



# SCOPING STUDY ON SOCIAL PROTECTION AND SAFETY NETS FOR ENHANCED FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION IN TAJIKISTAN

2018



KAZAKHSTAN

# TAJIKISTAN

UZBEKISTAN

KYRGYZSTAN

TURKMENISTAN

AFGHANISTAN

JAMMU AND  
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I N D I A N O C E A N



This report is part of a larger series of scoping studies on **Social Protection and Safety Nets for Enhanced Food Security and Nutrition in Tajikistan** that was commissioned by the World Food Programme in partnership with the University of Maastricht in 2017. Specific country focused studies have been conducted on Armenia, Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan with a view to contributing fresh evidence and sound policy analysis around social protection issues in relation to food and nutrition security, resulting in a set of country-specific policy recommendations on nutrition-sensitive social protection and safety nets that consider the perspectives of a wide range of stakeholders. The Regional Synthesis Report summarizes the findings of the three studies and provides a more general overview of social protection and safety nets issues in relation to food security and nutrition across the three countries, with a summary of the main trends and a set of consolidated findings and recommendations.

This research initiative has been conducted under the overall coordination of Carlo Scaramella, Deputy Regional Director, Regional Bureau for North Africa, Middle East, Central Asia and Eastern Europe, World Food Programme (WFP), Cairo with the support of Dipayan Bhattacharyya, Muriel Calo, and Verena Damerau, WFP. The report authors are Franziska Gassmann and Eszter Timar from the University of Maastricht, with the additional collaboration of Dilbar Bakaeva and Irina Lukashova.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Tajikistan's economic growth picked up after the difficult first decade following the dissolution of the Soviet Union.** Recently, the country has made the transition to a lower middle-income country status. Because of high fertility and relatively low life expectancy, Tajikistan's population is comparatively young.

**The mountainous terrain of the country severely limits the availability of arable land. Tajikistan also is considered the most vulnerable country to climate change in the Europe and Central Asia region. It is particularly prone to natural disasters, extreme temperatures and erratic rainfalls.**

These conditions significantly affect poor households, which are most affected by environmental degradation given that many depend on agricultural land for their livelihoods.

This vulnerability also impacts the country's agricultural production, an extremely important factor given agriculture's key role in the economy.

This sector employs more than half of the labour force, but it lags behind other sectors in its contribution to gross domestic product. The labour market is characterized by a labour surplus and decreasing economic activity of the working-age population.

Low wages and the lack of productive employment opportunities have driven much of the working-age population to seek

employment in the Russian Federation or Kazakhstan, resulting in Tajikistan being one of the world's most remittance-dependent countries

**Tajikistan has the worst food security and nutrition indicators in the region, with poverty and behavioural patterns being important underlying factors.**

The Tajik population suffers from the double burden of malnutrition: undernutrition (including micronutrient deficiencies) and overnutrition. Both chronic and transitory food insecurity is prevalent.

Although wasting and anaemia have been decreasing since 2005, underweight and stunting have been growing since the economic crisis of 2008. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations reports the prevalence of underweight among children under 5 has doubled between 2008 and 2015. Stunting figures show significant disparities between rural and urban regions, and most stunted children belong to poor households.

One third of the Tajik population is affected by poverty, a predominately rural phenomenon. Poverty rates are correlated with the seasonality of agriculture and remittance inflows. For example, the poorest households finance a substantial share of their consumption through remittances: 50 percent and 80 percent for urban and rural households, respectively.

Urban-rural and regional inequalities are observed, and female-headed households are at a higher risk of poverty relative to male-headed households.

**Comprehensive social protection systems can be an adequate answer to the problems faced by the Tajik population.** Social protection measures can help people break the vicious cycle of poverty and food insecurity. Besides poverty, behavioural factors also play a role in malnutrition, manifesting in conditions such as micronutrient deficiency or overweight and obesity.

Introducing nutrition-specific or nutrition-sensitive programmes can further enhance positive impacts on food security.

**Tajikistan has a relatively comprehensive social protection system, which includes elements of social insurance, social assistance and social services.** Remittances, as a form of informal protection, play an important role.

Existing social protection programmes have limited impact on food security, especially due to the low coverage and adequacy of the social assistance system.

The country is now reforming its social assistance system. The current cash compensations will be replaced by the Targeted Social Assistance programme from the beginning of 2018, which is expected to improve the situation.

A key issue remains the low coverage and adequacy of social assistance. The government plans to gradually increase the share of the poor and vulnerable population covered by social assistance transfers.



**Institutional and implementation challenges persist in Tajikistan.**

Acknowledging that there is a lack of promotive social protection measures, shock-responsive safety nets and nutrition-sensitive social protection in the country is the first step toward providing adequate support.

Addressing existing challenges will require consideration of the following elements:

- **Policy dialogue** on future strategies should be underpinned by a set of minimum standards for social protection, food security, nutrition and healthcare.
- **Improving policy design and policy implementation**, and ensuring sound public financial management of social protection, are key for the future development of an effective social protection system in Tajikistan.
- **International development partners**, particularly the World Food Programme, the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, and the United Nations Children's Fund, can play a major role in addressing these issues and supporting the government.

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# ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	Asian Development Bank	MES	Ministry of Education and Science	SP-ABND	Assessment Based National Dialogue on Social Protection
ASIP	Agency for Social Insurance and Pensions	MHSP	Ministry of Health and Social Protection	SPF	Social Protection Floor
CCP	Cash Compensation Programme	MIA	Ministry of Internal Affairs	SPP	Social Protection Plan
CRC	Commission on the Rights of the Child	MJ	Ministry of Justice	SDG	Sustainable Development Goal(s)
DCC	Development Coordination Council	MLME	Ministry of Labour, Migration and Employment	TajStat	Agency for Statistics under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey	MOF	Ministry of Finance	TJS	Tajik Somoni
DRS	Districts of Republican Subordination	OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development	TSA	Targeted Social Assistance
DSAHU	Department of At-Home Social Services	OPM	Oxford Policy Management	UN	United Nations
DSP	Department of Social Protection of the Population	OPHI	Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative	UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
EU	European Union	OSI	Open Society Institute	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	PMPC	Psychological Medical Pedagogical Consultation Centres	UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
GBAO	Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region	PMT	Proxy means test	UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
GDP	Gross Domestic Product	PPP	Purchasing Power Parity	UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit	RUCSW	Rutgers University Center for International Social Work	UNTJ	United Nations in Tajikistan
IFPRI	International Food Policy and Research Institute	SADD	Sex- and age-disaggregated data	USAID	United States Agency for International Development
ILO	International Labour Organization	SAHU	Social Assistance at-Home Units	USD	United States Dollar
IMF	International Monetary Fund	SALE	State Agency for Labour and Employment of Population	USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
IOM	International Organization for Migration	SASP	State Agency for Social Protection	WB	World Bank
		SMSES	Social Medical State Examination Service	WFP	World Food Programme
				WG	Working Group
				WHO	World Health Organization

WFP/Tajikistan



# 1. INTRODUCTION

**The potential of social protection to alleviate poverty and deprivation has been established in different contexts.**

However, effective programmes and an efficient investment of resources require the identification of population needs and gaps in existing programmes.

**This country study was conducted to investigate these questions in Tajikistan.**

Along with similar reports on Armenia and Kyrgyzstan, it will provide crucial background information for a scoping study commissioned by the World Food Programme (WFP).

Insights from all country reports will be synthesized, allowing for the identification of potential avenues for social protection interventions by governments, WFP and other development partners, particularly addressing gaps in food insecurity alleviation.

## **The report is structured as follows:**

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the economic, political and demographic contexts. Chapter 3 goes into detail regarding poverty and food security in the Republic of Tajikistan, identifying particularly vulnerable groups and potential determinants of poverty and food insecurity. Chapter 4 discusses social protection initiatives in Tajikistan, emphasizing specific characteristics such as eligibility criteria, targeting methods and benefit levels and the effect of the initiatives on poverty and food security. Institutional arrangements and the performance of specific programmes are also discussed. Chapter 5 identifies achievements and challenges and concludes with a set of policy recommendations to strengthen social protection in Tajikistan.

## **METHODS**

**Findings presented and analysed in this report are based on a comprehensive desk research of reports published by international organizations, scientific journals and the Statistical Agency under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan (TajStat).** Governmental decrees and legislation documents also were consulted. The desk research was complemented with in-depth interviews conducted with stakeholders involved in the design, support, administration or implementation of social protection and food security programmes in the Republic of Tajikistan<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> See Annex 3

WFP/Heather Hill



## 2. COUNTRY CONTEXT

### MESSAGES:

**Because of its fertility rate and relatively low life expectancy, Tajikistan has a young population.**

**After a difficult first decade after independence, economic growth has picked up, and Tajikistan has recently transitioned to the lower middle-income status.**

**The Tajik economy largely depends on services and agriculture. The latter employs more than half of the labour force.**

**The labour market is characterized by a labour surplus and decreasing economic activity. Low wages and the lack of productive employment opportunities have driven much of the working age population to seek employment in the Russian Federation or Kazakhstan.**

**Tajikistan is one of the world's most remittance-dependent countries.**

**Tajikistan is a mountainous, landlocked country located in Central Asia.** It is bordered by Kyrgyzstan on the north, China on the east, Afghanistan on the south and Uzbekistan on the west. The Republic of Tajikistan has gained independence after the dissolution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in 1991.

**In 1992, shortly after independence, the country saw a devastating civil war.** It resulted in an estimated 50,000 to 100,000 victims, about 10 percent of the population being internally displaced, and 80,000 people seeking refuge outside of the country – mainly in Afghanistan (Akiner and Barnes, 2001).

As with many former Soviet Union member states in the region, the democratisation efforts of the country led to a dominant-party presidential system. Emomali Rahmon, the current president, has been in power since 1994, running unopposed during elections.

**The country lies on mountainous terrain, with 93 percent of its surface dominated by the Alay Range in the north and the Pamir mountains in the east.**

The mountainous location severely limits the availability of arable land. Tajikistan is considered the most vulnerable countries to climate change in the Europe and Central Asia region, as it is prone to natural disasters, extreme temperatures and erratic rainfalls (WFP, 2017b). These have significant impacts on the country's agricultural production.

## 2.1 DEMOGRAPHIC CONTEXT

**The population of Tajikistan in 2016 was 8.65 million people (IMF, 2016), and this number is expected to grow to 9.60 million by 2021.** Whereas most countries in Europe and Central Asia experience decreasing fertility rates and shrinking populations, the average number of births per woman in Tajikistan remains high at 3.8 in 2014 (UNECE Statistical Database, n.d.).

Because of the high fertility rate and relatively low life expectancy, Tajikistan has a young population, as evidenced by the population pyramid (Figure 1). The old-age dependency ratio is low, with only 3 percent of the population being older than 65 years. In 2015, 62.2 percent of the population was of active age, and a further 34.8 percent under the age of 15.

**As fertility rates are expected to decrease, the age composition of the Tajik population is likely to be different by 2030.** The UN's World Population Prospects (2015) forecasts the share of the active, aged population to remain relatively stable, but old age dependency is expected to almost double, and the child population to decrease to 32 percent of the total (Figure 2).

TABLE 1. REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF THE POPULATION

Region	Capital	Population %
Dushanbe	Dushanbe	9.5%
Sughd	Khujand	29.4%
DRS	Dushanbe	23.0%
Khatlon	Qurghonteppa	35.5%
GBAO	Khorugh	2.6%
<b>Total</b>		<b>100%</b>

Source: Tajstat (2014)

The expected aging of the population is likely to pose a challenge to the country's pension system in the future (UNDESA, 2015).

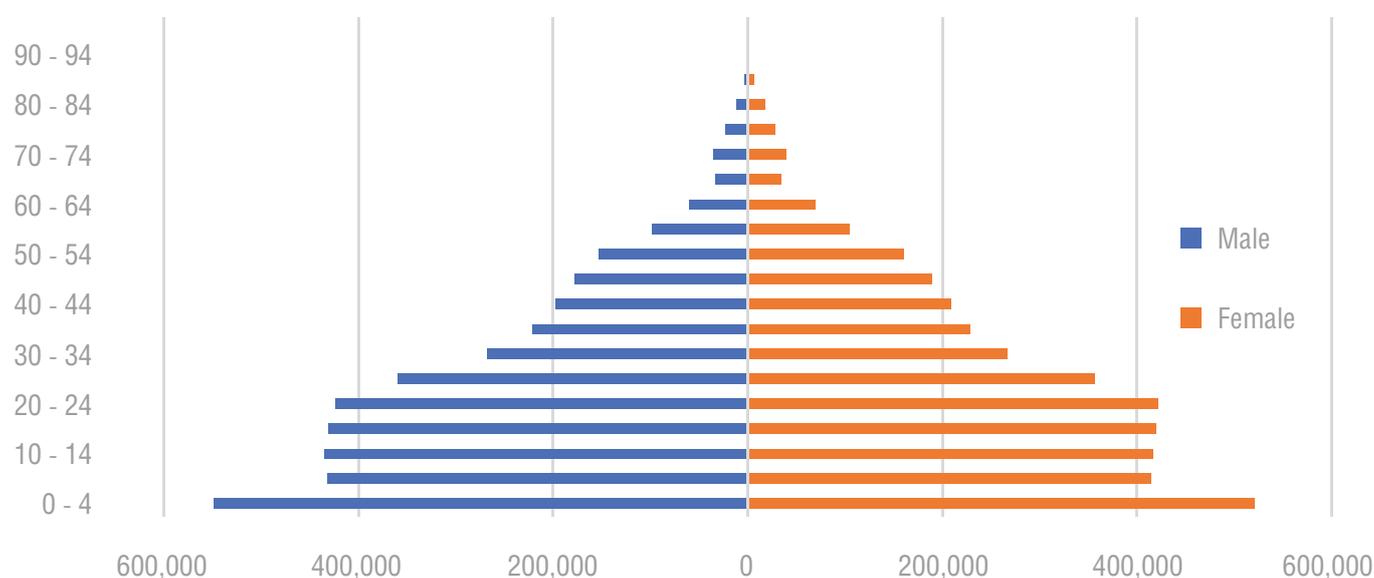
Tajikistan is administratively divided into the capital city Dushanbe, and four oblasts: Sughd, Khatlon, the Districts of Republican Subordination (DRS) and the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region (GBAO). One third of the population lives in Khatlon and almost 30 percent in Sughd region.

**The least populated area is GBAO, located in the Pamir Mountains, making up almost half of the country's area but only 2.6 percent of its population (TajStat, 2014).** Table 1 provides a breakdown of the population by region.

## 2.2 ECONOMIC CONTEXT

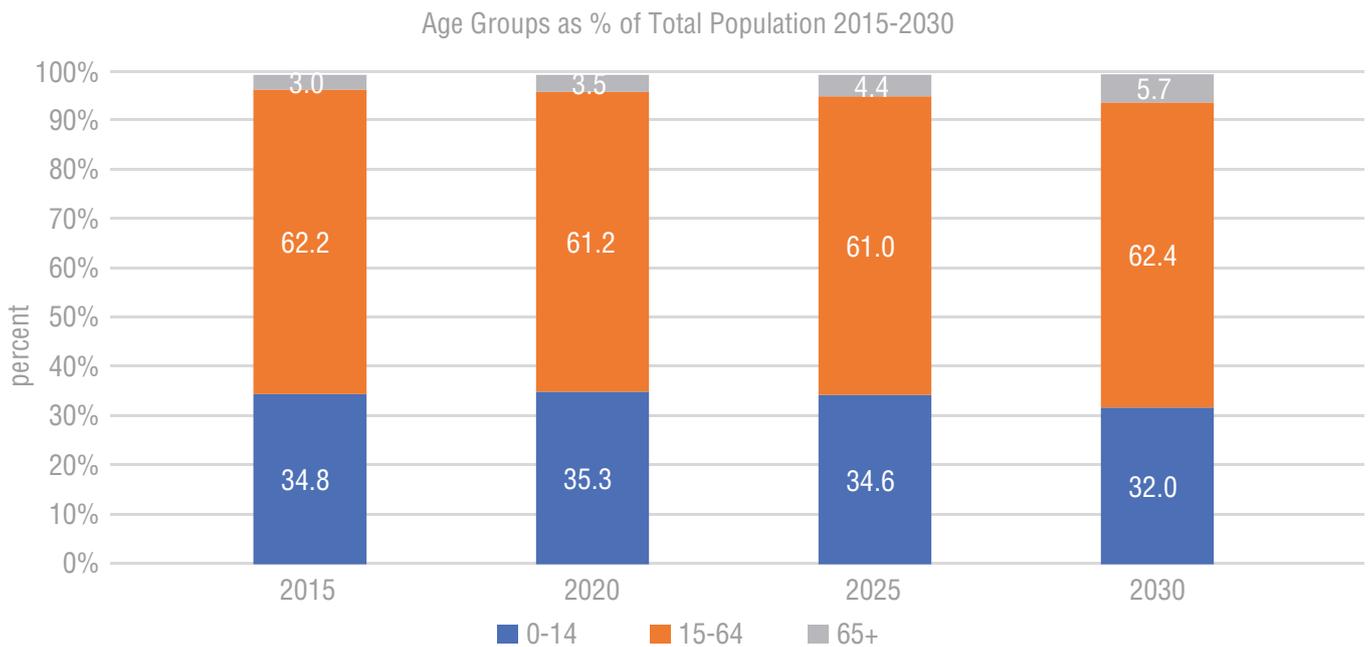
Tajikistan has recently transitioned from the low income to the lower middle-income country status, with a GDP per capita slightly above the lower middle-income threshold (IMF, 2016). It has the lowest GDP per capita in the Europe and Central Asia region. Tajikistan's economy has been steadily growing since 1997, with a slowdown during the 2008–2009 global economic crisis. Yet, the effect of the crisis was relatively modestly compared to other countries in the region. Whereas Armenia's and Kyrgyzstan's economic growth reached negative figures as a consequence of the crisis, the Tajik GDP grew, even if at a much lower rate than before (IMF, 2016). The IMF forecasts an average annual GDP growth of 5 percent for the period 2017–2021 (Figure 3).

FIGURE 1. POPULATION PYRAMID OF TAJIKISTAN, 2012



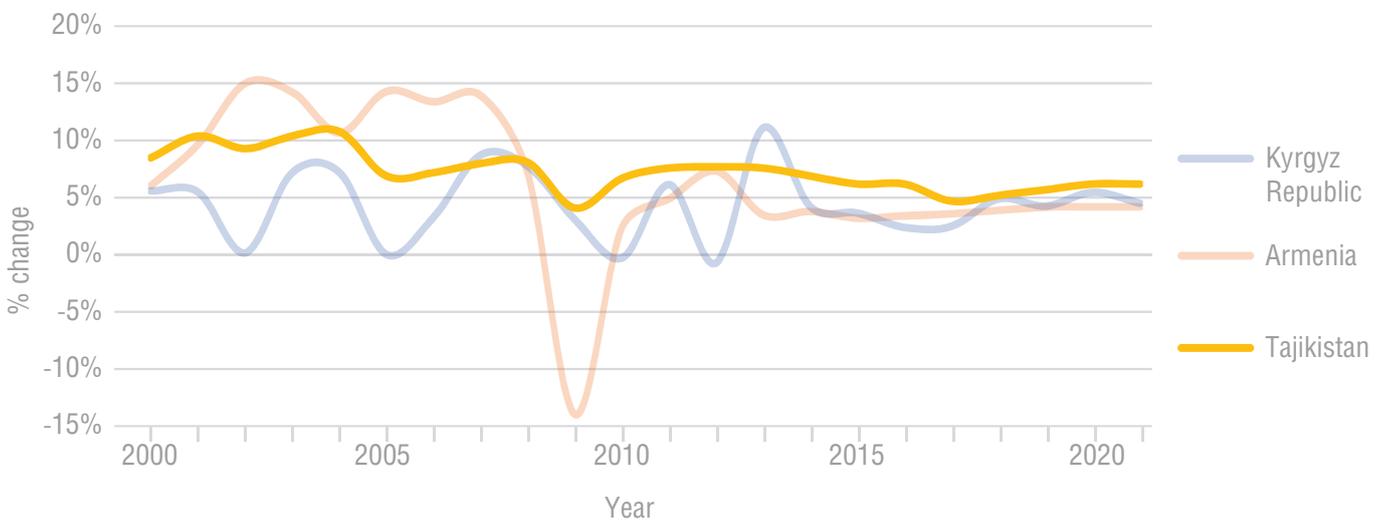
Source: UNECE Statistical Database (n.d.)

FIGURE 2. AGE GROUPS AS % OF TOTAL POPULATION (FORECASTS FOR 2015–2030)



Source: UNDESA World Population Prospects (2015)

FIGURE 3. GDP GROWTH RATES (CONSTANT PRICES) AND FORECASTS (2000–2021) IN TAJIKISTAN, ARMENIA AND THE KYRGYZ REPUBLIC



Source: IMF World Economic Outlook Database (2016). IMF staff projections for 2016 and beyond.

**Tajikistan’s main source of GDP is remittances, mainly from migrant workers employed in Russia.** The cash inflow in the form of remittances constitutes approximately 50 percent of GDP, making Tajikistan the world’s most remittance dependent country. Thus, the country is extremely vulnerable to external economic shocks. With most if this cash inflow coming from Russia, the recent Russian oil price

crisis had significant effects on the country’s economic growth. The value of remittances dropped by 8.3 percent since 2011, and resulted in a slowdown in the GDP growth rate. This shows just how fragile Tajikistan’s development is (WFP, 2016a).

**Inflation was high in the early 2000s and quite volatile in subsequent years.** Since 2012, the inflation rates

have stabilized at one-digit figures (IMF, 2016). The IMF forecasts future consumer price increases to average 6 percent in the following years.

**Economic growth does not only occur at the macro level but also at the micro level.** According to the World Bank’s Listening to Tajikistan survey implemented from May 2015 to December

2016, real per capita household incomes continued to grow between May and October 2016 (relative to the same period in 2015). This growth in real incomes has been driven by the increase of certain income components, such as: wages (9.6 percent), income from agriculture and self-employment (15.5 percent), and remittances (17.7 percent) (Rajabov and Ziyayev, 2017).

**The main contributors to the country's economic growth during 1997 and 2014 have been services and the agricultural sector** (World Bank 2016a).

The share of industry's contribution to GDP has decreased considerably since 1997, whereas the agricultural sector's share in GDP and contribution to growth has remained relatively stable since 1997,

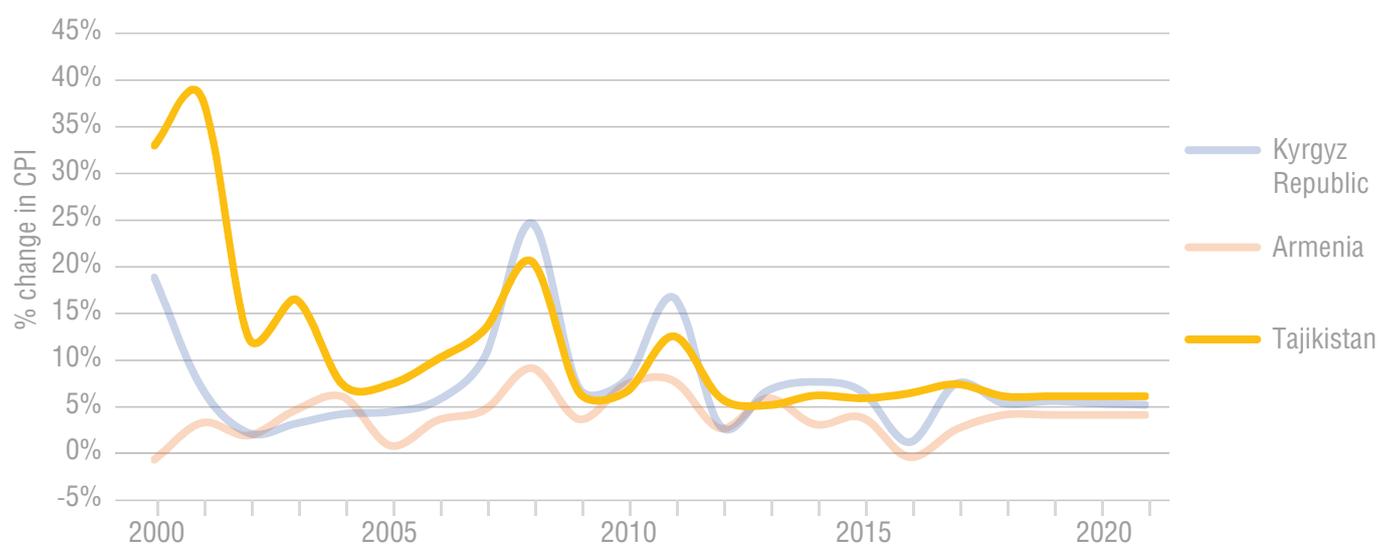
averaging at 23.2 percent and 24.6 percent (ADB, 2016a). The service sector has experienced a sharp increase since 2005, almost doubling its contribution to growth relative to the period between 1997 and 2004 (Table 2).

Although the Republic of Tajikistan has experienced remarkable growth in the last decade and a half, it has not been inclusive (ADB, 2016a). Not all segments of society have been able to benefit from economic opportunities. The lack of productive employment opportunities poses a critical constraint on the inclusiveness of growth. Labour force participation in the domestic<sup>2</sup> labour market has dropped sharply between 1991 and 2014, from 76.5 percent to 47.2 percent (ADB, 2016a).

This decrease can be potentially explained as the interaction of the rapid growth of the population (including the working age population) and the lack of job opportunities in the domestic labour market (ADB, 2016a).

**The labour market of Tajikistan is characterized by a labour surplus and decreasing economic activity of the working-age population.** The level of economic activity of men is significantly higher than that of women. In 2013, female labour force participation was at a low 27 percent compared to 68 percent of men (Strokova and Ajwad, 2017). The decline in the economic activity of the population is observed in all regions of Tajikistan, at all ages, among men and women. According

FIGURE 4. INFLATION TRENDS AND FORECASTS (2000–2021)



Source: IMF World Economic Outlook Database (2016)

TABLE 2. SECTORAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO GDP GROWTH (1997–2014)

	GDP Growth Rate (%)	Agriculture			Industry			Services		
		Growth rate	Share to GDP	% contribution	Growth rate	Share to GDP	% contribution	Growth rate	Share to GDP	% contribution
1997–2004	7.7	9.3	22.9	27.8	7.0	31.8	29.1	7.3	45.2	43.1
2005–2014	6.9	6.4	23.4	21.7	-0.4	22.3	-1.1	10.1	54.3	79.4
1997–2014	7.2	7.6	23.2	24.6	3.6	26.5	13.1	9.0	50.2	62.3

Source: ADB (2016a)

2 The ADB distinguishes between domestic and migrant labour markets in Tajikistan because of the large share of the employed population working abroad.

to forecasts until 2020<sup>3</sup>, the labour market surplus will further increase because of the natural increase in the able-bodied population, and the number of people of working age will increase by a half-million people compared to 2015.

**The official unemployment rate of Tajikistan stood at 2.4 percent in 2014 (ADB, 2016a). This can be considered low but it only reflects registered unemployment.** The Asian Development Bank estimates overall unemployment at 21 percent for 2009, with even higher prevalence in urban areas (ADB, 2016a). Unemployment is characterized by geographical and gender disparities, with GBAO registering the highest, and Khatlon the lowest rates. It is estimated that 24 percent of men and 15 percent of women had been unemployed in 2009 (ADB, 2016a).

**Youth unemployment is especially high: more than a third of the individuals between the ages 15–24 was unemployed in 2009 (ADB, 2016a).**

Besides the lack of employment opportunities, low real wages pose a further constraint to inclusive growth. Although real wages grew by 18.6 percent between 2005 and 2014, they are still the lowest in the region<sup>4</sup> (ADB, 2016a). For comparison, real wages are 1.7–6.8 (depending on sector) times higher in the Russian Federation. The absolute lack of employment opportunities and the low wages are the main driving forces behind outward labour migration (World Bank, 2016a).

**The lowest wages are paid in agriculture (ADB, 2016a). This is especially important since the sector accounts for a quarter of the country's GDP (ADB, 2016a), and employs more than half of the Tajik labour force<sup>5</sup> (World Bank, 2017).**

However, productivity in the agricultural sector is low, which hinders economic growth and limits the livelihoods that agricultural workers can attain. Because

of the mountainous terrain, the proportion of arable land is limited to approximately 7 percent, causing severe constraints to agricultural production. According to the ADB, "arable land area, irrigation resources, and state efforts are concentrated in cotton produced on stagnant farms that descended from the former Soviet Union" (ADB, 2016a).

Furthermore, agriculture is characterized by small family plots, which have little ability to rent or agglomerate land and no or little access to credit. The agricultural sector has inherited a legacy of state control that makes progress especially difficult (ADB, 2016a).

Land degradation is another key factor explaining the underperformance of the Tajik agricultural sector (UNDP-UNEP, 2012): it contributes to low productivity, low economic returns and low income for food producers. At this point 97 percent of the arable land is subject to soil degradation (WFP, 2017). Poor households in Tajikistan are the most affected by environmental degradation since they rely heavily on natural resources.

## 2.3 MIGRATION

**As the ADB (2016a) observed, essentially two Tajik labour markets exist simultaneously: domestic and migrant.** The low employment opportunities and low real wages discussed above have driven a substantial part of the Tajik working-age population abroad. According to the World Bank, 7.5 percent (607,800 people) of the Tajik population was living abroad as of 2013 (World Bank, 2016b).

However, estimations suffer from serious inconsistencies depending on the source of data. For example, in April 2016, the Russian Federation's Migration Service estimated the number of Tajik migrants in the country to be 878,536 (Rajabov and Ziyayev, 2017). At the same time, the Tajik Ministry of Labour, Migration and Population Employment calculated that 517,308 Tajiks have worked in Russia in 2016 (Rajabov and Ziyayev, 2017).

The top destination countries of emigrants are the Russian Federation, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, Afghanistan, Germany, Uzbekistan, Belarus, the United States, Azerbaijan and Moldova.

Out of those who have emigrated to Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries, 45.9 percent have a higher education, which means a significant loss of human capital (World Bank, 2016). According to a Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) study, 41 percent of labour migrants in 2015 were aged between 25 and 34 years. Most them are married (Rajabov and Ziyayev, 2017).

**According to the World Bank's Listening to Tajikistan Survey, 86 percent of labour migrants were employed during the harvest season of 2016 (World Bank, 2016a).** The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has found that labour mobility to the Russian Federation has not decreased as rapidly as was expected given the Russian economic downturn.

Nevertheless, the share of households with at least one member working abroad has been lower than before 2014 (Rajabov and Ziyayev, 2017). The largest share of labour migrants works in construction and in sale. The overwhelming majority of respondents reported to have sent remittances to Tajikistan, and 82 percent said that they were able to improve their financial situation.

For the year 2013, the World Bank estimated the number of immigrants residing in Tajikistan at 275,700 people, or 3.4 percent of the population (World Bank, 2016b).

Interestingly, the top sending countries show high similarity to Tajik emigrant's destination countries. Most of the immigrants to Tajikistan come from the Russian Federation, the Kyrgyz Republic, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Ukraine, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Moldova, Kazakhstan, Turkey, and Belarus. In 2014, Tajikistan hosted 2,017 refugees (World Bank, 2016b)

3 State Strategy for the Development of the Labor Market of the Republic of Tajikistan until 2020

4 Armenia, Kyrgyz Republic, Moldova, Georgia, the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan.

5 A summary table of the distribution of the working population along sectors is provided in the Annex.



WFP/Elizabeth Zakirid

# 3. FOOD SECURITY AND POVERTY PROFILE

## MESSAGES:

**Tajikistan has the worst food security and nutrition indicators in the region.**

**The Tajik population suffers from the double burden of malnutrition: undernutrition (including micronutrient deficiencies) and overnutrition.**

**Chronic and transitory food insecurity are prevalent.**

**The main underlying reasons for food insecurity and malnutrition are poverty and behavioural factors.**

**Poverty affects approximately one third of the population.**

**Poverty rates show correlation with the seasonality of agriculture and remittance inflows.**

**Urban-rural and regional inequalities can be observed, and women-headed households are at a higher risk of poverty relative to male-headed households.**

## 3.1 FOOD SECURITY

**The World Food Summit (Rome, 1996) stated that “food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life”.** Food is a basic building block of human life, making food security an essential determinant of people’s well-being. Food insecurity is a condition violating the basic human right to food (entrenched in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and General Comments 12 and 19 of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights). Food insecurity undermines people’s quality of life and their ability to live a life they value. It has adverse effects on economic growth by affecting the ability to learn and be productive, lowering the human capital citizens can accumulate and limiting their options to engage in activities associated with risk and returns.

**Food insecurity remains a severe problem in Tajikistan.** The country has the worst nutrition and food security indicators in the Europe and Central Asia region (WFP, 2016a). The World Food Programme (WFP) estimates that approximately 1.1 million people in rural areas are prone to chronic food insecurity, and an additional 700,000 to transitional food insecurity (WFP, 2016a). This chapter explains the nature and roots of food insecurity in Tajik households.

Tajikistan has come a long way in combating hunger since its independence. The Global Hunger Index, published by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI, 2016), shows a remarkable improvement in the hunger situation. Whereas Tajikistan was categorized as a country with an „alarming” hunger rate in the 1990s, it improved its score from 40.3 to 30.3 by 2015, and stepped up to the category of „serious” (Table 3).

Although this is a clear sign of progress, its high scores compared to other countries in the region indicate that the Tajik population is still affected more by hunger than any other country in the region.

**The following four dimensions of food security have been identified by the 1996 World Food Summit: food availability, access, utilisation and stability.** The overall nutrition status of the population captures the outcomes related to food (in-) security. According to FAO’s nutrition database, a third of Tajikistan’s population was undernourished in 2014–2016 (FAO, 2017). This number seems even more extreme when compared to other countries in the region, as seen in Figure 5. The prevalence of undernourishment in Tajikistan is more than five times the level of Kyrgyzstan and Armenia and more than

TABLE 3. THE GLOBAL HUNGER INDEX

Country	1995	2000	2005	2015
Armenia	21.8	17.4	14.1	11.2
Georgia	31.8	15.2	10.2	8.5
Kyrgyz Republic	24.1	20.2	14.3	9.4
Moldova	16.0	15.3	15.7	9.1
<b>Tajikistan</b>	<b>40.3</b>	<b>40.4</b>	<b>36.5</b>	<b>30.3</b>
Uzbekistan	23.7	21.9	18.5	13.3

Source: IFPRI (2016)

four times higher than in Georgia. Over time, a decrease in the undernourishment rate can be observed: between 2008 and 2016, the proportion of people undernourished dropped by almost five percentage points (FAO, 2017). However, as the population has been rapidly growing, the absolute number of undernourished people has grown from 2.8 million in 2008–2010 to 2.9 million in 2014–2016 (FAO, 2017).

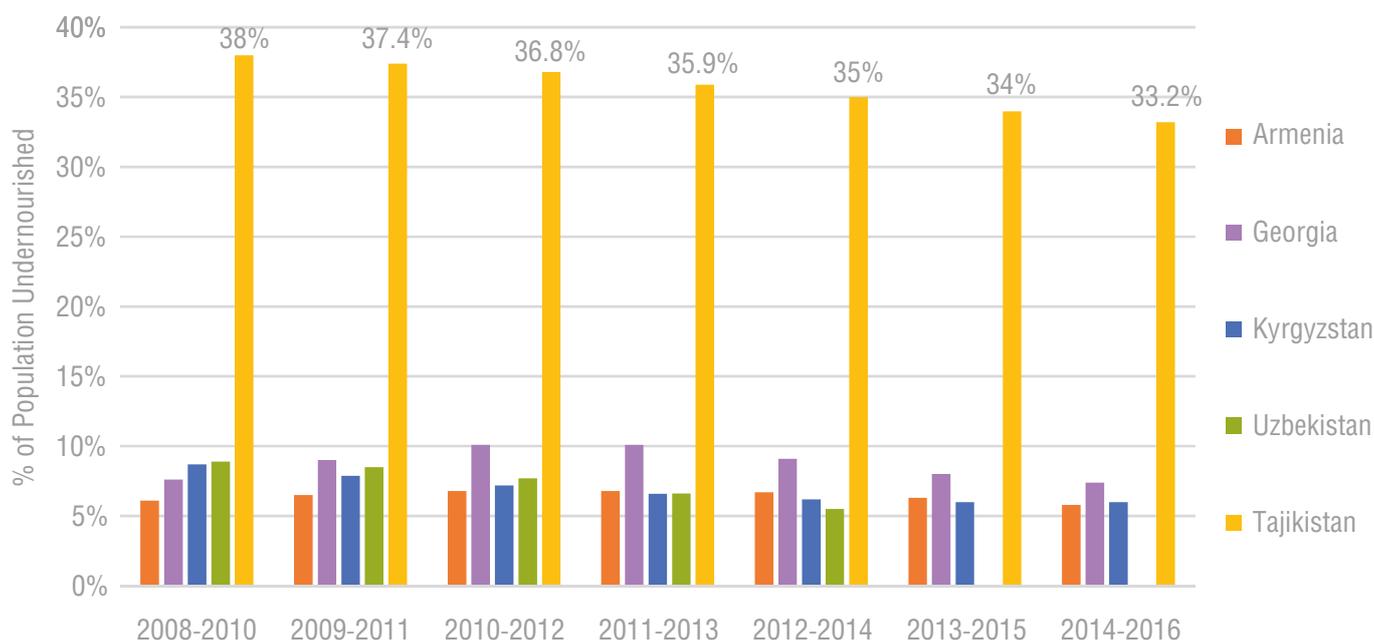
Tajikistan is the only country in the region with an average dietary energy supply adequacy below 100 percent. Although a constant positive trend can be observed since the crisis in 2008, calorie intake remains inadequate. According to the FAO, the total number of undernourished people in Europe and Central Asia was 5.9 million

in 2014–16, of which almost 50 percent lived in Tajikistan (FAO, 2017).

Figure 7 shows the three-year averages of the food deficit depth. Although the gap has been decreasing since 2008, it is still not at the level of the early 1990s. Between 2014 and 2016, caloric intake per day still fell 250 calories short, which is more than 10 percent of the average daily needs.

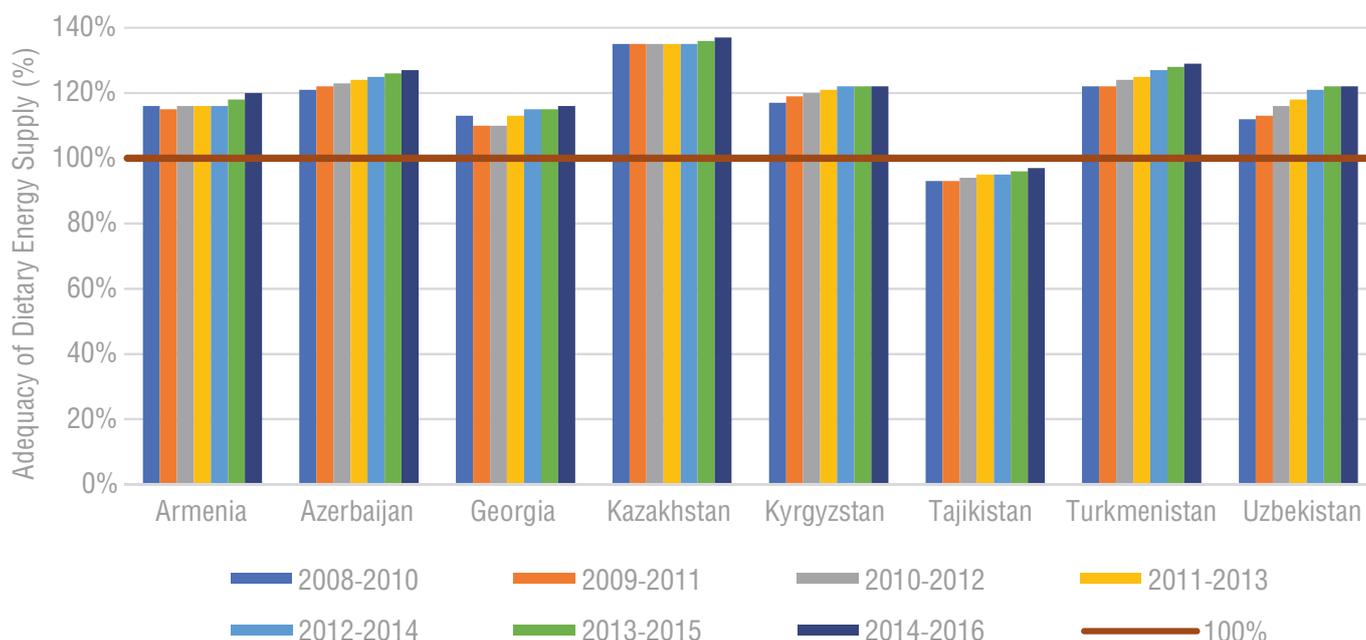
According to TajStat (2017) the calorie content of food consumed in the bottom decile has remained more or less unchanged over the past six years. However, the source of the calorie intake has shifted towards sugars and fats, rather than quality carbohydrates and proteins, indicating a lower quality diet (TajStat, 2017).

FIGURE 5. PREVALENCE AND TRENDS IN UNDERNOURISHMENT



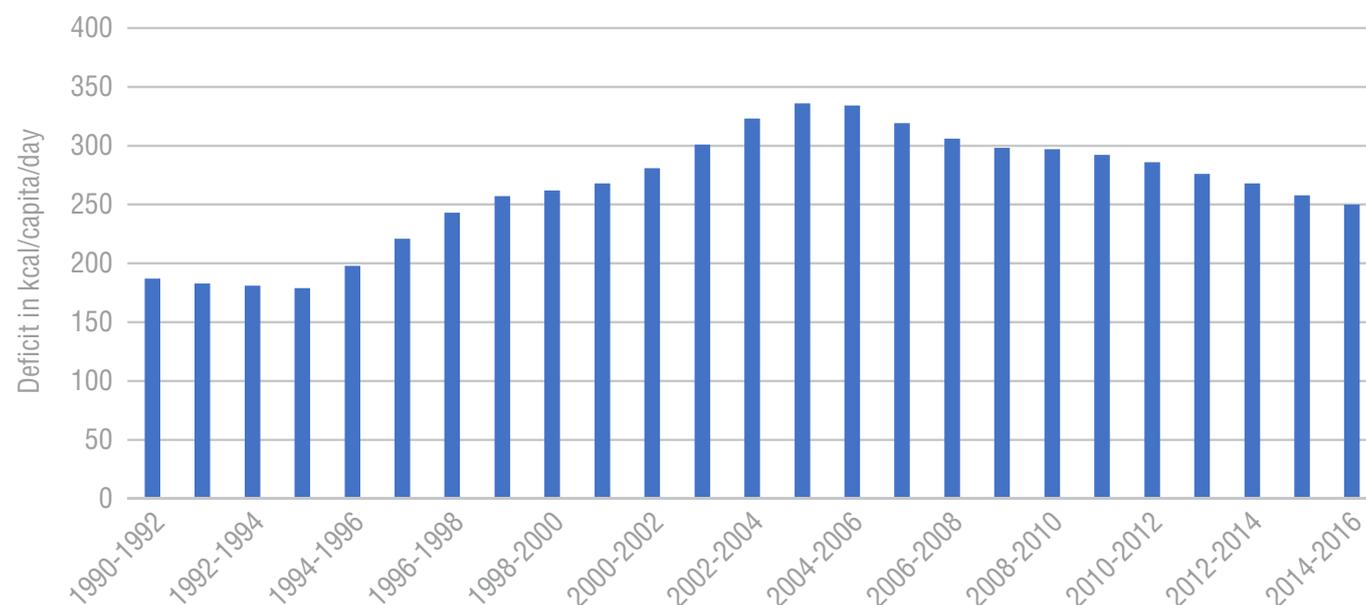
Source: FAO (2017)

FIGURE 6. AVERAGE DIETARY ENERGY SUPPLY ADEQUACY



Source: FAO (2017)

FIGURE 7. TAJIKISTAN: DEPTH OF THE FOOD DEFICIT OVER TIME (KCAL/CAPITA/DAY) (3-YEAR AVERAGE)



Source: FAO (2017)

**The consequences of under-nourishment affect the well-being of the population, especially children.**

Only 20 percent of children have adequately diverse and frequent food intake, leading to malnutrition (FAO, 2017). The prevalence of stunting among children under 5 is estimated to be 26 percent, whereas 10 percent of children are wasting (FAO, 2017). Stunting figures show significant

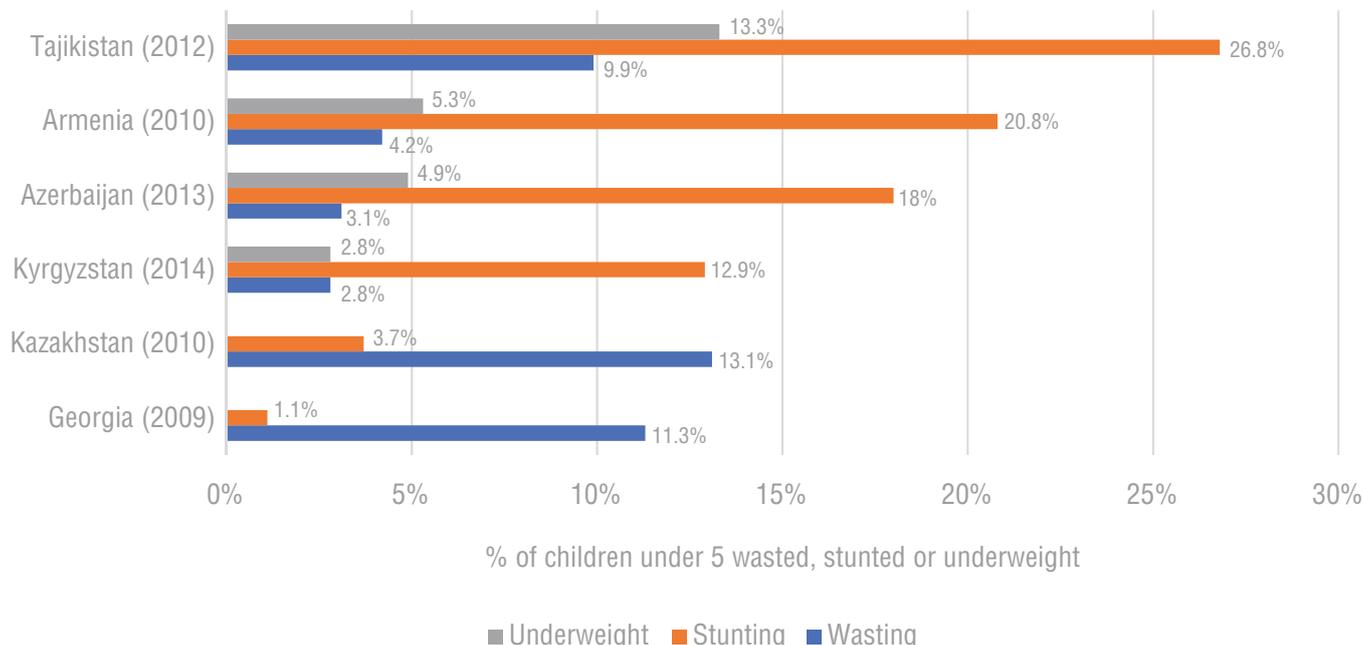
disparities between rural and urban regions, and most of the stunted children belong to poor households. Khatlon region shows the highest rates of stunting and wasting. Micronutrient deficiency also is prevalent.

The WFP estimates that 30 percent of children under 5, and 25 percent of women of reproductive age, are affected by anaemia (WFP, 2016b). Health risks associated with

undernourishment show varying trends in the past decade.

Whereas wasting and anaemia have been constantly decreasing since 2005, underweight and stunting have been growing since the economic crisis of 2008. In fact, the prevalence of underweight among children under 5 has doubled between 2008 and 2015 (FAO, 2017).

FIGURE 8. PREVALENCE OF STUNTING, WASTING AND UNDERWEIGHT, % OF CHILDREN UNDER 5



Source: FAO (2017)

Availability refers to food in sufficient quantity and appropriate quality, supplied through domestic production or imports (including food aid). This dimension shall be understood on a national, rather than a household level, representing the amount of food present in the given country.

#### Tajikistan is a food-deficit country

(WFP, 2016a), with most of its labour force employed in the underperforming agricultural sector (ADB, 2016a). Although agriculture employs almost 40 percent of the total labour force, it is characterized by low productivity and high seasonality in employment.

The country faces constraints in terms of domestic food production but it can cover its food needs by imports and by maintaining properly functioning markets (WFP, 2017). The country is vulnerable to changes in the international market, since it covers more than half of the population's food needs through import.

#### Half of the wheat (accounting for 70 percent of the overall calorie intake) consumed in the country is imported

(WFP, 2016b). The effect of global food prices on consumer prices and thus the purchasing power of household income is demonstrated by the case of the global wheat price increase in the second half of

2010. As global prices went up, inflation in Tajikistan instantly responded by rapidly accelerating. (Al-Eyd et al, 2012).

**Most the population depends on agriculture but this sector is characterized by very low productivity.** Land degradation, the scarcity of cultivable land, the dominance of cotton production and low investments in agriculture all contribute to the sector's underperformance.

Climate change and related natural disasters pose a further risk to a stable food security situation, which has already been experienced by the population, when an erratic rainfall in 2014 reduced the production of the two main staple foods: wheat and potatoes (WFP, 2017).

**The low productivity results in food insecurity because it leads to decreased availability of and access to food.** Moreover, it creates inadequate and seasonal livelihood opportunities for households. During the lean season, usually stretching from January to mid-April, households face scarcities in nutrition and make ends meet with a less diversified, lower quality diet (WFP, 2017).

More households are food insecure in April/May (at the end of the lean season)

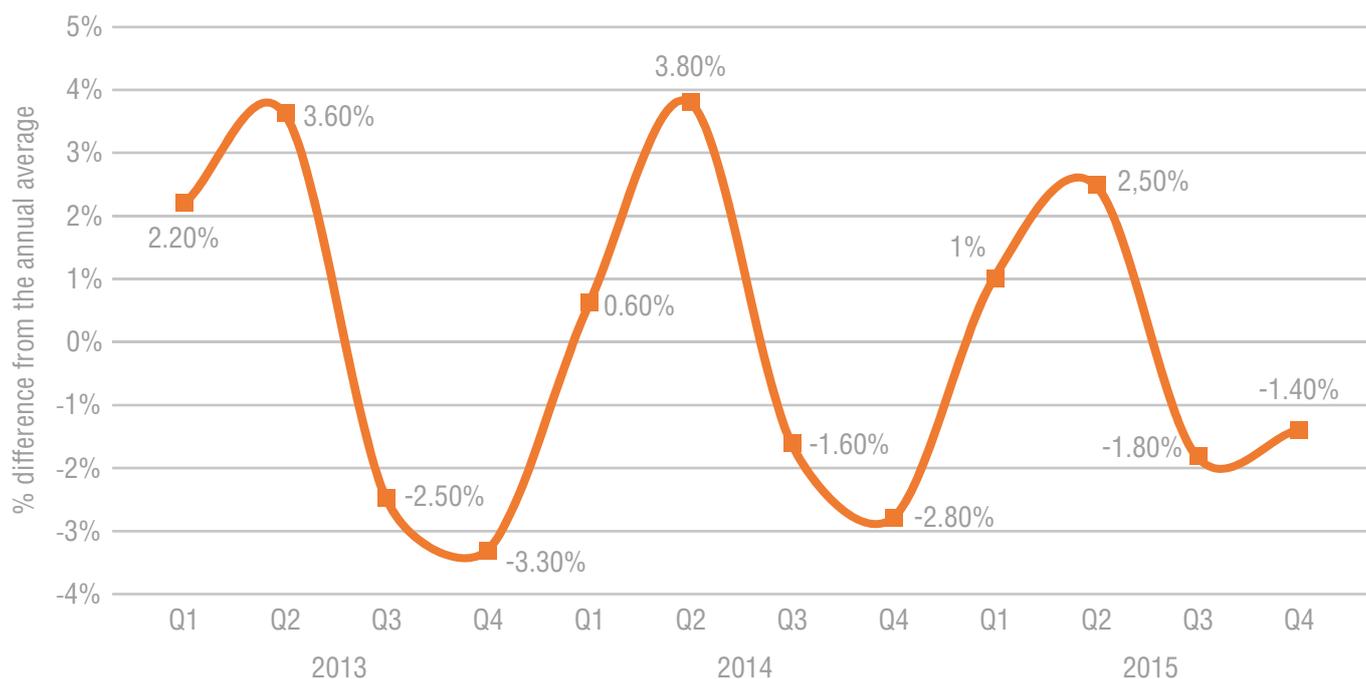
#### Food prices and household welfare – an example from Kyrgyzstan

Bierbaum and Baibagysh Uulu (2015) investigated the effect of food prices on household welfare in the Kyrgyz Republic, which shares many characteristics with Tajikistan, including being a net food importer. Their findings suggest that net food-buyer and net food-importer households differ in terms of vulnerability to fluctuations in food prices. Increases in food prices are expected to have an adverse effect on the welfare of net food-buyer households, and substantial price increases in one staple commodity (such as wheat) alone can lead to considerable loss of welfare (Bierbaum and Baibagysh Uulu, 2015).

than in December (at the end of the harvest season). This is reflected in the fluctuation of the number of households that do not meet their calorie requirements (Seitz and Rajabov, 2016), measured as a percentage deviation from the annual average, shown in Figure 9.

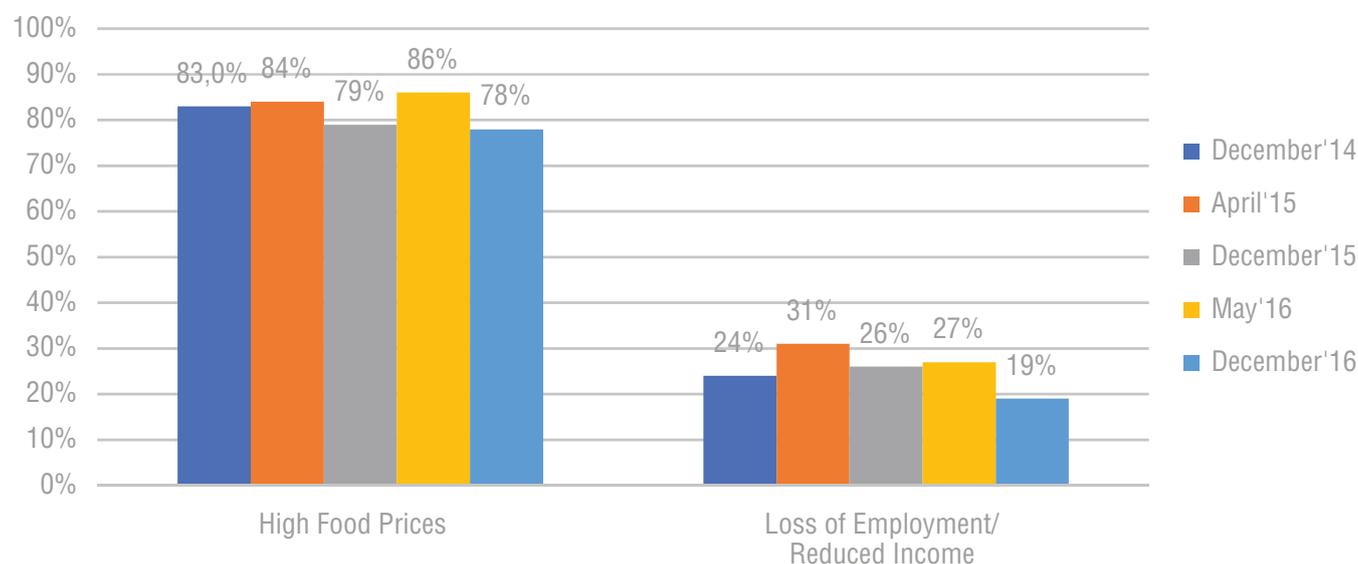
The dimension of access is fulfilled when people have access to adequate resources for acquiring appropriate foods for a nutritious diet. Economic access refers to the purchasing power of households – the disposable income that people can use to

FIGURE 9. SHARE OF HOUSEHOLDS REPORTING FOOD CONSUMPTION BELOW 2,250 CALORIES PER CAPITA PER DAY



Source: Seitz and Rajabov (2016)

FIGURE 10. HOUSEHOLDS AFFECTED BY ECONOMIC SHOCKS



Source: WFP (2017)

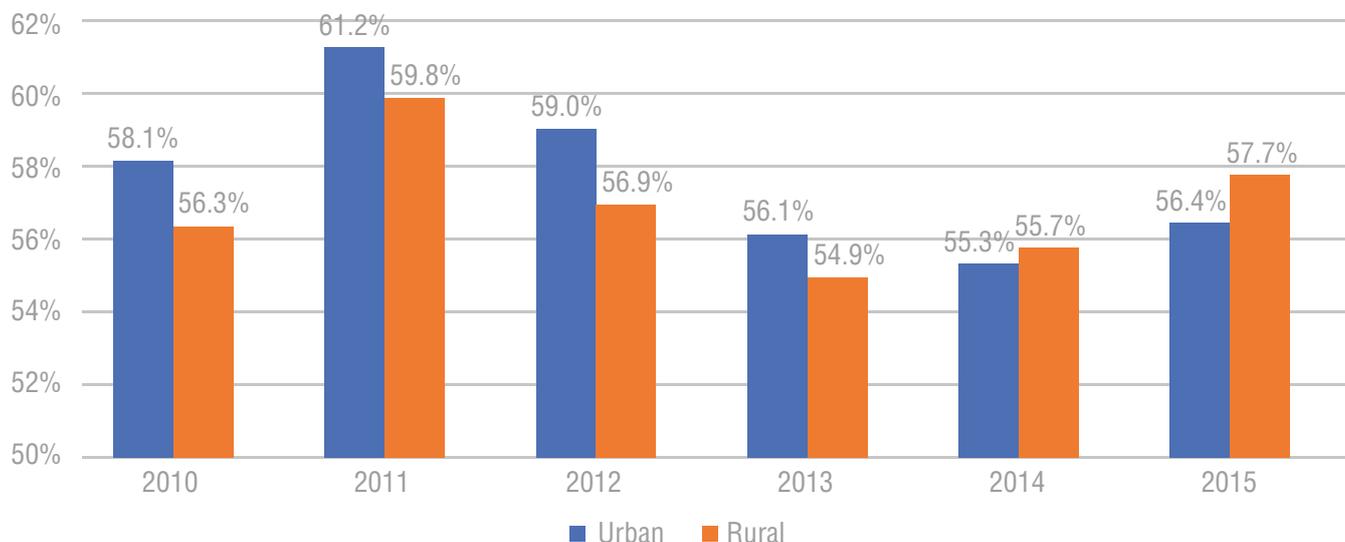
purchase the food they need. Economic access depends on demand- and supply-side factors: the purchasing power of households and the price of food products.

The WFP concludes that food insecurity in Tajikistan is mainly a result of lack of economic access because of the low purchasing power of households (WFP, 2016a).

During 2014 and 2016, the WFP interviewed households about their food security status high food and fuel prices were mentioned as the most common shocks, with 78-86 percent of households experiencing difficulties associated with prices. During the survey period, 19-31 percent of households reported a loss of employment or reduced income as a shock to their food security (WFP, 2017).

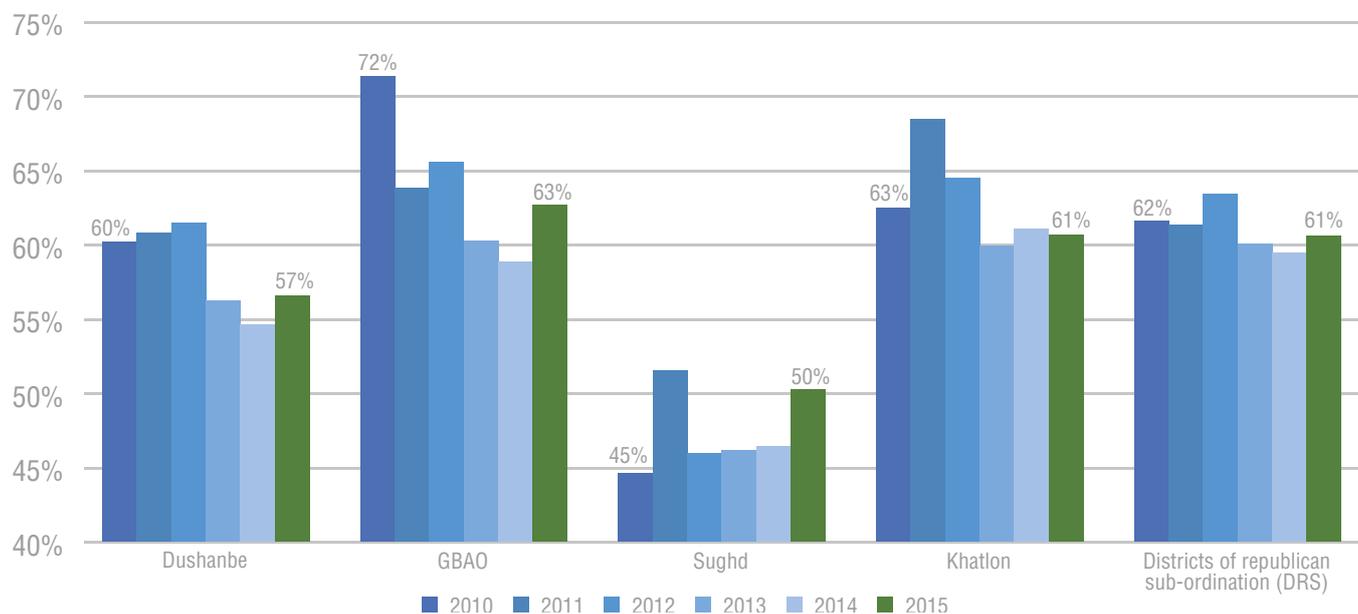
**The cost of food as a share of total household consumption has been growing since 2010, which suggests that the constraints on households' economic access to food have become more severe.** While purchasing a balanced diet was estimated at 58 percent of average household consumption in 2010, it has increased to 70 percent by 2015 (TajStat, 2017).

FIGURE 11. SHARE OF FOOD EXPENDITURE IN HOUSEHOLD CONSUMPTION BY RESIDENCE



Source: TajStat (2017)

FIGURE 12. SHARE OF FOOD EXPENDITURE IN HOUSEHOLD CONSUMPTION BY REGION



Source: TajStat (2017)

**On average, Tajik households spent 55.5 percent of their consumption on food in 2016** (TajStat, 2017). The corresponding share for rural households was slightly higher at 56.3 percent. Regional differences prevail in this indicator as well: for example, the share of food expenditures in total consumption has been 60.1 percent in Khatlon region, and 48.1 percent in Sughd Oblast (TajStat, 2017).

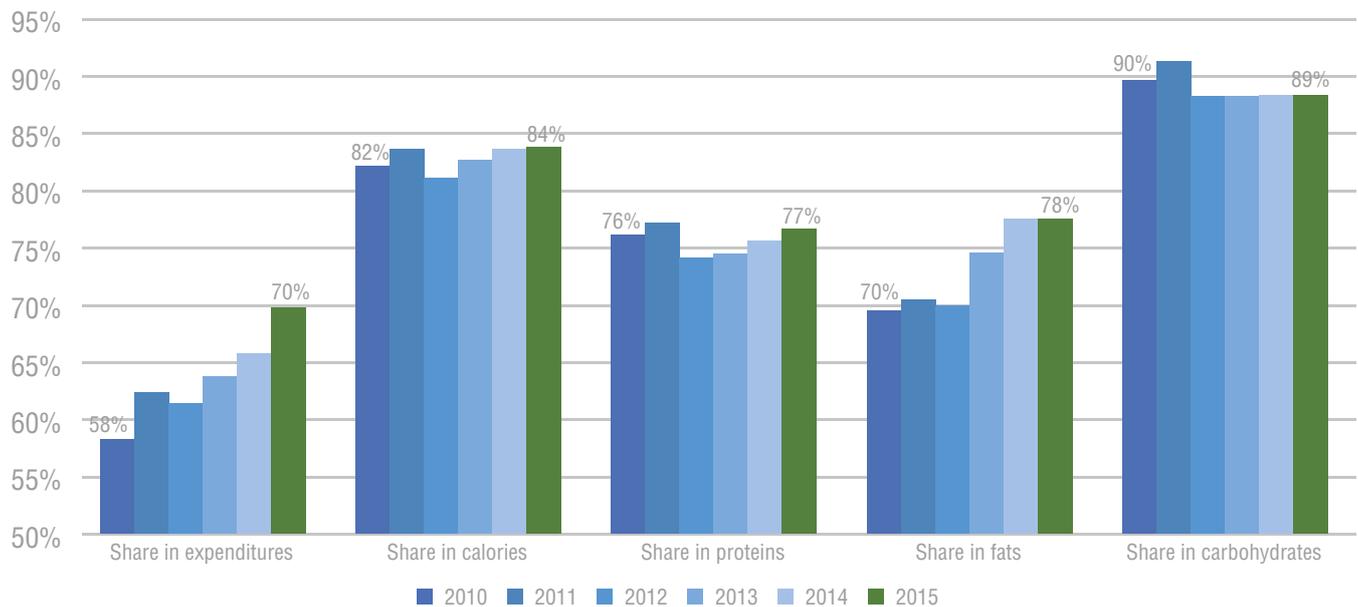
The gap between urban and rural households seems to be widening. Whereas in 2016 urban households spent a 2.4 percentage points lower share of their expenditures on food items compared to 2015, the reduction in rural households was only 1.4 percentage points (TajStat, 2017).

Between January and December 2016, the share of food expenditures for households

with 3 and more children decreased by 4.7 percentage points and for pensioners by 0.4 points (TajStat, 2017).

As seen in Figure 12, the share of food expenditure in household consumption and its changing patterns also show variation among the regions. Households spend the largest part of their income – 63 percent – on food in GBAO. Dushanbe, Khatlon and

FIGURE 13. FOOD CONSUMPTION PATTERNS IN THE LOWEST DECILE



Source: TajStat (2017)

the DRS have a rather similar statistic, while Sughd region's figure stands significantly lower, at 50 percent. Between 2010 and 2015, the share of food expenses decreased in Dushanbe, GBAO, Khatlon and the DRS, but has risen in Sughd (TajStat, 2017).

Figure 13 shows that expenditures on food account for 70 percent of total expenditures in the poorest households. The increase witnessed since 2010 indicates a further impoverishment of the poorest households following the Law of Engel, which says that with increasing income the share allocated to food decreases. Nevertheless, total calorie consumption has slowly been increasing, but it did not reach an adequate level by 2015. Neither has any of the macronutrients considered adequate in a balanced diet.

**Besides the problems in economic access to food, the desk review and the discussions revealed behavioural practices to be a further contributor to food insecurity and malnutrition.**

According to the general expert consensus, poor breastfeeding and infant feeding practices can cause severe consequences in children's physical and mental development. UNICEF and WHO recommend exclusive breastfeeding in the first six months of an infant's life and introducing complementary feeding between the sixth and eighth

months. Furthermore, WHO recommends continued breastfeeding through the second year of life (WHO, 2008).

According to the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) carried out in 2012, breastfeeding is almost universal in Tajikistan, with 98.1 percent of children being breastfed at least once, and 91.9 percent within one day of birth (Tajstat, MoH and ICF International, 2013). However, contrary to the recommended practice, only 34 percent of infants under 6 months old received exclusive breastfeeding.

The median duration of exclusive breastfeeding in 2012 was two months while the total duration of breastfeeding is 19 months (Tajstat, MoH and ICF International, 2013). Only 50 percent of infants received complementary feeding in a timely fashion. Overall, only one fifth of infants were fed according to the recommended practices (Tajstat, MoH and ICF International, 2013).

Micronutrient deficiencies can also arise as a result of poverty (the inability to afford a diet of adequate diversity and micronutrient value) and behavioural practices (influenced by social norms). Anaemia affected 27.4 percent of children under 5 in 2011, and 26.8 percent of pregnant women in 2012 (FAO, 2017). The DHS 2012 surveyed

mothers of children between 6-23 months old on the foods their children received in the 24 hours preceding the survey. In total, a little over half (52 percent) of the children consumed food rich in Vitamin A, and 43 percent consumed food rich in iron (Tajstat, MoH and ICF International, 2013). In iron consumption, there is a pronounced difference between regions: a considerably lower share of children in Sughd and Khatlon received iron-rich food (Tajstat, MoH and ICF International, 2013).

**The consumption of vitamin A and iron is notably lower in the lowest wealth quintile, but does not seem to correlate with income among higher quintiles.**

The lower consumption of micronutrient rich foods in the poorest quintiles suggests that inadequate micronutrient intake is to some extent (directly or indirectly) a consequence of poverty. However, the fact that approximately half of the children in the higher quintiles also did not consume foods rich in one of the micronutrients implies the importance of behavioural practices.

Emerging issues, such as obesity and overweight are also linked to adverse behavioural practices. WHO data from 2014 estimate a prevalence of 41.1 percent and 12.0 percent of overweight and obesity (WHO, 2017). The prevalence of obesity

among females (15.1percent) is much higher than among males (8.8 percent). The DHS survey from 2012 revealed that overweight and obesity among women is more frequent in higher wealth quintiles and higher education levels but is present in the entire population (Tajstat, MoH and ICF International, 2013). This suggests that obesity is at least as much a result of behavioural factors as it is of poverty.

Although there are issues regarding the availability and stability of food, the main drivers of food insecurity are insufficient economic access and inadequate behavioural practices. Many Tajik households simply do not have adequate purchasing power to afford a nutritious diet. Poverty and hunger are intertwined, pushing the population into a vicious cycle.

### 3.2 POVERTY

**In the last decades, Tajikistan has made sustained progress in poverty reduction, but it remains the poorest country within the Europe and Central Asia region.** Since 1999, poverty rates have drastically decreased. Monetary

poverty at the national poverty line<sup>6</sup> has shown a constant decrease from 82 percent in 1999, to 31.3 percent in 2015 (Seitz and Rajabov, 2016). A similar decline in poverty rates is observed at international thresholds. Tajikistan has managed to almost entirely eliminate extreme poverty measured as the percentage of the population living below purchasing power parity (PPP) USD 1.90 per person per day. Whereas the corresponding headcount in 1999 was 17.5 percent, it was estimated to be less than 1 percent in 2009. The rate of people living below PPP USD 3.10 per person per day has shown a similar pattern, decreasing by 63 percentage points between 1999 and 2009 (Seitz and Rajabov, 2016).

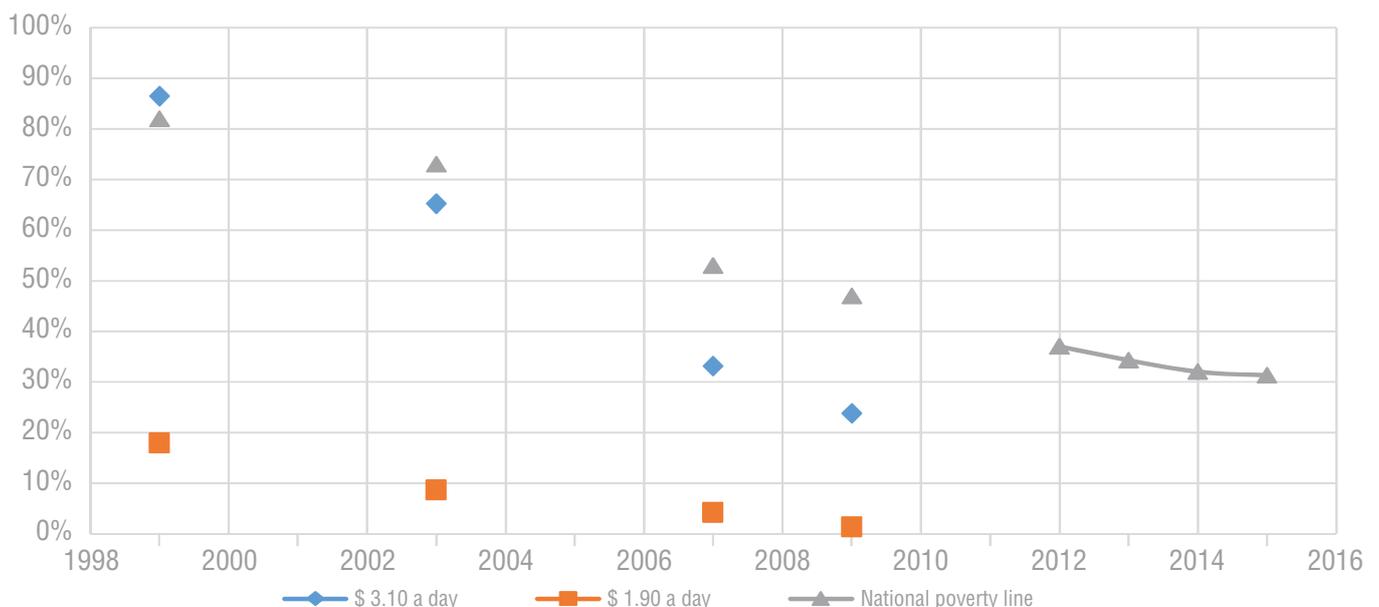
#### Poverty rates show great geographical and seasonal variation.

According to the TajStat's estimations for 2015, the risk of living in poverty is considerably lower in Dushanbe and Sughd than in the rest of the country. Poverty rates and the depth of poverty are lowest in these administrative regions. Whereas the poverty rate in Dushanbe stands at 20.4 percent, the regions of Khatlon, the DRS, and the GBAO all register poverty headcounts above 35 percent. The capital is the economic centre

of the country; it offers better employment opportunities and higher average salaries than in the rest of the country (ADB, 2016a). Sughd, situated in the northwest, has thriving agriculture and industry, with one-third of the country's cultivable land. It also benefits from bordering Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan in the Fergana valley. Poverty is predominately a rural phenomenon. According to information provided by TajStat, not only is the poverty rate in rural areas 13 percentage points higher compared to urban areas; 76 percent of the poor are living in rural areas.

In addition to geographical variation, there is substantial seasonal fluctuation in poverty rates within a year. Poverty rates typically drop drastically by the third quarter and continuously increase until they reach their annual high in the second quarter (Seitz and Rajabov, 2016). The differences between the lowest and highest rates within a year – in regards to poverty and extreme poverty – have been approximately two-fold between 2013 and 2015 (Seitz and Rajabov, 2016). However, the national headcount shows a constant decrease over time, with annual peaks and annual lows consistently dropping.

FIGURE 14. POVERTY RATES AT INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL POVERTY LINES



Source: Seitz and Rajabov (2016)

6 The national poverty lines were established using a cost of basic needs approach, and set at TJS 158.71 per person per month in 2014. A summary of the methodology of poverty measurement is included in Annex.

TABLE 4. POVERTY RATES AND GAPS BY REGION AND URBAN/RURAL RESIDENCE, 2015

Region	% of Total Poor	Poverty rate (%)	Poverty gap (%)	Extreme poverty rate (%)	Extreme poverty gap (%)
Dushanbe	7.1	20.4	4.6	9.1	1.8
GBAO	10.3	39.4	9.9	19.6	4.2
DRS	27.7	37.3	9.5	20.6	3.9
Sughd	18.4	22.3	4.8	9.4	1.7
Khatlon	36.5	35.8	8.1	16.8	2.8
Rural	75.8	35.2	8.4	17.5	3.2
Urban	24.2	23.2	5.1	10.2	1.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>31.3</b>	<b>7.3</b>	<b>15.2</b>	<b>2.8</b>

Source: TajStat (2017<sup>1</sup>)

<sup>1</sup> The information on poverty gaps was shared by the World Bank in Tajikistan but originates from TajStat as well.

The seasonal fluctuation of poverty rates pertains less in Dushanbe than in the rest of the country. The rural population's dependence on agriculture, specifically subsistence farming explains most of the seasonal variation and mirrors the food deficits during the lean season.

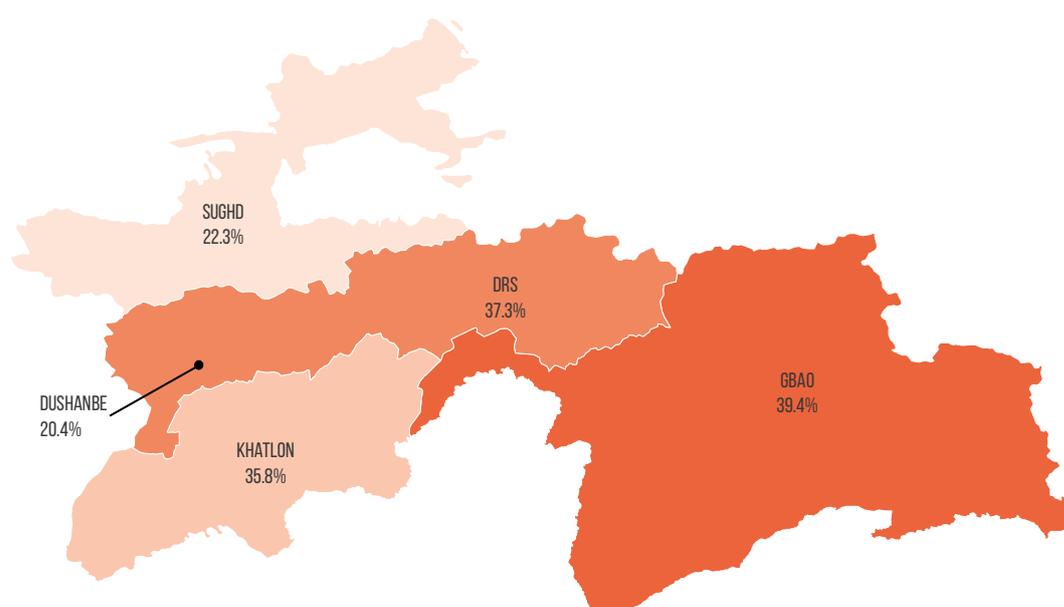
Even though poverty rates in Sughd region fluctuate similar to GBAO, Khatlon and the DRS, the average poverty rate is close to that of Dushanbe.

**Given that Tajikistan is the world's most remittance dependent economy (WFP 2016b), seasonality in migrant workers' employment may also contribute to fluctuating poverty rates.** Analysing a household panel survey, Danzer et al (2013) found that the poorest households finance a substantial share of their consumption through remittances: 50 percent and 80 percent for urban and rural households. This suggests that rural households are also more vulnerable to

developments in labour migration, the host countries' economies and thus remittance inflows.

The IMF identifies remittances inflows as a main channel of transmission of the Russian economic crisis to Central Asian countries. Most Central Asian labour migrants are employed in Russia's non-tradable sector, which causes remittance inflows to be highly correlated with developments in this sector (IMF, 2015).

## POVERTY RATE BY REGION

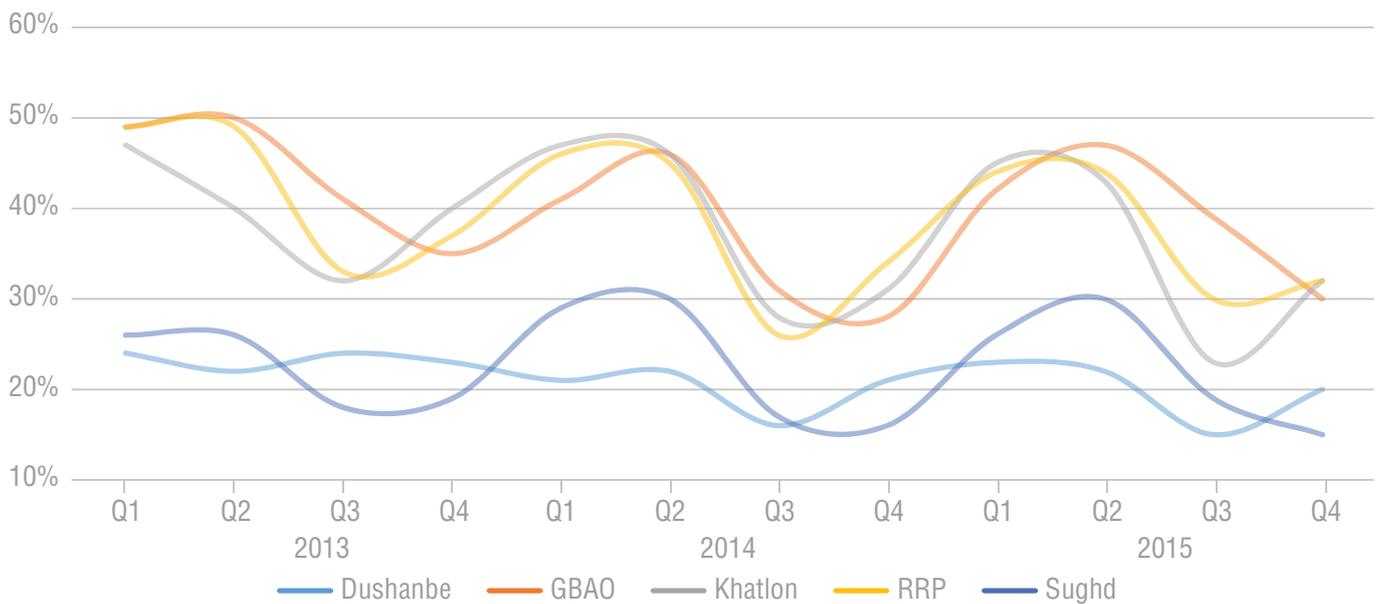


The non-tradable sector, in turn, is highly volatile (to oil prices in particular), and comprises a high number of flexible labour market arrangements (IMF, 2015). The spill-over effect is exacerbated by returning labour migrants who create pressures on labour markets by increasing unemployment, putting downward pressures on wage levels and increasing the need for social assistance (IMF, 2015:22)."

Figure 16 shows the seasonal fluctuations in poverty headcounts and in real per capita incomes from remittances. The quarterly trends in remittance income show a cyclical opposite to that of poverty rates: as cash inflows rise, poverty rates fall. This gives further support to the explanatory power of changes in cash inflows behind seasonal poverty fluctuation. Although remittances provide an informal safety net

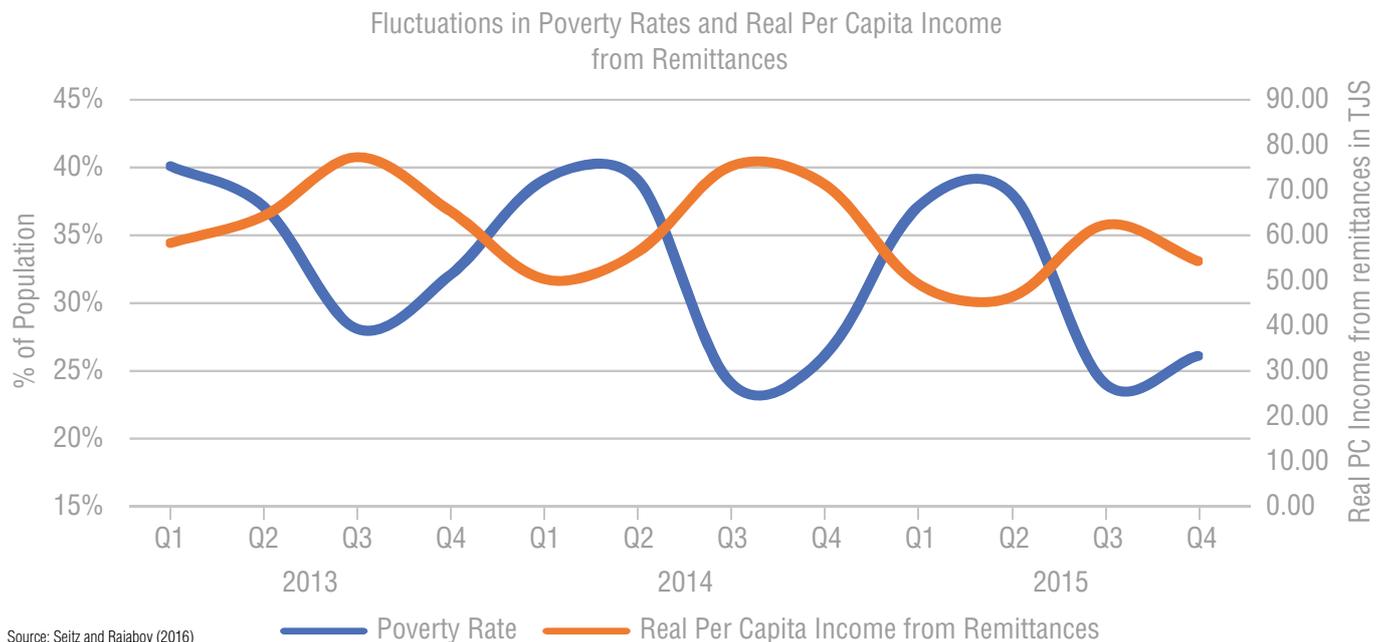
for households by raising their incomes, dependence on them increases families' vulnerability to external shocks. The aggregate share of poor households that receive such transfers is substantially higher than the share of non-poor households. In the last quarter of 2015, approximately 49 percent of poor and 37 percent of non-poor households were remittance recipients (Seitz and Rajabov, 2016).

FIGURE 15. QUARTERLY FLUCTUATIONS OF POVERTY RATES BY REGION



Source: Seitz and Rajabov (2016)

FIGURE 16. SEASONAL FLUCTUATIONS IN POVERTY RATES AND REMITTANCE INFLOWS



Source: Seitz and Rajabov (2016)

According to Seitz and Rajabov (2016), poor households on average are larger, have more children and thus higher youth dependency ratios. Poor households are less likely to have secondary or tertiary educated members than the non-poor.<sup>7</sup>

**Despite de jure gender equality, discriminatory social norms create obstacles for women in practising their rights and accessing the labour market** (WFP, 2016b). Gender disparities are also reflected in poverty rates, with women having a higher risk of poverty than men (World Bank, 2014). In its 2017 country briefing, the WFP finds gender to be related to food insecurity: women-headed households have a higher rate of food insecurity, and lower shock resilience (WFP, 2017).

Single women and women-headed households are among the groups most vulnerable to poverty, a consequence of several social and economic developments that have occurred since the collapse of the Soviet Union (World Bank, 2014).

First, the transition meant the end of the comprehensive social safety nets for motherhood, including the protection for working mothers and child care support programmes.

Second, the devastating civil war of the early 1990s left approximately 20,000 women as widows, and caused the number of women-headed households to rise significantly (World Bank, 2014).

Third, labour migration developed as a predominantly male phenomenon. With husbands migrating, women are left with



all duties of providing for a household. In many cases, migrant workers establish new families abroad, abandoning their original households. The IOM calls this group the “abandoned wives of migrant workers” and estimates that one third of the wives of Tajik labour migrants are affected by this phenomenon (IOM, 2009).

**After the collapse of the Soviet Union, a re-emergence of traditional gender roles has been observed.** This is reflected, for example, in the lower labour force participation of females (59 percent)

compared to males (77 percent) observed in 2013 (Khitariashvili, 2016).

As a result, many women work in the informal sector or in roles that are not traditionally viewed as employment, such as unpaid labour on family plots. According to the DHS 2012, only 53 percent of employed women work for a wage (cash), 7.6 percent for in-kind earnings and 19 percent for no earnings at all (Tajstat, MoH and ICF International, 2013). In agriculture, the harsh conditions of women are even more salient: 59 percent do not receive any kind

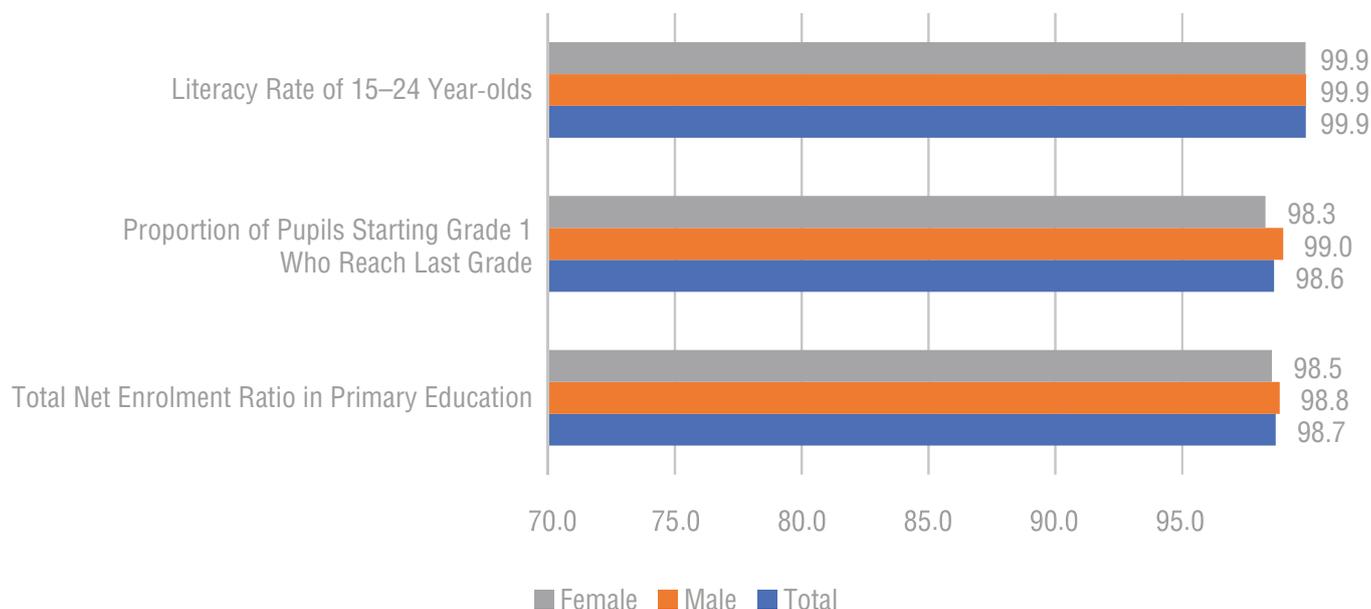
TABLE 5. MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY INDEX

MPI	Headcount (%)	Average Intensity Across the Poor (%)	Percentage of Population:		
			Vulnerable to Poverty (%)	In Severe Poverty (%)	Destitute (%)
0.054	13.2	40.8	20.8	2.5	2.4

Source: Alkire and Robles (2016)

7 Unfortunately, poverty data disaggregated by age, gender and other individual and household characteristics are not available.

FIGURE 17. EDUCATION INDICATORS BY GENDER



Source: ADB (2016b)

of earnings. Of all employed women, 37 percent were employed by family members. A similar finding was made by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 2013, which estimated a substantial difference in employment composition between men and women. Whereas 12.5 percent of working men were classified as “contributing family worker”, the corresponding rate for women was almost 50 percent higher: 17 percent (Khitarishvili, 2016). According to a 2016 study, “industrial and occupational segregation by gender is a typical feature of labour markets and Central Asian countries are no exception” (Khitarishvili, 2016:18). Women’s employment is concentrated in sectors such as education and healthcare (Khitarishvili, 2016). Vertical segregation by gender is also prevalent in the region, with women being underrepresented in the decision-making positions – managers, senior officials and legislators (Khitarishvili, 2016).

**The World Economic Forum’s 2015 Global Gender Gap Index ranks Tajikistan at 95 out of 145 countries in gender equality.** Although the health and the education domains are characterized by high levels of gender equity, women are disadvantaged in the economic and the

political domains. The score of women’s political empowerment stands at 0.104 on a scale of 0 to 1, where 0 means complete inequality and 1 complete equality. The low political empowerment of women is demonstrated by the low share of seats (17 percent in 2014) held by women in the parliament (Khitarishvili, 2016). In the dimension of economic participation and opportunity, the country scores 0.709. This score needs to be interpreted with caution, however, because it disregards women’s informal and unpaid work.

The lack of sufficient sex- and age-disaggregated data (SADD) makes it difficult to estimate the extent to which gender disparities exist. The available evidence implies that women in Tajikistan are disadvantaged in many aspects of life and are more affected by food insecurity, malnutrition and poverty than men. For working towards equity, an essential first step would be the collection of adequate data disaggregated by gender.

**Besides monetary poverty indices, the consideration of non-monetary and multidimensional indicators can help better understand the nature of deprivations the Tajik population**

**experiences.** Lack of access to education, health, living conditions and services can be causes and consequences of poverty – and, thus, food insecurity.

They contribute to people’s well-being, their ability to fulfil their potential and lead a life they value. Deprivations in any of these dimensions can directly influence the utilization dimension of food security. Education is essential for the dissemination of information about adequate nutrition. Good health results from and determines the physical ability to utilize food. Living conditions, such as clean water, improved sanitation and cooking fuel affect a household’s ability to prepare food that is safe and nutritious.

**The Multidimensional Poverty Index includes the three dimensions of education, health and living standards.**

In 2016, an estimated 13.2 percent of the total population is multidimensional poor<sup>8</sup>, and the average intensity among the poor is 40.8 percent<sup>9</sup>. The MPI for Tajikistan, which is calculated as a function of the poverty headcount and the intensity of deprivations, is 0.054 and is similar to countries such as Indonesia, the Philippines and Morocco (Alkire and Robles, 2016).

8 Deprived in at least 33.33% of all indicators.

9 Average intensity of the poor is the average proportion of indicators in which the poor are deprived.

TABLE 6. MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY INDICES BY REGION

Region	MPI (2012)	Incidence (2012)	Intensity (2012)	Monetary poverty (2014)
Urban	0.020	5.5%	36.3%	23.5%
Rural	0.065	15.6%	41.3%	36.1%
Dushanbe	0.021	6.1%	34.5%	19.9%
Sughd	0.033	8.1%	41.2%	23.1%
DRS	0.045	11.4%	39.2%	37.8%
GBAO	0.048	12.1%	40.0%	37.3%
Khatlon	0.086	20.5%	41.7%	37.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>0.054</b>	<b>13.2%</b>	<b>40.8%</b>	<b>32.0%</b>

Source: Alkire and Robles (2016)

**The difference between monetary poverty rates at the national poverty line and the percent of multidimensional poor people is 31.3 percent and 13.2 percent.** (Alkire and Robles, 2016). This suggests that even though almost one third of Tajiks does not have sufficient income, this does not necessarily mean that they are deprived in education, health or living standards.

Tajikistan fares relatively well in the education dimension, where deprivations contribute the least to the overall index. This is most probably driven by the fact that primary school education is almost universal in the country, with less than 1 percent of the population deprived in the “years of schooling” indicator (OPHI, 2016) and confirmed by data from the ADB (ADB, 2016b).

Literacy rate for youth (15–24 years old) stands at nearly 100 percent for both genders (ADB, 2016b). Primary school enrolment and the proportion of pupils who reach the last grade are very close for boys and girls, with the figure for girls being less than 1 percent lower than for boys (ADB, 2016b).

Despite the near-universal literacy rate and primary school enrolment, access to higher levels of education is highly unequal, geographically and between genders (ADB, 2016a). GBAO, for example, has only a single secondary school, while Dushanbe city has nine. Tertiary education enrolment is still low, at 31 percent. Higher education institutions are concentrated in Dushanbe (ADB, 2016a).

The DRS have no higher education institutions. Furthermore, the gap between women and men gets wider at the secondary and tertiary level. Whereas the ratio of girls to boys is 1.0 at the primary school level, it is 0.90 at the secondary and only 0.67 at the tertiary level (ADB, 2016b).

**Keeping girls in education after basic schooling remains a challenge: in 2007, female attendance rate was found to be as low as 73 percent by the age of 15** (Langbehn, 2010). In 2005, an estimated 12 percent of children aged 7-14 are involved in child labour (UNESCO Institute for Statistics and UNICEF, 2015).

According to a study on girls’ absenteeism, an overwhelming majority of girls mentioned working at home or in the fields as a reason for being absent or attending irregularly (Langbehn, 2010). Approximately 90 percent of the interviewed girls cited reasons directly related to poverty, such as not having adequate clothing or school supplies (Langbehn, 2014).

According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics and UNICEF (2015), parents’ concerns for the safety of their daughters explain non-attendance for 15 percent of out-of-school girls.

Health figures paint a rather grim picture. Overall, infant mortality has been decreasing in the last decades. But the most recent figures from 2015 show large variation across regions, from 22 deaths per 1,000 infants in Dushanbe to a mortality of 48 in Khatlon region (Alkire and Robles, 2016). Tajikistan still has the highest rates of infant mortality and under-five mortality in

the region with 38.5 and 44.8 (Alkire and Robles, 2016). Despite Tajikistan’s overall progress in health, it did not reach the health-related Millennium Development Goals.

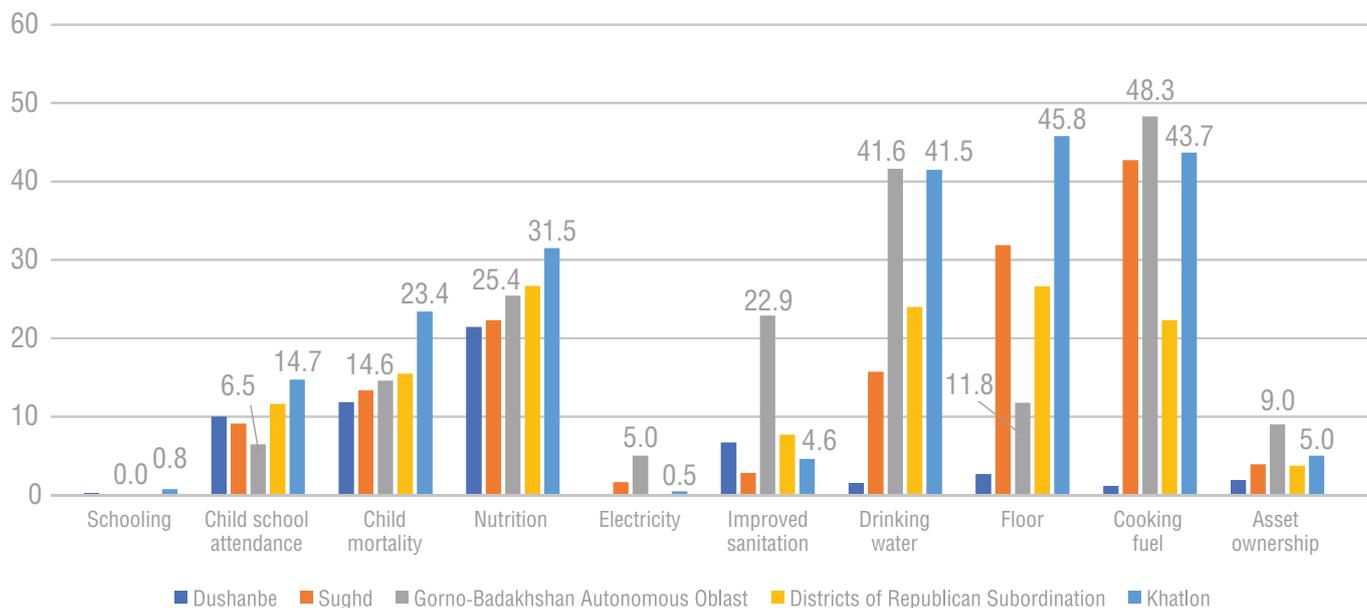
Living standards also need improvement, as is shown by the 7 percent of population that suffers from the lack of improved drinking water, quality housing material and cooking fuel (Alkire and Robles, 2016). Urban-rural disparities can be observed in this dimension as well.

**Although sanitation has improved widely in the country (except for households in GBAO), many rural households lack access to clean water.** More than 90 percent of the urban population has access to an improved source of drinking water, but this figure in 2012 was only 71 percent for rural areas. (Alkire and Robles, 2016) Nevertheless, there is rapid improvement, since the corresponding number was only 47 percent in 2000 (Alkire and Robles, 2016).

The patterns of geographical inequality found in monetary poverty can also be observed in the MPI figures. Table 6 gives an overview of the MPI, the poverty headcount and the average intensity of deprivations in different regions, and compares it with monetary poverty rates.

Rural populations are three times more likely to be multidimensionally deprived than urban residents. Moreover, inhabitants of rural Tajikistan are on average five percentage points more intensely deprived than urban households (Alkire and Robles, 2016).

FIGURE 18. UNCENSORED HEADCOUNT RATIO OF MPI INDICATORS BY REGION



Source: Alkire and Robles (2016)

Dushanbe remains the least vulnerable to poverty, not just by monetary standards but also in the MPI. The capital city has a score of 0.021, the lowest in the country. When it comes to the most deprived region, however, the MPI tells a different story than monetary poverty headcounts.

Multidimensional and monetary poverty indices seem to be inconsistent with one another. Khatlon region, which has similar monetary poverty rates to DRS and GBAO, has a significantly higher MPI, gained as a function of the highest (20.5 percent) incidence and highest (41.7 percent) average intensity of deprivation (Alkire and Robles, 2016).

Figure 18 shows that the population in Khatlon is relatively more deprived in all dimensions, particularly health and education.

Figure 18 also shows the uncensored headcount ratios of each indicator by region. The nature of poverty seems to vary across regions.

Deprivations in living standards indicators are the most common in Sughd, Gorno-Badakhshan and Khatlon, while health indicators are the driving force behind multidimensional poverty in the DRS and in Dushanbe.

### 3.3 SUMMARY

**Food insecurity experienced by the Tajik population is predominantly a result of their low purchasing power, and hence, a consequence of the still widespread poverty.** Food insecurity and poverty are prevalent in the entire country, but certain regions and population groups are more affected than others.

Food security and poverty headcounts follow a seasonal pattern. Looking at geographical disparities reveals that rural populations suffer from a higher risk of poverty than urban populations. The DRS, Khatlon Region and GBAO Region register higher poverty rates than the rest of the country.

The risk of poverty is higher among larger households. Women and female-headed households are poorer than men and male-headed households. Utilization indicators show substantial lags in food security among children.

In 2015, more than one in four children under 5 was affected by stunting, every eighth child was underweight and every tenth was affected by wasting. It follows from these findings that the country's chronic food insecurity can only be eased

if the underlying cause – poverty – is tackled. Comprehensive social protection systems can be an adequate answer to the problems faced by the Tajik population.

**Social protection measures can help people break the vicious cycle of hunger and poverty.** Besides poverty, behavioural factors also play a role in malnutrition, manifesting in conditions such as micro-nutrient deficiency or overweight and obesity. Introducing nutrition-specific or nutrition-sensitive programmes can further enhance positive impacts on food security, which will be discussed in more detail.





# 4. SOCIAL PROTECTION

## MESSAGES:

**Tajikistan has a comprehensive social protection system that includes elements of social insurance, social assistance and social services.**

**Remittances, as a form of informal protection, also play an important role.**

**The country is reforming its social assistance system.**

**The current cash compensations will be replaced by the TSA programme beginning in 2018.**

**Social protection has limited impact on food security because of low coverage and adequacy of the social assistance system.**

**The TSA is expected to improve the situation.**

**As outlined in previous chapters, the Republic of Tajikistan faces considerable challenges in poverty and food security.** These are addressed by several social protection initiatives that include social assistance, social insurance and social services.

Figure 19 shows which initiatives are in place and how they can be categorised. In 2012, expenditures on social protection of the Republic of Tajikistan comprised approximately 4 percent of GDP (Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, 2016) of which the largest share (80 percent) was spent on pension programmes.

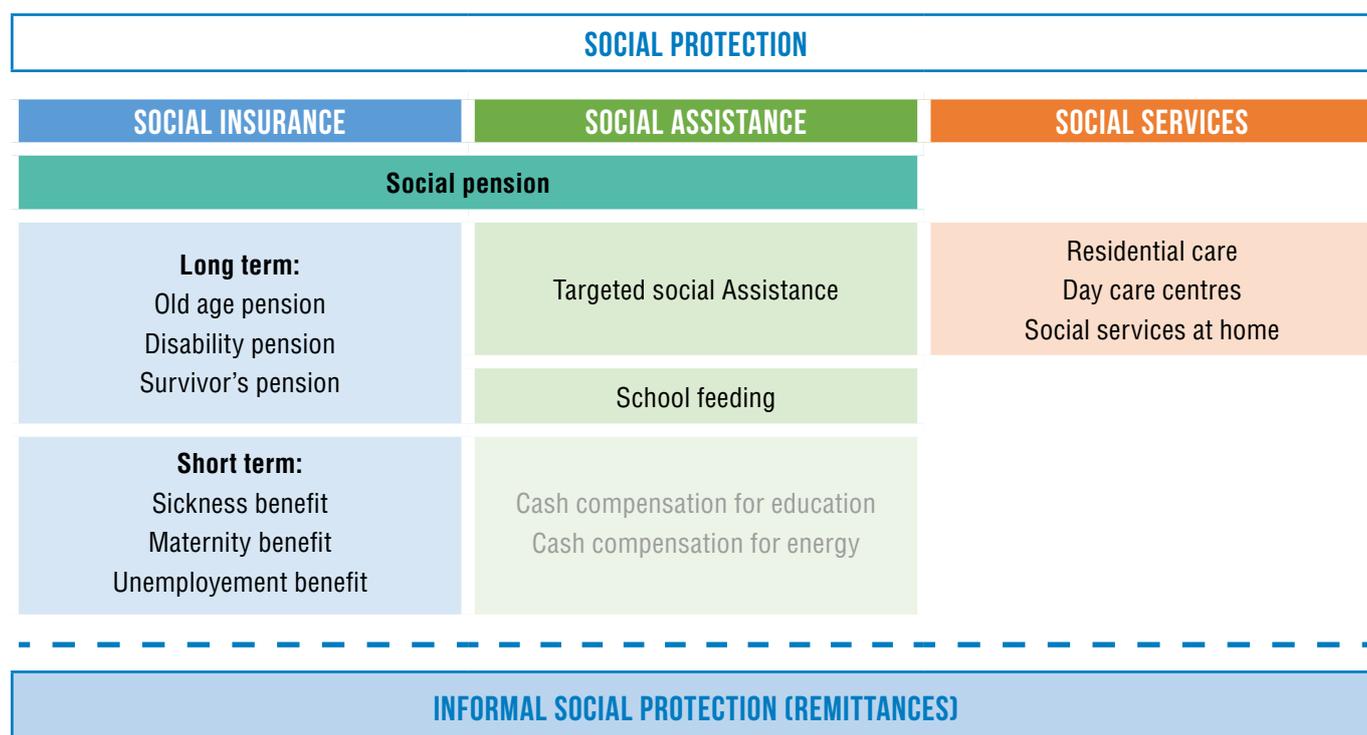
## 4.1 PROGRAMMES OVERVIEW

### 4.1.1 SOCIAL INSURANCE

Social insurance programmes in Tajikistan mainly entail contributory pensions for the elderly, for the disabled and for survivors and thus focus on income security for those no longer able to work.

Other contributory programmes address immediate and temporary types of risk, such as sickness, maternity and unemployment. Further, non-contributory social pensions support the elderly and persons with disabilities who have not accumulated pension entitlements. The latter therefore could be classified as social assistance. Social pensions, which fall under the responsibility of the Agency for Social Insurance and Pensions (ASIP), will be discussed in this section.

FIGURE 19. SOCIAL PROTECTION FRAMEWORK TAJIKISTAN



Source: author's elaboration

## PENSIONS

The objective of insurance pensions is to provide continuous income support to the elderly when they reach retirement age, conditional on a sufficient period of employment in the formal sector and contributions to the scheme made in the past<sup>10</sup>.

Besides age, certain criteria such as disability and the loss of a breadwinner also qualify households for an insurance pension. Pensions comprise the majority of overall expenditures on social protection in Tajikistan. There are three main groups of pension beneficiaries: retired workers, people with disabilities and households that lost the breadwinner.

- An old age pension is available to men from the age of 63 and to women who are 58 or older. A minimum insurance period applies for full entitlement and it is a timeframe of 300 months of contribution for men and 240

months for women. A partial entitlement is granted to those who do not reach the minimum period but have contributed for at least 60 months. The same retirement ages apply to men and women.

- Persons with a disability are eligible for a pension once they have accumulated a contributory period of at least 60 months. The benefit amount depends on the degree of disability. The eligibility period covers the entire timeframe during which the recipient is not able to work because of the disability.
- If a household's breadwinner dies and household members suffer from a disability, they are entitled to the pension on behalf of the breadwinner if a contributory period of 60 months or more has been reached. The entitlement lasts as long as the survivors of the deceased are unable to work.

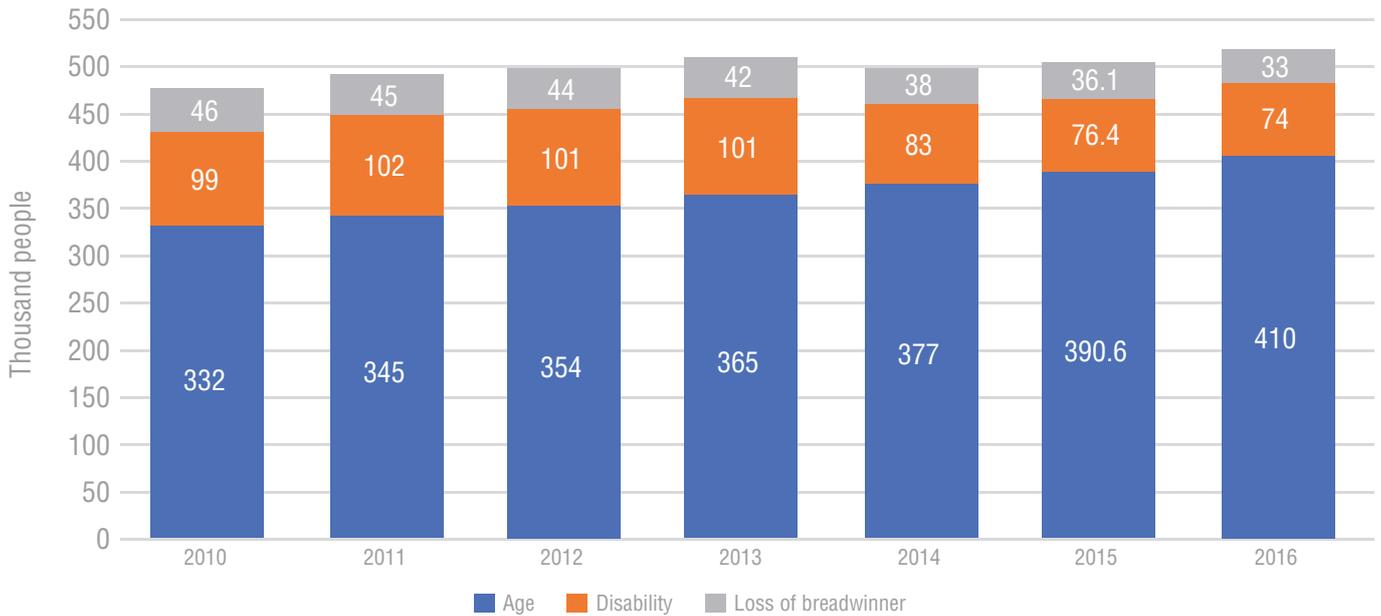
The total number of pension beneficiaries has remained relatively stable since 2010. However, the number of old age pensioners increased by approximately 20 percent while the number of recipients of a disability pension decreased by about a quarter, as shown in Figure 20. Pension entitlements consist of a social insurance part and a notional defined contribution part. The latter was introduced in 2013 and applies to all employed workers.

### Average pension amounts increased between 2010 and 2016 (Figure 21).

In 2016, the minimum (or basic) pension was TJS 156. Until the end of 2016, there was a limit to the maximum pension that could be received (TJS 748). This limit was abolished 1 January 2017. According to ADB (2013), the electronic payment system for pension benefits in Tajikistan is one of the first in Central Asia. It entails specific bank accounts that can be accessed for cash withdrawal and payments with an ATM card and its objective is to make payment processes more efficient and transparent (ADB, 2013).

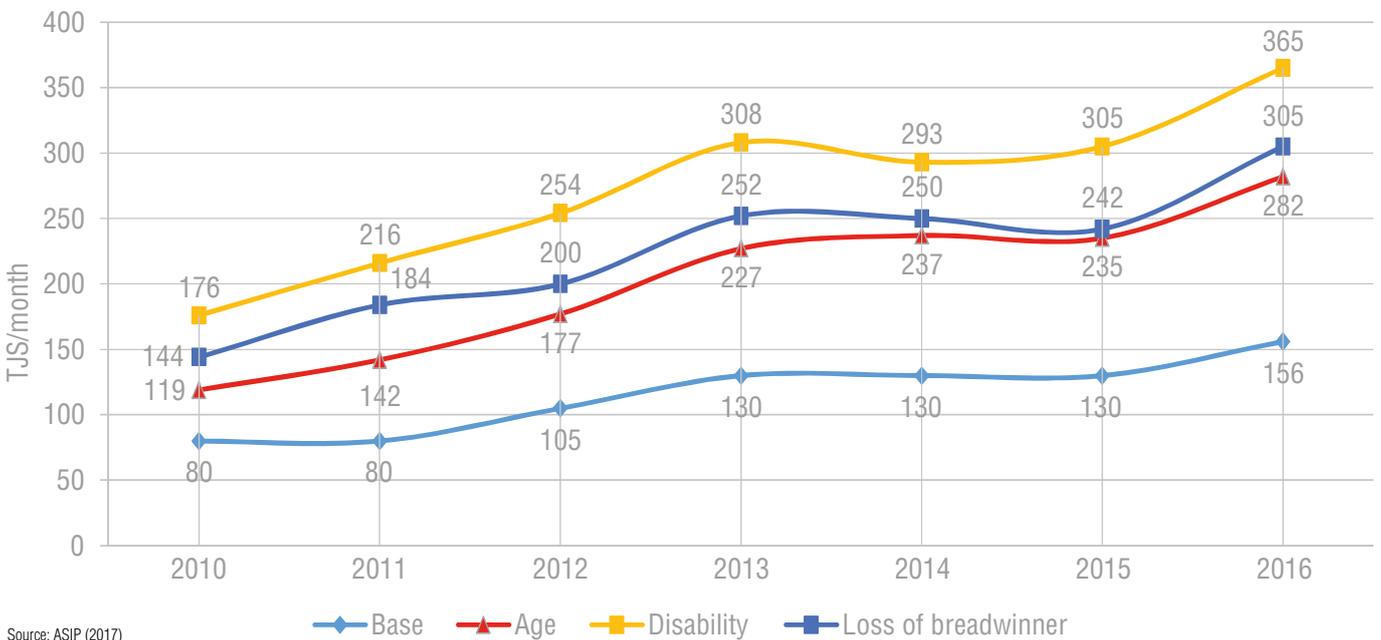
<sup>10</sup> Pensions and social insurance benefits are regulated in Law No. 513 from 16 December 1997 on State Social Insurance.

FIGURE 20. NUMBER OF PENSION BENEFICIARIES, 2010–2016



Source: ASIP (2017)

FIGURE 21. GROWTH DYNAMICS OF THE PENSION, 2010–2016



Source: ASIP (2017)

TEMPORARY SICKNESS ALLOWANCE

**The temporary sickness allowance supports individuals who are temporarily sick or disabled.** Also eligible are individuals taking care of a sick family member, those affected by tuberculosis or an occupational disease or those assigned prosthetics.

Applicants are eligible if their disability occurred during or on their way to work, whereas those who became disabled in their private time do not have access to the benefit during the first week of absence from work.

The benefit is contributory and therefore requires beneficiaries to be insured

by the state social insurance system. The eligibility period of this benefit is limited to four consecutive months or twelve consecutive months in the case of tuberculosis.

It is a monthly transfer and the size depends on salary and the contribution timeframe.

## MATERNITY AND FAMILY ALLOWANCE

The maternity allowance enables mothers to continue receiving their full wage for a period of leave around the time of the birth of their child or the adoption of a child. Its objective is to allow women to take care of their new-born children and to prepare for or recover from pregnancy without facing financial difficulties because of their inability to work.

**The leave period can be freely distributed across weeks before and after birth.** The child's parents need to be covered by social insurance and the eligibility period depend on the delivery (standard or complicated) and on the number of children born.

In case of a normal delivery of one child, 140 calendar days of leave are granted and this increases to 156 days in case of a complicated birth. In case of twins or more children, the period is extended to 180 calendar days whereas adoptive parents are entitled to 70 days.

Along with the maternity allowance, insured families with young children are eligible for a lump-sum payment paid upon the birth of a child and a monthly child care benefit paid until the child reaches the age of 18 months.

## UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFIT

**To cover a period of financial instability caused by the loss of a job, the unemployment benefit provides a monthly cash benefit for a maximum of three months per year.**

Applicants need to officially register as being unemployed and they need to be able to show that they have worked for at least 18 months throughout the preceding three years. During the first month, beneficiaries receive 50 percent of their average wage across the previous six months. The benefit decreases to 40 percent in the second and to 30 percent in the third month.

### 4.1.2 SOCIAL PENSION AND FUNERAL BENEFIT

Social pensions provide income security for the elderly and those who are unable to work, or have an insufficient contribution history to qualify for an insurance-based pension. The same three groups as in the insurance pensions are eligible. The retirement age also is identical (men: 63, women: 58). The number of social pension recipients increased by approximately one third between 2010 and 2016 (Figure 22). The size of the social pension varies for different groups. The regular old-age social pension is 60 percent of the basic

pension. In 2016, the average social pension was TJS 144 per month. The number of social pension recipients has been growing between 2010 and 2016, from 85,000 to 116,000 beneficiaries.

Average social pension amounts vary substantially among beneficiary groups, but they have been growing for all groups between 2010 and 2016. The dynamics of transfer amounts are depicted on Figure 23 below.

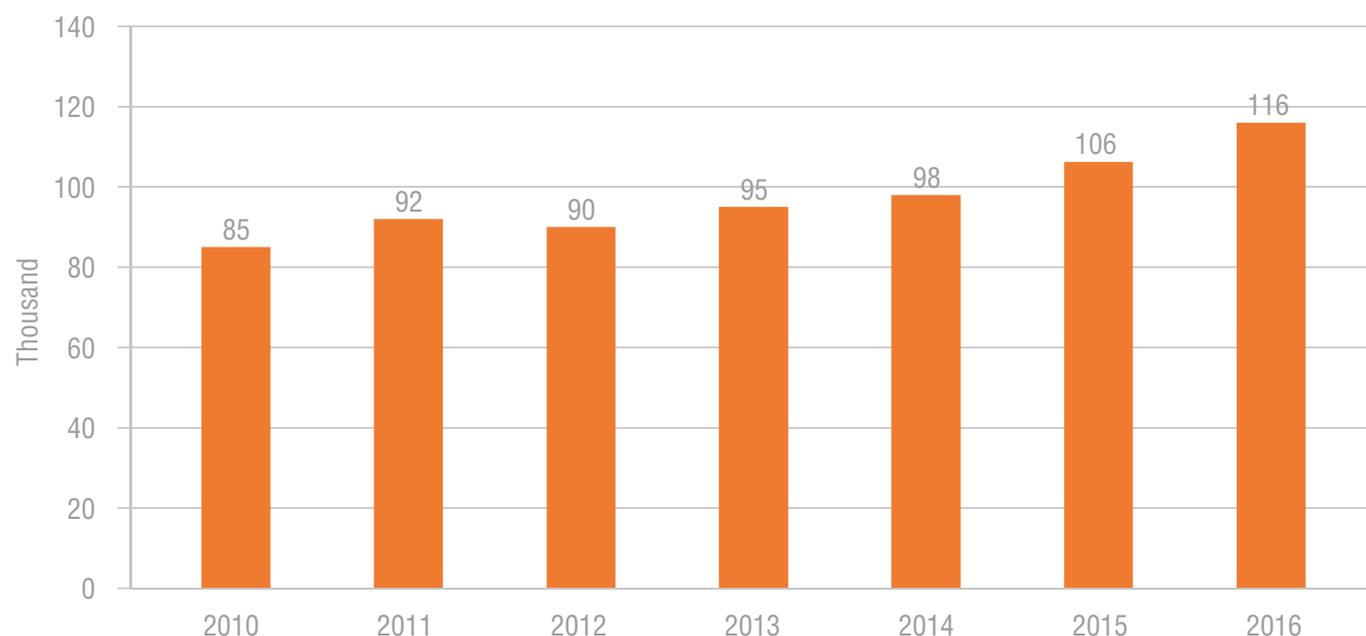
## FUNERAL BENEFIT

Besides the personal and long-term difficulties arising from the death of a family member, immediate costs for funeral arrangements can also be problematic for low-income families. Therefore, these families are supported with a lump sum funeral benefit TJS 1000 (January 2017).

### 4.1.3 SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

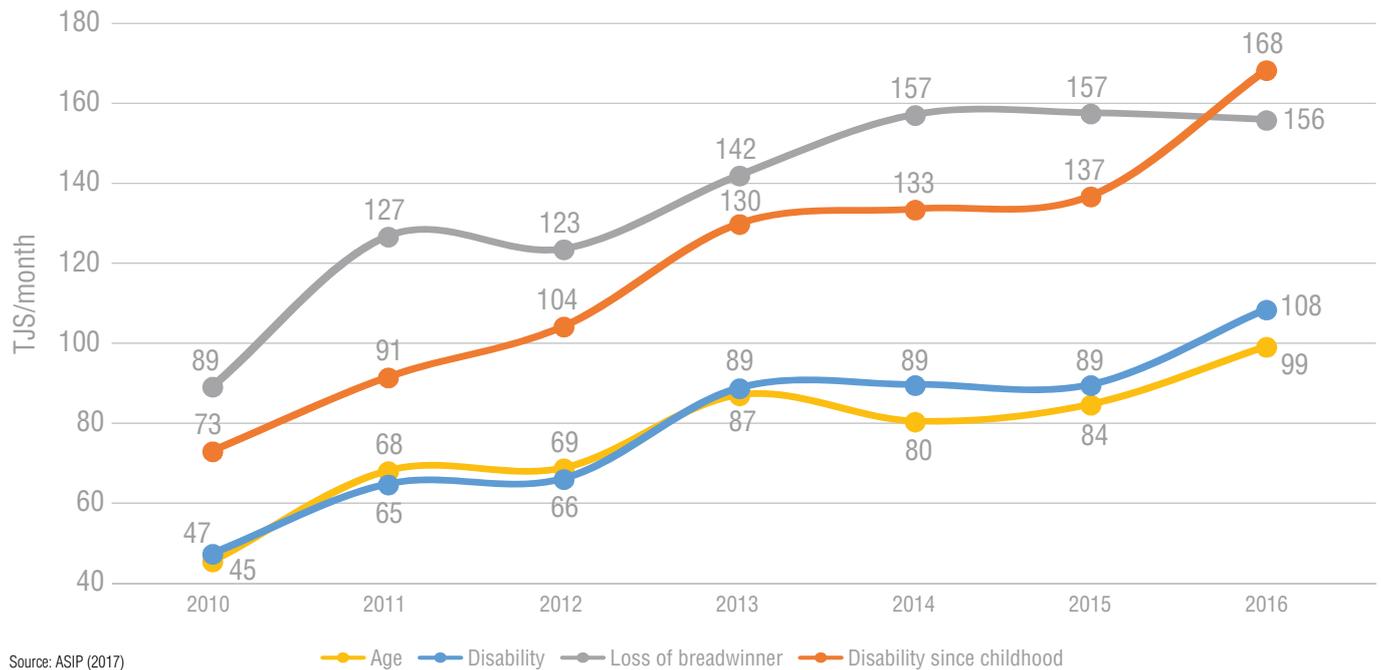
Social assistance in Tajikistan is currently in transition. It has been based on two main programmes, a conditional cash transfer for children attending school and an electricity compensation benefit. Starting from January 2018, the TSA programme is expected to fully replace the two previous transfer

FIGURE 22. NUMBER OF SOCIAL PENSION RECIPIENTS, 2010–2016.



Source: ASIP (2017)

FIGURE 23. DYNAMICS OF MONTHLY SOCIAL PENSION, 2010–2016



Source: ASIP (2017)

programmes. The three programmes currently are running in parallel. The TSA has been successfully piloted since early 2011. The TSA is already implemented in 40 districts, whereas the original programmes are still in place in the remaining 28 districts. The following three sub-sections will describe the specific characteristics of each programme.

#### CASH COMPENSATION FOR EDUCATION

**In Tajikistan, the attendance in primary and lower secondary school is compulsory and free of charge** (UNICEF, 2013a). However, parents face considerable costs when sending their children to school. These include direct costs for uniforms, textbooks and food and indirect costs such as the contribution to school funds for repairs or supplies and informal payments to schools that are used to cover gaps in operational financing (OSI, 2010). The objective of the conditional cash compensation programme for education (CCP) is to promote school attendance.

Education is crucial for the development of children and it can prevent the inter-generational transmission of poverty. The

economy is expected to benefit from an educated workforce in the long run. The CCP was introduced in cooperation with the World Bank in late 2001 to address the shortcomings of the previous social assistance scheme and, at the same time, to promote school attendance in primary and basic education.

The CCP is targeted at the neediest 15 percent of school children. All students in grade 1–9 with a family income below 50 percent of the minimum wage are in principle eligible.

**However, given that the share of low-income families exceeds the available resources, a local committee identifies those 15 percent of students most in need.** Children not attending school because of the financial burden also belong to the target group. It is an individual benefit assigned per student but is limited to a maximum of three students per household. The annual benefit is TJS 40, paid in two instalments.

The list of students entitled to the benefit is reviewed every six months. However, the annual benefit amount of TJS 40 covers only approximately 30 percent of the annual

costs incurred when sending a child to school.<sup>11</sup> As stated by the World Bank (2014), the benefit is too low to incentivize parents to send their children to school.

#### CASH COMPENSATION FOR ENERGY

**Whereas universal electricity coverage is rather common in the region, Tajikistan is an exception as 6 percent of households do not have access to electricity.** Moreover, those with access to the grid cannot rely on it 24 hours a day (UNDP, 2011). The limited supply of energy is only one problem, though. The financial burden of paying energy bills is substantial, particularly considering recent subsidy cuts and price increases.

The high energy costs force poor and vulnerable households to spend a relatively larger share of their resources on electricity, which in turn contributes to social exclusion (UNDP, 2011). The cash compensation for energy was introduced with the objective to guarantee a minimum level of energy consumption and reduce the risk of electricity costs pushing already vulnerable households into poverty.

11 In 2002, at the introduction of the CCP, the annual benefit was TJS 24.

The energy compensation benefit was introduced in 2004 to relieve poor and vulnerable families of a part of the financial burden they face when paying for electricity.

Households connected to the electricity network and with average per capita income below 50 percent of the minimum wage are eligible<sup>12</sup> (World Bank, 2011; ADB, 2012). Certain groups have priority for receiving the compensation: single elderly households, people with disability living alone, families with disabled children that have lost the breadwinner, families whose household head is no longer able to work and households with at least two members with a disability (ADB, 2012).

Households need to apply for this benefit by submitting several documents that confirm their identity, residency and all types of income. A special committee at the *jamoat*<sup>13</sup> decides whether a household should be recommended to receive the compensation. The final decision is made at the district level. The size of the benefit corresponds to basic norms of electricity consumption and differs for summer and winter months. The

benefit is paid every two months either in cash or in kind (direct transfer to electricity provider). Cash transfers are made through the state-owned Amonat Bank (World Bank, 2011).

**The benefit is intended to reach a maximum of 20 percent of the population in each district, that is, like the cash benefit for education, it is granted to those identified as poorest among all families in need.**

#### TARGETED SOCIAL ASSISTANCE (TSA)

The challenges and limitations<sup>14</sup> of the two social assistance programmes described above were a key factor in the decision to pilot a new social assistance scheme intended to consolidate objectives and target groups in one overarching programme while ensuring a focus on those most in need.

The TSA programme is an unconditional cash transfer where beneficiaries are identified through a proxy means test (PMT). The programme was introduced

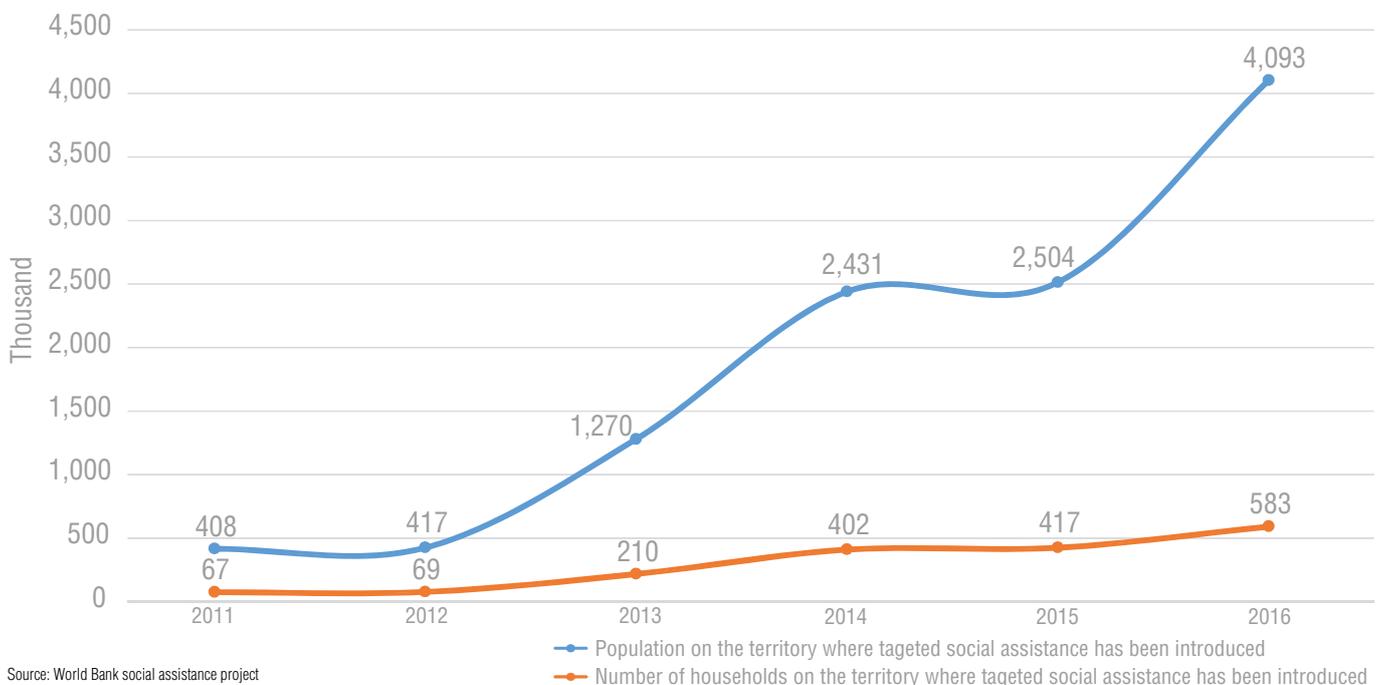
in the first two districts<sup>15</sup> in January 2011 and the Government of Tajikistan received support from the European Union EU) and the World Bank. The TSA programme is expected to fully replace the ongoing schemes by 2018. Its objective is to improve the living conditions of the most vulnerable by providing overarching support to families instead of delivering transfers for specific purposes.

A further objective is to enhance the capacity of government at all levels to achieve more efficient management and administration processes in social protection programming.

The TSA programme is managed by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection (MHSP) and is currently in place in 40 districts. It replaced the cash compensations for education and energy, which are still provided in the remaining 28 districts.

Full implementation is expected to take place by the end of 2018. In contrast to the other two programmes, the new scheme is unconditional and eligibility is determined by a proxy means-test to target the poorest

FIGURE 24. THE POPULATION AND HOUSEHOLDS LIVING IN THE TERRITORY COVERED BY THE TSA PROGRAMME.



Source: World Bank social assistance project

12 For elderly / households headed by a person with a disability: pension income < 50% of minimum wage  
 13 Lowest administrative level in Tajikistan. Can be understood as a municipality.  
 14 See section on social protection performance.  
 15 Yovon and Istravshan (World Bank, 2016)

15 percent of the population, that is, more or less all of the extreme poor (World Bank, 2015). The proxy means-test is applied to households, whereas the CCP for education assessed the poverty status of individual children. Households with a PMT score below the established threshold receive quarterly payment, amounting to TJS 400 per household per year. Even though the

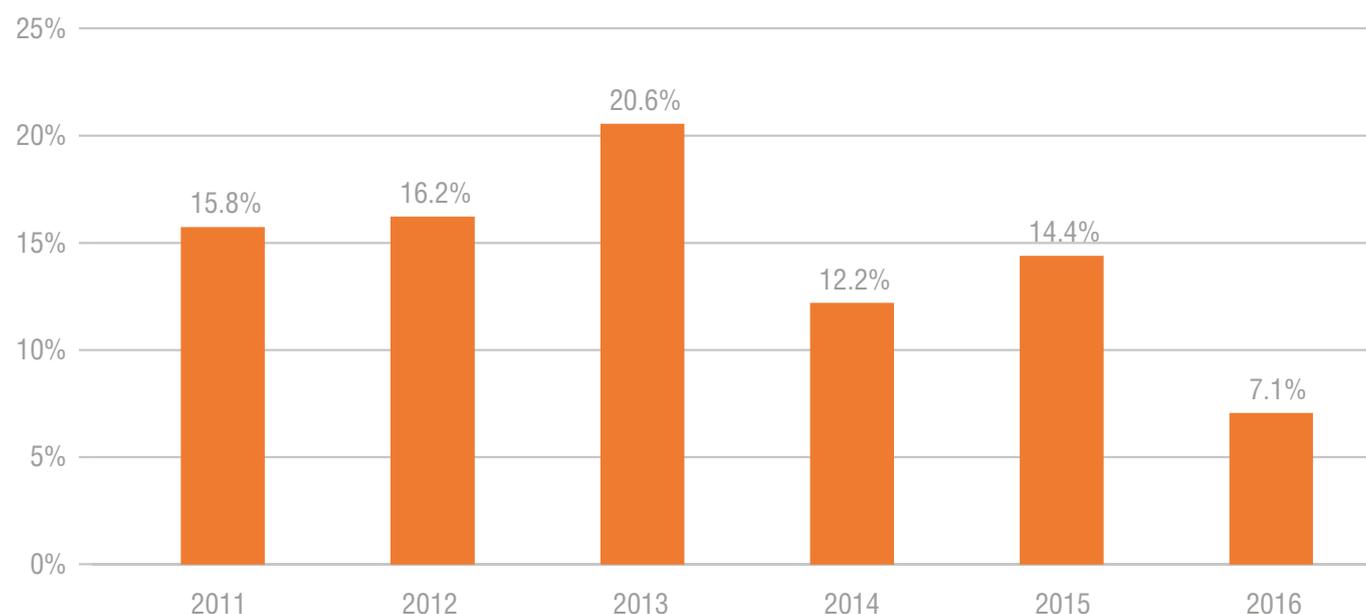
annual benefit amount is not particularly high per household, it is expected that given its predictability and transparency recipient households can use it more efficiently.

Findings from the pilot evaluation suggest that households felt that their well-being improved upon introduction of the benefit (World Bank, 2013). In female-headed

households, the number of women active in the labour force increased. The TSA also had a positive effect on school attendance. Children from recipient households were more likely to attend school (World Bank, 2014).

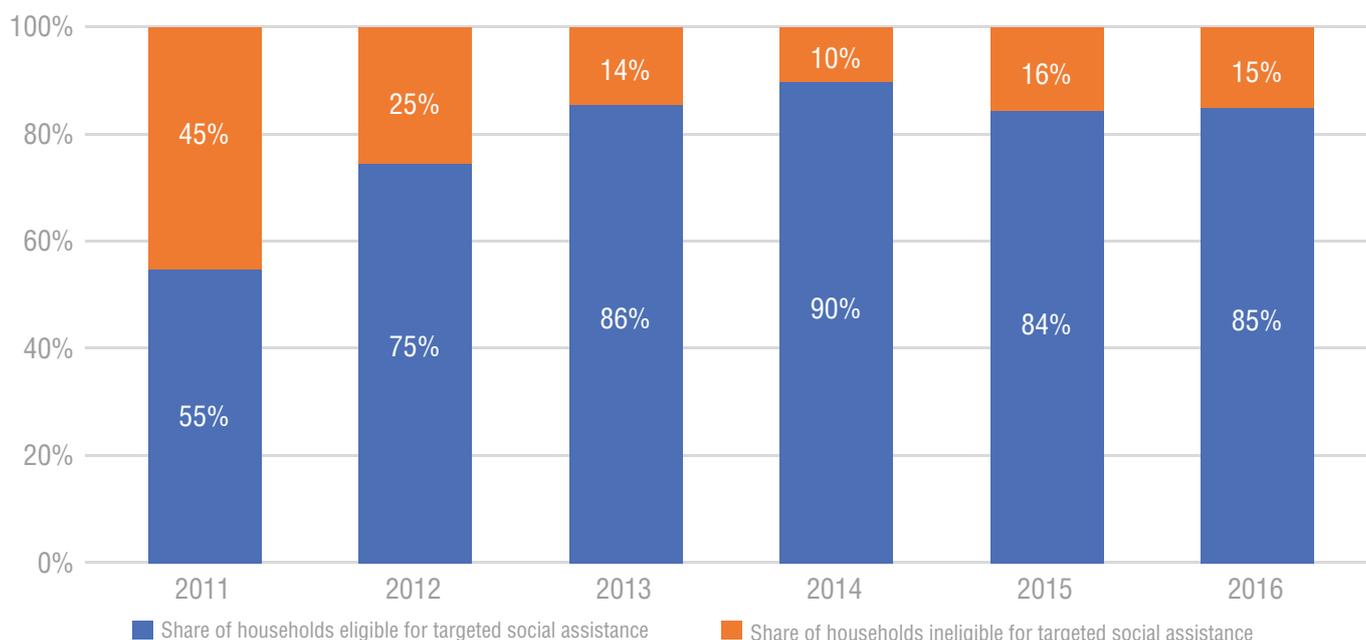
A central electronic database allows applicant data to be entered at the district

FIGURE 25. PROPORTION OF HOUSEHOLDS COVERED BY THE TSA PROGRAMMES IN DISTRICTS WITH TSA, 2011–2016



Source: World Bank social assistance project

FIGURE 26. PROPORTION OF SUCCESSFUL AND UNSUCCESSFUL APPLICATIONS FOR THE TSA BENEFIT



Source: World Bank social assistance project

level and verified at the central level, which is expected to enhance targeting accuracy (World Bank, 2015). The advanced data management also will facilitate regular monitoring and evaluation of the programme. Moreover, every household can in principle register and have the PMT applied.

Although a certain score is needed to receive TSA, the status of low-income family entitles households for other in-kind benefits: 50 percent discount on health care services and medication, a funeral benefit of TJS 1,000, eligibility to receive humanitarian assistance, 50 percent discount on tuition for students and the right to marry at the

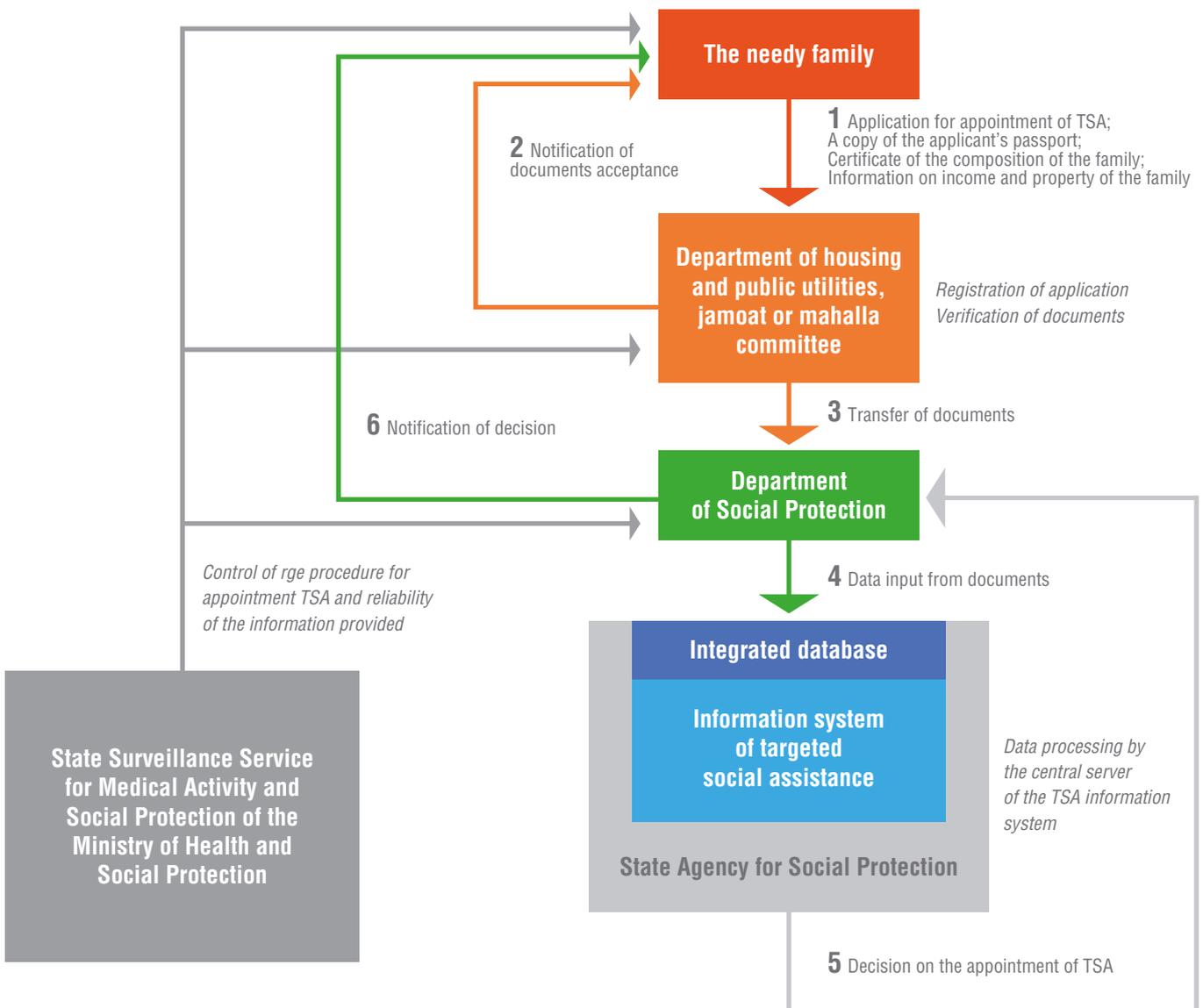
age of 17 instead of 18. After a positive evaluation of the pilot, it was decided to expand the programmes to other districts and to review the PMT formula (World Bank, 2014).

**When the TSA was first piloted in 2011, the success rate among applications was 55 percent, meaning that almost half of the applications had been denied.** With the expansion of the pilot to other districts, the number of applications increased. Over time, an increasing share of applicants has been found eligible for the transfer, with the percentage of unsuccessful applications dropping to 15 percent by 2016.

The institutional and procedural scheme of the TSA programme is summarized in Figure 27. Local level staff, such as the departments of housing and public utilities, the jamoat or mahalla committees, play a crucial role in the identification and delivery process and their capacities will probably have to increase as coverage increases.

The database and information system built for TSA is one of the most promising elements of the new scheme. It has the potential to substantially simplify administration and support monitoring and evaluation not only of TSA but also of other programmes aimed at low-income families.

FIGURE 27. APPLICATION PROCESS FOR TARGETED SOCIAL ASSISTANCE



Source: Authors' elaboration based on Government of Tajikistan (2014)

#### 4.1.4 SOCIAL SERVICES

**Several types of social services are offered in Tajikistan. Traditional institutions that were in place during the Soviet era mostly address vulnerable groups such as elderly, orphans and individuals with disabilities.** Numerous new programmes have been established that specifically target groups identified as vulnerable more recently, for example, drug users, individuals diagnosed with HIV/AIDS or victims of abuse (EU, 2013). These services are not only offered in specific institutions for day care or residential care but also at clients' homes. However, a report published by the EU and Oxford Policy Management (OPM) emphasizes that services offered at family homes are rare compared to those carried out in institutions.

The major component of social services in Tajikistan still follows those programmes that were established during the Soviet era. Yet, as emphasized by a study report on social services in Tajikistan (EU, 2012), the general understanding of social services has changed substantially, from the Soviet conceptualisation to one that is more specifically related to Tajikistan. In fact, Law No. 350 from 2008 defines social services as “a set of activities related to social support, provision of social-household, socio-medical, psychological-pedagogical, social-legal, other services and material assistance, social adaptation and rehabilitation of persons in difficult life situations”.

These difficult life situations<sup>16</sup> cause significant hardships in the daily life, and are challenging to overcome independently (EU, 2012). This law incorporates services offered at home, at day-care centres and in residential institutions.

There are different ways to identify beneficiaries and evidently no clear, quantifiable criteria can be defined in the case of social vulnerability and generally difficult life situations. It was found that some service providers tend to establish the needs of applicants through interviews and others rather rely on documents provided



by the client. Some providers claim that they refer to clearly defined schemes that do not allow for individual assessment, that is, those used in the Soviet system (EU, 2012). Other providers have developed comprehensive assessment methods using a combination of home visits, material assessments and conversations.

**Besides the traditional approach, several new target groups have been identified and several new types of services have been developed upon independence** (EU, 2012). On the one hand, traditional initiatives that were already in place during the Soviet times mostly address vulnerable groups such as elderly, orphans and individuals with disabilities.

On the other hand, new programmes specifically target groups identified as vulnerable more recently, like for instance drug users, individuals diagnosed with HIV/AIDS or victims of abuse (EU, 2012). Yet the most common form of social services remains care provided in residential institutions such as boarding schools for neurological problems, homes for disabled children, etc.

Six regional social service centres offer services while enabling clients to live in temporary accommodation units within their own district. These differ substantially from closed institutions where clients cannot maintain their own social network as they

are submitted individually and possibly far from where they used to live. At the end of 2016, these six centres provided services to 927 clients, all funded by local budgets (Yusufzoda, 2017). Day-care centres for the elderly and people with disabilities also provide social, legal and psychological services and physical therapy. Twenty-two providers, including NGOs, offer services in 30 social service centres (Yusufzoda, 2017).

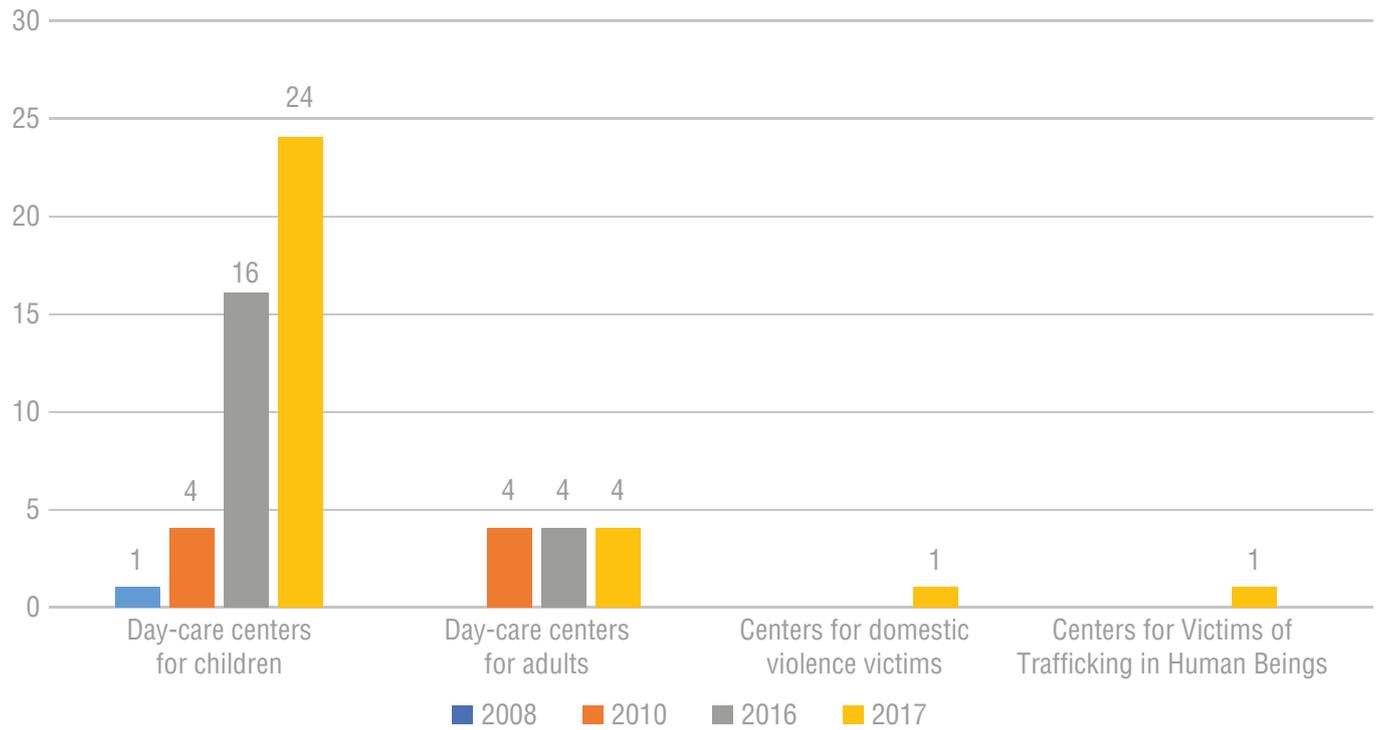
Services currently offered in Tajikistan can be clustered in four categories. The Community Based Rehabilitation programme offers social services at home. The second category is social care offered in day-care centres near the client's home. This is possible thanks to a law introduced in 2008 that allows for public procurement of social services.

**Therefore, external suppliers can contribute to the range of programmes.** A further group of services is carried out in short-term residential institutions. In these centres, social services focus on an integrated approach entailing a medical examination, physical therapy, speech therapy and other individual support.

Examples include the Chorborg rehabilitation centre, which supported 600 children and their parents in 2016 and a centre in Baldzhuvan where 67 children and their parents received assistance that year. There also are four sanatoriums focusing

<sup>16</sup> The following are defined as 'difficult life situations': disability, old age or illness; effects of work related injury or disease; loneliness, orphanage, loss of breadwinner; having no permanent residence; psychological and psychiatric issues etc.

FIGURE 28. NUMBER OF DAY CARE SERVICE PROVIDERS BY TYPE OF SERVICE



Source: Ministry of Health and Social Protection

on health services. The fourth category of services is administered in permanent care institutions.

Different target groups receive different types of social services. The elderly and disabled adults mostly receive support in their homes and occasionally in day care centres where they can interact with peers, reducing the risk of social exclusion.

**Children receive support across all types; however, those without parental care or socially vulnerable children are predominantly cared for in long-term residential institutions.** This implies that the opportunities for these children to experience support within a community or a foster family are limited. Further, children with a disability are either supported in day care centres or in long-term residential institutions. People living with HIV/AIDS and users of injecting drugs are mostly cared for in day care centres (EU, 2012).

As emphasized by O'Brien (2015), the Government of Tajikistan is initiating a shift of social services from institutional care and towards support in or near clients' own homes. Documents have been drafted that

outline required services and how they should be implemented. These reforms follow the trend of de-centralization, de-institutionalization and personalization of social care that has been on the social service agenda in many countries in the Europe and Central Asia region. Moving away from institutional care, and towards community- or family-based care, enhances service users' autonomy and dignity and protects their human rights. For children in residential care, dismantling the Soviet-type institutional system is especially important.

**As a further essential element to improve social services, the professionalization of social work has begun in the country.** The Tajik National University in Dushanbe now has a department of social work, and international donor partners such as UNICEF, UNDP, the Open Society Foundation and the EU are providing specialized social work training (UNTJ, 2016; OSI, 2016; RUCISW, 2008). The National Centre of Chorbog also trains social workers. There has been progress in the professionalization of social work specialists, who receive a state-recognized certificate upon completion of training.

#### 4.1.5 SCHOOL FEEDING

**The WFP has been operating a school feeding programme for primary school children since 1999.**

Until 2010, the programme had operated within WFP's relief and recovery activities but since then has become a development operation. School feeding programme during these years has contributed to increases in the net attendance rate of primary school children. The importance of the school feeding programme as a nutrition-sensitive social safety net is highlighted in the National Education Development Strategy for the period of 2012–2020, and the National Social Protection Reform Strategy Until 2025 (WFP, 2016b).

**The school feeding programme is WFP's largest activity in Tajikistan.**

From a strategic point of view, it is coordinated by the MHSP and is currently implemented through the Ministry of Education. It provides one daily hot meal to primary school children from grades 1 to 4 in public education institutions. At its initial roll-out in 1999, it covered 5,000 school children in 33 schools.

By 2015, it had reached 60 percent of all rural primary school children in the country and provided a daily hot meal to almost 360,000 children in more than 2,000 rural schools (WFP, 2015).

In February 2015, President Rahmon signed legislation to develop a national school feeding policy (Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, 2015). The decision aims to establish a framework to expand and transform the current WFP-supported school feeding programme into a sustainable, nationwide, government-owned programme. It mandates the Government of Tajikistan to develop a legislative, institutional and budgetary plan for the programme by 2021; to build management and monitoring capacity and to develop adequate supply chains and local food production to provide home-grown school feeding<sup>17</sup>.

To eventually achieve government ownership of the programme, WFP will start handing it over during 2018/2019 by transferring 270 schools with 50,000 beneficiaries. The next year, a further 325 schools with 60,000 beneficiaries will follow (WFP, 2016b).

### **The school feeding programme will be an integrated part of the Tajik national social protection system**

as foreseen in the National Social Protection Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan until 2025 (Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, 2016). An Inter-Ministerial Working Committee on School Meals has been established to harmonize the work of responsible line ministries. WFP provides support to this committee and is working on engaging local authorities in its work.

The school feeding programmes makes use of the Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER) framework. SABER is a platform that fosters policy dialogue among stakeholders and supports planning capacity development and roadmaps to achieve policy goals. School feeding in all CIS countries, including Tajikistan, takes the evidence-based SABER approach to identify strengths and challenges, following the five policy goals (Box 1).

## **BOX 1**

### **Five policy goals of SABER school feeding**

1. Policy framework
2. Financial capacity
3. Institutional capacity and coordination
4. Design and implementation
5. Community goals

Although WFP's school feeding programme in Tajikistan is a success story, some challenges need to be addressed to ensure sustainability and maximize positive effects.

**Regarding the design and quality of the service, it has been mentioned that the meals lack variety, and that they could have greater effects if**

**provided earlier in the day.** Discussion about these issues is on-going, and they likely will be solved by WFP soon. The recipe book developed and distributed by WFP is a first step towards encouraging schools to vary the meals.

Financing can be expected to be a further difficulty, especially in the country-wide expansion of the programme. The WFP's school feeding programme has a yearly transfer value of 38 USD per beneficiary child.

WFP is responsible only for providing the meals, not for adequate infrastructure in schools or the salaries of those employed in school feeding (such as cooks). These additional costs are the responsibility of the schools and the parents. The additional costs, and the expenses associated with increased coverage, must eventually be met, ideally through cooperation among WFP, the Government of Tajikistan and other development partners.



WFP/Muhssino-Imagine

17 Home-grown school feeding refers to school feeding programs in which the ingredients are produced locally, thereby generating demand in the local market.

### 4.1.6 INFORMAL SOCIAL PROTECTION

**The collapse of the USSR, the transformation of the political and socio-economic system, the civil war and the subsequent economic devastation have caused widespread external labour migration.** Labour migration has become a characteristic of many

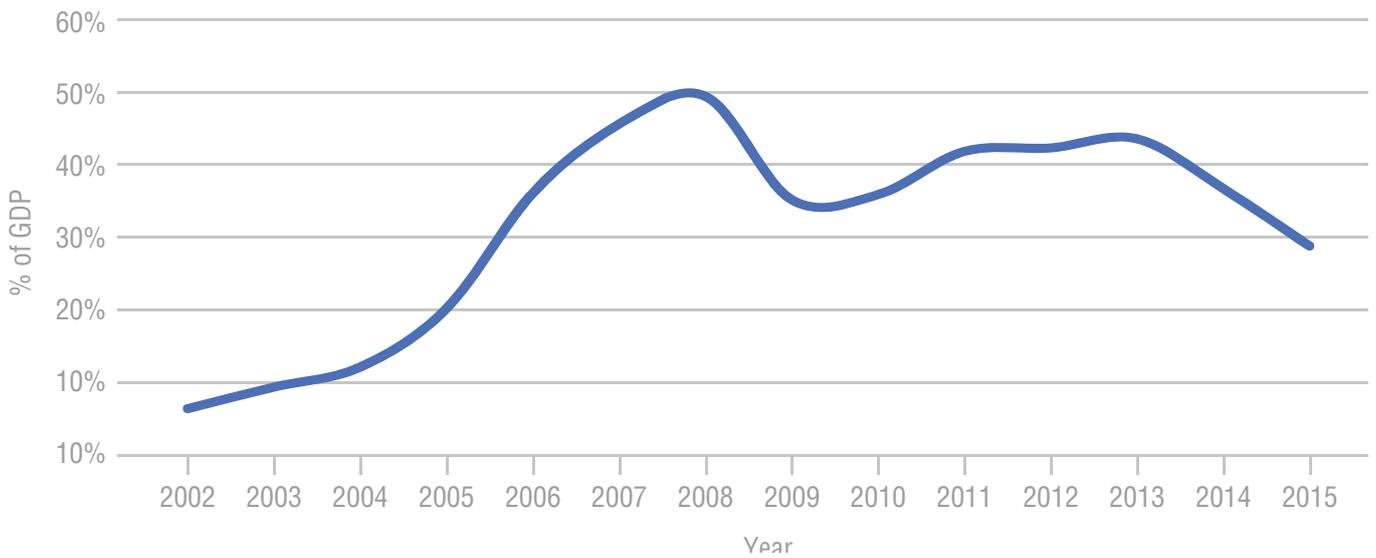
post-Soviet countries and is especially salient in Tajikistan. Some of the underlying reasons in the labour market are discussed in Chapter 1. They include:

- High unemployment in Tajikistan;
- Large share of seasonal work opportunity;

- Inadequate wages in absolute terms, especially in the agricultural sector; and
- Low wages in relative terms compared to other countries in the region, especially the Russian Federation.

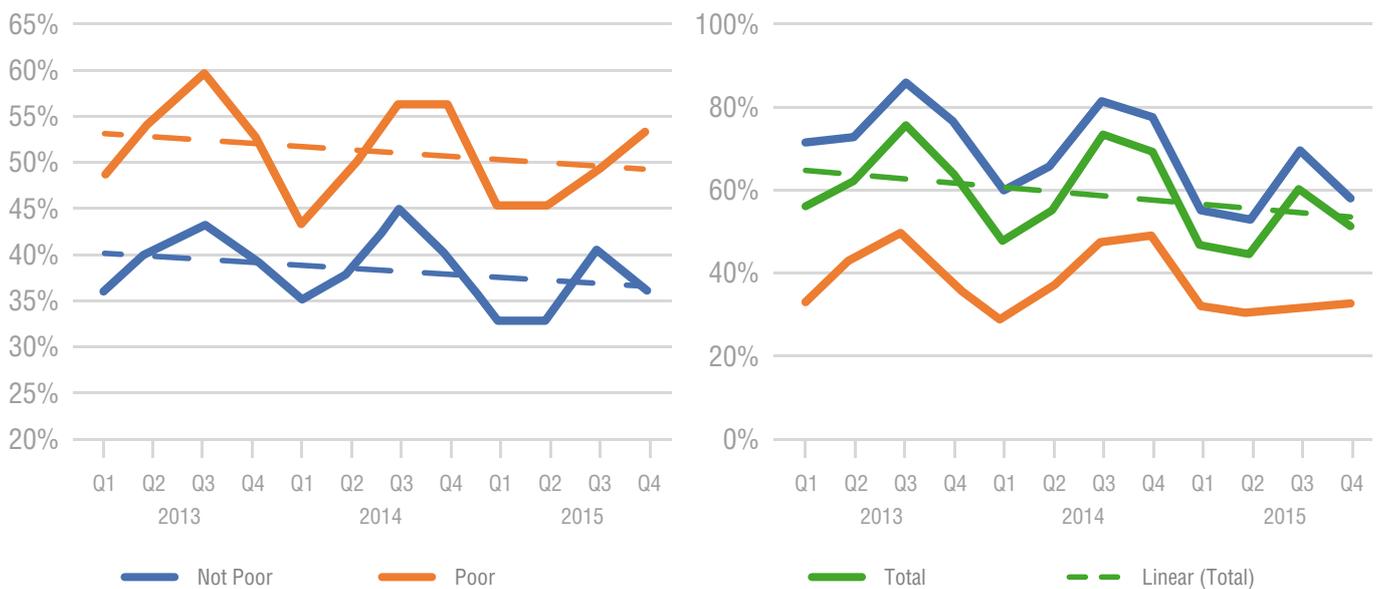
Remittances are an important source of income for a large share of households in Tajikistan, and personal remittances sent

FIGURE 29. PERSONAL REMITTANCES RECEIVED, IN % OF GDP



Source: World Bank (2017)

FIGURE 30. SEASONAL FLUCTUATIONS IN SHARE OF HOUSEHOLDS RECEIVING REMITTANCES (LEFT) AND PER CAPITA REAL REMITTANCE INCOME (RIGHT)



Source: Seitz and Rajabov (2016)

to Tajikistan tend to comprise between 30 percent and 40 percent of the GDP. They peaked at close to 50 percent before the global fiscal crisis (Figure 29). As discussed in Chapter 2, remittances are volatile to the economic developments in the destination country (in this case, the Russian Federation), and are therefore not a stable and reliable social safety net.

**The importance of remittances for Tajik households is well demonstrated.** In 2010, TajStat has conducted a survey, *The Impact of Migration and Remittances on the Well-Being and Poverty of Households in Tajikistan*. According to the findings, almost all – 94 percent – of remittances are used for daily consumption, such as food and clothing.

Thus, remittances are rarely invested in opportunities that could yield long-term returns, such as education, healthcare or businesses (TajStat, 2012). The overwhelming majority of the IOM's labour migration survey respondents reported to have sent remittances to Tajikistan, and 82 percent said that they were able to improve their financial situation (Rajabov and Ziyayev, 2017).

**Chapter 2 discussed important findings about the relationship between remittance inflows and poverty rates.** The opposite patterns of fluctuation not only demonstrate correlation but also confirm that remittances are not a reliable and stable safety net to secure livelihoods and smooth consumption. Because of the seasonal nature of work opportunities in the Russian Federation, remittances also fluctuate within the year. This makes them an unreliable source of income that cannot achieve consumption smoothing during the lean season.

Figure 30 shows the seasonal fluctuation in the share of remittance-receiving households and in the real per capita remittance income, disaggregated by poverty status.

Besides the issue of instability, the fact that poor households benefit from less real remittance income (compared to non-poor households) raises a further concern about their appropriateness as a social safety net. The downward trend in real remittance

income, which is attributed to the crisis in the Russian Federation, also can be observed in the trend lines from 2013 to 2015. The share of households receiving remittances and the amount of remittances have been decreasing in this period.

**Tajik households are facing serious difficulties that threaten their most basic needs, such as food consumption.** A lack of productive employment opportunities and low wages characterize Tajikistan. Moreover, the current system of formal safety nets is fragmented and provides inadequate transfers to a small segment of the population.

In the absence of employment and strong formal safety nets, it is not surprising that many Tajiks seek livelihoods in Russia or Kazakhstan. This, however, does not mean that remittances can fill the role of formal safety nets in providing basic income security and incentivizing investment in human capital.

## 4.2 PERFORMANCE

**Social protection in Tajikistan comprises various elements of contributory and non-contributory programmes with different objectives.** However, it is evident that the overall aim of social protection programming is to contribute to poverty alleviation and to enhance well-being of the poor and vulnerable. In the context of evaluations of social protection in countries of the former Soviet Union, targeting is a challenge given the universality of assistance prior to independence. This also holds in the case of Tajikistan, where administration and legislation are still limited when it comes to developing effective and sustainable programmes (ADB, 2016b).

### 4.2.1 THE ROLE OF STANDARDS

To assess the performance and adequacy of the social protection system, it is necessary to first discuss the standards that guide it. The national poverty line, the extreme (food) poverty line and the subsistence minimum all have their roles in social protection. Annex 1 provides a methodological brief on the construction of these standards.

All three standards serve predominantly statistical purposes, such as to assess poverty. The subsistence minimum is used to determine minimum wages, pensions and other benefits. However, the exact relationship remains unclear.

According to the document “Methodological recommendations for determining the consumer basket for the main demographic groups in Tajikistan”, the subsistence minimum also guides policy decisions in social protection provision. Because of budget constraints, the subsistence minimum is rarely used as a standard for benefits. In the fourth quarter of 2016, the subsistence minimum was TJS 520 per capita per month. For comparison, in 2016, the minimum wage was TJS 400, the monthly basic pension 156 TJS and the average social pension TJS 144. The annual value of the CCP is TJS 40 per child, and the new TSA comes at TJS 400 per year per household.

### 4.2.2 COVERAGE, DISTRIBUTION AND BENEFIT ADEQUACY

**Data from 2012 were used in the most recent assessment of social protection targeting.** Overall, 40 percent of individuals were living in a household receiving any type of formal social protection benefits (Table 7). Old age pensions are the most prevalent benefits, reaching 25 percent of the population in 2012. Survivor benefits and social pensions are the smallest programmes. Social assistance benefits cover only 10 percent of the population.

Although energy compensation and cash compensations for education are targeted to households and children most in need, they reach only 7 percent of individuals in the poorest quintile. The analysis also indicates that social assistance targeting to the poor is not particularly successful. Only 7 percent of allocated funds were received by households belonging to the poorest quintile.

Table 8 shows that the distribution of energy compensations was neutral given that approximately an equal amount of transfers was received by each quintile. The cash compensation for education

TABLE 7. SOCIAL PROTECTION COVERAGE BY CONSUMPTION QUINTILE, 2012

	Total	Quintiles per capita consumption (pre-transfer)				
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5
All social protection	39.6	45.8	39.7	40.2	39.4	32.8
All social insurance	33.9	38.8	35.3	32.5	34.8	28.1
Old age pensions	24.6	28.6	25.2	26.2	22.8	20.3
Disability pensions	10.3	13.8	9.4	7.9	11.8	8.4
Survivor pensions	1.7	2.9	1.9	1	2	0.8
All social assistance*	10.3	13.3	9	13.3	8.5	7.6
Energy compensation	4.5	6.7	5.2	4.8	3.1	2.8
Cash compensation for education	3.2	7.1	1.2	4.5	1.6	1.5
Social pensions	0.9	0.6	0.6	1	1.5	1

Source: World Bank (2014). \*these numbers should be interpreted with caution as they do not seem to be accurate.

TABLE 8. SOCIAL PROTECTION BENEFIT DISTRIBUTION BY CONSUMPTION QUINTILE, 2012

	Total	Quintiles per capita consumption (pre-transfer)				
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5
All social protection	100.0	16.8	18.5	16.8	22.2	25.7
All social insurance	100.0	17.7	19.5	15.9	21.1	25.8
Old age pensions	100.0	19.2	19.2	17.4	18.8	25.4
All social assistance*	100.0	7.5	7.1	26.4	33.7	25.4
Energy compensation	100.0	21.6	19.7	21.2	16.9	20.5
Cash compensation for education	100.0	32.1	21.7	21.7	6.5	18.1
Social pensions	100.0	8.1	4.0	4.0	46.1	27.0

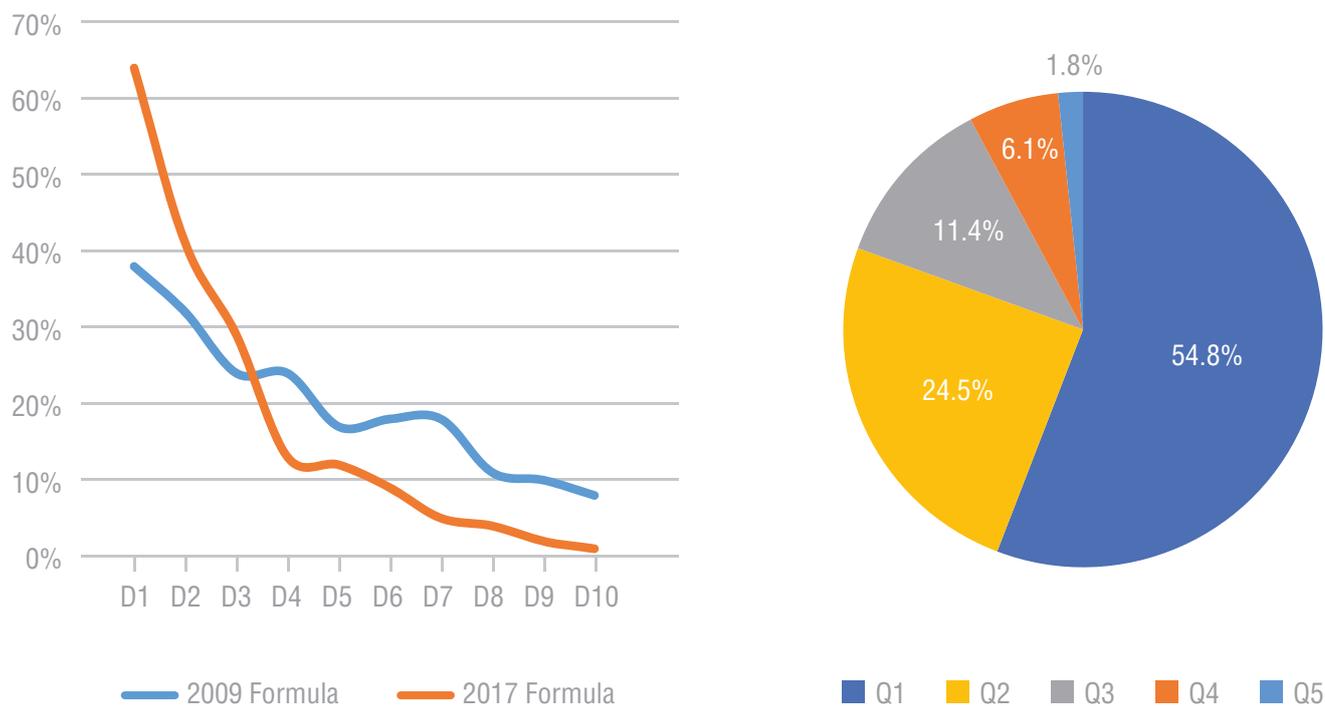
Source: World Bank (2014).

TABLE 9. SOCIAL PROTECTION BENEFIT ADEQUACY BY CONSUMPTION QUINTILE, 2012 (RECIPIENT HOUSEHOLDS ONLY)

	Total	Quintiles per capita consumption				
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5
All social protection	7.6	10.8	9.6	6.8	7.4	6.0
All social insurance	8.1	12.4	10.5	7.3	7.3	6.4
Old-age pensions	7.2	11.2	9.2	6.3	6.3	5.8
Disability pensions	6.9	9.0	10.0	7.0	7.2	4.6
Survivor pensions						
All social assistance	2.4	1.3	1.3	2.7	4.3	1.9
Energy compensation	0.5	0.7	0.6	0.5	0.5	0.3
Cash compensation for education	0.5	0.6	1.8	0.4	0.2	0.5
Social pensions	4.1	5.0	1.8	3.2	5.6	3.5

Source: World Bank (2014)

FIGURE 31. TSA: EXPECTED IMPACT OF NEW PMT



Source: Seitz and Rajabov (2016)

is slightly more progressive. Thirty-two percent of the transfers were received by children belonging to the poorest quintile. However, 18 percent went to the richest children. In terms of benefit adequacy, Table 9 confirms that transfers values are very low. Not even social insurance transfers reach 10 percent of total household consumption. In the poorest quintile, old age pensions contribute 11 percent to the total household budget. Social assistance transfers are entirely inadequate, accounting for less than 1 percent of total consumption in the poorest quintile. According to a report published by the ADB (2016a), the social pension transfers are too small considering the needs of the target group, which has been confirmed by the government.

It is expected that the TSA will greatly improve the targeting performance of social assistance. With the newly calibrated PMT formula, it is expected that coverage of the poorest will substantially increase. Assuming perfect implementation and 100 percent take-up, the simulation in Figure 31

predicts that with the new scheme 55 percent of all transfers would go to the poorest quintile, and another 25 percent to the second poorest quintile.

Even though the simulations and the preliminary findings from the pilot predict that the TSA will perform substantially better in terms of coverage of and distribution of cash transfers to the poor, its design has drawbacks inherent to the PMT methodology. PMTs are not well-equipped to respond to transient poverty or sudden changes in the welfare of households, for example in the event of an emergency, since the indicators used to assess household welfare usually refer to stock, rather than flow variables.

Assets, human capital stocks and infrastructure access are all characteristics that generally endure over time and only respond to economic shocks when households are in exceptional situations of need. Most PMTs are infrequently recalibrated given that they are highly data intensive.

#### 4.2.3 CONTRIBUTION TO FOOD SECURITY

##### SOCIAL INSURANCE AND SOCIAL PENSIONS

**The number of old age pensioners receiving a basic pension is estimated to be 10 percent.** Compared to the cost of a balanced diet, which is part of the consumer basket, the basic pension covers more than 80 percent if the entire amount would be spent on food.

The average pension exceeds the cost of the minimum food bundle by 50 percent. These ratios have improved considerably since 2010 (Table 10).

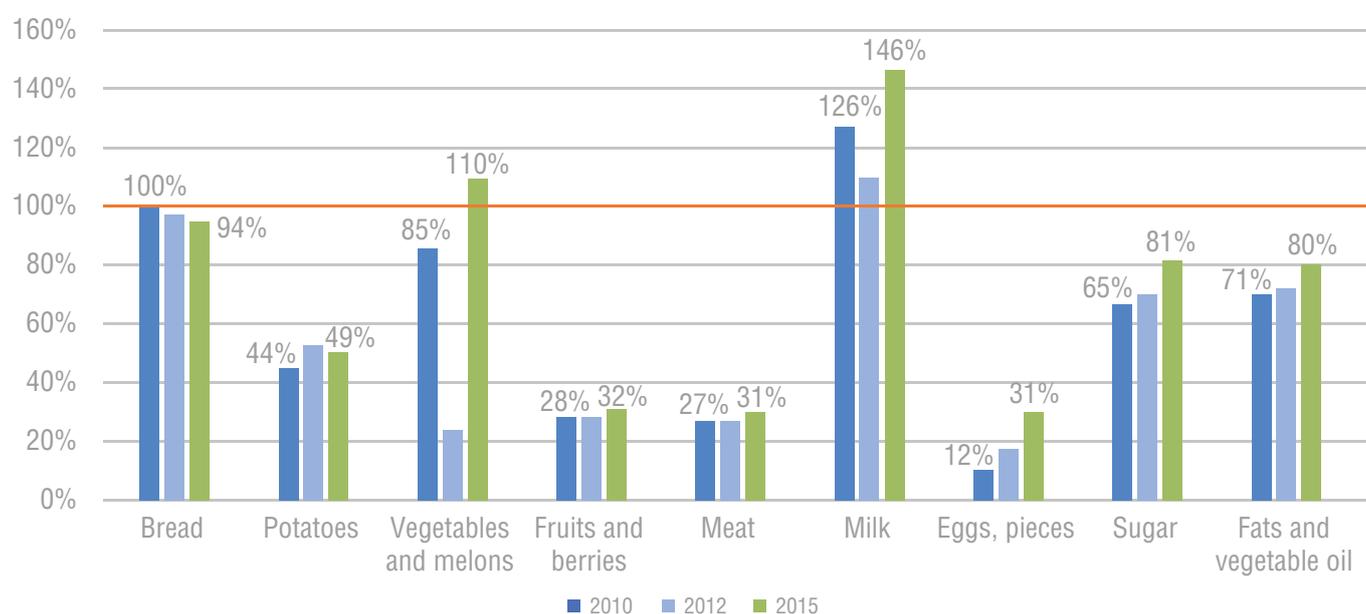
Even though an average pension in principle would be enough to ensure the consumption of a balanced diet, Figure 32 shows that actual consumption pattern of the poorest pensioners is rather unbalanced and does not match the normative basket.

TABLE 10. NUTRITIONAL ADEQUACY OF OLD AGE PENSION

	Cost of a balanced diet per pensioner, TJS / month	Basic pension, TJS / month.	Average old-age pension, TJS / month.	Share of basic pension as % of balanced diet	Share of average old-age pension as % of balanced diet
2010	107.2	80.0	119.0	75	111
2012	132.7	104.0	177.0	78	133
2015	157.1	130.0	235.0	83	150

Source: Tajstat (2017) and authors' calculations. Current prices

FIGURE 32. AVERAGE CONSUMPTION PATTERNS OF PENSIONERS BELONGING TO THE POOREST DECILE COMPARED TO THE BALANCED DIET



Source: TajStat (2017) and authors' calculations



WFP/Emma Khachatryan

**Social pensions tell an entirely different story.** The value of the social pension is not nearly enough to enable consumption of a balanced diet. On average, social pensions cover half of the

normative amount considered necessary. This is particularly detrimental in the case of children and if the surviving household has more than one child (Table 12). Social pensions granted to children in case

of a loss of one or both parents are not considered adequate. The benefit amounts do not account for the significant risk of falling into poverty and in general do not guarantee nutritional requirements.

TABLE 11. NUTRITIONAL ADEQUACY OF SOCIAL DISABILITY PENSION

	Cost of balanced diet in TJS / month	Basic pension, TJS / month	Average social disability pension, TJS / month	Share of basic pension as % of balanced diet	Share of average social disability pension as % of balanced diet
2010	107.2	80	47	75	44
2012	132.7	104	66	78	50
2015	157.1	130	89	83	57

Source: TajStat (2017) and authors' calculations

TABLE 12. NUTRITIONAL ADEQUACY OF SOCIAL SURVIVOR PENSION FOR CHILDREN, 2015

Number of children	The share of basic pension, %	The share of basic pension / child, %	Social pension per child, TJs / month	Share of a balanced diet, %
1	100	100	130	77
2	150	75	98	58
3	200	67	87	51
4	200	50	65	38
5	200	40	52	31
6	200	33	43	26

Source: TajStat (2017) and authors' calculations

TABLE 13. NUTRITIONAL ADEQUACY OF THE CCP FOR CHILDREN (AGE 7–14) FROM THE LOWEST DECILE

	Cost of balanced nutrition for children, TJS / month	Cost of actual food, TJS / month	Nutritional gap, TJS / month	Share of nutritional gap covered by CCP per month, %
2010	115.6	62.2	53.3	6.2
2012	143.0	81.1	61.9	5.4
2015	169.0	108.9	60.1	5.5

Source: TajStat (2017) and authors' calculations

TABLE 14. NUTRITIONAL ADEQUACY OF THE ENERGY COMPENSATION BENEFIT (HOUSEHOLDS FROM THE LOWEST DECILE)

	Cost of balanced diet TJS / month	Cost of actual food, TJS / month	Nutritional gap, TJS / month	Share of nutritional gap covered by compensation per month, %
2010	106.5	62.2	44.3	5.9
2012	131.9	81.1	50.8	6.0
2015	155.9	108.9	47.0	7.8

Source: TajStat (2017) and authors' calculations

TABLE 15. COMPARING THE NUTRITIONAL ADEQUACY OF THE TSA AND CURRENT SOCIAL ASSISTANCE SCHEMES

	Cost of a balanced diet, TJS / month	Cost of actual food, TJS / month	Nutrition gap, TJS / month	Average current compensation TJS/month	TSA TJS/month	Current compensation as % of nutrition gap	TSA as % of nutrition gap
2011	128.6	80.4	48.2	2.87	4.8	6.0	10.0
2012	131.9	81.1	50.8	3.46	4.8	6.8	9.5
2013	142.4	90.9	51.5	3.51	4.8	6.8	9.4
2014	145.6	95.7	49.6	3.31	4.8	6.7	9.7
2015	155.9	108.9	47.0	3.86	4.8	8.2	10.3

Source: TajStat (2017), author's calculations

## SOCIAL ASSISTANCE BENEFITS

**Overall, the cash compensation programme is insignificant for protecting children's nutritional needs.** In 2015, the value of the CCP was equal to 1.9 percent of the monthly costs poor households spend on food, and 5.5 percent of the nutritional gap<sup>18</sup>. Moreover, the lack of indexation of the CCP has further eroded its value.

The issue is similar with energy compensation. Assuming that the average household receiving the compensation consists of 6.9 people, the energy compensation would cover about 8 percent of the nutrition gap (an increase from 5.9 percent in 2010).

This assumes that the expected benefit amount is paid and that it is only allocated to food consumption. However, these values are found to be lower in reality, as the full amount of expected transfers was not disbursed to recipients because of programme underfunding. In contrast to the CCP, the energy compensation benefit is automatically indexed. Thus, although the benefit amount is low, it increases with the overall price level in the country.

Based on the assumption that the entire benefit is allocated to food consumption and that households have 6.9 members,

the effect of the TSA benefit on food security appears to be higher than in the case of the two former social assistance programmes.

Overall, the impact of social protection programmes on food security and nutrition status is limited. This is because of multiple caveats of the current system. First, social assistance covers a low share of the poor and provides transfers of low value.

**Although coverage is foreseen to increase with the TSA, the increased benefit values will remain too low to improve households' economic access to food.** Second, promotive safety nets, which could contribute to resilience and enhanced production, are de facto missing. Third, shock-responsive elements, which could counteract failures in food security's stability dimension, have not yet been developed. Fourth, nutrition objectives are not incorporated in national social protection programmes, apart from the school feeding programme.

As malnutrition is a result of not only limited access to food but also of behavioural practices, nutrition-specific programmes – such as supplementary feeding, take-home rations or nutrition education, to mention a few – could increase positive nutrition outcomes.

## 4.3 IMPLEMENTATION

### 4.3.1 SOCIAL INSURANCE AND SOCIAL PENSIONS

**In 2015, payment delays were recorded for social insurance and social pensions.** This is problematic for beneficiaries given the limited predictability of pensions, which may be their only source of income. Households cannot rely on receiving specific amounts at specific dates, whereas predictability of transfers is generally considered to be a crucial element of useful social protection benefits.

Certain issues prevail regarding the registration of the level and period of contributions, potentially leading to an inadequately calculated length of service and pension entitlement. According to the law, certain periods of inactivity during which no insurance contributions were paid are considered along with the periods of work for which insurance premiums were paid.<sup>19</sup>

For each month of service for which information on incomes was not provided but confirmed by records in the work book, the insured person who applied for a pension is counted as a contribution of TJS 20. In practice, the periods indicated are indeed included in the length of the

<sup>18</sup> This assessment assumes that the entire benefit amount of TJS 40 would be allocated to the nutrition of a child, which does not necessarily reflect the truth.

<sup>19</sup> Service in the armed forces; training in full-time higher and secondary special educational institution, subject to the availability of employment (insurance) experience in the specialty for at least five years after graduation; learning on the job at the advanced training courses, retraining, temporary disability, which began in the period of work, but no more than four calendar months of the year, except for persons suffering from tuberculosis; the time of receipt of unemployment benefits, but not more than 24 months for the entire period of employment; while caring temporarily working parents of young children, but not longer than until each child age 3 years, no more than 60 months for the entire insurance period; period of imprisonment of persons wrongly prosecuted, repressed and subsequently rehabilitated.

insurance period but are not included in determining the size of the pension. UNICEF has emphasized that the pension administration lacks an effective and transparent database as data on applications, beneficiaries and contributions are stored at various places and in different forms. Further, it is suggested that those in charge of administration of contributions and the calculations of pension benefits do not work together, whereas cooperation in this regard would be crucial for an accurate result. So far, individual contributions paid by employers are not accounted for, which implies that there is no link between personal income and pension costs.

Tajikistan does not have bilateral social security agreements with other countries that would ensure the export of social security benefits for migrant workers. Negotiations are currently underway with the Russian Federation to develop a bilateral agreement, but it requires the settlement of a number of differences in legislation<sup>20</sup>.



#### 4.3.2 SOCIAL ASSISTANCE BENEFITS

##### Concerns about the CCP relate to the identification of the poorest children.

Decisions by local authorities generally are not verified by a third party. It is therefore possible for teachers or other committee members to deliberately include ineligible families on the list or to divert funds (World Bank, 2014). Similar observations regarding the lack of verification have been made by UNICEF (2013). This lack

of accountability is also emphasized by Yat Wai Lo and Maclean (2015), who note that this reflects the discrepancy between programme prioritisation and non-transparent implementation mechanisms. As the analysis above has shown, the goal of reaching the poorest 15 percent of children was not met.

**However, not only the selection of children considered eligible is important but also how funds are distributed.** Funds are received and

managed by district governments, in one large sum that also includes resources for other benefits. This gives officials the opportunity to divert funds, as allocation cannot be verified (World Bank, 2011). Also, letting school principals instead of treasurers disburse the benefit amounts in cash enables them to claim a part of the money for the school.

An analysis conducted by the World Bank (2014) raised several concerns regarding the implementation of the energy compensation.

TABLE 16. EXPECTED AND ACTUAL LEVELS OF THE ELECTRICITY COMPENSATION BENEFIT (HOUSEHOLDS IN THE BOTTOM DECILE)

	Electricity costs <sup>i</sup> , TJS/month	Share of electricity costs in monthly household expenditures, %	Expected compensation, TJS / month	Actual compensation, TJs / month
2010	3.12	3.7	2.61	-
2011	3.26	3.0	2.61	1.42
2012	3.72	3.0	3.04	2.01
2013	4.44	3.1	3.19	2.06
2014	4.33	2.7	3.42	1.86
2015	4.76	3.1	3.65	2.41

Source: TajStat (2017) and authors' calculations

<sup>ii</sup> Expenditures of households living in rural areas. According to the WB, 88% of households among the recipients of compensation live in rural areas.

20 In particular: a burial allowance: in RT, only for the needy; in the RF, for everyone. Child care: in RT, up to 1.5 years; in Russia, up to 3.

For example, the application process foresees applicants submitting numerous documents, which is considered a barrier to benefit access because of time, costs and uncertainties involved for the applicants. Further, the programme budget does not reflect the needs of the target group. It is simply assumed that the demand for the transfer at the local level is like the previous year and funds are only adjusted for inflation. The target of reaching 18–20 percent of the population within each district is not considered when estimating the required resources. Similar to the CCP, accountability for beneficiary selection and verification throughout the administrative process and benefit delivery are deemed unsatisfactory.

**The selection of beneficiaries is strongly affected by the fact that the local committees are neither paid for their work nor checked on a regular basis.** They are therefore tempted to include ineligible households because of personal preferences, and considering they are also responsible for collecting payments for electricity, they have been found to deliberately exclude poor households as it gives them the opportunity to enforce payments (World Bank, 2014).

Delays of payments have been recorded repeatedly, making the benefit unreliable

and thereby reducing its supportive value for recipient families as they cannot count on it as a regular source of income. According to information provided by the Ministry of Finance (MOF), the amount of benefits transferred to recipients was below the expected amount because of underfunding of the programme. This is likely to be a consequence of the budgeting process outlined above, as it is not based on the actual demand but assumptions regarding previous budgeting periods.

Certain details regarding the implementation of the TSA may need to be reconsidered or accounted for when assessing the impact of the programme. For example, an effective implementation process partially relies on well-coordinated cooperation between local authorities at different levels. All those involved in distributing application forms, consulting families and entering information into the database need to be trained regularly, and open and regular communication with other stakeholders is essential.

**There is a lack of monitoring capacity, which so far has not been addressed by the government.** It is also important to realise the generally rising demand for staff once the programme is fully implemented nationwide. As of the beginning of 2017, 71 staff members were

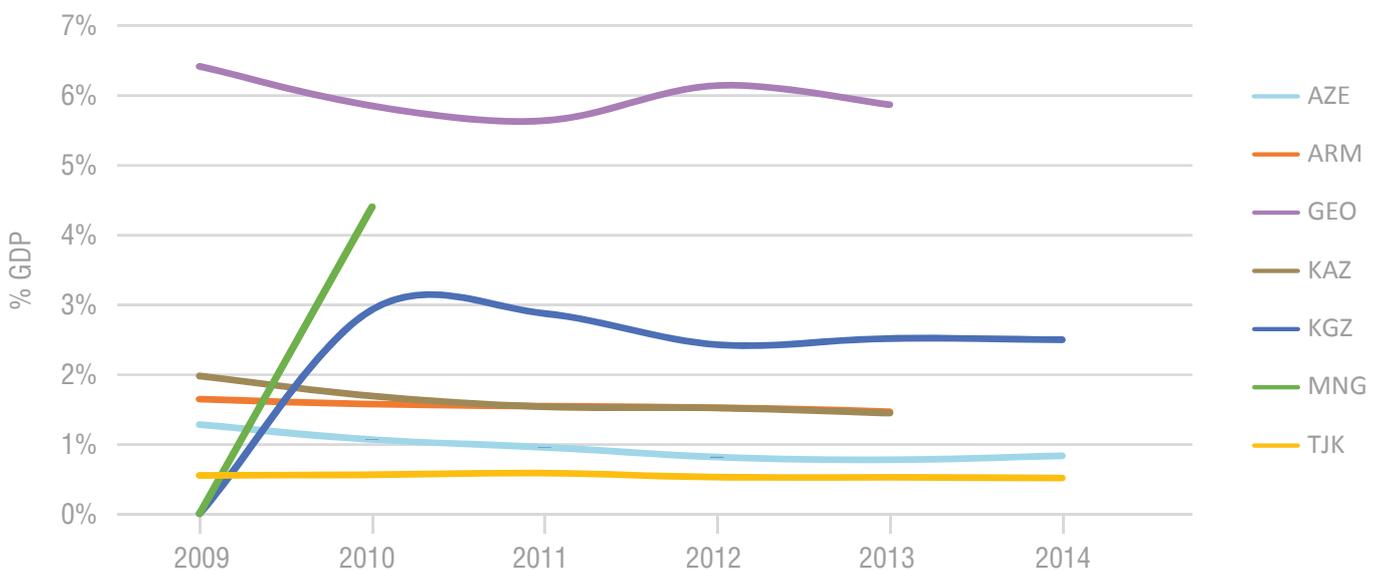
engaged in data entry at the district level and ten in two regional centres. Once the TSA is implemented nationwide, the need for data operators will increase to 140. One of the big advantages of the TSA includes the availability of an information database on the welfare level of low-income households.

However, the reliability of data is not guaranteed simply by collecting them in one central database. Hence, certain verification mechanisms may be needed. Finally, the verification processes currently envisaged for eliminating inclusion errors may not be sufficient as only 5 percent of the cases are reviewed.

#### 4.4 FINANCING

**Government expenditure as a share of total GDP is relatively similar to most low- or middle-income countries** (World Bank, 2013). According to the World Bank, government expenditure in absolute terms almost tripled between 2007 and 2012 (World Bank, 2013). The largest increase between 2007 and 2012 occurred in social sector spending, such as education, healthcare, social security, welfare, culture and sports. Expenditures on the social sector have gone up from 31 percent in 2007 to 44 percent in 2012 (World Bank, 2013). By functional classification, the education

FIGURE 33. SOCIAL ASSISTANCE EXPENDITURE AS % OF GDP



Source: World Bank ASPIRE database (2017)

TABLE 17. COST OF SOCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMMES RELATIVE TO GDP AND CENTRAL GOVERNMENT BUDGET

Programme	Energy compensation		Targeted social assistance		Social pensions		Social insurance pensions	
Year	% of GB	% of GDP	% of GB	% of GDP	% of GB	% of GDP	% of GB	% of GDP
2010	0.45	0.12	-	-	1.67	0.45	11.37	3.08
2011	0.32	0.09	0.11	0.03	1.86	0.54	11.11	3.17
2012	0.28	0.07	0.13	0.03	1.87	0.47	12.73	3.21
2013	0.19	0.05	0.16	0.05	1.88	0.54	12.89	3.69
2014	0.13	0.04	0.25	0.07	1.65	0.47	11.22	3.25
2015	0.12	0.04	0.26	0.09	1.42	0.48	9.12	3.07
2016	0.07	0.02	0.17	0.06	1.7	0.56	10.05	3.37

Source: Ministry of Finance (2015), ASIP (2017) and TajStat (2017) and authors' calculations

sector is the largest recipient of government funds. It is followed by spending on social security and welfare related functions, which accounted for 15 percent of the government budget in 2012 (World Bank, 2013). Although total government spending on welfare functions is relatively high, social assistance expenditure is small. The World Bank's ASPIRE dataset contains information on social assistance expenditure as a percentage of GDP. Estimates for Tajikistan were relatively stable between 2010 and 2014, remaining between 0.5 percent and 0.6 percent (World Bank, 2017). This makes Tajikistan the lowest investor in social assistance programmes in the region.

According to the 2016 budget, disseminated by the MOF, social insurance and social protection of the population accounted for 2.4 percent of the republican budget (MOF, 2015). The social protection expenditure is largely driven by social insurance, which cost 1.5 percent of the budget, whereas

social assistance schemes consumed only 0.2 percent. Other expenses in the field of social protection made up the remaining 0.7 percent (MOF, 2015).

**Most social assistance schemes are financed from the republican budget, of which social pensions are the largest non-contributory expenditure.**

Conditional cash transfers, however, are paid from local budgets. Spending on the TSA and on social pensions has been increasing relative to GDP and government expenditure.

At the same time, the resources directed at the energy compensation subsidy have been substantially decreased: from 0.5 percent of state expenditure in 2010 to less than 0.1 percent in 2016. This is not surprising given the phasing out of the programme, which will be completed by 2018. The TSA programme, which is currently being expanded and will replace other forms of

social assistance starting in 2018, is also financed from the Republican Budget. Its cost has been growing in the last years, as the number of beneficiaries has been expanding. In 2011, approximately 0.03 percent of Tajikistan's GDP was spent on this programme. By 2016, the GDP-relative cost of the TSA has doubled, and reached 0.06 percent.

Measured as the share in government expenditure, it has grown by almost 50 percent, indicating an increase in total government spending. The cost of the TSA has peaked in 2015 at 0.26 percent of government expenditure, when it covered more beneficiaries than ever before (Table 17).

As seen in the cost summary presented in Table 17, social pensions account for a smaller expenditure than do social insurance pensions. Whereas the former took up 0.56 percent of GDP in 2016, the latter accounted

TABLE 18. ANNUAL COSTS OF SOCIAL PROTECTION PROGRAMMES IN TJS (THOUSANDS)

	CCT	Energy compensation	Targeted Social Assistance (TSA)	Old age pensions	Disability pensions	Survivor's pensions	Social pension
Source:	Local government budgets	Republican budget	Republican budget	Agency of State Social Insurance and Pensions budget, Republican Budget, local government budgets			Republican budget
2010	8,357	30,035	-	474,370	207,780	80,280	70,660
2011	-	27,067	9,420	587,750	264,760	99,300	100,210
2012	-	25,766	11,680	747,200	307,700	104,570	106,790
2013	5,142	21,470	18,440	995,950	372,290	125,820	139,660
2014	-	16,508	33,280	1,074,600	291,020	113,740	146,060
2015	-	20,316	43,090	1,100,430	279,930	104,920	160,460
2016	-	13,517	30,720	1,390,450	324,950	121,870	217,720

Source: TajStat (2017) and authors' calculations

for 3.37 percent. The gradual increase of the expenditure on targeted social assistance, and the decrease of resources directed to the CCT and the electricity and gas subsidy also are reflected in the absolute number presented in Table 18 .

Social insurance is financed from multiple sources. Pensions are financed from the budget of the Agency of State Social Insurance and Pensions (coming from social taxes), from the funds accumulated on individual accounts of contributors' (including investment incomes) and from the Republican Budget if the accumulated amount does not reach the base pension.

**Certain groups of pensioners, for example World War II veterans, receive an additional allowance that is paid from local budgets.**

According to the interviews with ASIP representatives, the top-up to the level of the base pension is in fact financed by the Agency of Social Insurance and Pensions, despite the legislation delegating this to the Republican Budget (ASIP, 2017).

Temporary social insurance benefits (unemployment benefit, funeral benefit and family allowance) are also financed from the budget of the Agency of Social Insurance and Pensions.

The total expenditure on social insurance benefits and pensions increased considerably from 2010 to 2016, as seen in Figure 34. The gap between planned expenditures on social insurance and actual costs has been widening since 2010, indicating a decreasing accuracy of forecasting and execution. Except for 2010, typically higher expenditures have been foreseen.

**4.5 INSTITUTIONS, GOVERNANCE AND STRATEGIES**

**4.5.1 GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS**

**Major decisions about social protection are made by several ministries and departments operating at the central level.**

The main government bodies involved in social protection policy design, implementation and monitoring are the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, the Ministry of Labour, Migration and Employment (MLME) and the ASIP.

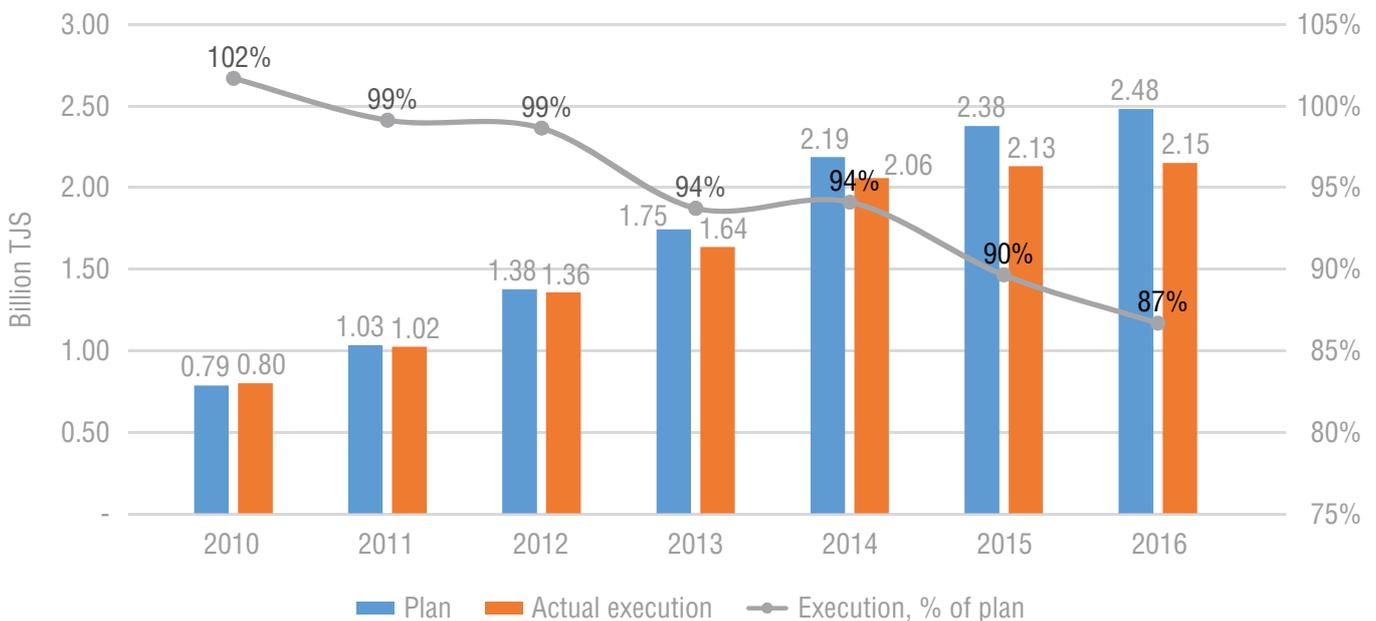
The administration of social protection is divided by the State Agency for Social Protection (SASP, a specialized agency within the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare) and the ASIP (a direct subordinate

agency of the central government). The former is responsible for the administration of social assistance schemes, the latter for social insurance programmes. Even though the financing of this programme is not the ASIP's responsibility, it also administers the social pension. The Tax Committee is responsible for the collection of social tax and social insurance contributions. Figure 35 shows the main central government bodies and their roles in the Tajik social protection policy process.

**The Ministry of Health and Social Protection (MHSP).**

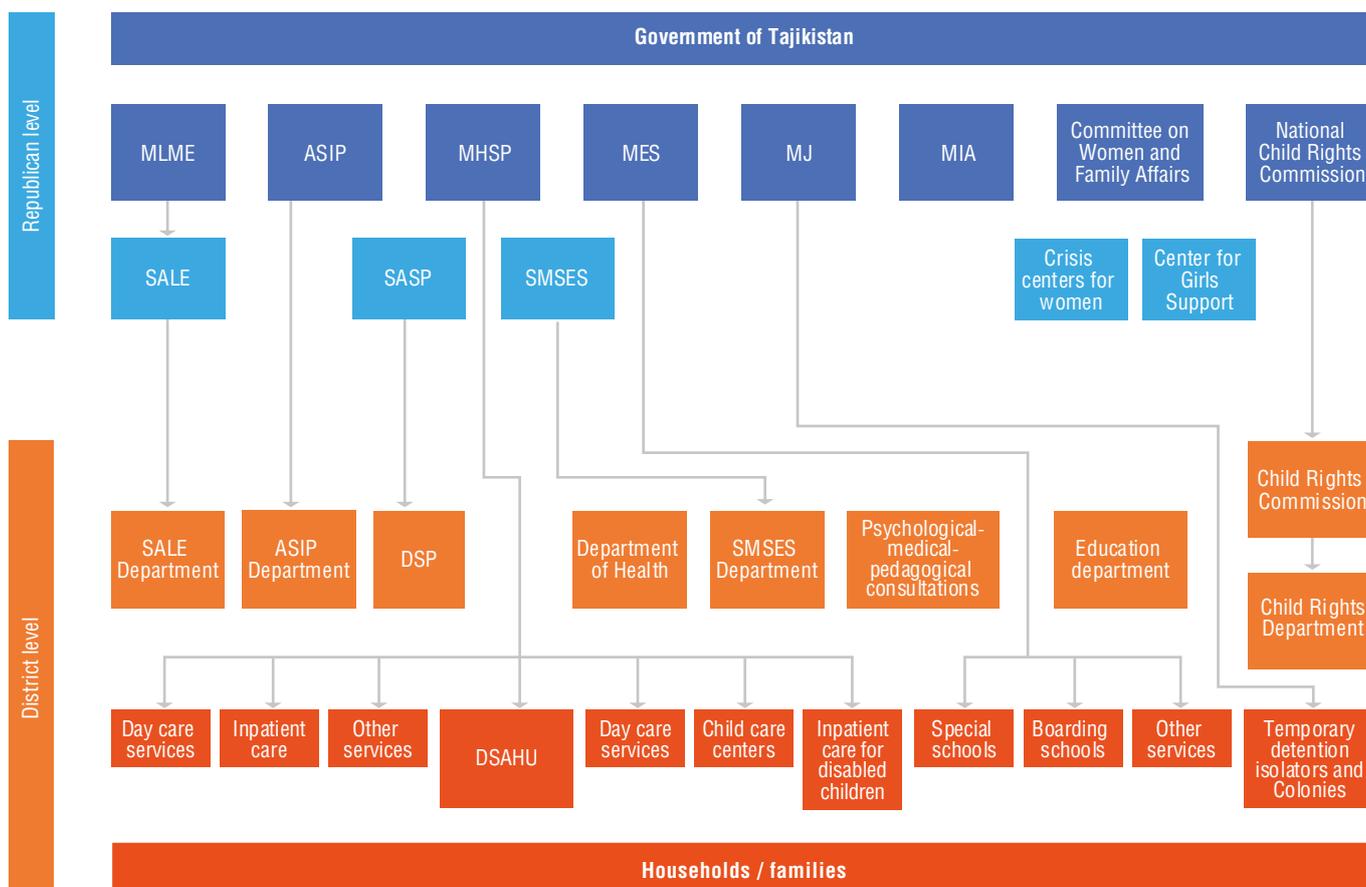
Develops and submits proposals to improve state social protection policy. Develops state social protection programmes for the poor and oversees their implementation. Plans the budget of the TSA programme. Monitors the implementation of health and social protection legislation. Together with the government and local executive bodies, it is responsible for the creation and development of a network of integrated and specialized, state, regional, local and other social services. Provides guidance and control over the activities of social services, including social service facilities. Develops and maintains social service standards. Approves the procedure for the establishment of a system of statistical accounting and reporting in the field of health and social protection.

FIGURE 34. EXECUTION OF THE SOCIAL INSURANCE BUDGET, 2010–2016



Source: ASIP (2017)

FIGURE 35. INSTITUTIONAL MAP OF SOCIAL PROTECTION



Source: Authors' elaboration based on UNICEF (2015)

**State Agency for Social Protection (SASP).** Implements state TSA policy, the appointment and payment of cash compensations and cash benefits to vulnerable segments of the population and people with disabilities. Organizes and provides TSA to low-income families and citizens. Creates and manages a single databank to register individuals receiving TSA, including vulnerable families, disabled people, single elderly people, children and orphans without guardianship. It compiles quarterly budget estimates for TSA and reports on the use of funds.

**Agency for Social Insurance and Pensions (ASIP).** Administers and implements social insurance (including pensions). Manages the Social Insurance and Pension Fund.

**Tax Committee Under the President of Tajikistan.** Collects and monitors social insurance contributions.

**Ministry of Labour, Migration and Employment (MLME).** Implements policies in employment, migration and unemployment insurance.

**State Agency for Labour and Employment of Population (SALE).** An implementing agency within the MLME, SALE performs some of the administrative tasks of the unemployment benefit programme, along with expansion of employment opportunities.

**Ministry of Education and Science (MES).** Special schools and boarding schools for children, including children with disability, children without parental care and children in conflict with the law, operate in the structure of the ministry.

**Ministry of Justice (MJ).** Maintains temporary detention facilities for young people and adults.

**Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA).** Responsible for the residential care of children without family care, including residential institutional care and foster care.

At the regional and local levels, the management of the social protection system and the provision of social services are functionally distributed among several bodies that are either decentralized structures of central departments or local departments operating at different levels of the management system, in regions, districts and jamoats.

Some government agencies operating at lower levels of government are involved in issuing cash benefits, whereas others are engaged in providing services. Small NGOs and international organizations also provide a variety of social services for different target groups. The most

important government bodies at the local level in social protection provision are the Departments of Social Protection of the Population, which process all applications for social assistance programmes. Regional and local level institutions and their roles are as follows:

**Psychological-medical-pedagogical consultation centres.** Provide consultations as a mechanism for sending disabled children to specialists and provide short-term services for their rehabilitation, as well as social and legal assistance to their parents

**Social and Medical State Examination Services (SMSES).** Carries out disability examinations and providing certifications necessary for disability benefits.

**Departments of social protection of population (DSP).** Process all applications for social assistance in the form of cash benefits.

**Departments of At-Home Social Services (DSAHU).** Provide home-based care services. They are mainly targeted at older people who live in isolation, as well as people and children with disabilities.

**Commissions on the Rights of the Child.** Monitors the district level implementation of child protection measures. Several local authorities are involved in the work of the commissions. CRCs receive child protection cases from the child rights departments and coordinate their further management.

**Child Rights Offices.** They serve as the main coordinating mechanism for the protection of children at the local level. Evaluate whether the child protection case meets the established criteria. Responsible for escorting specific cases.

**Committees for Women and Family Affairs.** Provides services for the prevention of domestic violence and establishes centres for assistance in critical situations.

#### 4.5.2 DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

**Besides the relevant governmental bodies, several development partners are involved in social protection policy.** A Development Coordination Council (DCC), which includes representatives of donors, UN agencies

and other development partners, has been established to coordinate actions. Clusters and working groups (WG) coordinate the work of development partners.

WFP, for example, chairs the cluster on food security and nutrition, and the European Commission and UNICEF chair the cluster on human development. The latter cluster includes four WG, one of which is focused on social protection. As coordinating policy dialogue between the government and its partners is one of the tasks of the group, government representatives are occasionally invited to join WG meetings. The main international partners of the Government of Tajikistan, and their brief activities in the country are the following:

**International Labour Organization (ILO).** To support the implementation of Social Protection Floors (SPFs) Recommendation 202, (No.202), the ILO and MHSP of the Republic of Tajikistan have initiated the Assessment Based National Dialogue on Social Protection (SP-ABND) in the Republic of Tajikistan. SP-ABND is the implementing tool for improving national SPFs by identifying which elements of national SPFs are in place or missing in the country.



The ILO currently provides technical assistance through technical advice on policy formulation and capacity building. Regarding the former, SP-ABND is a driving force to enhance participatory multi-stakeholder national dialogue to determine the main national priorities on social protection, with mid/long-term perspectives.

**United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).** UNDP supports the government in accelerating reforms in social protection sector. Jointly with other sister UN agencies, the UNDP assists in developing the capacity of government agencies to increase the quality and availability of disaggregated data and statistical information to inform policy decisions targeting the most vulnerable. UNDP also supports civil society organizations to participate in policy discussions and play an active role in preventing violence against women and addressing stigma and discrimination against people with disabilities and those with HIV/AIDS. Promoting the integrated approach to the sustainable development goals (SDG) agenda, UNDP works on gender inequalities through economic empowerment of women by increasing employment and livelihood opportunities in remote and rural areas and on increasing gender responsiveness of social protection measures.

More specifically, UNDP provided technical assistance and capacity building on monitoring and evaluation in social protection and assessed the capacity of social assistance at-home (SAHU) units in the country. As a result, seven SAHU offices were established throughout the country. In close cooperation with WHO and UNICEF, UNDP supports the MHSP in strengthening the capacities of the national primary health care system in providing basic immunization services.

**The World Food Programme (WFP).** WFP has been in the country since 1993 and is a partner of the government in developing the enhanced modalities and expanded coverage of the social protection system (WFP, 2016a). The country programme for 2016–2020 focuses on themes of education, health, employment, social protection and food security, and is aligned with the government's National Development

Strategy (2016–2030) and Mid-Term Development Strategy (2016–2020).

The WFP has been implementing a school feeding programmes in primary schools around the country in partnership with the government. As part of the WFP country programme and the National Social Protection Reform Strategy, these school feeding programmes will gradually be handed over to the government.

WFP assists the government in developing the legal and institutional framework for a sustainable and country-wide home-grown school feeding model. For more detail on this programme and its transformation into a country-owned scheme, see the section *School Feeding* in this chapter. WFP is also involved in the repair and reconstruction of schools, provides hygiene education to school children, provides targeted supplementary feeding for children between 6 and 59 months in three districts (Balkhi, Shaartuz and Kulob) and assists tuberculosis patients and their families country-wide. WFP also plans to enlarge its capacity development activities to support the development of a sustainable school meal programme by providing bakeries, kitchen equipment, canteen equipment and greenhouse settings for selectively assessed schools.

#### **World Health Organization (WHO).**

The WHO works in partnership with the government to strengthen healthcare and improve health outcomes of the population, by improving their nutritional status and physical activity. With technical assistance of WHO Regional Office for Europe, the Government of Tajikistan has developed the "Strategy for Nutrition and Physical Activity in the Republic of Tajikistan for 2015-2024", which has been approved and endorsed by the Government in December 2014.

Furthermore, WHO is involved in the provision of technical expertise in development of prevention and treatment protocols for malnutrition, supplementary feeding and infant and young child feeding and counselling, evidence-based recommendation, support national awareness's increase campaigns on safe and healthy diet and the benefits of breastfeeding, conduct research on the food environment in the markets and streets often

consumed by the Tajik population. WHO supports the Government in strengthening the prevention and control of different communicable diseases. WHO collaborates with WFP and UNICEF in preventing and addressing acute undernutrition.

#### **United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF).**

UNICEF's social protection work responds to the organization's mandate to support the realization of child rights, that is, the right of every child to benefit from social protection. Since 2015, UNICEF has been supporting the Inter-Ministerial Working Group and the MHSP in the development and costing of the new social protection strategy. In 2016, with UNICEF's financial and technical support, the MoHSP established a new Social Protection Policy Analysis Unit to improve the quality of data, data analysis and presentation in the social protection sector. UNICEF also supported the local government of the Rasht district to establish a new Social Assistance At Home Unit, thereby creating access to social services, referral and rehabilitation for children with disabilities. As part of its efforts to fill data gaps on children, UNICEF introduced real-time poverty monitoring focused on children (*Listening to Tajikistan*) in partnership with the World Bank.

#### **Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).**

FAO's assistance to Tajikistan focuses on achieving the following objectives: ensuring sustainable food security and nutrition through reforms, building capacity and supporting policies for national food security, rational use of natural resources, addressing land degradation, watershed management, sustainable productivity and competitive agriculture.

Since June 2016, the project Strengthening Institutions and Capacity of the Ministry of Agriculture and State Veterinary Inspection Service for Policy Formulation works to strengthen institutions and capacity in strategic decision making, planning, regulation, quality control and management in the food and agriculture sectors. FAO plans to implement the project Promoting Inclusive Economic Growth through Matching Grants, which aims to leverage the remittances of migrant workers to invest in the development of

family agriculture. Farmers may invest 50 percent of funds for the small-scale project and attract an additional 50 percent of funds from the project supported by FAO guidance. The project will generate evidence on the impact of an integrated approach on food security, nutrition and social protection outcomes and contribute to policy, legislative and programming processes at the country level.

FAO is also working to make social protection nutrition sensitive. The Social Protection PLUS approach looks to combine interventions to maximize impacts in social protection programmes by providing nutrition services and supporting local agricultural production. Some examples are combining cash transfers, school meals and procurement from local farmers and using pay points for cash transfers to implement nutritional and health talks and information sessions.

**The International Organization for Migration (IOM).** IOM takes a community approach to expanding social and economic opportunities for migrants and their families, focusing on areas of high return and outward migration in Khatlon, GBAO and Sughd. Livelihood interventions are a core component to foster resilience and build self-reliance for migrants and their families, as well as their communities. This is done through the rehabilitation of community infrastructure, providing in-kind grants for vulnerable community members to establish their own businesses and technical vocational education and training (TVET).

IOM also works at the community level to build the capacity of local actors on migration-related issues. The organization also focuses on health risks associated with migration and with human trafficking, and carries out capacity-building at the local level in migration-related issues.

**The World Bank (WB).** The WB is the government's partner in the currently piloted TSA programme. The organization is also involved in the development of the National Poverty Measurement Methodology of the Republic of Tajikistan, and is currently conducting a study, *Diagnosis of employment in Tajikistan: a strategic programme for creating jobs*".

**European Union.** The EU runs a Human Development Support Programme (European External Action Service, n.d.). The programme goal is to promote better health and social protection of the population, in particular the poor and the most vulnerable. The programme aims to develop the social service system and improve the public procurement of services from external suppliers.

**USAID.** USAID promotes economic growth, democracy, education, health and food security in Tajikistan. As part of the USAID Mission to Central Asia, USAID in Tajikistan advances the US Government's New Silk Road initiative, which increases regional connections between the economies and peoples of Central and South Asia (including Afghanistan) to foster greater stability and prosperity. Through Feed the Future, USAID addresses food insecurity by increasing agricultural productivity and profitability and improving nutrition. USAID strengthens local governance and contributes to the reform of basic education and health services.

To promote economic growth and regional connectivity, USAID supports energy, trade and water sector reforms and the development of a network of economic and transit connections across and between South and Central Asia. USAID is helping the government roll out new treatment regimens for tuberculosis and supports access to clean drinking water by helping municipalities install drinking water systems.

**UN Women.** UN Women has been in Tajikistan since 1999 and covers three priority areas: eradicating violence against women, empowering women economically, and women's participation in conflict prevention and management, including in the context of natural disasters.

UN Women programmes activities are focused on rural women's economic empowerment to improve the livelihoods of rural women affected by the socio-economic and financial downturn and natural disasters. Using the innovative Joint Economic Initiatives approach, UN Women supports women's entrepreneurial activities and the creation of job opportunities. Coupled with a strong social mobilization

approach, the initiative enabled poor women to realize income generation activities.

UN Women's Support to Civil Registration Reform project begun in 2016 aims to raise public awareness of civil registration reforms and advocates with the state institutions to ensure that the new legislative amendments do not harm women's status by increasing unregistered and early marriages.

UN Women also provided technical assistance to the government in mainstreaming gender issues in strategic policy and legal documents, among them the National Development Strategy till 2030, its mid-term strategy till 2020, amendments to the Labour Code, the National Strategy on labour till 2020, migration and employment and National Disaster Risk Management Strategy till 2020.

#### **Asian Development Bank (ADB).**

The Republic of Tajikistan is a member of the ADB. The strategic objective of the partnership is outlined in the ADB-Tajikistan Country Partnership Strategy 2016–2020 (ADB, 2016c), and the Country Operation Business Plan for 2017–2019. The primary goal of the partnership is to assist the government to achieve sustainable, inclusive economic growth decrease its vulnerability to external shocks and enhance the productivity of the labour force. This is envisioned through three pathways: (i) continued infrastructure investment; (ii) the integration of food security with value-chain development, climate change adaptation and water resource management; and (iii) the investment in climate reforms, in technical and vocational training.

### **4.5.3 THE UPCOMING SOCIAL PROTECTION STRATEGY**

**In 2016, the MHSP started drafting a new Social Protection Plan (SPP) to strengthen and reform its current system by 2025.** The aim is to create a "sustainable, high-quality, comprehensive and effective social protection system, which would ensure equitable access to minimum income, basic social services and food security for individuals and vulnerable families across the country" (Government of Tajikistan, 2016). However, because of the requirement of harmonization with the new

National Development Plan 2030, the reform strategy has not yet been approved. Given that the new draft of the SPP is not available, we rely on the initial SPP from 2016.

The initial SPP includes concrete milestones, organized thematically as follows: promoting and protecting the rights of vulnerable groups, capacity-building, improving accessibility and availability of social protection instruments and improving governance in social protection.

The document envisions a SPF floor providing basic income security at all stages of the life cycle, such as pregnancy

and early childhood, school age, working age and old age.

The SPP sets out to transform its social services system and provide integrated social services. This includes the development of single window access to services, the coordination and integration of child protection services with education and health sectors, the development of an interagency collaboration framework for service providers.

The government also plans to reform residential care for children, moving from a system dominated by residential institutions

towards family-type care provision, such as foster care and guardianship. To improve the quality and accessibility of services, the SPP will increase investment in the social work profession.

Reforming the legislative and administrative framework is a further – and essential – component of the SPP, which aims to achieve improved transparency, accountability, coherence of policies and institutions. If properly funded and implemented, the Tajik SPP could substantially improve the efficiency, effectiveness and equity of the social protection system.



WFP/Rustam Yuldashev



# 5. CHALLENGES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

## MESSAGES:

**There is a lack of promotive social protection measures, shock-responsive safety nets and nutrition-sensitive social protection in the country.**

**Institutional and implementation challenges pertain.**

**Fostering policy dialogue, improving policy design and policy implementation and ensuring sound public financial management of social protection are key for the future development of an effective social protection system in Tajikistan.**

**International development partners, particularly WFP, FAO and UNICEF, can play a major role in addressing these issues and supporting the government.**

**Tajikistan has the lowest GDP per capita in the region.** Remittances account for almost 50 percent of GDP, which makes the economy vulnerable to external shocks, particularly in the Russian Federation, where many Tajik migrants move. Even though economic growth has been positive and stable over the last years, growth is not particularly inclusive. Wages and social protection transfers, for example, are still low.

**Food insecurity and poverty remain challenging issues.** Undernourishment and stunting continue to increase and micronutrient deficiency is prevalent. Insufficient access to food is a key determinant of these problems.

**Poverty rates, even though decreasing, are still high and vary considerably across regions.** There is clearly a need for comprehensive safety nets to address poverty and food insecurity and to break the vicious cycle of hunger and poverty.

## 5.1 CHALLENGES

The interviews and the desk review have revealed several challenges of the Tajik social protection system, which are discussed below. These issues are not isolated; they interact, and are best addressed by a comprehensive reform of social protection.

### The three P's of social protection

**Protective** social protection includes ex-post measures that provide relief from deprivation and chronic poverty. TSA schemes and disaster relief belong here. **Preventive** measures are ex-ante policies that aim to avert deprivation and alleviate poverty. Social insurance, contributory pension systems, risk diversification strategies and informal ex-ante coping strategies belong to this group. **Promotive** measures seek to decrease vulnerability by promoting and stabilizing income and capital building. Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler (2004) mention school feeding and micro-credit programmes as promotive social protection instruments, the former as a tool to incentivize human capital formation, the latter to promote asset building. **Transformative** social protection measures go beyond consumption smoothing and redistribution policies and aim to reduce poverty and inequality by addressing social equity, exclusion and marginalization.

*Source: Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler (2004)*

The question of shock-responsive social protection can be linked to the three P's of social protection. Promotive measures, which are missing from the system, can contribute to the shock-resilience of the population. In addition to building sustainable asset bases and infrastructure, productive safety net programmes can mitigate the effects of natural disasters.

**Social protection in the Republic of Tajikistan currently does not apply a gender lens, and thus, does not contribute to gender equality.** It would be crucial to introduce transformative elements to social protection, but at the moment the mere mapping of the issue is difficult because of insufficient sex and age disaggregated data.

**A further gap in the system is the lack of nutrition objectives in social protection.** It is important to understand that improved food security outcomes are more than just a positive externality of social protection. Policymakers can and should incorporate nutrition objectives when designing and implementing programmes to reduce hunger and malnutrition. These effects can be further enhanced with nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive social protection programmes (UNICEF, 2013b).

Yet, school feeding is the only programme with a clear nutrition objective within the national policy framework. Nutrition objectives in social protection should acknowledge and address the vulnerability of certain groups to food insecurity and malnutrition. This includes socio-economic and physiological vulnerability. Programmes should be designed to ensure that pregnant and lactating women, infants, children and the elderly receive extra support to meet their nutrition needs.

### 5.1.2 GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE

Even if individual programmes are designed to meet all needs, governance and institutional arrangements can either increase or hinder the efficiency of policies. The institutional framework of social protection in Tajikistan is characterized by fragmentation. The central government, the

#### 5.1.1 GAPS AND NEGLECTED ISSUES

**One of the most pressing challenges in social protection is the lack of critical threads to the system.**

Although the social protection system generally is comprehensive, it fails to acknowledge and address some of the Tajik population's needs and vulnerabilities. The main missing elements are:

- Promotive social protection measures
- Shock-responsive safety nets
- Gender-sensitive social protection
- Nutrition-sensitive social protection

Social protection in the Republic of Tajikistan focuses predominantly on the preventive and protective functions. Protective measures have to be scaled up to achieve their desired impacts. Promotive social protection is de facto non-existent, with the exception of school feeding. The country context provides clear rationale for promotive safety nets. For example, the low productivity of the agricultural sector can be enhanced through the development of infrastructure and assets, which would provide long-term gains in livelihoods.

Any future reform to the system should include additional promotive measures, as their potential contribution to breaking the cycle of poverty is invaluable. The lack of productive employment opportunities is one of the biggest challenges faced by the Tajik

population. This, and the low productivity of the agricultural sector, could be addressed by cash for work programmes, if they create a productive, sustainable asset base and real infrastructure, and if they are part of a comprehensive system of active labour market policies.

**As noted earlier, Tajikistan is particularly vulnerable to shocks, since it is prone to natural disasters (exacerbated by climate change) and price fluctuations on the global markets.** The adverse effect of increases in food prices on household welfare, and the damage natural disasters can impose on livelihoods, have been demonstrated in the past and will be a risk in the future. It follows that Tajikistan's social protection system should be prepared to respond to covariate shocks and to mitigate their adverse effects.

**The social protection system is not prepared yet to cushion such shocks.** There are no mechanisms for social assistance to expand horizontally or vertically, and no funds are set aside for emergency purposes. The cash compensations for energy were in essence emergency assistance, as they responded to and mitigated the increase in energy prices. Other than this programme, which is currently being phased out, the Tajik social protection system has no shock responsive element. It is highly recommended that the government or its partners study the responsibility and resilience of the new TSA programme to future shocks.

ASIP, the SASP, the MHSP and numerous international development partners are involved in policy making. The functioning of the ASIP as a direct subordinate of the government makes coordination with the MHSP challenging.

In 2013, social protection, which was part of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, was moved to the MHSP. This shift had consequences at the central and local level for the design, management and implementation of social protection policies. After the move, the department heads are the most senior staff with expertise in social protection. The social protection sector as such is not represented in the high-level management of the MHSP. This puts social protection in a somewhat peripheral position within the ministry and makes it harder to advocate for policy reforms. According to our interviewees, social protection had a stronger position when it belonged to the MLME.

The shift of social protection to the Ministry of Health has arguably been favourable for certain target groups. People with disabilities could benefit from the new institutional arrangement, since the merger brought health and social protection closer together. But the link between labour and social protection became much weaker, when harmonization of policies in these two fields is essential for safety nets that can respond to people's needs.

### 5.1.3 POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

**The institutional change also created challenges for local government, which is responsible for the implementation of several social protection programmes.** The implementation of the TSA illustrates the challenges arising from the institutional transformation. When social protection was under the MLME, local employment offices, which are a subordinate part of the ministry's organization, would implement and administer social protection at the local level. After the change, officers responsible for the TSA could no longer use the MLME infrastructure. Social protection is now the task of local government staff, which is subordinate to local government. Moreover, the change also caused staff shortages at

the local level. Investing in local capacity will be essential for efficient implementation of the TSA and other social protection. This includes not only the employment of additional staff but also the training of qualified social workers. Moreover, the need for capacity strengthening is likely to increase once the TSA is rolled out in the entire country in 2018.

The school feeding programme is an invaluable addition to the national social protection system. Nonetheless, certain challenges should be addressed to further improve its impact and efficiency:

- Meals lack variety. To tackle this issue, WFP has developed a recipe book, which is highly popular and has won a prestigious award. However, greater variety in food items and increased incentives for school kitchen workers are needed.
- The salaries the schools pay cooks are very low.
- Beneficiary registry has weaknesses. The list of poor households of the MHSP and the list of poor households benefiting from WFP support do not match. Although this is not an issue for targeting (as every student in a beneficiary school receives meals),

making school feeding part of an overarching registry system would be important for coherent and harmonized monitoring and evaluation of social protection programmes.

### 5.1.4 FINANCING

**The financing of social protection is a further challenge for the country, especially given the ambitious plans to expand coverage and performance of social protection.** Several informants have mentioned budget constraints. As the World Bank and the EU projects are coming to an end in the upcoming years, there will be an increased need for donor support. The Government of Tajikistan is expected to need donor assistance in financing social protection. Regarding the strategy for reform in social protection, a costing exercise is currently being carried out by UNICEF Tajikistan. The results can guide the policy discussion on budgeting.

The country-wide roll-out of the TSA in 2018 is also expected to challenge the country's resources. In 2017, the TSA is expected to cost TJS 41.5 million. In 2018, this number is estimated to more than double, reaching TJS 85 million. With such substantial changes in budgetary requirements, it is essential that the government practices



strong and sustainable public finance management.

The financing of social pensions represents another challenge. Despite their non-contributory nature, social pensions are currently administered by the ASIP.

According to the legislation, social pensions are financed from the republican budget and not from the pension funds. However, since the resources transferred for this purpose from the republican budget are not sufficient for all social pension obligations, the deficit is regularly covered with resources from the pension funds. Such a practice can seriously endanger the sustainability of the entire pension scheme.

### 5.1.5 FUTURE THREATS TO THE SYSTEM

**Tajikistan has a young population, but ageing may challenge existing pensions in the future.** Moreover, much of the Tajik working-age population is working abroad, especially in the Russian Federation. This poses further challenges to the social protection system, particularly with respect to pensions. Migrant workers are not paying taxes and contributions in the Republic of

Tajikistan and therefore do not earn future entitlements for pensions and other social insurance benefits. Once migrants return to Tajikistan and reach retirement age, it can cause a severe strain on the republican budget.

There have been discussions between the Republic of Tajikistan and the Russian Federation to find a solution to this issue. In 2004, an agreement was signed between the two countries, making it possible for migrant workers in Russia to keep their labour card, which keeps track of their employment history.

This, however, only applies to a small, formally employed part of all migrant workers. Discussions about intergovernmental agreements will be held with the governments of Belarus, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan to find a suitable solution for the issue.

## 5.2 THE WAY FORWARD – POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

**All interviewed development partners and government representatives greatly appreciate the work of WFP in Tajikistan.** The government and WFP are drafting new social protection strategies, which provides a window of opportunity for

strategic alignment and cooperation. What follows is a set of recommendations for the Government of Tajikistan, the WFP and other development partners, based on the caveats and bottlenecks identified in the study.

### 5.2.1 FOSTERING POLICY DIALOGUE

**Policy dialogue on the upcoming strategies should be underpinned by a set of minimum standards on social protection, food security, nutrition and healthcare.** A common agreement on standards is crucial, especially when many stakeholders (as in the case of Tajikistan) are involved.

**WFP could take the lead on fostering the policy dialogue on minimum standards.** Minimum standards for social protection should refer to ILO's SPF recommendation, since it covers the basic livelihood needs throughout the life cycle and is already embedded in the international and national policy arena.

The local context of vulnerability to shocks and unemployment provides solid rationale for strengthening promotive safety nets. In addition to the protective function covered by the SPF, all “three P's” of social protection (as described by Devereux and



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Sabates-Wheeler, 2004) should be part of the established minimum standards.

WFP has the expertise to develop further standards in food security and nutrition, in cooperation with the national governments, the FAO, WHO and UNICEF (among other possible partners). This would help mainstream nutrition objectives within social protection and could contribute to better integration among policies in social protection, agriculture, health and food security.

## 5.2.2 ADDRESSING CRITICAL GAPS

**Shock-responsive social protection is lacking but it should be a focal point of any upcoming strategy.**

The WFP's expertise in disaster risk management can be a valuable addition to Tajikistan's policy process. Since the country is one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world and the most vulnerable to climate change in the region, WFP's advice on how to create a shock-resilient and shock-responsive social protection system could be crucial. The Emergency Preparedness Activities carried out in 2016 in Armenia, led by WFP, can serve as a best practice to mobilize the government and the development community.

WFP is committed to promoting gender equity, as demonstrated by its Gender Policy 2015–2020. As Chapter 2 revealed, girls and women are more affected by poverty and food insecurity than boys and men. Women are also in a vulnerable position in the labour market and have low participation in the political process. WFP should pay attention to achieving its Gender Policy objectives to avoid reinforcing gender inequalities and to make use of emerging opportunities to create sustainable and empowering changes for particular groups of women, men, girls and boys.

A reasonable starting point would be to advocate for and support the collection of sex- and age-disaggregated data for a detailed and evidence-based diagnosis of the nature and extent of gender inequalities. As a strategic advisor to the government, the WFP should advocate for the inclusion of gender considerations in the new national social protection strategy.

## 5.2.3 STRENGTHENING GOVERNANCE

**It is essential to develop a plan for inter-agency cooperation in social protection to strengthen the link between different ministries and government agencies.**

The new SPP should rethink the institutional structures. A possibility for harmonized administration could be the expansion of the software developed for targeted social assistance. As the programme seems to be well-functioning, it could be used as a uniform tool across social protection programmes and across agencies. This would simplify data sharing, and reduce the resources and capacity needed for policy administration and monitoring. Hence, it is important that the new Social Protection Plan is approved and signed soon, since the existing issues cannot be addressed without a clear national agenda.

## 5.2.4 STRENGTHENING SOCIAL PROTECTION PROGRAMMES

**Low coverage and the adequacy of social assistance remain important issues.**

The government plans to gradually increase the share of the poor and vulnerable covered by social protection transfers. TSA is a critical instrument for improving income security.

The TSA has the potential to overcome the fragmentation and low coverage of the current system, since it will become the country's flagship means-tested social assistance programme and will cover the poor in a systematic way that no current transfer scheme does. How this will be delivered should be a part of the government's upcoming social protection strategy.

Expert advice from the ILO and the ADB can be valuable in meeting the financial requirements of upscaling the TSA programme.

The creation of a monitoring and evaluation framework, and building up the capacity to carry out these tasks, should receive special attention. This is a time when substantial reforms in social protection are expected, which offers a window of opportunity for enhancing monitoring and evaluation of

programmes. The lessons learned through regular policy monitoring and evaluation can guide evidence-based policy making and contribute to the further improvement of social protection's performance. A new social protection policy analysis unit, currently under the Institute of Disability, will oversee the monitoring the new SPP.

It is envisaged that by 2018 the new unit will be fully funded and integrated in the MHSP. The beneficiary registry system developed for TSA should be made an integral part of the unit's monitoring and evaluation strategy.

**Strengthening cooperation between the government and WFP, with the eventual goal of transforming the school feeding programme into a sustainable, country-owned and widespread programme, should be a key priority.**

The President of Tajikistan has already signed legislation to take over and expand the school feeding programme currently operated with the WFP.

Besides taking government ownership of this nutrition specific social protection programme by 2021, targets include the scaling up of school feeding and the incorporation of specific educational, social protection and nutritional objectives. The legislation sets out to transform it into a home-grown school feeding programme to boost local food production.

The decision mandates the government to develop the necessary legislative, budgetary, management and monitoring system for a country-wide scheme (WFP, 2016a).

Further cooperation with the government is needed, since the standards of meals and kitchens, and the low quality of infrastructure at schools is a severe problem that WFP cannot address alone.

The government envisions the consolidation of development gains, combined with efficient and increased social protection, with objectives and harmonization of food security, education and health care. WFP and other partners (for example, UNICEF) can advise the government how to address cross-cutting issues and design cross-sectoral policies.

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# ANNEXES

## A.1. BRIEF METHODOLOGICAL NOTE ON POVERTY CALCULATION

### NATIONAL POVERTY LINE AND EXTREME (FOOD) POVERTY LINE

Poverty indices at the national poverty line are derived from the Tajik Household Budget Survey. This survey has been conducted quarterly since 2009 by TajStat, and is representative on the national, urban/rural and regional level. The quarterly surveying of households allows for the measurement of fluctuations of poverty rates within a year.

The absolute poverty line is defined using a cost of basic needs method. The poverty cut-off point equals the sum of two components: a food poverty line and an allowance for non-food consumption. The food (extreme) poverty line captures the cost of consuming a diet of daily 2,250 kilocalories per capita.

The poverty line for 2014 has been set at TJS 158.71 per capita per month. The base poverty line for 2014 is updated quarterly, using the consumer price index weighted by the median shares of food and non-food consumption.

*Source: Tajstat (2015). Poverty measurement in Tajikistan:*

*A methodological note. Dushanbe: Tajstat*

### SUBSISTENCE MINIMUM

The subsistence minimum is derived from a consumer basket that allows for a socially acceptable minimum standard of living, and consists of the following elements:

1. **A set of food products**, considering:
  - the composition of nutrients and the energy value of food ;
  - the current structure of actual consumption of food in poor families; and
  - choice of food products, allowing to organize a healthy diet at minimum cost.

Foods included in the minimum set are divided into 11 groups:

- Bread, bread products, legumes and cereals
- potatoes
- vegetables and melons
- fresh fruit
- sugar and confectionery products
- meat products
- fish products
- milk and milk products
- eggs
- vegetable oil, margarine and other fats
- other products

2. **Set of non-food products**, considering:

- the existing level of provision of low-income households with non-food products;
- Renewability
- Minimal diversity
- Low retail price
- Accessibility and security

A set of non-food items contains:

- Clothes
- Shoes
- School-related goods for children
- bedding (bedspreads, mattresses and pillows)
- Essentials, sanitation and medicines
- goods for cultural and household purposes

3. **Services**, considering: the minimum needs of the population in housing and communal services, household services, transport and communication services. Services in health, education, culture, and social work services are not included in the minimum set of services. In accordance with the legislation of the Republic of Tajikistan, the minimum volumes of these services are provided to the population free of charge by organizations financed from budgets of various levels and state social extra-budgetary funds.

*Source: Government of Tajikistan (2012)*

## A.2. TABLES

TABLE 19. DISTRIBUTION OF THE WORKING POPULATION AMONG SECTORS

	The total employed population, Thousand people	Average number of employees for hire			Employed as% of the total number of employees
		Both sexes, thousand people	Men, %	Women, %	
<b>Real sector</b>	<b>1,682.7</b>	<b>611</b>	<b>61.3</b>	<b>43.1</b>	<b>36.3</b>
Agriculture, hunting and forestry	1,526.2	496.4	51.9	48.1	32.5
Fish farming	0.2	0.2	85.0	15.0	100
Mining industry	12	12	87.5	12.5	100
Manufacturing industry	65.7	59.5	70.1	29.9	90.6
Electricity, gas and water supply	19.5	19.5	84.1	15.9	100
Construction	59.1	23.4	91.0	9.0	39.6
<b>The service sector</b>	<b>624.6</b>	<b>454.4</b>	<b>52.0</b>	<b>48.0</b>	<b>72.7</b>
Trade, repair	135.7	24	74.6	25.4	17.7
Hotels and restaurants	7.4	5.2	57.7	42.3	70.3
Transport, warehousing and communications	55	26.1	76.2	23.8	47.5
Financial intermediation	20.8	20.1	70.1	29.9	96.6
Real estate transactions	18.5	16.2	71.0	29.0	87.6
State administration and defense, compulsory soc. insurance	32.9	32.8	65.5	34.5	99.7
Education	201.3	201.2	46.3	53.7	99.9
Health and social services	90.6	90.2	34.9	65.1	99.6
Other communal, social and personal services	59.9	36.2	58.8	41.2	60.4
Extraterritorial organizations and bodies	2.4	2.4	66.7	33.3	100
<b>All industries</b>	<b>2,307.3</b>	<b>1,065.4</b>	<b>54.7</b>	<b>45.3</b>	<b>46.2</b>

Source: TajStat

### A.3. INTERVIEWS

#### INFORMANT INTERVIEWS:

- Zamira Komilova, EC Project on Social Services;
- Dragan Aleksoski, Chief of Mission, International Organization for Migration;
- Parvina Tajibaeva, Country Representative Caritas Germany in Tajikistan;
- Shodibeg Kodyrov, NGO Economy and Education;
- Kakhramon Bakozada, Research Center Zerkalo;
- Nazokat Odinzoda, Deputy Director of Agency on State Social Insurance and Pensions;
- Yusuf Kurbonkhojaev, Social Policy Officer, UNICEF Tajikistan;
- Kulov Abdevali, Head of Demography and Social Statistics Department, Agency of Statistics under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan (TajStat);
- Vania Tomeva, Team Leader, Support to the Public Internal and Financial Control in Tajikistan EU project in Ministry of Finance;
- Emma Khachatryan, Programme Officer, World Food Programme Tajikistan;
- Farida Muminova, Daring Rahman Jahan Afroz, and Davlatov Umed Abdulalievich, Center for Strategic Studies under the President of Tajikistan;
- Rajab Radjabov, Head of Labour Relations and Living Standards of the Population; Mahmadbekov Moyonsh, Head of Department of Migration Population;
- Khimatsho Muzafarov, Head of Labour Market Department; Ministry of Labour, Migration and Employment;
- Jamshed Karimov, representative of the World Bank's project on targeted social assistance;
- Zoirjon Shapirov, Programme Associate, UNDP Tajikistan;
- Theo Kurbanov, Head of Social Protection Department, Ministry of Health and Social Protection;
- Hadija Boimatova, Nutrition and Food Safety Specialist, World Health Organization Tajikistan;
- Malika Makhkambaeva, USAID Tajikistan;
- Ibrohim Ahmadov, FAO Tajikistan;
- Alisher Rajabov, World Bank, Tajikistan;
- Alexi Sluchynskyy, World Bank, Washington DC (skype).





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