

**United States Agency for International Development
Bureau of Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian
Assistance
Office of Food for Peace**

**Fiscal Year 2010 Annual Results Report
Single-Year Assistance Program**

**Save the Children/Tajikistan
FFP-A-10-00003**

Submission Date: 11/01/10

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List of Acronyms

BCC	Behavior Change Communication
CDH	Community District Hospital
CHW	Community Health Worker
CERT	Community Emergency Response Team
CS	Cooperating Sponsor
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
FFW	Food for Work
FY	Fiscal Year
HF	Health Facility
IPTT	Indicator Performance Tracking Table
LOA	Life of Award
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MC	Mercy Corps
MCH	Maternal and Child Health
MoH	Ministry of Health
MT	Metric Ton
NSG	Nutrition Support Group
SAPQ	Standardized Annual Performance Questionnaire
SC	Save the Children
SO	Social Organization
SR	Strategic Result
SYAP	Single-Year Assistance Program
ToT	Training of Trainers
TJS	Tajik Somoni
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WFP	World Food Program
WHO	World Health Organization
WSSG	Women Self Support Group

1. Introduction: Annual Food Aid Program Results

Save the Children (SC) is implementing the Single-Year Assistance Program (SYAP) in partnership with Mercy Corps (MC). SC works in 221 villages across 34 jamoats in 13 districts in the Khatlon Region located in southern Tajikistan. MC, the sub-grantee, is operating in 79 villages across 10 jamoats in 3 districts in the mountainous Rasht Valley northeast of the country's capital. During the reporting period, **24,816 families (170,110 people¹)** were reached with food aid and/or participated in health, agricultural complimentary and disaster risk reduction (DRR) activities. The total amount of commodities distributed to beneficiaries between October 2009 and September 2010 by SC and MC was **3,953.58 MT** including 2,472.73 MT of wheat flour, 968.43 MT of lentils, 312.42 MT of vegetable oil, and 200.00 MT of yellow peas. Additionally, to support the development of local civil society organizations SC worked with seven local NGOs, providing them with 102.30 MT of commodities and assisting them in implementation of small scale distribution projects. These projects included conducting trainings on preservation of fruits and vegetables, the reduction of diarrhea and child mortality including infant and young child feeding practices, and hygiene and sanitation norms and practices (cleaning of streets, channels and ditches from mud/debris, the rehabilitation of storm water retention pools to prevent disaster consequences, and increase the effectiveness of agricultural lands).

The goal of SYAP is to reduce acute food insecurity for disaster-affected rural Tajikistan households through timely distribution of commodities and appropriate nutrition messages. Throughout the life of the project, the focus has been on two strategic objectives:

SO 1: Families enabled to maintain nutritional status of vulnerable members following natural disasters and severe crop losses.

SO 2: Communities and households better-prepared to reduce or mitigate future risks.

To lay the groundwork for the program, SC staff collaborated with local governments and disseminated information about the SYAP to local community leaders. Following initial meetings SC conducted community-wide meetings to familiarize participants with the SYAP and its goals in public spaces in the target communities. These meeting were attended by heads of villages, religious authorities, and community members to ensure (1) beneficiaries and stakeholders were aware of the aims and approaches of the project and (2) community members' participation in training events and complementary activities. MC held meetings prior to start-up with religious leaders and men of the village as an important step to launching a successful program that targeted and encouraged the participation of women in the Rasht Valley, a very conservative area where women are generally far less free to assemble outside of their homes.

MC program activities were implemented in partnership with 432 village volunteer educators. Food distributions were directly implemented by MC staff with the assistance of the village volunteer-educators who helped to identify and confirm beneficiaries throughout the ten operational jamoats.

SO1: Families enabled to maintain nutritional status of vulnerable members following natural disasters and severe crop losses

SC completed the baseline survey in December 2009 while MC completed baseline survey by June 2010. MC set out to monitor a random selection of 30% of the beneficiaries; however, due to a large number of discrepancies, the M&E team ended up covering 40% - 60% of the lists in Jirgatol

¹108,018 people (18,003 families) were reached with food aid and/or participated in health, agricultural complimentary and disaster risk reduction activities (on average six persons per family in SC target area); and 14,401 additional beneficiary people benefit from latrines provided by SC; 8,618 families (47,691 persons) were reached by MC (on average 7 persons in MC target area)

district and covered 100% in Hijborak jamoat of Rasht district and Jafr village of Jafr jamoat. This year, verification of true beneficiaries posed the most difficulties compared with any of the previous four years of Mercy Corps' food distributions in the region. This may be an indicator of more desperate conditions within households, or could also be an indicator that people are very motivated to participate and receive all of the benefits offered by the SYAP program. Desperation frequently leads volunteers to falsify some beneficiaries, and even doctors and jamoat leaders in the Rasht Valley assist in the falsification, occasionally by providing fake documents. Thus the extensive time needed to verify the beneficiary lists and correct mistakes lead to significant delay in completion of the baseline survey and pushed the distribution of the food commodities from May-June until June-July in Rasht Valley. The base line surveys collected data on health and nutrition indicators, anthropometric measurements, and affected infrastructure which were used to ensure effective targeting. In total, 16,618 affected families were identified as beneficiaries by SC. The beneficiaries included: families with children up to 5 years of age, female-headed households with primary school aged children, elderly and disabled people who were living on their own without caretakers/family support and households which were affected by localized disasters. MC targeted 6,813 beneficiaries consisted of 6,381 women who have a child under the age of 5 years and 432 village volunteers/educators.

In total, SC food distributions supported 16,618 families with 2,787.82 MT of commodities helping to ensure the food security of 8,000 families for ten-eight-six months and of 8,618 families for one-two months. MC reached 6,381 women beneficiaries and 432 village volunteer/educators with 1,122.08 MT of food aid for 4 months. In addition, 1,385 people received food for work rations through local NGOs contracted by SC, bringing the total number of families reached with food aid to **24,816**.

Initially, 14,813 families were selected by SC and MC to receive family rations of wheat flour, lentils and vegetable oil at critical times during winter season, in the spring when their food stocks are depleted and in the fall, prior to the harvest. SC was due to conduct three distributions – January, April and October - to cover 11 months of food needs. Road access is limited during the winter in MC target areas. As a result, MC planned to conduct two distributions – April and October – to cover eight months of food needs.

However, SC commodities were delayed. The commodities should have arrived in March, but as a result of the suspension of the container forwarding at the Uzbek border along the Kurgan Tube rail spur, the commodities did not arrive until late May. MC commodities were unaffected by problems at the Uzbek border as they were delivered on the Dushanbe rail spur. To off set the delay, SC borrowed commodities from the World Food Program (WFP) which enabled SC to commence food distributions between January and March 2010. However, WFP was unable to loan the full ration planned for the January distribution. Therefore, SC was only able to deliver a two-month rations which did not include vegetable oil (as opposed to a three-month ration). Thus, the first set of food distribution was implemented by SC from January 23 to February 6, 2010. As a result, the 8,000 beneficiary families in Khatlon received two-month rations made up of wheat flour and yellow peas. Each ration contained 25 kg of wheat flour and 12.5 kg of yellow peas. After the first distribution, there was remaining wheat flour which was close to reaching its' expiry date. SC decided to distribute the wheat flour to 8,000 beneficiary families. As a result, a four-month ration of wheat flour was distributed to 2,175 families and a two-month ration of wheat flour to 50 families. In a total, 2,225 families received food during March 2010.

Following the arrival of the commodities, SC was able to commence the distribution of complete two-month rations in June and September, as planned, to the 8,000 beneficiary families. The

monthly ration for each family rations consisted of 25 kg wheat flour, 12.5 kg lentils and 3.7 kg of fortified vegetable oil. In June, 2010 the WFP loan was also returned.

Between June and July 2010, 8,300 additional beneficiary families were identified using the selection criteria described above. From the 8,300 families, 7,800 families received a one-month full ration and 500 families received a one-month ration made up of lentil and vegetable oil.

From July to August, SC implemented a second distribution for the additional beneficiaries (8,300 families). During this distribution an extra 318 families who were badly affected by flooding in August were selected based on the head of Sari Khosor jamoat's request which brought the total number of additional beneficiary families reached to 8,618. From the 8,618 families, 7,055 families received one-month full ration and 1,563 families received a one-month ration made up of lentils and vegetable oil.

MC provided 6,381 female beneficiaries and 432 village volunteer/educators (in total, 6,813 families) with four-month full rations in June-July 2010. The second distribution was slated to begin in September, however, due to increased insecurity and fighting in the Rasht Valley, this, among a number of other program activities, have been adversely affected and therefore distribution is expected to resume in the middle of October 2010.

SC was able to target additional families because of the late arrival of commodities as USAID regulations do not permit back feeding. The variation in rations distributed was the result of the delay in receiving commodities and the amounts and types of commodities SC was able to borrow from WFP.

Additionally, SC collaborated with local NGOs to distribute 59.02 MT of vegetable oil and 43.28 MT of lentils. During the reporting period, 31.39 MT of vegetable oil and 12.28 MT of lentils were distributed by the local NGOs. The remaining balance will be distributed in October and November 2010. Working collaboratively with local NGOs, SC reached an additional 1,385 families (8,310 people). While this situation was not ideal, the food distributions conducted between January and September in the target areas helped ensure that 24,816 families were food secure.

The SYAP food distributions from October 2009 to September 2010 are summarized below:

Description	Area	Families	People
Families food secure for <i>ten</i> months (SC)	Khatlon Region and Rasht Valley	2,175	13,050
Families food secure for <i>eight</i> months (SC)		50	300
Families food secure for <i>six</i> months (SC)		5,775	34,650
Families food secure for <i>four</i> months (MC)		6,813	47,691
Families food secure for <i>two</i> months (SC)		8,300	49,800
Families food secure for <i>one</i> month (SC)		318	1,908
Families received <i>Food for Work</i> (local NGOs)		1,385	8,310
Total		24,816	155,709

Increased practice of key health and nutrition behaviors

SC and MC implemented complimentary activities aimed at promoting improved health and nutrition practices through behavior change strategies relating to health and child feeding practices. Both SC and MC staff initially introduced each topic to the community health volunteers. The volunteers are then responsible for repeatedly conducting trainings on these topics for men and women in their communities.

During April and June 2010, following the outbreak of Polio in Tajikistan, SC supported the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Ministry of Health (MoH) by including awareness raising and monitoring of the polio vaccination campaign in routine health and hygiene trainings in 11 SYAP targeted districts in Khatlon. The poliomyelitis campaign included increasing the community awareness on poliomyelitis disease as well as informing communities of the location of vaccination points and the dates for carrying out immunization.

In April, MC's revised modules on Safe Motherhood, and on Anemia and Worms passed inspection of the MoH and began training sessions. Because this was the first year working in Tojikobod district, and due to the high impact and demand for knowledge by mothers, it was decided to implement the SYAP first-year topics on Safe Motherhood, including danger signs of pregnancy, pre- and post-natal care, and breastfeeding. After this topic, training on water borne and diarrhea was given to the Field Coordinators in Tojikobod.

At the same time as the training on Safe Motherhood for the Tojikobod Field Coordinators was conducted, MC held a two-days training on Anemia and Worms was also held for the eight other Health Field Coordinators who work in Rasht and Jirgatol districts.

During May 2010, hygiene promotion refresher training was provided by the SC Health Manager to 12 SC health staff. The staff then conducted sessions on hygiene promotion for 300 volunteers. The 300 trained community volunteers then provided hygiene and sanitation training for 29,796 men and women in the target communities. During the reporting period, three brochures were also developed on breastfeeding, complementary feeding and hand washing with soap. These brochures were developed by SC staff and approved by Ministry of Health. 8,000 leaflets on breast feeding, 8,000 leaflets on hand washing with soap and 580 brochures on complimentary feeding were distributed during training sessions. Following training, 1,081 families made hand washing stands from locally available and low cost materials such as plastic water bottles in both Khatlon Region and Rasht Valley. MC volunteers also continued repeating topics previously taught through the SYAP-1 with their groups of beneficiaries, such as on Acute Respiratory Illness (ARI) and Hygiene. All trainings include education about risk factors, symptoms and signs, consequences and prevention. The hygiene training also included personal hygiene, environmental sanitation, and instructions on the construction of wash stands, waste pits and latrine lids.

As a means of supporting the messages given in all of the health and hygiene topics, MC provided a combination hygiene/complementary feeding kit to mothers that included small combs, toothbrushes and toothpaste, child's nail cutters, soap, towels, thermometer, manganese crystals and cotton, plus small plastic bowl and plastic spoon to use to serve the complementary foods, a metal masher to mash foods like potatoes, fruits, etc. Mothers were grateful to receive the items, all provided in a bag, especially items such as the thermometer which are difficult to find in small villages.

In addition to hygiene promotion, latrines were installed in medical centers and schools in 43 communities across 17 Jamoats in 8 districts within SC target areas. Two types of local wooden latrines – one cubicle (10 units) and two cubicles latrines (70 units) were delivered to 36 schools, 6 medical centers, 2 hostels (low income housing, where the extremely vulnerable families reside), 1 Regional hospital and 1 boarding school. Overall, 14,401 people benefit from the 80 latrines.

Prior to the installation of latrines a needs assessment was conducted to identify schools, and medical centers with no or poor quality latrines. A latrine manufacturing company was selected

through a process of competitive tendering. Once identified SC engineer monitored the manufacture of the latrine components, and the managers of institutions were given the construction materials necessary for installing them. The heads of the institutions and villages mobilized community members to dig latrine holes and install the latrines.

In June and July 2010, Ministry of Health's trainers conducted training on breastfeeding and complimentary feeding for 23 District Health Workers (DHW) in SC targeted communities. Also 160 volunteers were trained on these topics by SC staff. These were the most active people in communities who together with DHWs, following the training, conducted training sessions for 23,417 men and women on breast feeding and complimentary feeding. The training targeted mothers with infants as well as husbands and mother-in-laws. Targeting husbands and mother-in-laws with the training is essential as they are the decision takers in Tajik families. The training promotes changes in behavior among mother-in-laws and husbands to allow mothers, who conduct most household chores, adequate time for feeding their children. The anecdotal data showed that as a result of training on complementary feeding conducted in June-July 2010, mothers started feeding their children after 6 months age with eggs, puree, meat and fruits.

During the implementation of the SYAP project, SC also introduced Women's Self Support Groups.⁷ SC staff supported women in target communities in forming groups which collected between one and two Somoni each month (0,22-0,44 USD)² from each group member. The members of the groups then decided the rules for being a group member and on what and when they utilize the funds they accumulated. By the end of the fiscal year 185 groups consist of 3,840 members were established in 104 communities. In total, the groups saved 13,137 TJS (2,952 USD). From this total, 3,100 TJS (697 USD) was used by women to seek emergency treatment from doctors, hospitals or health clinics, or in some instances, to bring doctors to the village in order to provide examinations to pregnant women. The groups have also used funds to rehabilitate the medical centers, provide children with school supplies and clothes, to buy water, to perform weddings, purchase seeds and fertilizers and to perform circumcision ceremonies for their sons. The similar fund called "Mother's Fund" established by MC during SYAP-1 is the lynchpin of the health program for providing a safety net and ensuring the possibility for women to seek medical care in times of need in Rasht Valley. These are locally managed funds that have aided many women seeking urgent medical care, or routine examinations, wanting or needing to give birth in a regional hospital, or simply needing to purchase medicines, among other things. By the end of September, the Funds collected reached a balance of over 12,000 Tajik Somoni (over 2,700 USD) and a total of nearly 11,000 TJS (over 2,500 USD) was utilized by women for their medical needs throughout the year since January.

SC continued to collect information relating to the lives of SYAP beneficiaries. During food distributions and training events, SC staff asked beneficiaries questions on a variety of different topics including: potable water, food security, food production, household income, livestock production, markets, migration, registration, household fuel use and consumption and HIV/AIDS. The data collected has provided an overview of the challenges facing families living in rural Khatlon and has been used in the design of SC food security programming as well as the production of a report, "Why Khatlon is Food Insecure" which has been widely shared with international agencies and donors.

To broaden SC's beneficiary reach and strengthen the capacity of local NGO partners, SC approached twelve NGOs. These NGOs prepared project proposals describing their approaches and

² 1 USD is equivalent to 4,45 Tajik Somoni

targeting methods. SC then selected the seven best proposals, which met the SYAP targeting criteria, and supported the NGOs in implementing their projects. Under SC's supervision, these NGOs assisted in the distribution of commodities to community workers, training participants and trainers. The NGOs used their own funds to cover the expenses associated with implementing the proposed projects. The successful proposals from the local partners included: "Support of vulnerable women," "Children health in our hands", "To support disaster affected households with canal cleaning and to prevent the infectious diseases", "Kulyab flood response - Cleaning of streets in affected areas", "Prevention of disaster consequences, improve health protection through mobilization involvement and participation", "Solving problems of people through Food for Work", and "Increase the standard of living of people and improve the sanitation-ecological situation."

With the support of SC, the local NGOs were able to implement their projects and reach 1,385 beneficiaries. Using food for work, the NGO projects provided training for 800 women on diarrhea prevention, breastfeeding, infant and young child feeding practices, hygiene and sanitation and conservation of fruit and vegetables. 3,827 cubic meter of household plots, 2,500 cubic meters of streets, 13,620 meter of secondary irrigation channels and 1,000 meter of gutters were cleaned from mud/debris. Two lakes of 430 cubic meters were also cleaned from mud/debris and 280 square meter of refuse was taken away.

Improved community and household production of food

In addition to health, nutrition and hygiene promotion, SC implemented complimentary activities to increase household food production. These activities included the promotion and use of tunnel green houses in the target communities. The tunnel green houses have several key advantages that contribute to increasing household food security. They allow for off-season production which increases yields, they allow families to increase the amount and quality of crops grown for consumption in the house and they are low cost and low maintenance.

By the end of February 2010 the project supported **200** families in Khatlon in constructing **200** greenhouses. Beneficiaries were selected on the basis of having land for construction of greenhouse, farming skills, having up to 4 children and willingness to cooperate with SC. SC provided each beneficiary household with 13 meters of plastic sheeting for greenhouse construction as well as seeds including 50 gram of parsley, 50 gram of coriander, 40 gram of tomato and 20 gram of cucumber. Parsley and coriander were chosen for household consumption and for income generation. The seeds provided allowed families to cultivate 12.66 meters of land. During 190 training events, families were also trained on growing vegetables and controlling pest infestations in Khatlon. MC also distributed plastic sheets to 4,428 households involved in the program in Rasht and Jirgatol, where the training on greenhouses had been conducted and repeated and was familiar to all but the newly identified participants. Cucumber and tomato seeds were distributed to **4,428** households too in order to get the seedlings started, followed by distribution of plastic sheeting in April. Trainings on green housing and distribution of plastic sheeting encouraged 4,428 program beneficiaries and volunteers to construct **7,784³** greenhouses. From April to mid of June 2010, families that received tunnel green houses received a good harvest of coriander and parsley which they sold in the market. The average income from the tunnel green houses provided by SC over the year was an estimated 36,000 TJS (8,090 USD). Additionally, an estimated 50,000 TJS (11,236

³ Many BNF took half of their plastic (meant for the second layer) and constructed separate greenhouses – one for tomatoes and one for cucumbers, which is why the number of greenhouses is so much larger than the number of BNF receiving them. This also includes the jamoat of Tojikobod, in which only volunteers were given plastic as demonstrations.

USD) was earned from selling fresh tomato and cucumber during the summer season. Tomato and cucumber were also consumed by households.

The tunnel green houses have proved highly sustainable and popular with beneficiaries; families participating in the greenhouse demonstrations and educational activities experienced increases in incomes and enthusiastically shared their knowledge and skills with other people living in the target communities. The success of the greenhouse, demonstrations, trainings and word-of-mouth endorsements by beneficiaries, has led over to 500 non targeted people purchasing plastic sheets to construct greenhouse in Khatlon. In Rasht Valley a total harvest of **671,647kg** (estimated by households) was achieved included: 404,660kg of cucumbers and 266,987kg of tomatoes. There is notable amazement amongst beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries alike at the production of cucumbers and tomatoes in the region of Jirgatol district. Repeatedly MC staff report stories of elation by families at their achievement of eating (and selling) of their own production. Anecdotal information has also indicated that households in non-target jamoats are purchasing the tomatoes and cucumbers of MC beneficiaries in target jamoats.

Due to time constraints for setting up and planting in the greenhouses, only the health and agriculture volunteers who were informed of green house practices received plastic in the two jamoats of Shirinchashma and Langari Shoh in Tojikobod district to use for demonstration purposes. As of September, a total of an estimated **671.65** metric tons of tomatoes and cucumbers were produced out of the greenhouses, which is an average of **151.7** kilos (**334** pounds) per household. In areas like Jirgatol, where cucumber and tomato production do not normally take place at all, this represents a notable increase in household food production. In countless examples one can see the extreme differences between tomatoes planted at the same time, yet outside of the greenhouse environment, and those planted and producing inside the structure of the greenhouse, the latter being vastly more prolific. This year, in many places, there was a widespread problem with cucumber plants drying out and failing to produce as normal. This happened throughout the Valley and affected both greenhouse and non-greenhouse cucumbers. Had this problem not have occurred, the production would have been even higher. Overall, however, the success of the greenhouses and the impact on household food production and food security is unquestionably positive and dramatic.

Training on the production of elite potato seeds was given at the end of 2009 by MC in Rasht and Jirgatol districts (during the former SYAP), and for the new volunteers in Tojikobod district, the same training was provided in February of 2010. In March 2010, each of the 216 agriculture volunteers in all 10 jamoats received one gram of True Potato Seeds (TPS) – the botanical seeds collected from the potato plant. The goal of this activity was to enable beneficiaries/farmers to produce their own good quality elite vegetative seeds and botanic potato seeds in the future. This technology has particular relevance in Rasht Valley, and even more specifically in Jirgatol District, where potatoes are considered one of the main sources of livelihoods. In Jirgatol, many farmers took to the technology and as of September reported harvesting **1,300** grams of TPS from their own production, and **4,313** kilograms of potatoes to be used or sold as elite seed. Quality Elite seeds are said to obtain prices between \$6 to \$10 per kilogram potentially adding significantly to a household's income.

Additionally, from June to July 2010, SC livestock specialists conducted education sessions on livestock production and the prevention of infectious, zoonotic diseases. Over 2,000 people attended a total of 200 educational sessions. SC estimates that information relating to improved animal husbandry reached nearly 8,000 people. To support training activities, two kinds of leaflets,

one focused on the promotion of improved livestock husbandry and one focusing on infectious diseases among livestock that can infect humans, were developed and distributed to 2,000 beneficiaries in Khatlon.

MC provided training to agriculture field coordinators on household poultry production and construction of chicken tractors.⁴ All 10 agriculture field coordinators were taught on the technology of poultry production including on the anatomy and physiology of birds, hatching from eggs and incubation, breeding, illnesses affecting poultry and their prevention, types of chicken houses, and chicken tractor construction. During the training by the field coordinators for the agriculture community educators, construction materials were given and used within training for the participants to practice constructing chicken tractors. Training modules on poultry care and construction of chicken tractors were distributed to all agriculture educators to be used in their educational sessions. This simple but new technology was adopted by **774** households that built their own tractors. Results and feedback will be discussed in the final report.

Improved household processing, preservation and storage practices

During August 2010, a consultant provided SYAP agriculture staff with training on fruit drying. Following the training, staff conducted 64 training events in targeted villages, training 640 project beneficiaries in fruit drying techniques and food preservation. To allow for practical demonstrations of fruit drying in the target communities, the team also distributed 640 dehydrators (fruit drying racks). As a result of the training and provision of racks, 640 families were able to dry 12,800kg of apples, 6,400kg of apricots, 16,000kg of beans, 17,200kg of cherry and 9,600kg of plums.

Jamoats that had been targeted in the previous year under an earlier SYAP program were provided with refresher training on canning and preservation during the summer months. In August, volunteers in the newly targeted Tojikobod district received training in proper canning methods and dehydration of fruits. Within the same month, fifteen jars and lids, one sealer and netting for fruit dehydration were distributed to all 1,339 program beneficiaries in Tojikobod for a total of **20,085** jars. Program volunteers and beneficiaries focused on canning and preserving of foods such as wild sour cherries, tomatoes and cucumbers, wild onions and various fruits. A total of 140,230 jars were reportedly canned this year by volunteers and beneficiaries throughout Rasht Valley.

To further promote the preservation of food SC developed and distributed a brochure providing information on methods for the conservation of vegetables and fruit, drying vegetables and fruit and the storage of vegetables and fruit in the home. The brochures were distributed to over 2,000 beneficiaries. Routine monitoring identified that the 200 trained individuals produced and stored more than 24,000 jars of jams and salads for winter. In addition, over 500 people were identified, who did not participate in training events, producing more than 46,000 jars of jam, juice, pickled cucumber, pickled tomato, pickled cabbage, salads, and compotes.

SO2: Communities and households better-prepared to reduce or mitigate future risks

To support communities in reducing the risks associated with disasters, SC supported over 99 communities in establishing Community Emergency Response Teams (CERTs). In total 77 CERTs were formed with a total of 751 members. Each CERT was made up of 9-10 persons. To support the groups in conducting community emergency preparedness activities and managing localized disasters, 2,000 shovels, 2,000 spades, and 2,000 hoes were distributed to the CERTs. The tools were widely used during flooding in April-May 2010 for clearing drainage canals and blocked

⁴ Chicken tractors are moveable coups that allow households to control where their chickens feed and to collect the eggs, which are generally scattered about when chickens are left to roam free. Free range chickens cause a lot of damage in the household garden plots, destroying much of the production for households.

irrigation channels. CERTS also used the equipment for digging holes for installing latrines. Further activities are planned with CERTS during October and November 2010.

By the month of June 2010, a Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) program coordinator and field coordinators were recruited by MC. By the beginning of August 2010, preparation of modules and procurement of appropriate trainers for each of the components got underway. In early September, events affected the security situation in Rasht Valley and impacted all program activities, further delaying implementation of this component.

Nonetheless, plans are in place to organize the village volunteers currently being educated in agriculture and health topics, into the Community Emergency Response Teams (CERTs) and to further educate each of them in all topics to be offered by the DRR component. The purpose of these teams will be to work with communities and families to create early warning communications systems, identify and prioritize risks for their villages, and to promote and facilitate the development of emergency preparedness plans with schools and households.

2. Success Stories

Modeling Healthy Behavior for the Community

School No 21 of Hojidara village in Shurobod district was constructed in 1967 and 195 schoolchildren are studying there in two sessions each day. The school is very old, poorly maintained and dilapidated. The school has a latrine; however, it is unsafe and unhygienic and poses a health risk to the children attending the school.

In June 2010, SC community construction engineer and health staff visited this school and conducted survey. They noted that the school latrine was in a bad state of repair and discussed improved latrine designs with the school's head master. Following the discussions SC agreed to install two new latrines and the school head agreed to mobilize the community to prepare for the installation. Over the next few days the parents of the children attending the school prepared the ground and dug the holes in the location where the latrines were to be installed. Once the area had been prepared, SC staff supported the community with the actual installation of the latrines. School No 21 now has hygienic, ventilated latrines with two cubicles for boys and two for girls.

The latrines are constructed from wood and can easily be moved to a new location when the pits are full. Each latrine also has a ventilation pipe to reduce odors and flies. The design of the latrine is new to rural communities in Tajikistan and many people had never seen moveable, ventilated pit latrines. The head of school pointed out, "When we completed the latrines, many people came and asked advice on how to construct a latrine similar to our new school latrines." The head master also commented that, "We are very happy with our new latrines as they will take more than 10 years to fill and when they becomes full we can fill in the old latrines wholes, dig new ones and move the latrines to a new location."

The SYAP has successfully combined improving hygiene infrastructure with changing hygiene practice within communities. The approach is extremely effective, as providing examples of improved hygiene infrastructure, such as latrines, as well as education relating to hand washing motivates communities by providing an incentive to change behavior.

Making a difference—the evidence of success

The SYAP health component has supported hygiene education, diarrhea prevention, and latrine promotion in Khatlon region. Hygiene education has been conducted in 13 districts, covering over

221 villages. In many rural areas targeted by SC people work on the land, raising animals and rearing chickens, making hand-washing with soap a critical priority. Shortages of medicine and healthcare providers compound the problem. For those most susceptible to illness—young children and the elderly—sicknesses such as diarrhea can be especially debilitating, even deadly.

A key aspect of health promotion and behavior change under the SYAP has been hand washing with soap. During the month of June, 29,796 beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries, including children, participated in training provided by SC community volunteers and learned the importance of hand washing.

Gulnora, a mother of 4 children from Zarbdor village in Panj district participated in one of the training events after which she said, “The prevalence of diarrhea in Tajikistan can be reduced through proper hand washing with soap at five critical times: before meals, after defecation, before handling a baby, after cleaning a child’s bottom, and before preparing meals.”

Gulnora, who is also a Community Emergency Response Teams member not only learnt about hand washing frequency but also how to make low cost hand washing stands from old plastic bottles. Gulnora said “My small children like the hand washing stand and now they even clean their hands even when it is not needed”.

Empowering women

During the implementation of the SYAP project, SC established Women’s Self Support Groups (WSSGs). SC staff supported in forming groups which collected between one and two Somoni each month (0,22-0,44 USD) from each group member. The accumulated fund is used by the groups’ members to meet their needs. The formation of the groups has proved highly effective in empowering women and providing a means of saving money for priority needs identified by women. In many cases, men in communities who were against the formation of the groups have changed their attitude. They have seen the success of the groups in providing funds to support families in coping with problems and in several communities men are also showing an interest in establishing saving groups.

Thirty-year-old Sojida, lives in Yangi Yol village, in Hamadoni district, together with her two sons and a daughter, who is one of the member of WSSGs. Her husband left for Russia many years ago to earn money for the family. “I borrowed 222 TJS (50 USD) from WSSG’s fund and bought tomato and cucumber seeds to plant in my small household plot,” says Sojida. “I was able to harvest in time and plant the second crops. My family has been able to consume fresh tomato and cucumber from April to mid September. Also several times I took my crops to the market. From selling the fresh tomato and cucumber I have bought sack of 50 kg of sugar for making different jams including apricot, cherry, grapes and pear for my children consumption during the winter. I have bartered with my neighbors and in exchange of potato and cucumber received fruits. Even I was able to buy Bulgarian pepper and cheese to conserve salads from cucumber and tomato.” Sojida continued: “My husband works in construction and during the winter often cannot find work and so rarely sends money. The WSSG’s fund helped me to store more food which means my children will be well fed during the winter. *For the first time in my life I feel independence and hope in myself.*”

Greenhouses Changing Lives in Qarakenja

The USAID-funded SYAP program of MC started its activities in the Rasht Valley in 2009, teaching people like Ahtam how to grow vegetables in greenhouses for early harvesting. The first

time he saw his neighbor's greenhouse, he was surprised and amazed, *“Before I thought that it was impossible to grow cucumbers and tomatoes in early spring in our climate, high in the mountains. But seeing my neighbor's greenhouse harvest encouraged me to construct one”*.

Qarakenja village is one of the more densely-populated villages in the area. It is located at 2,250 meters (8,202 feet) above sea level with a population of 8,700. The nearest small market is 8 km (4.9 miles) away and is open only on Sundays. To reach the central market, Qarakenja residents must travel 65 km (40 miles). Winters last for five months and spring and summer seasons are short with constant rain. Due to the harsh weather, poor infrastructure and a lack of financial means, the villagers do not always have vegetables in their diets. They could never grow vegetables or even potatoes earlier than June because of the late snow melt and constant spring rains.

This year, in early spring, Ahtam constructed a greenhouse in hopes of providing his extended family of 24 with fresh vegetables. Since then, he has produced potato seedlings three times and grown cucumbers and tomatoes as well. *“ I received a double benefit from the greenhouse: first my family has cucumbers and tomatoes whenever they want; second I will get 500 kg of good potato seeds from the seedlings I produced, which I can sell for 3 Somoni (\$0,68) per kg or plant myself. This means I might have 1,500 Somoni (\$342) to buy other household needs.”* Next year, Ahtam plans to build an even bigger greenhouse for cucumbers and tomatoes and another to experiment with growing more nutritious vegetables like turnips, carrots, and red beets.

3. Lesson learned

The following factors contributed to the SYAP's success:

- Food distributions motivated families to participate in training activities and to improve the environment in their villages affected by promoting the improved sanitation.
- Involving selected local partners allowed SC to reach more beneficiaries with food aid and training and also helped to build the capacity of the local NGOs.
- Involving husbands and mother-in-laws in health and nutrition training ensures that young mothers are given adequate time for breastfeeding, complimentary feeding and hygiene and sanitation activities for their children.
- The wooden latrines installed during the SYAP were low cost and designed so that they are hygienic and can be carried from one place to another. The latrine design has encouraged families in the target communities to adopt and use hygienic latrines.
- The WSSG and Mother's Funds strengthened the role of women in family and empowered them to take decisions and actions.

The following will be taken into consideration for current and future programming:

- Requiring beneficiaries to use official documentation as means of verification for receiving meant that many women applied for official government identification documents which allowed them to have identities and vote, to open bank accounts, to access other official services, and to receive husband's remittances without an intermediary. Also their children can receive birth certificates, register with the health facilities, and receive proper vaccinations.
- Provide household financial management training to WSSG and Mother's Funds would improve their capacity.
- Effective collaboration with local authorities and communities ensures mobilization of locally available resources and reduces the chance of conflict over beneficiary selection.
- Working with local authorities in the distribution of food aid builds the capacity of local government staff in implementing transparent process and improves their accountability.

- Using SYAP resources to work with local NGO partners is an effective approach to building NGO capacity.
- Experience exchanges among volunteers of different jamoats help to improve results in some of the more culturally or socially closed areas or in those without a lot of exposure to new ideas.
- The lists of beneficiaries should be shown to the Jamoat Chiefs for their input prior to distribution and presence of representatives from the Jamoat should be present for all distributions.

The SYAP helped improve the food security status of 24,816 families during critical times of the year. The complimentary activities, health, nutrition and hygiene promotion, and improved agricultural techniques implemented under the SYAP have provided sustainable outputs that will contribute to long term household food security as well as family health and well being. The SYAP also allowed SC to implement innovative initiatives (WSSGs) which have empowered women and increased family resilience to shocks. Supporting communities by providing food aid linked to health, nutrition and hygiene behavior change messaging and activities and improving agricultural production has made a considerable contribution to improving food security in the districts targeted by SC and MC under the SYAP.