuse. Before deploying their IT skills, they decided to find out more about the issue and the needs of victims.

The young men spoke to psychologists and learned about common triggers of violence and the types of behaviour associated with perpetrators. They also learned about the range of victims' reactions to abuse. They were surprised to discover that violence can be economic and psychological as well as physical, and that men, too, can be subjected to domestic abuse. The discussions allowed them to grasp the scale of the problem in Tajik society.

The more they learned about domestic violence, the more they became motivated by the desire to find a new approach to address this serious issue. Winning the Hackathon became less important.

Because abuse victims often live in constant fear of their partners or relatives, the IT experts developed a double-layered Android-based application. On the surface, Happy Family provides family-friendly information on childcare, nutrition, family relations and housekeeping. A second level, accessible only through a password, contains a hidden SOS button directly linked to the 1313 hotline of the Resource Centre, operated under the Committee on Women



and Family Affairs. The application also provides information about legislation on domestic violence and useful tips on what victims should do in case of violence, such as "Keep sharp objects away".

Protecting victims' privacy was an important consideration for the Tojweb developers who also ensured that users can contact the Hotline even if they are offline since many people in Tajikistan, particularly in rural areas, have limited access to the Internet.

After racing to produce their app on time, the young developers are delighted to have won the competition. They look forward to adding new features to Happy Families at a later stage. The young changemakers hope that their technology-based solution will contribute to reducing domestic violence and allow victims to get help quickly when they most need it.

The Hackathon was organised in the framework of the UNDP project "Strengthening community security and prevention of violence against women in Tajikistan" with support from UN Women and EFCA.





## WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS

### ZARINA\*: REBUILDING A LIFE BLIGHTED BY DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



Zarina\*, from Jamoat Ziraki in the Kulyab region, was pushed into an arranged marriage at 17, just after she completed her secondary education. Her parents were poor. Finding a husband for their daughter meant one less mouth to feed in the family.

From the first days of her marriage, Zarina experienced insults and violence at the hands of her husband, his mother and his sister. Zarina complained to her parents, but they urged her to stay with her husband in spite of the ill treatment.

For 10 years, Zarina lived a life full of darkness with her husband. Unable to leave the house, with no friend to confide in, the young woman was miserable.

Zarina's plight, unfortunately, is not uncommon. Domestic violence remains widespread in Tajikistan and like the majority of victims, Zarina never considered reporting the abuse to the police.

The young woman's situation did not improve when her husband became a labour migrant. From Russia, he divorced her according to Islamic law by saying talak three times.

Tajikistan does not recognise talak as an official form of divorce. However, it remains commonly used, particularly in rural areas. In some cases, migrant workers issue talak by SMS text messages. Kicked out by her in-laws, Zarina returned to her parents' house where she received a frosty welcome. Running out of options, she left her children in the care of her mother and moved to Russia to find work but her son got ill, forcing her to return and spend her earnings on medical treatment.

Through a neighbour, Zarina heard about the NGO Mayram, which provides support and free legal advice to victims of domestic violence. Desperate and penniless, she contacted the NGO. This moment marked a turning point.

A lawyer at Mayram advised Zarina to seek alimony from her ex-husband who had abandoned her and their children. The court ruled in her favour and Zarina now receives a modest sum in alimony and children support.

A social worker at the NGO later helped Zarina overcome depression and find employment. Deeply traumatised by her experience, Zarina was initially introverted, almost silent. Gradually, she started to open up and smile again. With support from the NGO, Zarina was able to train as a beautician. She now has a decent job and lives with her children in rented accommodation. Her dream is to own a house.

When clients of the beauty salon tell her they face violence at home, Zarina advises them to contact Mayram and seek help without delay. "Protect yourself and never let anyone hurt you," she tells them. "No one can help you until you help yourself."

.....  
**NGO Mayram provides free legal advice in the context of UNDP project "Strengthening security and prevention of violence against women in Tajikistan".**





## RELATED CRITICAL AREAS OF THE BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION



Women and poverty



Education and training of women



Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women



Women in power and decision-making



Women and the economy

## SUSTAINABLE AND EQUITABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH

UNDP works to create an environment favourable to business creation, trade and direct investment in order to enhance the sustainability and equitability of economic growth in Tajikistan.

Private sector development is an important aspect of this approach. Strengthening regional collaboration with neighbouring countries like Afghanistan and Kyrgyzstan in sectors such as agro-processing and linking Tajikistan's trade and business strategies to economic prospects in the region also contributes to achieving this objective. In rural areas, UNDP promotes economic diversification and the creation of 'green jobs' through the use of sustainable technologies and renewable energy sources.

Following Tajikistan's entrance to the World Trade Organisation in 2013, UNDP assists the Government in the implementation of its post-accession plan. Together with other UN agencies, it also works closely with the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade as well as the Agency of Statistics to integrate the SDGs in strategic planning, policy development and implementation in all sectors of government. It also helps ensure national monitoring and reporting on progress towards SDGs.

In spite of legislation that supports equal opportunities for women and men, Tajik women face numerous barriers that limit their ability to seek paid employment or start businesses. As a

*“Unlike men, women cannot easily move abroad to find work due to the additional burden they bear as women and mothers in a traditional society. It is therefore very important to create jobs for them within the country and in particular in rural areas. This is exactly what UNDP is doing within the framework of LITACA project.”*

*Ismonali Safarov, Jamoat Galaba, Farkhor district of Khatlon region*

result, they are more vulnerable than men to poverty and social inequality. UNDP works to remove these barriers and improve women's income-generating capacity with projects such as micro-grants schemes that prioritise women-headed households and small women-led businesses.

Some of the obstacles that women face are structural, such as lack of access to funding, land or water and sanitation. Others barriers are less visible and include traditional norms that dictate gender roles and perceive women primarily as wives and mothers. Women also often lack specialised knowledge, business-related information as well as social assets such as business networks.

Through training on marketing, budgeting, agribusiness development, business planning, management and fundraising as well as





## BREAKING GENDER STEREOTYPES

### MAKHINAKHON: APP DESIGNER AND BUSINESS LEADER IN A SECTOR TRADITIONALLY DOMINATED BY MEN

As a tech entrepreneur involved in improving agricultural output through digital technology, Makhinakhon Suleymanova, who runs the public organisation Nexigol Mushovir, has become a role model for young women in her native Khujand region and beyond.

“Both agriculture and IT are perceived as ‘men’ areas in our society. At the time I started, there were hardly any women,” she says. As a result, she often found herself the only woman at meetings and men initially ignored her ideas. Women work in agriculture in large numbers in Tajikistan, but they rarely have opportunities to reach decision-making level or acquire specialised skills.

Makhinakhon grew up in a traditional mahalla, the youngest child in her family. Her parents were fairly conservative but they believed in education for girls and supported her aspirations. From a young age, she showed an interest in mathematics and science, which were considered unlikely fields of excellence for young girls.

In fifth grade, Makhinakhon was among 20 students, only two of them girls, selected for extracurricular programming classes. This was an important milestone. She went on to study software engineering at university where, again, girls were a tiny minority: two among 40 students. When she was offered a chance to go to Germany for an internship at Siemens, her parents initially hesitated about letting her travel abroad, but they eventually gave their consent.

In her work, Makhinakhon keeps in mind the advice of an inspiring university teacher who taught his students to adopt a solution-based approach. “One behaviour I learned from him, that I still apply in my personal and professional life, is that when something is not working, you have to try something different,” she said.

Finding solutions has been Makhinakhon's mission at Nexigol Mushovir. Since she joined in 2010, the organisation has developed a range of tools, such as the Agrinform newspapers, several apps, SMS agricultural consulting and web-based platforms



as part of the Agricultural Information Marketing System (AIMS), which uses technology to reduce the information gap and helps farmers better market their products. In 2017, Makhinakhon had the opportunity to acquire further skills further with a prestigious internship at Google.

“Combining work and family is often challenging,” says Makhinakhon, mother to two daughters, “but it can be done.” Gender stereotypes dictating that a women's first and main obligation is to her husband and family persist in society, she says, but they are increasingly challenged by the younger generation.

Today, thanks to her hard work and dedication, Makhinakhon is well respected and her scientific expertise is no longer questioned. “When you prove who you are and achieve success, it does affect people's perceptions and they accept you.” Her career trajectory makes her an inspiration for young women determined to push the boundaries of tradition and shine in their chosen field. Encouraged by her achievements, her nieces and the students she supervises at university are determined to make a career in science.

The AIMS system was developed with support from UNDP “Aid for Trade” project.



## CHALLENGING GENDER ROLES IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

### MATLUBA: IMPROVING LIVES IN HER COMMUNITY SINCE 2001



When her fellow villagers chose her to run the newly opened Jamoat Resource Centre (JRC) in Garm in 2001, Matluba Rajabalieva was surprised and initially overwhelmed. In the Rasht region, it is still rare for women to attain leadership positions in the community. "I didn't even know where to start," she says. Then she remembered that as a schoolteacher, she was entrusted with people's most valuable assets, their children. She summoned her inner strength and got down to work.

Dedicated to addressing the needs her community, Matluba spends countless hours travelling to remote regions to talk to women, men and girls, urging them to attend training and participate in projects. She personally convinced many parents to allow their daughters to attend secondary education.

She has also helped women in desperate situations. One case, in her early years as head of the JRC, still gives Matluba a particular sense of achievement. A young mother with two children and no income was contemplating suicide after a painful divorce. Matluba persuaded her to attend a workshop on women's rights and gender equality. The young woman was initially reluctant, but this first step pulled her out of her isolation. She later went on to study and has since opened a sewing business, benefiting from business training at the JRC.

Being able to make a difference and improve people's lives is the most rewarding aspect of her work, Matluba says. JRC projects focus on supporting economic initiatives and creating job opportunities, particularly for women.

Currently, Matluba is working with OSCE on domestic violence prevention. "Girls need to be educated, trained and given the opportunity to work and be independent. If a girl is financially independent, it is a big step toward overcoming domestic violence," she says. Never short of ideas for projects to empower

women in her community, Matluba wants to run finance education programmes. Many women in her rural district rely on the remittances sent by labour migrants. Matluba believes they could learn to invest in income development.

Now 44, Matluba believes her leadership position has helped challenge traditional perceptions of women in her jamoat. Over the past two decades, she has witnessed slow, but positive change in her rural area. Parents are showing more interest in quotas for girls' higher education. "Women have become more active," she says. "They are more aware of their rights and have started to understand that they need to act and not wait for others to make decisions for them."

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**The Jamoat Resource Centre in Garm, opened in 2001, was one of 39 JRCs opened by UNDP as part of its Community Programme in the Rasht region. Two of them are led by women.**





## WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP



### DILDORA: PROVIDING EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING FOR WOMEN

Brought up on a farm in northern Tajikistan, the youngest of ten siblings, Dildora Muhammadova trained as a seamstress after secondary school. She now runs a successful curtain business that provides employment for women and girls from low-income backgrounds and invests in their training.

It took 40 year-old Dildora a long time to reach this position. In the 1990s, when economic hardship forced most members of her family to migrate to Russia for work, Dildora Muhammadova and her husband, a small trader, opted to stay behind to look after their elderly parents and raise their three young children.

To supplement the household income, Dildora started sewing curtains from home before opening a small workshop in a rented room. "We bought three sewing machines and took on three trainees. Sewing one set of curtains would take about three days."

In 2013, Dildora moved her sewing business to larger premises and hired two more trainees with financial support from her husband and relatives. As the circle of customers widened, Dildora wanted to expand the business further and buy more equipment, but financial constraints limited her ability to expand her business.

Many women entrepreneurs in Tajikistan struggle to develop their business due to limited access to funding and a lack of management skills.

When Dildora heard, through television, that soft loans were available for entrepreneurs, she submitted a business plan. Her project was approved and she received a loan of 19,000 somonis, which enabled her to purchase additional multifunctional sewing machines and ring-fitting equipment. She also used a share of the funds to repair and upgrade her sewing workshop.

Gaining access to funding has increased productivity and profitability. "I was able to provide five seamstresses with permanent work and hire new students," says Dildora. "Having trained girls to use the new equipment, we started taking more orders for modern curtains as well as European and national dresses." Uzbek traders have placed some orders and Dildora hope to expand her clientele outside the national borders and create more jobs and training for local women and girls.

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**UNDP project "Innovative solutions for Nationalizing and Localizing the SDGs and Empowering Women, Youth and People with Disabilities" provides soft loans for business owners.**



## YOUNG CHANGEMAKER

### SHAKHZODA: JOINING THE DIGITAL REVOLUTION WITH MONDAY ART STUDIO



At 19, still a business administration student at the Tajik National University, Shakhzoda Eshonova is already an entrepreneur, part of a young generation of tech-savvy innovators set to transform the social and economic landscape in Tajikistan.

Science and technology may not have been considered women-friendly fields traditionally, but young Tajiks, women as well as men, are embracing the digital revolution.

Shakhzoda developed Monday Art studio, an online platform that puts talented young artists in touch with customers wanting to commission portraits and other art works. "I wanted to order a portrait of my friend and could not find a website where I could order one," explains Shakhzoda. "I thought why not create an online platform myself?"

Shakhzoda was well equipped to develop the project. Born in Isfara in the Sughd region, she always enjoyed computer science and mathematics at school and participated in several Olympiads while still at school.

When she moved to Dushanbe to study, Shakhzoda was initially lonely and felt homesick. She took positive action and volunteered at a public charity Peshraft, where she got involved in initiatives that improve the lives of young people. She became determined to seek ways of creating jobs for young people.

Having spotted an opportunity to support young artists, Shakhzoda began to study the market. Her research confirmed that many talented young artists need work but are still unknown to potential customers.

Shakhzoda submitted her Monday Art Studio project at the StartupStan Cup where it was a finalist. She also won an international competition for young entrepreneurs in Moscow in 2017.

At another tech event, Shakhzoda met a like-minded technology enthusiast, Komron Avezov, and they decided to team up. At a 16-week business course organised by Peshraft, Shakhzoda and Komron recruited participants to join their growing team. "Now I was not alone. There were six of us who wanted to bring change to people's lives, provide employment for young women and men, and provide access to art services," she says.

Monday Art Studio is now up and running. The young change makers have established a strong social media presence and are actively developing and promoting their business.

Shakhzoda believes these early achievements confirm that young women in Tajikistan can overcome barriers to success and win support for their initiatives. "We only need faith in ourselves and the support of friends and family, and we have to seek opportunities to break stereotypes.

UNDP supported the "SambusaPitch" event and the "Business Constructor" training







RELATED CRITICAL AREAS OF THE BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION



Women and health



Women and poverty



Human rights of women



Violence against women

## SOCIAL EQUITY AND PROTECTION OF VULNERABLE GROUPS FROM VIOLENCE AND DISCRIMINATION

Targeted solutions are required to protect the rights of population groups that face different forms of discrimination in society. These include women in rural areas, unemployed youth, women facing domestic violence, people with disabilities and people living with HIV.

UNDP works with the Government to reduce domestic violence, which remains a pervasive issue in Tajik society. Combating gender-based violence requires enhanced community policing and improved mechanisms to provide protection and support for victims.

Concerted efforts at all levels of society are also needed to create a more women-friendly social and institutional environment by raising awareness of domestic violence and enhancing the status of women. Civil society organisations should be included in these endeavours and in the development and implementation of policies to combat discrimination against vulnerable groups.

*“Domestic violence remains a serious problem, despite measures taken to prevent it. To eliminate domestic violence, in particular against women, it is necessary to eradicate gender stereotypes about the roles of women and men. A culture of zero tolerance for violence against women should also be developed.”*

*Azimjon Sayfiddinov, Director, Eurasia Foundation Central Asia – Tajikistan. Chairman of the Advisory Public Council for the Promotion of Police Reform under the Ministry*

*“In our society, girls are only prepared for marriage. They are therefore very dependent on their husband and cannot protect their rights especially to property and inheritance while divorcing. When their HIV status becomes known, their relatives kick them out of the house, even if they have children. This injustice forced me to work in the field of HIV so that I could protect myself first of all. Unfortunately, there were no specialised programmes in Tajikistan for women living with HIV who experience violence. It is important to start work on the rehabilitation of victims of domestic violence among people living with HIV.”*

*Tahmina Khaidarova, founder of the Network of Women Living with HIV*





By developing the capacity of the Agency of Statistics, UNDP seeks to improve the quality and availability of disaggregated data, which is crucial to inform policies aimed at protecting the most vulnerable in society.

People living with HIV, people with disabilities and victims of domestic violence face a high level of social stigma. Women are particularly vulnerable to multiple forms of discrimination. UNDP focuses on ensuring that marginalised groups have equal access to healthcare and other services, particularly in rural areas.

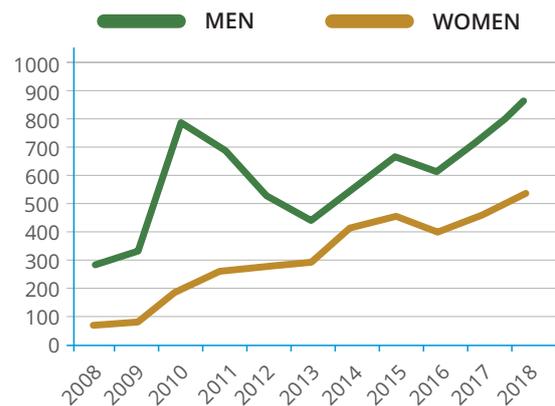
Awareness raising campaigns aimed at the general population, healthcare workers and policy makers seek to prejudice and ensure that vulnerable people are protected from violence and discrimination, and respected as equal members of society.

Women and children account for a rising share of people living with HIV, which makes testing among pregnant women crucial to prevent HIV transmission. In rural areas, UNDP has partnered with civil society organisations to run community mobilisation campaigns on HIV and TB prevention among wives of labour migrants, considered most at risk, and other vulnerable groups.

In addition to targeted public information campaign, the gender dimension of HIV is also emphasized through other advocacy and awareness raising events focusing on domestic violence, reproductive health and mother/child health.

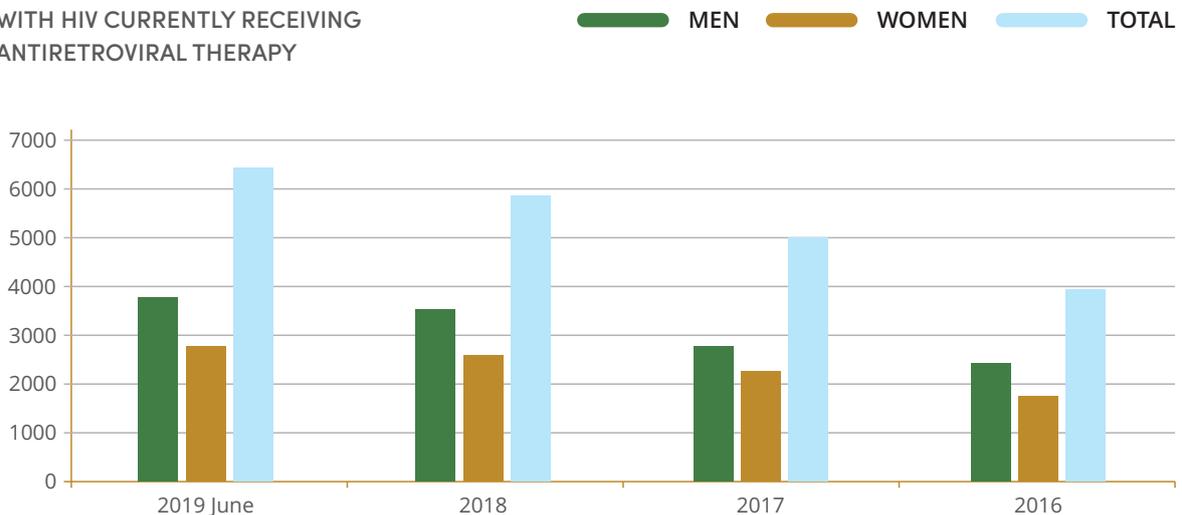


NEW INCIDENCE OF HIV PER GENDER



## IMPACT

NUMBER OF PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV CURRENTLY RECEIVING ANTIRETROVIRAL THERAPY





## RIGHTS OF WOMEN AND PEOPLE LIVING WITH DISABILITIES



### FATIMA: VISUALLY IMPAIRED LAWYER PROVIDES LEGAL AID FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH DISABILITIES

Fatima Shamsuddinova, 27, has lived with poor eyesight since childhood but she never let her disability stop her from reaching her goals. Intelligent and strong-willed, she always knew she wanted to become a judge. In 2011, she successfully graduated with honours from the Law Faculty of the Tajik National University, one of the first women living with a disability to do so.

Fatima admits that people with disabilities still face numerous challenges, which can vary depending on where they live, the support they get from their entourage and their form of disability.

Once she qualified as a lawyer, Fatima founded the NGO Noil (Achievement) to help people with disabilities get access to justice to defend their rights. Women, in particular, experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. Her own disability and experience of the barriers that people with disabilities experience in daily life make her a powerful advocate.

First, there were practical problems to overcome. "It was not easy, especially at the beginning, particularly with deaf-and-dumb people because I cannot see them and they cannot hear me," she explains. Ever resourceful, the lawyer now brings in a professional translator of the sign language once

a week to help her communicate with clients who have hearing difficulties. Her team now includes six lawyers, four of them women.

While studying at university, Fatima had stood for her rights, bravely confronting a professor who had complained about the sound of her Braille typewriter. After she talked to him, the professor's attitude changed.

In the courtroom, pleading her clients' civil cases, she often encountered similar opposition from judges who were uncomfortable dealing with a visually impaired lawyer. There too, she successfully overcame prejudice by pointing to legislation that prevents discrimination against people with disabilities. "All the judges with whom I worked then changed."

Her assistant at Noil, a young woman who is also visually impaired, is following in Fatima's footsteps. She, too, is studying law, along with a growing number of other people with disabilities. "It is now easier for them to study," observed Fatima. "Of course, Braille books are still not available but technology and the Internet make learning easier."

**UNDP "Access to Justice" programme supports free legal advice**





## FIGHTING DISCRIMINATION



### MANIZHA\*: MAKING LEGAL HISTORY IN TAJIKISTAN BY DEFENDING HER RIGHT TO PRIVACY

Until a few years ago, Manizha\* thought she was a happily married woman. When she was diagnosed with HIV and malicious gossip was spread about her, social stigma and discrimination shattered her comfortable life.

The story does not end here, however. Manizha fought back to defend her right to privacy and she made legal history by winning the first confidentiality case involving a person living with HIV. It has been a tough and bruising battle, but Manizha is now rebuilding her life.

A hairdresser, Manizha had worked in Russia with her husband, who was studying there. She believes she contracted the HIV virus at a Russian medical facility. She was only diagnosed when they returned to Tajikistan. Her husband, who was not HIV positive, refused to accept this explanation. He assumed she had been unfaithful and sued for divorce, abandoning Manizha and their child.

Manizha knew little about HIV when she was diagnosed. She has since found out that with proper medication and precautions, HIV people can live long and happy lives and prevent transmission of the virus.

When her ex-husband's new wife started to talk publicly about her HIV status, the impact on Manizha's life was devastating. Colleagues at work stopped talking to her. Eventually, Manizha could no longer bear the pressure and she quit her job. Her parents stood by her, but many people in her entourage deserted her.

Upset by the violation of her right to privacy and medical confidentiality, Manizha turned to the NGO,

Network of Women Living with HIV. They directed her to the Human Rights Centre (HRC), which provides free legal assistance to people living with HIV.

"I saw a very distraught young woman. When I suggested suing the people who had disclosed her HIV status under Article 163 of the Health Code, which guarantees HIV-infected people the right to confidentiality, and other laws that protect personal information, she was scared at first," says lawyer Zebo Kasymova. "I explained the pros and cons in detail. Eventually Manizha agreed to go to court to protect other women living with HIV from having their rights infringed in the same way."

Manizha won her lawsuit. For the first time, a court ruled to protect the right to confidentiality of people living with HIV. The guilty party had to apologize and pay compensation for moral damage.

Manizha now has a new job and she can support herself and her child. Her ordeal has left emotional scars, but she says it has made her stronger.

She regularly attends NGO seminars and roundtables focusing on the rights of women living with HIV and tells others in her situation about her successful legal battle. The Human Rights Centre has already launched other lawsuits. Manizha is proud that her case encourages others to defend their right to privacy in court, challenging prejudice toward people living with HIV.

**Free legal assistance is provided with support from UNDP project "Strengthening the supportive environment and scaling up prevention, treatment and care to contain HIV epidemic in the Republic of Tajikistan"**



RELATED CRITICAL AREAS OF THE BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION



Women and the environment



## RESILIENCE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

With its mountainous terrain, Tajikistan is prone to natural disasters such as landslides, floods, avalanches and earthquakes. The country is also highly vulnerable to the impact of climate change.

To build up the resilience of communities to climate variability and climate-related hazards, UNDP works to strengthen disaster risk reduction management and emergency preparedness.

Working in close cooperation with the Government, UNDP promotes environmental sustainability through water resource management, the use of renewable energy and regional cooperation for transfer of knowledge and technologies.

*“Small energy is a key factor that can unlock the development potential of Tajikistan's mountainous rural regions and reduce poverty. Such initiatives are of particular importance in improving the living conditions of women and children in rural areas. Access to electricity can decrease the additional burden that many women in rural areas face. They will be able to spend the time saved on self-development and other income-generating activities.”*

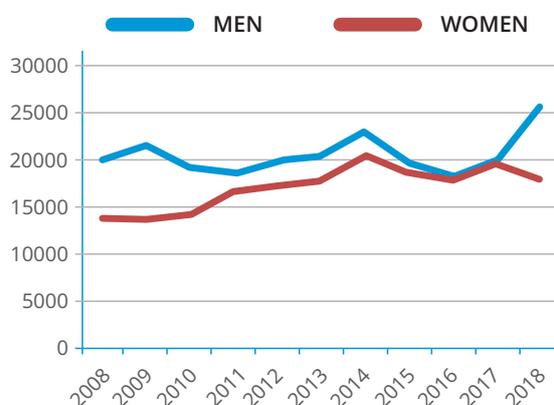
*Ms. Roza Khoshmukhamedova,  
Director of energy sector company  
Energoremont*

*“Natural Disasters can have a significant negative effect on women. Women can make a valuable contribution to disaster risk reduction. Promoting gender equality in Tajikistan helps mitigate natural disaster risks.”*

*Jamshed Kamalov,  
Head, Population and Territories  
Protection Main Department,  
Committee for Emergency Situations*

Due to labour migration, women head many households and farms in rural areas. Involving women in risk reduction and disaster management is therefore crucial. Gender stereotypes, however, still limit their ability to participate in community decision-making. Women are also migrating for work in larger numbers.

MIGRATION - DEPARTURES  
BY GENDER 15-64 AGE GROUP





UNDP seeks to ensure that risk reduction strategies address the different vulnerabilities of women and men. It also promotes the active participation of women in disaster risk management structures, search and rescue training, mine risk education programmes as well as mine clearance activities through the formation of a team of women deminers.

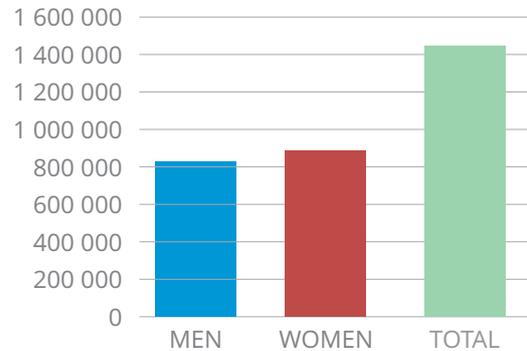
With UNDP assistance, the Government of Tajikistan developed the National Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy for 2019-2030, which incorporates a gender perspective and stresses the importance of overcoming gender inequality alongside disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and sustainable development.

Landmine contamination is a consequence of several years of internal and external conflicts. UNDP assisted in the creation of the Tajikistan Mine Action Programme (TMAP) and the development of its 2018-2022 strategy, which takes into account the specific needs, priorities and capabilities of women, children and people from disadvantaged groups. Since 2004, it supports mine action activities in different parts of Tajikistan.

In rural communities, UNDP aims to ensure that women, as well as men, have access to drinking water and affordable energy. It promotes environmentally friendly technologies, such as energy-efficient stoves and solar heaters that reduce deforestation and help families limit energy costs. Through UNDP-sponsored projects, women have learned to manufacture solar heaters.

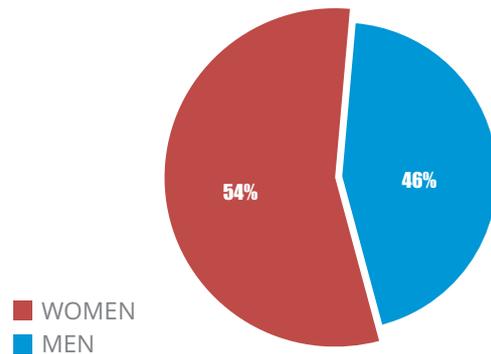
## IMPACT

PARTICIPANTS - ACCESS TO SOCIAL SERVICES, INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS, ENHANCED LIVELIHOODS 2009-2018



PARTICIPANTS OF RISK REDUCTION PROJECTS 2009-2018

**TOTAL 368,680 PEOPLE**



MINE ACTION ACTIVITIES 2004-2019

 **LAND RELEASED**  
**21.6** km<sup>2</sup> of contaminated land has been released

 **CLEARED AND HANDED OVER**  
**277** areas have been handed over to local government for future safe usage

 **BENEFICIARIES**  
**120,000** people are using the cleared land for development purposes





## WOMEN AND THE ENVIRONMENT

### AZIZA: EMPOWERING WOMEN AND IMPROVING ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY



Trained as a chemist, Aziza Shokhmansurova worked in finance in international organisations before realising that her heart was elsewhere. She wanted to work in the community, helping women, girls and young people achieve their potential. The NGO Alternativa, based in Shaartuz District, was struggling when she took the helm. "Access to funding is not easy for NGOs in the regions," she says. Her determination, enthusiasm for the work and active fundraising soon enabled her organisation to develop new projects.

One project, "one of our best" says Aziza proudly, involved training returning migrants and their families to make solar water heaters. For many years, her region suffered severe power shortages. This situation particularly affected women and small businesses. Today, power outages are less frequent but the rising cost of electricity pushes people to burn wood, paper, dung, coal or even shrubs, causing environmental degradation.

"When we first started, many people, including the women themselves, didn't realise the importance of solar water heaters. Some men did not believe that the women could build them," she says. "The project showed women and men the importance of

renewable technologies. It also demonstrated that stereotypes about women's capabilities are wrong." The solar water heaters save energy and protect the environment, while providing families with hot water throughout the year.

Challenging gender prejudice is important in Aziza's eyes. "People have become very religious. Girls are prevented from gaining higher education," she says. When she wanted to attend university in Dushanbe, acquaintances and relatives tried, unsuccessfully, to convince her engineer father to withhold his approval.

When engaging with the community, Aziza constantly emphasizes the importance of educating girls, which she believes is also crucial to tackle widespread domestic violence. Concerned about the lack of job opportunities for young people, she tries to fill the gap with projects promoting employment.

Beneficiaries of the solar heater project are delighted with the cost-effective appliances. "One woman opened a canning shop in Sayed village, using solar water heaters, heaters," says Aziza. "I was very happy to see her make use of the knowledge and equipment we provided. Her business is seasonal, but she created jobs for 10 other women."



The "Do it Yourself and Help Others" project was implemented by Public Organisation Alternativa under the UNDP/GEF Small Grants Programme in Tajikistan



## CHALLENGING TRADITIONAL GENDER ROLES

### WOMEN ROCKIN' PAMIRS: TRAINING WOMEN TO BECOME TREKKING GUIDES

The Women Rockin' Pamirs initiative was born when two trekking enthusiasts—one from Pamir and the other from France—spent the summer hiking across the Pamirs. Having spent time with the local community, they came up with an innovative project that simultaneously pushes the boundaries of traditional gender roles, creates new employment opportunities for women and contributes to local economic growth through the development of a gentle form of tourism that respects the environment.

Tourism is rapidly growing in the region, but women have so far had limited access to tourism jobs. Trekking guides, who have not always undergone vocational training, are traditionally men.

Women Rockin' Pamirs is open to women aged between 18 and 40 who are prepared to engage in a rigorous three-year training. The comprehensive formation covers map reading, compass navigation, how to bivouac overnight in the mountains as well as learning about the fauna and flora. With their newly acquired skills, participants can earn an income as trekking guides.



After a minimum of two years of work experience, they can be initiated to glacier crossing and mountaineering techniques. In addition to training women to become professional trekking guides, the project also organises multi-activity wilderness camps for teenage girls to introduce them to nature, outdoor activities and the delicate mountain environment.

Women Rockin' Pamirs teaches local residents to appreciate nature while showcasing women's potential and challenging traditional gender roles. The project enables women to turn their interest in the mountains into an income-earning activity that benefits them and promotes local economic growth.

UNDP is working with Women Rockin' Pamirs to train local women to become rangers in the framework of the "Conservation and Sustainable Use of Pamir Alay and Tien Shan Ecosystems for Snow Leopard Protection and Sustainable Community Livelihoods" project.





## LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

For the past 25 years, UNDP has assisted the Government of Tajikistan in its efforts to strengthen its institutions and policies to create an environment where democratic governance, gender equality, and sustainable and inclusive economic growth can flourish.

The empowerment of women and girls will remain a central element of the UNDP mandate. With comprehensive programmes like the Spotlight Initiative, funded by the European Union, UNDP in Tajikistan will continue to tackle pervasive problems like domestic violence that require long-term engagement.

As the stories in this publication demonstrate, awareness of the obstacles that stand in the way of gender equality has increased and some inequalities have been reduced. Significant bottlenecks persist in all the critical areas of concern listed in the Beijing Platform for Action 25 years ago, however.

Some issues that affect women differently from men, such as the environment, were already discussed in Beijing 25 years ago. With the growing impact of climate change, they have become more acute, globally and in Tajikistan. UNDP is actively building community resilience to disasters and will continue to

promote gender-responsive policies and inclusive emergency management to address risks. New challenges like unregulated migration and the rise of religious extremism have emerged and require a gender-specific approach.

Youth engagement will be critical to break gender stereotypes, promote gender equality and address bottlenecks, old and new. With more than 60 percent of the population below the age of 30, creating employment for the young women and men of Tajikistan will be a challenge in itself. In 2018, nearly 30 percent of young people aged 15–24, 90 percent of them women, were neither in employment, education or training. UNDP will assist the Government of Tajikistan in exploring new fields such as the digital and the 'green' economy, to create jobs for the next generation.

UNDP projects in Tajikistan have evolved over the years and they will continue to adapt to pressing needs and changing circumstances. The end goal, in line with the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, remains the same: the promotion of sustainable and equitable development that "leaves no one behind" and enables all people, irrespective of their gender, age, abilities or health status, to fulfil their potential and live with dignity.



*Empowered lives. Resilient nations.*