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CASE STUDY

Water from Faucets, Not from Streets

USAID brings water to residents who had to fetch water by buckets from street pumps

A happy resident of Sarband in a multi-floor apartment turns on the faucet to bring water to her kitchen. Photo: Urban Institute

"The local government and the residents of Sarband are grateful to USAID for it technical assistance, help in conducting citizen education activities, and the financial support to ensure that people have access to running water in their homes."

- Mr. Rajabov, Chairman of Sarband Municipality

Challenge

Like many towns in Tajikistan, Sarband (population 12,000) in Khatlon Province, was acutely affected by post-Soviet civil strife and general economic malaise. In particular, its water supply system has succumbed to a lack of financial resources and experienced technicians. Among those hardest hit by the crumbling infrastructure were residents living in Sarband's 63 multi-story apartment buildings. The location of the water pumping station, two miles from town, and water loss from leaking pipes and illegal siphoning – totaling almost half the amount from source to home – led to a huge drop in pressure, and water rarely reached the residences. For over six years, people brought all water for home use from street pumps, carrying it in pails.

Initiative

In early 2008, USAID provided a $13,000 grant to the local government of Sarband to bring potable water into residences. USAID's Local Governance and Citizen Participation project also brought specialists to help reconstruct wells, install two new high-performance pumps and an electrical security system, as well as detect and stop leaks and illegal connections. The USAID project also trained personnel at the municipal utility company in technical and management skills, and together with the city officials conducted public campaigns to educate people on conservation techniques and on the relationship between water fees and usage.

Result

Due to this comprehensive approach, the number of residents who received regular access to water jumped 90 percent, from 6,000 to 10,500, while water consumption decreased by 20 percent. The information campaign also led to a significant increase in the rate of fee collection. The local government plans to use the funds to upkeep the water supply system, so that the situation does not revert to the previous state.

"We thought that this undertaking was going to cost tens of thousands of dollars," says Rajabov, Chairman of Sarband Municipality. "But the solution turned out to be less expensive, simpler, and more reliable. Together with USAID, we put tremendous efforts into finding the right solution."