



Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

Online Version: <https://www.feedthefuture.gov/article/tajikistan-water-users-associations-help-diversify-agriculture-and-build-communities>

In Tajikistan, Water Users Associations Help Diversify Agriculture and Build Communities



USAID / Tajikistan

Chairwoman Mamlakat Abduqahorova leads her peers in maintaining irrigation canals in Khatlon, Tajikistan.

Mamlakat Abduqahorova has been successfully chairing the Havaskor-1 Water Users Association in rural Khatlon, Tajikistan since its formation a year ago, and is one of a select few women nationwide who lead such groups.

It's an important job, because the economy and food security in Abduqahorova's district depend in large part on its irrigation-fed agriculture system, which was developed during Soviet rule to support cotton crops.

The irrigation system was in need of serious upgrades in order to help farmers diversify agricultural production, as cotton is no longer profitable.

"No one wanted to take responsibility for its maintenance and improvement within the last 15 to 17 years," Abduqahorova says of the irrigation system. "People were too busy with their own problems and the government did not have enough funds."

In Tajikistan, Feed the Future improves farmers' access to irrigation water in part by helping water users associations better manage and operate their own irrigation systems. This includes planning fair and efficient distribution of water and performing necessary maintenance on irrigation infrastructure. As part of its Feed the Future activities in the country, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has helped form over 50 water users associations organized into four federations, benefitting over 200,000 people in Tajikistan.

These associations are not only essential to sustaining agricultural livelihoods, they also play an important role in community development - water users working together along irrigation canals build and share critical knowledge on water-borne diseases, food preservation, and children's nutrition. The associations also provide opportunities for women's participation and leadership.

"Working in the fields, women experience firsthand how lack of water affects the ability of crops to grow," says Abduqahorova. "Women with leadership skills are taking more initiative, organizing their own farms and employing other women on their farms."

Abduqahorova is committed to building irrigation management systems that can be effectively maintained in the long term. "We want to make Havaskor-1 sustainable," she says. "We'll continue maintenance of canals and rehabilitating water gates

to provide the farmers conditions for better harvests. We put a lot of our time and effort into this process and as a result will never let it collapse again.”