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TAJIKISTAN

SUCCESS STORY

Restoring the Peace

Rehabilitated Water Pump Reduces Tension Among Communities in Panjakent District



Former adversaries, Turks and Tajiks working together towards rehabilitating a community irrigation system.

A USAID-funded project help two adjacent communities renovate their irrigation system, thus resolving a decades-long water-based tension between the neighbors.

In a remote and isolated region of Tajikistan, USAID's Peaceful Communities Initiative Project (PCI) helped end a decades-long dispute over water between two communities in Jamoat Hurmi in Panjakent District. The project, implemented by Mercy Corps,

rehabilitated a water pump, which has not worked in the 15 years since Tajikistan's independence.

The lack of sufficient irrigation water had caused continuous tension between the ethnic Turk minority community in the village of Shingak and the neighboring village of Garibak that was inhabited by Tajiks. "People didn't adhere to the water regime, and as a result, there were conflicts," one resident said. Despite their dire need for irrigated water, the villagers could not afford to renovate the pump or the irrigation system themselves, and were not able to secure the government support for it either. Each year, the villagers would attempt to secure what little water they could get for their orchards, but with a defunct pump,

the water was always to scarce.

When the USAID-funded project approached these communities with the potential for assistance, village leaders immediately agreed that the irrigation system rehabilitation project was top priority. Residents of the once-adversarial neighboring villages began working together to restore their irrigation system. With funding from USAID, the villagers cleaned canals and the pump reservoir, constructed a new guard station, and renovated the pump and the station house. Additionally, the communities laid new pipes to provide sufficient irrigation water to 75 hectares of land.

Now the former adversaries enjoy the results of their joint efforts and USAID assistance. Apricot trees grow on a majority of the irrigated land, and the valuable fruit brings from 30 to 60 cents a kilogram for the farmers. When dried, apricots earn as much as two dollars. "This pump has greatly changed our lives," said the leader of the Garibak Dekhan farm on behalf of his community.