

# **EVALUATION REPORT**

PROJECT TITLE:

**IMPROVING INCOME AND LIVING STANDARDS IN  
BALJUVAN DISTRICT, TAJIKISTAN**

PROJECT NUMBER:

**AS 1255 / TJK 1040-04**

PROJECT HOLDER:

**DEUTSCHE WELTHUNGERHILFE (DWHH)  
GERMAN AGRO ACTION (GAA)**

Evaluator:

Willi Ege  
July 2006

## **1. Summary of the main results and conclusions**

The implementation of the project has been started by DWHH / GAA in March 2005. The project, funded by the TACIS Programme of the European Commission, is located in the Baljuvan District, which forms part of the Khatlon Province in southern Tadjikistan. The working area is characterized by its structural weakness, a high incidence of low income, and a concentration on subsistence production. Agricultural yields are low, due to a lack of high quality inputs, and relatively poor agricultural knowledge of the rural population. Beside labour migration to Russia, animal production is the main source of income. Infrastructure is not well developed, and parts of the district are not accessible during spring time.

### **1.1 Project holder analysis**

The steering and management of the Baljuvan project is exclusively in the hands of the project holder, Deutsche Welthungerhilfe / German Agro Action (DWHH / GAA). At DWHH / GAA level, the Regional Coordination Office in Dushanbe, and the DWHH / GAA-employed Project Manager make up the organisational structure. So far, no national counterpart organisation has been involved in the overall steering and day to day management activities, which makes these tasks highly dependent on the presence, initiative and commitment of the DWHH/GAA-Project Manager.

With regard to the employment of project personnel, no major deviations from planning have been noticed. However, during the ongoing project phase, some fluctuation of staffers had been observed, which may have produced some negative effects upon the continuity and quality of work.

The employed field-personnel have relatively little expertise relating to new and innovative working methods and technical solutions. On this account, it is recommended to continue and intensify the already initiated staff-training activities. Furthermore, it can be proposed to seek an immediate and effective use of the foreseen short-term consultancies, and the backstopping instruments, as provided by DWHH / GAA.

The establishment of a project office in Baljuvan has been carried out according to plan. It can be stated that the current equipment is according to daily requirements of project staff, allowing an efficient and effective realization of field activities.

### **1.2 Analysis of situation and target group**

Overall political, social and economic framework conditions have not altered significantly during the ongoing period of project implementation. In 2006, because of a severe drought, negative effects on the yield and quality of major agricultural crops have to be expected.

As planned, the project implements its activities in all five Jamoats of Baljuvan district, with altogether 15 selected pilot villages. The involvement of the target group, with regard to the number of beneficiaries (families), is satisfactory to the large part of activities.

The foreseen involvement of the District Dehkan Farmers Association (DDFA) as an instrumental target group could not be carried out, due to the lack of implementing capacity of this grass-roots organization. So far, no alternative counterpart organization has been found and incorporated as an instrumental target group of the project.

### **1.3 Analysis and assessment of project preparation**

Since no previous and site-specific pre-evaluation had been carried out, the initial analysis of potentials, problems and local requirements had to be based on a general survey on socio-economic conditions of Kulyab region, findings of the DWHH / GAA-commissioned project designer, and previously gained experience in settings with similar socio-economic and agro-ecological conditions settings. In this connection, the project design could not avail of data and information relative to the most pressing problems and potentials of rural women.

In the initial situational analysis, animal husbandry had been identified as a central source of income generation for local farmers. However, the basic design of the project produced no further concepts with regard to this important subject.

### **1.4 Analysis and assessment of planning / project planning matrix**

A significant weakness of the planning matrix is the insufficient formulation of the base-line situation (“starting point”), which not only complicates the proper assessment of the clarity and quality given to the planning, but also hampers any evaluative effort. Furthermore, the majority of impact-indicators are not sufficiently precise with regard to criteria like participants, quality of impact, quantity, timeframe, and place.

The initial planning of staff, budget and equipment has been done, generally speaking, in a professional and realistic manner. However, for some of the foreseen activities no budgetary item had been planned, and, vice versa, some activities had been budgeted, without giving any corresponding work-plan details to substantiate the claim. In these cases, no proper basis is given to include the mentioned activities in the M&E-system of the project.

### **1.5 Analysis and assessment of project implementation**

The foreseen survey, design and implementation of three small-scale irrigation systems and four drinking water supply systems have been carried out according to plan. During the construction works, a very satisfactory participation and contribution of beneficiary villagers was achieved.

The overall design and technical quality of the gravity-fed irrigation systems is according to local needs and conditions, so that a sustained operation, without much need for additional advice or support, can be expected. However, appropriate action should be carried out to avoid any kind of damage to the expensive PE-pipelines, and particularly, to improve the efficiency of irrigation water use.

The establishment of drinking water supply systems, in combination with campaigns for safe water use, has helped to improve of the health situation of the population, and to lessen the workload of women and children. It is recommended to repeat and intensify campaigns and training workshops for safe water use in 2006.

The basic design of the drinking water systems is appropriate to local needs and conditions; however, public standpipes still should be improved, in order to guarantee better hygienic conditions. The successfully established Water User Associations are gaining maturity to ensure proper use and maintenance of the systems.

The foreseen survey on household data and land-reform knowledge has been conducted as planned, producing some valuable information relating to the socio-economic situation of villages in Baljuvan District. However, the survey still lacks a detailed analysis of economic data on agricultural production, marketing, etc., and specific information with regard to the situation of female-headed households.

The initially proposed cooperation with the DDFA in the establishment of an Advisory and Information Centre (AIC) could not be put into practice, due to the lack of a functioning structure of this partner. Alternatively, help from the SITAF-TACIS programme has been achieved, so that the AIC could be put into operation. So far, the AIC has managed to establish 17 permanent training groups, which receive support from the centre with seminars and field-advisory activities. It can be stated that the involvement and participation of women in the various activities of the training centre is still relatively limited.

According to plan, DWHH / GAA-Baljuvan has carried out a number of land-reform related training units, focused towards the population of the former Kolkhoz Guli Bodom. However, as the land-reform process had already been terminated, the training effort only produced a limited development effect, relative to the social and legal position of farmer families

The project has provided high quality seeds to farmers in Baljuvan District, as an appropriate input to renew the deteriorated district seed base, to improve productivity, and to generate income. The quantitative and qualitative results obtained so far are satisfactory. Unfortunately, no systematic collection of production data has been carried out, so that there are no means to present a comparative calculation of productivity parameters.

Due to the inadequate storage conditions during the winter-period 2005-2006, a significant reduction of quality and weight of the expensive potato seed material was observed. In order to avoid further losses, the planned construction of seed-potato stores should be initiated as soon as possible, and be finished before the 2006 potato harvest starts.

The distribution of agricultural tools, mainly to impoverished households, is serving very well as an instrument for achieving better productivity of horticultural soils and fruit-growing activities. A total number of 1.120 smallholder families have been benefited.

Due to an initial lack of a specific budget item, the establishment of fruit orchards could not be carried out during the first 16 months of project implementation. Because of this delay, no sustainable management and impact of the orchards can be guaranteed.

Local farmers have started to apply the newly acquired knowledge relative to the production and usage of organic fertilizers. The use of compost is limited to kitchen gardens and small agricultural plots. A major effect on the soil fertility of agricultural production areas cannot be expected. Nevertheless, it is recommended to continue and intensify this training issue, during the second year of project implementation.

The training programme (workshops, seminars, field-days, demo-plots) on agricultural techniques and crop rotation is being carried out, according to plan. The trainings programme is highly appreciated by the local population, so that its impact could be estimated as being high. The overall number of training-activities in 2006, and particularly the participation of women, is still very limited. In this connection it is recommended to undertake all possible efforts to reach quantitative goals in the second half of the year.

The successfully constructed 62 greenhouses allow for earlier and more intensive cultivation of vegetables and greens. In order to give a better insight into the generated impact, particularly for women, it is recommended to undertake specific monitoring activities.

As a product of village development activities, 15 Village Development Committees have been successfully established, which by now constitute the local implementing partner for all project-activities (identification of beneficiaries; organization of training sessions; in-field monitoring).

Village development funds: The foreseen involvement of the Tajik NGO “JOVID” did not materialize, due to changes in the legal framework relative to microfinance organizations. As an alternative, a cooperation agreement has been reached between DWHH / GAA and the Microfinance Organisation HAQIQ, which now takes full responsibility for the implementation and overall management of a local credit system, including the corresponding training activities in the field of technical skills training and business development.

According to a June-2006 balance, the provision of small loans to credit groups has allowed access to cash for 181 beneficiaries, out of which 72 are women. Creditors have successfully started economic enterprises, which allowed them to increase their household income by 1/3. Up to now, a repayment rate of 100 % has been reached.

Up to now, the foreseen market analysis on innovative ideas has not been carried out, due to difficulties in the search for adequate expertise. This delay has hampered the identification, and further promotion, of relevant and promising business ideas. It is recommended to conduct and finish this study as soon as possible (second half of 2006).

## **1.6 Assessment of development impacts**

The socio-cultural effects and impacts so far achieved relate to the acceptance of a challenging credit system, new technologies, new crops and varieties, and the successful establishment of village level organisations (i.e. development committees; water user associations).

Various effects and (potential) impacts on the socio-economic situation of the target group have been achieved: The improved availability of drinking water has improved living conditions in 6 of the 15 target villages, and decreased the work-load of women and children. Potentials and possibilities to increase the agricultural and horticultural production and productivity have been created through the implementation of small-scale irrigation systems, training and field-advisory activities, allocation of seed-funds, construction of greenhouses, and the provision of gardening tools to impoverished families. Income-generation and a shift into a more market oriented production have been enhanced by the installation and use of a credit system and the corresponding provision of a specific training programme. The creation of Training Groups, Water User Associations and Village Development Committees constitutes a valuable means to foster the self-help potential and institutional build up of the local population.

## **1.7 Project management**

It has been found that the project management, with regard to administration, finances and logistics, is working excellently, while local project steering and development shows some

critical aspects, namely the lack of a national implementing partner, the weak participation by the local target group in control and steering activities, high dependency on the presence and initiative of the DWHH / GAA-employed Head of Project, and the still limited experience of national project staff relating to participatory management and self-reliability.

## **1.8 Recommendations**

DWHH / GAA is recommended to continue support of Baljuvan project to the end of the period agreed, according to plan, without modifications of strategies or objectives.

Furthermore, it is recommended to seek for a continuation of funding in the framework of a second project phase with duration of at least 2 years, in order to consolidate the initiated process and amplify the working area to further villages of Baljuvan. Considering the vital role of animal husbandry within the local farming system, a specific project component should be envisaged, in order to promote forage production and forage conservation.