



Annex 1: The Case of Tajikistan:

Some Issues for Discussion

Background

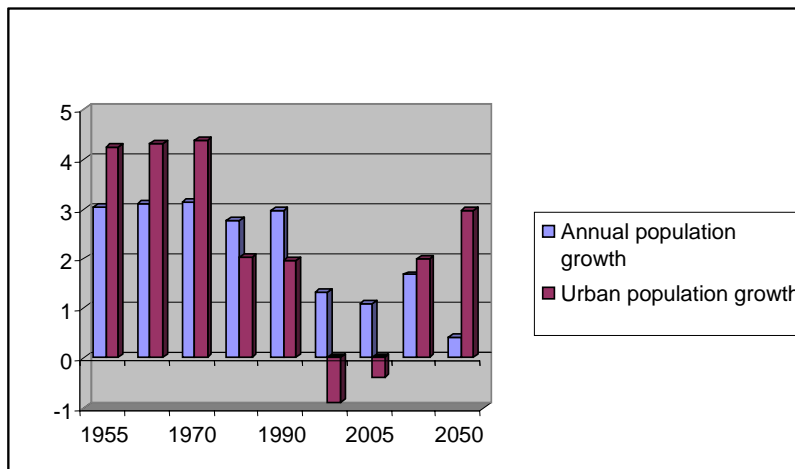
1. Tajikistan is the poorest country in Central Asia: 64 percent of the population live below the poverty line of US\$2 per person per day. It is a landlocked country of diverse geographic, ecological and production systems that ranks 122nd of 177 in the United Nations human development index. The unofficial unemployment rate is estimated at 33 percent. Remittances from nationals working abroad are a major source of household income: because of this labour migration, Tajikistan has the largest number of households headed by women in Central Asia; this exacerbates gender inequalities and places additional burdens on women, who are disproportionately affected by poverty and discrimination. Tajikistan is affected by frequent natural disasters including earthquakes, landslides, mudflows, avalanches and floods.
2. Apart from cotton and aluminium, Tajikistan has limited domestic industry and few exports. The country suffered major damage in the civil war that began shortly after independence in 1991 and ended in 1997. Relief programmes that had become semi-permanent after independence began to phase out in 2006 and 2007: assistance has subsequently shifted to long-term development.
3. An energy crisis that started in December 2007 has resulted in cuts in electricity supplies to rural areas. Supplies from neighbouring Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan have been blocked, resulting in further shortages of gas and electricity, which has had a knock-on effect on food supplies and prices.
4. Tajikistan is a net importer of food and fuel. Since the end of 2007, the prices of oil, bread and wheat-based products have doubled, mainly because of the high prices of wheat and other foods on international markets. Prices remain high despite government efforts to stabilize them. In February 2008, the United Nations launched a flash appeal that called for an increase in food supplies through direct assistance and support for livelihoods and crop and animal production.

Population Growth and Urbanization in Tajikistan

5. Tajikistan is the least urban of all the former Soviet republics. In the 1980s there were 19 cities and 49 “urban-type settlements” – the term for populated places used by Soviet planners. At the time of the first Soviet census in 1926, when Tajikistan was an autonomous republic of Uzbekistan, only 10 percent of its inhabitants lived in cities; by the 1959 census, the figure was 33 percent. This growth reflected the development of Tajikistan and the resettlement of people from other parts of the Soviet Union to occupy government, party and military positions. Most of the immigrants went to Tajikistan’s two largest cities, Dushanbe and Leninobod (now Istaravshan). During the period before 1960, some populated places were reclassified as “urban” or incorporated into an existing city, which created an impression of greater urbanization.

6. The growth of the urban population continued from 1945 through to 1980. Between the 1959 and 1979 censuses, Tajikistan's urban population more than doubled; the rural population increased almost as rapidly. By the 1970s, however, the rate of rural population growth had begun to outstrip that of urban areas; after a peak of 35 percent in the 1979 census, the proportion of the population declined.
7. According to the 1989 census, the proportion of urban inhabitants had declined to 32.5 percent even though Tajikistan's urban population had increased by 26 percent in the 1980s. By 1991, the five largest cities – Dushanbe, Khujand, Kulob, Qurghonteppa and Uroteppa – accounted for 17 percent of the population. The 1979 census showed emigration from cities exceeding immigration into them; in the 1980s, urban immigrants came predominantly from Tajikistan itself rather than from other Soviet republics, as had been the case in earlier decades. As other ethnic groups emigrated from Tajikistan more rapidly, beginning in the late Soviet period, the percentage of Tajiks in the cities rose. Nevertheless, Tajiks were one of the Soviet nationalities least likely to move from villages to cities; those who did so were usually single men reacting to the scarcity of employment in rural areas.
8. Until 2005, the urban growth rate in Tajikistan was slower than the global rate; it was negative between 2000 and 2005 (see Graph 1). However, projections are forecasting a change in the trend in line with global trends and a higher growth rate in urban areas than in rural areas from 2015.

Graph 1: Population Growth in Tajikistan (%)



Source: Globalis: <http://globalis.gvu.unu.edu>

Urban Food Security¹

How many people are food-insecure?²

9. It is estimated that 500,000 people in urban areas are food-insecure: i) 200,000 people, 15 percent of the urban population, are severely food-insecure: the diversity of their diet – mainly bread, potatoes and pasta, with little oil, sugar and vegetables and no pulses or animal products – is poor; children eat twice a day, adults less than twice; and ii) 300,000 people, 22 percent, are moderately

¹ WFP. 2008. *Emergency Food Security Assessment in Urban Areas of Tajikistan*. Rome.

² The figures are extrapolated from the percentages in the seven sampled towns, which represent 25 percent of the urban population. A household survey is recommended to determine the main characteristics of food-insecure households in the towns not sampled, to refine the estimates and inform programming. In the sampled towns, 21 percent of households were severely food-insecure, 34 percent moderately food-insecure and 45 percent food-secure.

food-insecure: their diet, which is slightly better but still inadequate, entails the risk of mineral and vitamin deficiencies in the short and medium term; adults and children eat twice a day on average.

10. Acute and chronic malnutrition rates among children under 5 indicate a “poor” situation by international standards: 7.8 percent were wasted and 20.5 percent stunted. Acute malnutrition is higher in urban areas than the 4.7 percent in rural areas; chronic malnutrition is lower at 27.5 percent, but the differences are not significant.
11. About 63 percent of the urban population is food-secure. These figures are similar to the estimates for rural areas made in May 2008 at the peak of the lean season – 11 percent food-insecure, 23 percent moderately food-insecure and 66 percent food-secure.

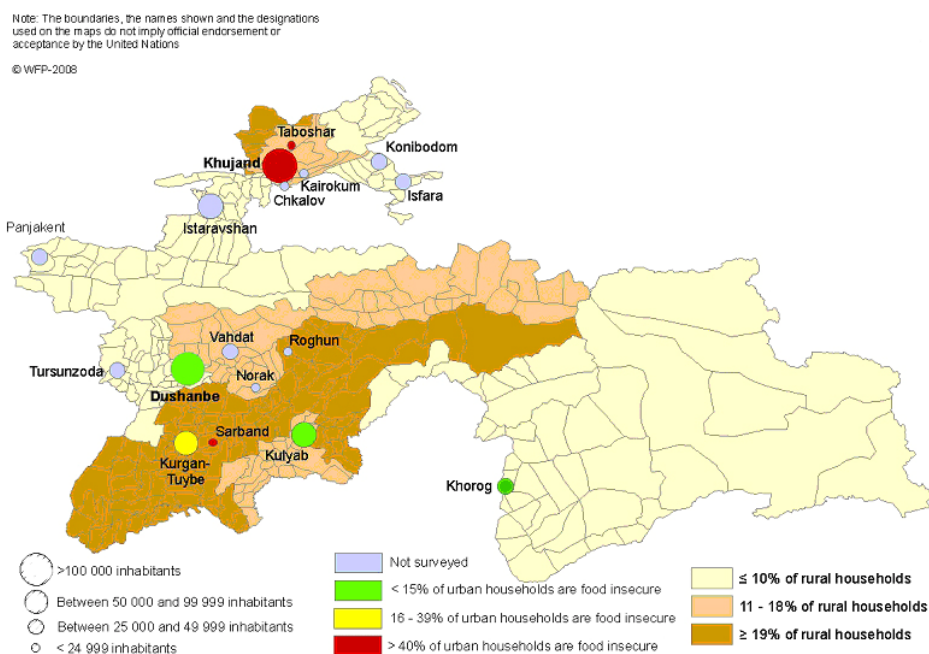
Who is food-insecure?

12. The socio-economic characteristics of food-insecure households are comparable in different towns.
13. Severely food-insecure households:
 - cannot afford a basic food basket of wheat, oil and sugar; bread, potatoes, oil and sugar are the main purchases; health is the main non-food expenditure at 9 percent of the total;
 - have their main income as follows: 30 percent depend on pensions and allowances; 21 percent depend on remittances; 21 percent rely on casual work; 20 percent receive government salaries; other earnings are low and irregular; 60 percent of households have only a single member able to earn an income;
 - own few assets; very few have any cash or savings; most do not have access to a home garden; the 15 percent who have such access cultivate on average only 0.02 ha;
 - are usually not self-sufficient in vegetables or fruit for more than a month; only 8 percent own sheep, goats or poultry; and
 - in nearly 50 percent of cases are headed by women, twice the proportion for food-secure households, and have on average 4.4 members rather than the 6 in other households.
14. Moderately food insecure-households:
 - can just afford a basic food basket of staples;
 - have incomes as follows: 64 percent have a single member earning an income and rely on a single source of income; 40 percent receive government salaries; 32 percent depend on remittances, 10 percent on day casual work; the remainder engage in a combination of petty trade and self-employment;
 - have a low asset base: 13 percent have cash or other savings; 17 percent have access to a home garden, of an average 0.022 ha; slightly more than half can be self-sufficient for up to three months in fruit and vegetables; 15 percent raise sheep, goats or poultry; and
 - in 33 percent of cases are headed by women.
15. Food-secure households:
 - have more income-earning members – two in about 50 percent of cases – and higher incomes; activities are similar to those in food-insecure households; and
 - have access to a home garden in 30 percent of cases, twice as many as other households, and cultivate a larger average area of 0.032 ha; 70 percent are self-sufficient in fruit and vegetables for up to three months; 26 percent raise animals.

Where are the food-insecure people?

16. The highest proportions of food-insecure households were in Taboshar (89 percent), Khujand (82 percent), Sarband (71 percent) and Kurgan-Tuybe (58 percent). The highest proportions of severely food-insecure households were in Khujand (45 percent) and Taboshar (46 percent), both of which are in the Sughd region. The highest proportions of moderately food-insecure households were in Sarband (59 percent), Taboshar (43 percent), Kurgan-Tuybe (42 percent) and Khujand (37 percent).

Map 1: Food Security in Urban and Rural Areas



Why are they food-insecure?

17. Food insecurity in Tajikistan is mainly a result of poor access to food. Urban households are largely dependent on markets: few can produce their own food, and those who cultivate gardens or raise animals cannot cover their needs for more than a few months. Their income therefore determines their food purchasing capacity, which is limited by lack of employment and widespread poverty.
18. This chronic food insecurity and vulnerability has been exacerbated in the past year by increased food prices, electricity and gas cuts, decreased employment and lower salaries.
19. Severely food-insecure households are mostly affected by structural factors that reflect chronic food insecurity – lack of members able to work, low incomes, lack of access to credit or capital, old age and disease.
20. About 80 percent of moderately food-insecure households are also chronically food-insecure. Rising food prices have clearly exacerbated the situation for all chronically food-insecure households. The remaining food-insecure households are considered to be transiently food-insecure because they have the capacity to recover from the current crisis by themselves, often relying on remittances from elsewhere.
21. Most households allocate two thirds of their expenditures to food. There is little margin to increase expenditure on food except by reducing expenditure on other essentials such as health, schooling and heating fuel.
22. Households have evolved various coping mechanisms to address their increasing difficulties. Food-insecure households were more frequently engaged in strategies that entailed negative effects on health and livelihoods in the short or medium term: i) 80 percent incurred new debt in the preceding six months, mainly for food; ii) three quarters reduced the amounts consumed at meals or reduced the number of meals per day; a similar proportion borrowed food or relied on help from others; iii) almost half reduced their health expenditures, compared with a quarter of food-secure households; and iv) between 10 percent and 12 percent took children out of school, compared with 4 percent of food-secure households. A staggering 40 percent of severely food-insecure households and 20 percent of moderately food-insecure households spent entire days without eating.

23. Less damaging strategies such as assistance from relatives, migration or searching for work were used by a limited number of households.
24. The combination of household food insecurity, inadequate complementary feeding practices and frequent sickness is a likely explanation for the high proportion of malnourished children.

Recommended response options³

25. The most food-insecure people include households headed by women, pensioners and households with sick members. The youngest and school-age children in these households are particularly at risk in terms of nutrition and education.
26. The situation of chronically food-insecure households – 33 percent of the urban population, 437,000 people – is unlikely to improve unless prices decrease dramatically and pensions and wages are increased to reflect inflation and high food prices.
27. The following short term interventions are necessary:
 - time-bound transfers of food, cash or vouchers, or combinations of these, to improve the diet of severely food-insecure households and prevent further degradation of the diet of moderately food-insecure households;
 - targeted supplementary feeding and home-based food fortification for children, linked to communication and sensitization activities, to restore the nutritional status of malnourished individuals; and
 - school feeding and exemption from fees – or cash or vouchers – for healthcare and school expenses for the poorest households to halt the decline in the use of health care services and restore access.
28. The following parallel longer-term interventions are recommended:
 - set up safety nets for chronically food-insecure households with a single income-earner, using transfers of cash or vouchers;
 - advocate for improved child feeding and complementary feeding;
 - advocate for an adjustment of pensions, allowances and wages for casual labour;
 - support or launch public works and employment programmes for households with members looking for work; and
 - provide start-up grants or credit and technical assistance for small businesses.
29. For the 4 percent of the population – 59,000 people – estimated to be moderately and transitorily food insecure, no interventions are needed in the short term because their situation is expected to improve with the receipt of new remittances. Targeting these households is a challenge: self-targeting mechanisms or transfers subject to conditions are options that should be explored.

Programmes and coordination mechanisms in Tajikistan – UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and WFP

30. The United Nations is committed to assisting the Government of Tajikistan in attaining the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, as articulated in the National Development Strategy and the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP). The United Nations agencies in Tajikistan are resolved to work more effectively and efficiently together, and with national counterparts and other partners, to overcome the economic, social and political obstacles to development.
31. The United Nations agencies in Tajikistan are committed to: i) closer collaboration through programme integration at the policy and field levels; ii) continued expansion of common services; and iii) improved capacity to deliver as one. By 2009, the United Nations aims to have sufficiently integrated planning and implementation processes to make Tajikistan one of the 20 pilot countries with a joint office, in line with the recommendations of the High-Level Panel on System-Wide Coherence.

³ WFP. 2008. *Emergency Food Security Assessment in Urban Areas of Tajikistan*. Rome.

Programmes

32. The goals of WFP's assistance are to: i) improve food security at the household level; ii) preserve and rehabilitate assets; iii) increase food production; and iv) promote investment in human capital. This is being accomplished through a combination of continued relief assistance for vulnerable groups and victims of natural disaster, and implementation of recovery activities such food for work, supplementary feeding and support for tuberculosis patients. Food for education also contributes to the development of human capital and to government priorities to increase school enrolment and enhance primary education, both of which are cited in the PRSP.
33. Cooperation with UNICEF aims to: i) support the development of a policy environment for the feeding of young children; and ii) improve the nutritional status of children under 2 through the promotion of exclusive breast-feeding, appropriate and timely complementary feeding practices for babies over 6 months and enrichment of children's food with micronutrients at the household level. The UNICEF country programme supports the establishment of new therapeutic feeding centres and enhancement of the capacity of the health system to respond promptly to nutrition problems, particularly those affecting children and their families.

Coordination mechanisms

34. Coordination mechanisms initiated during the most acute phase of the humanitarian emergency have evolved into sector-specific coordination groups, with agency and multi-sectoral government participation in dealing with relief and development issues. Regular meetings are held for major sectors; meetings are called as required on other topics of interest. The lead agencies usually chair the sector groups.