



THE CONTRIBUTION OF POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT IN TAJIKISTAN TO EFFECTIVE PEACEBUILDING AND TO COUNTERING OR PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM: SUCCESSES, LIMITATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

RESEARCH REPORT



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Abbreviations

Ansarullo (Ansarullah), Jamoati Ansarullo – extremist militant organization, which includes mainly descendants from Tajikistan

IRP or IRPT (Nahzat) – Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan

GBAO – Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast of Tajikistan

Imam-Khatib – Head of Mosque

IA – International Agency

IMU – Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan

ISIS – Islamic State of Iraq and Syria

NGO – Non-Governmental Organization

NEET – No Education, Employment or Training

RRP – Rayons of Republican Subordination – a group of central administrative districts (rayons) of Tajikistan, including Dushanbe, the capital

UTO – United Tajik Opposition, an alliance between Tajik democratic organizations and the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan

CBO – Community-Based Organization

UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNICEF - United Nations Children’s Fund

VET - Vocational Education and Training

Main administrative terms:

Hukumat – government (Farsi- Tajiki)

Oblast – province

Rayon – district

Jamoat – “community” in Tajiki, one of self-governance bodies in today’s Tajikistan

Mahalla (guzar) – city, village block

Mahalla council - traditional self-governance (community governance)

Glossary

Fatwa	A ruling on a point of Islamic law given by a recognized authority.
Hanafi	One of the four Sunni schools of Law (others include, Hanbali, Maliki and Shafi'i)
Jihad	Religious duty of Muslims – “striving in the way of God” (Qur’an). Jihad is often used as a “holy war” against unbelievers to spread Islam.
Jihadi Salafism	Trend of Salafism which considers armed jihad as the only way to advance the cause of Allah on earth.
Isma’ilism	Ismā’īlism is a branch of Shia Islam; in Tajikistan the Ismaili community constitutes about 4% of the population.
Madrasa	Higher religious education institution.
Salafism	An ultra-conservative trend within Sunni Islam that advocates a return to the traditions of the “pious forefathers” (from Arabic as-Salaf as-Salihun) of an early period of Islam.
Shiism	A branch of Islam which holds that the Islamic prophet Muhammad designated Ali ibn Abi Talib as his successor (Imam).
Sunna	Traditional portion of Muslim law based on Muhammad's words or acts, accepted (together with the Qoran) as authoritative by Muslims and followed in particularly by Sunni Muslims.
Sunnism	A branch of Islam, whose adherents believe that Muhammad did not appoint a successor and consider Abu Bakr (who was appointed Caliph through a Shura, i.e. community consensus) to be the correct (righteous) Caliph.
Wahhabism	Wahhabism derives its name from its founder, Mohammed Abd al-Wahhab (1703-1791); the trend is distinguished by its literal reading of Islam and its rigorist appearance.

Introduction

Research Task and Goals

The main task of the research is to measure the real impact of local and international efforts in the field of youth civic engagement and peacebuilding in the Republic of Tajikistan. The research focuses mainly on the following three research questions:

First, the boosters and barriers that influence young people's decision to invest themselves in civic youth engagement and peacebuilding projects;

Second, if and how youth participation in such projects contributes to peacebuilding and in countering/preventing violent extremism;

Third, the research explores the contextual factors, local, programmatic, approach, etc., that affect the impact of such projects, and what factors can be scaled-up or transferred to other contexts.

Methodology and Research Approaches

The project methodology consists of three consequent stages:

- I. Preparatory Stage:** Collecting and preliminary examination of existing documentation in Dushanbe and preparation for conducting interviews and studies in the capital and regions;
- II. Implementation Phase:** Conducting interviews in Dushanbe and in project target areas; analysis of gathered information/data and preparation of final report based of the Terms of Reference;
- III. Follow Up Analysis and Reporting Stage.**

Detailed Description

Preparatory Stage (October – November 2017)

During the Preparatory Stage the following types of activities have been conducted:

1. Analysis and processing of related documentation, information and data, as well as available statistics on the research subject and situation in the target areas;
2. Gathering data and information from correspondent media and Internet resources including publication in Tajik and Russian news and informational agencies, analytical journals and magazines. Extensive internet searches produced few useful and publicly available resources specifically relevant to the Tajik context. The publications containing information about civil society in Tajikistan that were available and of current and particular relevance as well as primary documents were

given the top priority. Another important source of analytical information and data are the academic studies and publications devoted to the topic of youth issues and implementation of the youth projects and programs in Tajikistan.

3. In addition, a considerable part of information is based on analytical and evaluation reports conducted by various international agencies based in Tajikistan.

Implementation Stage (November 2017– June 2018)

During this stage the following research methods and activities have been implemented:

1. *Interviews and meetings in the capital and the following target areas:*
 - Dushanbe outskirts and Vahdat district;
 - Kurgan-tube and surrounding Jamoats;
 - Kulob city and nearby Jamoats;
 - Kujand city and surrounding districts and Jamoats (preliminarily B Gafurob and J. Rasulov);
 - GBAO;
 - Rasht region (Garm city and surrounding Jamoats);
2. *The research team conducted a series of face-to-face and in-depth interviews with managers and coordinators, related staff of the correspondent international agencies' offices, NGOs in target areas, youth projects beneficiaries, representatives of civil society groups; representatives of local expert community, leaders of locally based NGOs, community-based organizations, officials, representatives of correspondent national official bodies in target areas, local mass media leading representatives;*
3. *Analyses of all collected data, information, press materials, and interview results collected before and during the field visits.*

Follow-up Analysis and Preparation of Final Report (May-June 2018)

During this stage the research team:

1. Completed analyses of collected data and prepared the First Draft of the Report;
2. Summarized ***feedback and comments***;
3. Developed and submitted the Final Report.

Background Information and Context Analysis

Country Background

Map of Tajikistan



BRIEF BACKGROUND DATA ABOUT TAJIKISTAN

Republic of Tajikistan¹

- **Population:** 8,388,000²
- **Capital:** Dushanbe
- **Largest city:** Dushanbe
- **Area:** 143,100 sq. km
- **Major languages:** Tajik-Farsi (official), Russian widely used in government and business, Uzbek
- **Human Development Index rank:** 0.673 (medium) (122nd)
- **Literacy rate:** 99.5% over the age of 15
- **Major religion(s):** Sunni Muslim 85%, Shi'a (Ismaili) Muslim 5%, other 10% (2003)

¹ See: Tajik State Statistic Agency, www.stat.tj

² Estimation of the Tajik State Statistic Agency in 2014, See: Shumorai aholii Jumhurii Tojikiston to 1 yanvari soli 2014 (Number of population of the Republic of Tajikistan, January 1, 2014), http://www.stat.tj/ru/img/b417f44e3113e555ffff3cd143d5b3fe_1404816557.pdf

Tajikistan is one of the former Soviet republics – it is a mountainous country (mountains comprise 93% of its territory) situated in the *post-Soviet Central Asia*.³

Tajikistan's territory measures 143,100 square kilometers (55,251 square miles). It shares borders with *Uzbekistan* (1,161 kilometers) to the west, *China* (414 kilometers) to the east, *Afghanistan* (1,206 kilometers) to the south, and *Kyrgyzstan* (870 kilometers) to the north.

The capital, *Dushanbe*, is in the west, near the Uzbekistan border.

According to the last 2010 census 84.26% of the population is composed of Tajiks, descendants of the ancient Iranian-speaking population of Central Asia. The majority of them are Sunni Muslim people who speak a branch of Farsi. The Tajik majority also includes Pamiris – a majority in the region of Badakhshan (Western Pamir), who speak several Eastern-Iranian languages/dialects and follow the Shia (Ismaili) branch of Islam. The rest of the population is comprised mainly of Uzbeks (13.94%), Russians Tatars, Kyrgyz, and Ukrainians.

In addition to the capital of Dushanbe, other important cities are Khujand, Istravshan (Uratube), and Kurgan-tube. The official language of Tajikistan is the Tajik language, while Russian is largely spoken in business and for government purposes. Despite its poverty, Tajikistan has a high rate of literacy, with an estimated 99.5% of the adult population having the ability to read and write. Tajikistan is a rugged, mountainous country, with lush valleys to the south and north.

Administrative divisions

The territory of the Republic of Tajikistan is divided into oblasts that, in turn, are sub-divided into districts, cities, towns, and villages. There are three oblasts in the Republic:

- **Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast** geographically located far from the central government. It consists of seven districts with the administrative centre of Khorog.
- **Sughd (formerly Leninobod) Oblast** is located in the north and consists of thirteen districts with the administrative centre of Khujand (formerly Leninobod city)
- **Khatlon Oblast** is in the south, bordering Afghanistan. It consists of twenty-one districts with the administrative centre of Kurgan-Tube.

There are **eleven Districts of Republican Subordination** that are governed from the capital city of Dushanbe. The main cities are Nurek (Norak), Vahdat, Roghun, Tursun-zoda, and Hisor; these are governed by the city hukumats (municipalities).

³ See: Land and geography of Tajikistan, http://factsanddetails.com/central-asia/Tajikistan/sub8_6e/entry-4898.html

Context Analysis

Tajikistan is one of a few post-Soviet republics that passed through a violent and protracted civil war right after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The war between the Government (pro-Communist forces) and the United Tajik Opposition (UTO) continued for more than five years (1992-1997) and was stopped mainly due to the active mediation of third parties and changed geopolitical situation in the Central Asian region.

In this regard, Tajikistan is still considered as one of several success stories of peaceful intervention under the UN umbrella. There are very few cases in contemporary world history when the intervention of the international community leads not only to the end of violence but promotes a peaceful settlement that lasts over a decade.

However, the devastating civil war led to a set of serious socio-economic and political consequences that considerably influenced the further development of the country throughout the whole period of independence, such as:

Large-scale emigration and considerable demographic changes, which had an unprecedented character. Thus, in the beginning of 1990's the emigration of Russian-speaking population as well as Tajik educated stratum caused by political instability and economic disorder had especially large-scale character, which totally changed the ethnic and social composition of post-war Tajikistan. Only in a few years the share of the Russian speaking population decreased from 14% to only 2-3%; in addition, the civil war caused an essential "brain-drain" process that continues until the present day;⁴

Economic collapse and social disorder - the civil war made a devastating impact on the economic system in Tajikistan. Thus, in 1993, GDP fell by 16% (in constant prices), 1994 - by 24%, in 1995 - by 12%, in 1996 - by 17%. GDP in 1995 was only 41% of that in 1991. Total direct losses of the first year of the war were more than \$ 7 billion; about 40,000 houses were destroyed, most enterprises stopped working;⁵

The period of instability and decline of central authority in the country lasted for several years after the war. The country was divided between warlords, who were the sole masters in their controlled territory. The situation started to be changed only after the conclusion of the peace accords, which laid a solid foundation for further stabilization and centralization of the power and elimination of war-lord network in the country;⁶

⁴Anora Sarkorova "Russakie v Tajikistane: ozhidanie peremen (Russians in Tajikistan: anticipation of changes), BBC Russian, 27.01.2007, http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/russian/in_depth/newsid_6264000/6264604.stm

⁵ Parviz Mullojonov, "Tajikistan 2014: Vizovi i riski" (Tajikistan 2014: challenges and risks), Institute for Public Policy, Bishkek, 12.05.2014, <http://ipp.kg/ru/news/2843/>

⁶ See: Kirill Nourzhanov, "Saviours of the nation or robberbarons? Warlord politics in Tajikistan", Central Asian Survey, 2006, p 109-130

Decrease of civil society network – due to political disturbances the Tajik civil society was demolished in early 1990's and began to develop later than in many other Central Asian countries;

One of the most important consequences of the civil war is the post-war syndrome due to which the level of “*social tolerance*” of ordinary Tajik population is much higher than in the majority neighboring country. “Social tolerance” describes a situation where due to the post-war syndrome, an average Tajik citizen is ready to tolerate any economic and social difficulties for the sake of preserving stability in the country. This is a common phenomenon still typical for the majority of population although there is a possibility (taking into account the experience of other post-war societies) that the post-war syndrome would be on decline with the younger generations. However, no opinion polls studies were conducted in the country to explore this particular aspect of the ‘social tolerance’ phenomenon.

This “social tolerance” phenomenon considerably increases the internal resilience of contemporary Tajik society as well as political passiveness of the majority of the local population. After the civil war the Tajik population largely distrusts politics and politicians – especially the ones who occupy radical positions or express extreme political opinions and points of views. It is especially the truth with regard to the Tajik labor migrants (mainly in Russia where the majority of them are employed), which still remain away from politics regardless the numerous attempts to involve them in political actions undertaken by various political organizations both inside and outside of Tajikistan.

In general labor migration is considered as one of the major conflict mitigating factors in contemporary Tajikistan. Thus, on one hand, labor migrants’ remittances remain the most important sources of the state budget. On the hand, labor migration considerably reduces the level of social tension in the country as the majority of socially active representatives of adult and younger generations resides outside Tajikistan.

Current Economic and Social Situation

Today, Tajikistan is distinguished by a predominantly one-sided type of economy where most of the budget revenues depends on labor migration to Russia and export of raw materials (such as cotton and aluminum). It is an unbalanced social-economic model as Tajik labor migrants’ remittances exceeded half of the Tajik GDP in 2013 and made up 52% of GDP in 2014. With this regard it is often described as ‘*remittances dependent economy*’ properly embedded in the overall post-Soviet economic system but losing its effectiveness in the rapidly changing geopolitical realities and economic conditions.

The ongoing economic recession and process of shrinking of Russian labor market makes an extremely negative impact on Tajikistan. Thus, according to Russia’s Central Bank the amount of money transferred to Tajikistan has fallen almost 67 percent, from \$3.8 billion in 2014 to \$1.28 billion in 2015. The figure in 2013 was \$4.16 billion; it was a peak year after which a sharp and continuous decline has been observed. In 2017 the amount of remittances started to gradually grow again but it still didn’t reach the pre-crisis indicators. The drop of

remittances causes an acute shortage of money supply, increasing devaluation of the Tajik Somoni against the dollar and the lack of hard currency in the country.

This crisis makes a negative impact on the living standards of the population especially in rural areas and main cities' suburbs with greater proportion of internal economic migrants. The impact is felt most strongly by communities, in which cash from relatives abroad constitutes a very literal lifeline. Meanwhile, according to the World Food Program study (2016) "fifty five percent of rural households depend on remittances as their main source of income, and a record 81 percent of remittances is spent on food expenditures". Therefore, the World Food Program estimated that food security is an issue for around 20 percent of rural households.

The crisis makes an increasingly negative impact on the country's employment sector. Although the official unemployment rate remains very low (only 50 thousand Tajik citizens are official registered by the Tajik authorities as unemployed) the actual number of jobless citizens are much higher. Thus, while working age population represent almost 60% of the total population, only 43% of the labor force is employed. These data imply that despite the official statistics more than half of the Tajik labor force remain unemployed or partially employed.

The second trend is deterioration in relationship between the authorities and civil society. Instead of implementing economic reforms, the Tajik authorities concentrate their attention on the civil society regarded as a potential space for public mobilization and threat to stability.

Since the start of the pre-election period (autumn 2014), the Tajik government has considerably increased pressure and control over local CSOs and independent mass media. Thus, several changes were introduced into NGO reporting procedures, making this process much more complicated and detailed. Civil society in general is regarded as one of the main potential troublemakers by government and as a tool for external intervention and interference.

Youth Statistics: The Impact of Economic Crisis

Tajikistan has the highest proportion of youth population among the CIS countries. According to official statistics, in 2015 young people 15-29-year-old constituted 51% out of total population of the country;⁷ today, young people below 30-year old make up 70% of the population.⁸

At the same time, young people constitute the major part of the unemployed citizens in Tajikistan. The country's **NEET** (No Education, Employment or Training) rate is one of the highest among CIS countries. In 2016, 29.3% of youth aged 15-24 had no job, were not

⁷ State Employment Program of the RT, adopted by the Tajik Government on 25.11.2015,N 709

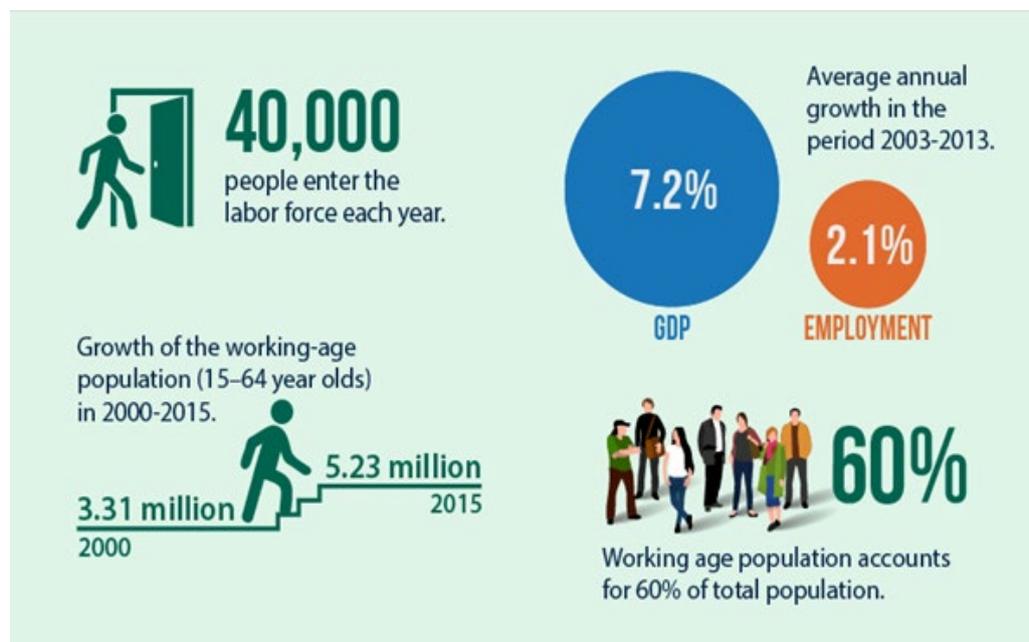
⁸ TAJIKTA, <http://tajikta.tj/news/detail.php?ID=338147>

studying towards degree and were not in professional training. Female NEET rate was nine times higher than male rate.⁹

In 2013, according to official data, more than 40 thousand youth entered the country's labour market. According to the most recent data, every year almost 150 thousand secondary school graduates enter the labour market but in average there are seven candidates for every vacant position. — 77% of officially registered unemployed Tajiks are representatives of younger generation between 15 and 29-year-old.¹⁰ Correspondingly, a considerable majority of them fail to find job inside Tajikistan and prefer to leave the country for labour migration.

It should be noted that the majority of independent experts regards the Tajik official statistics with a bit of criticism and caution. Many of the interviewed experts stated that the official data have often a mutually contradictory and unreliable character. For instance, in 2016 in Tajikistan only about 50 thousand people or 2.3% of the labour force are officially registered as unemployed, which does not reflect the real situation in the employment sector. According to official data the Tajik authorities annually create more than 100 thousand jobs in the country (125 thousands in 2017), which hardly explains why such high employment growth failed to reduce the labour migration. Several respondents stated that the real employment situation is much more complicated than it is shown by official statistics.

Chart 1. Tajik Youth Employment



⁹ Mapping the vulnerable and excluded groups of adolescents and youth in Tajikistan, Desk Study Report, UNICEF, UNDP Tajikistan, Dushanbe 2017

¹⁰ D.C. Murtazakulov, K.A. Miraliyon, Politologicheskie aspect normativnoi bazi gosudarstvennoi moodezhnoy politii v Tajikistane(Political Science Basis for the State Policy towards Youth), Eurasian Judicial Journal. №5 (96), M.: 2016, p.74

Youth and Labour Migration

Since the beginning of labour migration in 1992 (right after the collapse of the USSR), the Tajik youth constituted the major part of migrants from Tajikistan.¹¹ According to statistic data, in 2012 about “50 000 Tajik teenagers left schools and choose labour migration to save their families.”¹² Today, the proportion of youth among Tajik migrants is larger than ever before – 70% of Tajik migrants in Russia (where the majority of Tajik labour migrants are employed) belong to the younger generation.

The unemployment rate is increasing also among young representatives of educated and intellectual strata, local expert community and small business sector. Thus, in the course of 2015-2016 economic crisis (see above) more than 8 thousand of Tajik professionals – mainly employees of local banking sector and partly international organizations - lost their jobs due to the economic and financial crisis.¹³ It leads to the increasing phenomenon of ‘brain drain’ in the country; according to the Tajik media during last two year more than 63 thousand Tajik intellectuals left the country – the majority of them are representatives of younger generation. The youth constitute also a considerable proportion of internal migrants – descendants from rural areas who moved to the big cities (mainly to the capital) looking for new job opportunities.

Increasing Level of Religiosity

The level of religiosity of the Tajik population, as well as the process of Islamization of Tajik society, is continuously increasing. This phenomenon is often explained by a complexity of factors such as ideological vacuum appeared after the collapse of the Communist regime, socio-economic hardships of post-Soviet period, increasing religious propaganda conducted by various religious organizations and foundations etc. According to surveys conducted by the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES) in 2010, more than 63% of respondents claimed that they follow daily prayers (this number was only 27% in 1996), while 52% claimed to attend the collective Friday prayer, as compared to just 13% a decade and a half earlier. In 2010, 71% of respondents claimed that religion played an important role in their lives.¹⁴

According to a 2014 study conducted by Shark, 73,7% of the population claimed that they regularly visit mosques; 50% pray five times a day; 76,2% regularly fast. The number of

¹¹“Molodezh sostavlyayet 70% tajikskikh ofitsialnikh migrantov v Rossii” (The youth constitutes 70% of official Tajik migrants in Russia), 15.04.2006, Asia-plus, <http://www.news.tj/ru/news/molodezh-sostavlyayet-70-tajikskikh-ofitsialnykh-migrantov-v-rossii>

¹² Voce of Freedom, Tajikistan , 22. 12.2012 <http://vof.kg/?p=8233>

¹³ “Bankiri bez rabotu” (Bank employees lost their jobs) Asia Plus, December 6, 2017

¹⁴ Steven Wagner, Public Opinion in Tajikistan 1996, Washington, DC, International Foundation for Election Systems, 1997, p. 44 and IFES (International Foundation for Election Systems), Public Opinion in Tajikistan 2010, Washington, DC, IFES, 2010, p. 41.

religious pilgrims has been increased as well. During the first years of independence the annual number of pilgrims constituted only 550 persons; in 2014 this number has increased in more than ten times and constituted six thousand pilgrims.

The phenomenon of increasing religiosity is often interpreted in rather negative terms – especially by the state authorities and representatives of secular intelligentsia. However, the overwhelming majority of experts do not consider increasing religiosity as a necessarily negative phenomenon. Studies in Tajikistan and other Central Asian countries have indicated that the majority of local Jihadists are originally from secular families; they received preliminarily religious education and knowledge later through the network of religious fundamentalist propaganda institutions and organizations.¹⁵

According to available research studies and experts' observations, in Tajikistan (as well as in other republics of central Asia) the process of rising religiosity is partly influenced by propaganda and activities of radical Islamist organizations and Salafi groups.¹⁶ In other words, a part of Tajik citizens (especially young people) 'return' to religion (become more religious) under the influence and guidance of Salafi (fundamentalist) ideology and propagandists. This influence is mainly exerted through online and Internet propaganda; in addition, a part of Tajik citizens is influenced by radical ideology through a wide network of Salafi-controlled mosques and underground religious groups – mainly in Russia (labour migrants) or inside the country. In addition, according to interviewed experts the level of religious knowledge of many representatives of traditional moderate Hanafi clergy remain relatively low and doesn't correspond to the new challenges and demands. As a result, they often fail to compete with the younger generation of Salafi leaders and propagandists many of whom graduated foreign Islamic universities and institutions. In contrary, in public opinion some Hanafi clergymen themselves are often suspected of being influenced by Salafi ideology. In such situation, the increased religiosity not always able to counteract the ongoing recruitment of a part of Tajik young people into fundamentalist organizations.

Youth Recruitment and Radicalization Phenomenon

One of the brightest examples of the effectiveness of international fundamentalist network is the recruiting system created by the ISIS and Al-Qaeda type of organizations throughout the world. The Jihadist organizations have developed a sophisticated recruiting methodology, which combines a set of innovative approaches such as online propaganda, working in-person and via mosques (see description below). The Tajik population – predominantly Tajik youth - is also targeted covered by this extremely effective propagandist and recruiting machine. It resulted in a rapidly growing number of Tajik recruits in international extremist organizations. Thus, according to official sources in 2014 about 190-300 Tajik citizens

¹⁵ Project of Violent Extremism Prevention in Kyrgyzstan, materials of the Conference “Violent Extremism prevention in Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan”, DCAF, Bishkek, January 26, 2017

¹⁶ This fact is stressed by the majority of international experts and media coverage used for the given report; it was also frequently mentioned by our respondents.

joined the ISIS ranks to fight against secular regimes in Syria and Iraq.¹⁷ According to unofficial sources this number could be even much higher as by that time already about 500 Tajik citizens had died in Syria.¹⁸ Already by 2016 the number of Tajik recruits in ISIS has exceeded 700 hundred people. According to various data by 2017 the number of Tajik recruits who joined ISIS varies between 1000 and 1350 persons.¹⁹

At the end 2017 the Tajik Government reported that in the course of the last year the number of Tajik recruits in Syria and Iraq has been rapidly decreased. The authorities explain this phenomenon by the effectiveness of their anti-radicalization policy and preventive measures. However, the critics believe that this phenomenon reflects the overall and global process of decreasing recruitment to ISIS caused by the last series of military defeats and territorial losses experienced by this organization. Thus, according to the most recent study conducted by Soufan Center and the Global Strategy Network the majority of the 40,000 Islamic State supporters who migrated to the fight in Iraq and Syria are returning home in 2018.²⁰ Most probably that in this situation the global jihadist network reoriented the flow of new recruits to other areas and countries such as Libya and Afghanistan. According to unofficial sources the underground Jihadist supporters in Central Asia are instructed to remain in their countries until the situation turned to be more favorable for launching Jihad.

In the course of the last four years this underground network of ISIS related groups has conducted several propaganda and terrorist actions such as distribution of leaflets, hanging DAESH flags on the street buildings and even armed attacks. The most brutal terrorist action was conducted in August 2018 when a group of young men attacked several tourists in Danghara district of Tajikistan. The attackers murdered three international tourists: later ISIS assumed responsibility for the preparation and conducting this terrorist act.²¹

Methodology of Recruitment

The interviewed experts pointed at two main ways of youth recruitment to radical organizations in Tajikistan:

¹⁷ Nadin Bahrom, "ISIS misuses social networks to recruit the Tajiks", Central Asia Online, 12.02.2014

http://centralasiaonline.com/en_GB/articles/caii/features/main/2014/12/02/feature-01

¹⁸ "500 hundred Tajiks have been died in Syria, a Tajik jihadist says", Central Asia Online,

http://centralasiaonline.com/en_GB/articles/caii/features/main/2014/08/07/feature-01 **КОНЕЦ**

¹⁹ Authorities Say Up To 1,000 Tajiks Joined IS In Syria, Iraq, Radio Ozodi, <https://www.rferl.org/a/tajikistan-double-estimate-of-islamic-state-members/27509293.html>

²⁰ Tim Meko "Now that the Islamic State has fallen in Iraq and Syria, where are all its fighters going?" The Washington Post, 22.02.2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2018/world/isis-returning-fighters/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.a28d09d14d9e

²¹ ISIS claims deadly attack on tourists in Tajikistan, ST, <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/isis-claims-deadly-attack-on-tourists-in-tajikistan>

First of all, it is so referred 'online recruiting' – via Internet, online media (various Radio, video/TV channels created in the Internet), propagandist websites, including personal websites of the most well-known Salafi theologians etc. The experts consider online propaganda as the most effective way of recruiting – especially as the number of active Internet users is steadily increasing. According to Gen. J. Majidzoda, member of the Parliament of the RT, today Tajikistan has three million Internet users – or four out of 10 Tajiks now have access to the Internet. He stated that up to 80 percent of them could get recruited by terrorists and extremists online.

The second way of recruiting is through a wide network of underground Jihadist groups and mosques controlled by radicals. According to the Tajikistani authorities most of the Tajik youth are recruited in Russia through the network of local mosques or underground Jihadist groups. These statements are opposed by Russian experts who believe that the majority of Tajik recruits are radicalized in Tajikistan prior to their arrival at the territory of the Russian Federation. In 2016-2017 the Institute of Oriental Studies of Russian Academy of Science conducted a study on radicalization of Tajik labor migrants in Russia. According to the study, social factors – such as marginalization, unemployment, economic inequality - play a significant role in radicalization of Tajik migrants. Therefore, the Russian scholars believe that even if the actual recruitment of Tajik migrants to extremist organizations took place in Russia their initial radicalization occurs in Tajikistan.²²

Due to the lack of statistical data it is difficult to define what is the real proportion of Tajik youth recruited through online propaganda or underground Jihadist network. Most probably, the religious radicalization is not taking place right away, in one day or a month; it is usually a rather long, complicated and multi-stage process of mental, ideological and social transformation. According to Tajik independent experts, labor migrants are the most vulnerable group of population being suffered from social marginalization, inequality and economic crisis both in Tajikistan and Russia. For this reason, some of them could be socially outraged and dissatisfied even before moving to Russian; a smaller part of labor migrants could be already influenced by Jihadist propaganda by the time of arriving Russian territory. However, in the majority of cases (according to the interviewed experts) the actual recruiting is taking place on the Russian territory where a wide network of underground Salafi and Jihadist groups is well established and active.

²² Interview with leading employee of the Oriental Institute of the Russian Academy of Science, October 2017. Moscow

Chapter I. Mapping Youth and PVE Initiatives in Tajikistan

1.0 Conceptual Framework

Defining Radicalism

What is Radicalism?

There are various definitions of the terms ‘radicalism’ and ‘religious radicalism’. The majority of scholars agree today that radicalisation is a multi-stage and complex phenomenon. Therefore, it is often described as ‘staircase’ to extremist behaviour and ideology when radicalization is considered as “medium/long-term progression towards extremism, in different modes and steps”.²³ The most detailed definition describes radicalisation as:

“a process by which an individual or group comes to adopt increasingly extreme political, social, or religious ideals and aspirations that reject or undermine the status quo or reject and/or undermine contemporary ideas and expressions of freedom of choice”.²⁴

Therefore, the radicalization implies the use of radical and extreme means. As usual, an individual/social group becomes radicalized when all other non-radical (moderate, legal) means to change the situation proved to be ineffective or simply impossible.

The term ‘**radicalism**’ is often used along with the term ‘**extremism**’ defined as “*a tendency to go to extremes or an instance of going to extremes, especially in politics.*”²⁵ The notions are very close; but it should be also noted that historically, radicalism (unlike extremism) doesn’t have necessarily negative connotations.

The experts also define the notions of ‘**non-violent radicalism**’ (extremism)’ and ‘violent extremism’; radicalism is seen not the same as terrorism. The term “*terrorism*” is commonly

²³ Elisa Orofino, ‘Understanding Radical Groups and Radical Youth in the West: A Literature Review’, University of Catania, 2016, 3

²⁴ Wilner and Dubouloz, “Homegrown terrorism and transformative learning: an interdisciplinary approach to understanding radicalization,” *Global Change, Peace, and Security* 22:1 (2010). 38

²⁵ <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/extremism>

understood as “*political violence outside the norms of conflicts between states. Terrorism’s victims can be innocent civilians, or they can be political officials or even soldiers*”.²⁶

Definition of Religious Radicalism

According to scholars, while understanding the term ‘*religious radicalism*’ it is important to refer to the etymology of the term derived from the Latin word ‘*radix*’ meaning ‘root’. The Islamic radicals proclaim their goal to return to the roots of religion, to reestablish the Islamic society and the state (Caliphate) of early ages of Islam. The main message is to rebuild the ‘ideal’ state and society of the time of Prophet Muhammad – usually interpreted as the necessity to re-establish the state capable of counterbalancing the West. Therefore, for many supporters of Islamist groups the declared goal bears more political than religious character. With this regard, *religious radicalism* could be described as a political tool to ensure a thorough political and social transformation of society implemented under religious slogans. The notion term ‘*religious (Islamic) radicalism*’ is often used as a synonym of ‘*political religion*’ (*political Islam*) although it is not the same. ‘*Political Islam*’ is often described as a theoretical and practical tool for comprehensive society transformation by introducing a new model of social and political order based on religious (Islamic) values and norms. At the same time, there are Islamist groups and organizations of rather moderate character that do not reject the idea of cooperation and co-existence with secular state. In the majority of cases the ultimate goal of establishing Islamic state remains in place but it is regarded as a long-range historical perspective. Correspondingly, the preference is given to non-violent means of ideological and political character – in order to prepare the society for the idea of accepting new political order. It implies that political Islam not necessarily insists on using violence to change the status-quo while religious (Islamic) radicalism often gives preference to violent means with the aim to impose a new social/political order by force. In Tajikistan the brightest example of this kind of Islamist organizations is IRPT (Islamic Party of Revival of Tajikistan). However, it should be noted that some religious fundamentalist organizations (such as Hizb ut Tahrir) that refuse the use of violence in practice are often blamed in ideological justification for violence in their literature and programming documents.²⁷

Another important notion closely related to the phenomenon of ‘*religious radicalism*’ is the notion of ‘*social marginalization*’ defined as social exclusion or disadvantage and relegation to the fringe of society.²⁸ Marginalization is regarded as a shifting phenomenon, linked to social status. Thus, individual or group may lose their previous social niche/status and

²⁶ Mark Moyar, *Typologies Of Terrorism*, Hoover Institution, February 1, 2016, <http://www.hoover.org/research/typologies-terrorism>

²⁷ “Radical Islam in Central Asia: Responding to Hizb ut-Tahrir”, Crisis Group Report N58, Europe and Central Asia, 30 June, 2003, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/central-asia/uzbekistan/radical-islam-central-asia-responding-hizb-ut-tahrir>

²⁸ See: Hilary Silver, “Social Exclusion and Social Solidarity.” *International Labor Review* 133, nos. 5-6 (1994): 531-78.

become marginalized.²⁹ Such ‘today social marginals’ constitute the social base and driving force of the majority of the most radical religious extremist organizations.

The scholars define two types of radicalization: the *cognitive* and *behavior* radicalization.³⁰ The first one implies mainly adherence to the extreme ideas or ideology of radical character without direct involvement in violence. The behavior radicalism might involve the use of violence and violent means including extremist, military or terrorist actions. Today, various stakeholders and governments position regarding the two types of radicalism. Thus, in the majority of post-Soviet countries the cognitive (or ideological) radicalism is also the subject of prosecution (along with the behavior one); therefore, a political party or religious group could be prosecuted/prohibited even if there is no convincing evidence of its direct involvement into violence. The approach used in the majority of developed countries is to punish behavior as described by Tony Albot, Australian Prime-minster: ‘The general principle in this country is that we don’t punish bad thoughts, we don’t even punish bad words, as long as those words don’t amount to incitement to break the law’.³¹

Tajikistan follows the above mentioned ‘cognitive approach’ as well; as a result, the list of banned organizations in the country includes Hizb-ut-Tahrir and Jamoati Tabligh organizations that are not the subject of prosecution in the majority of Western and European countries.

Youth Radicalism: Causes and Driving factors

The fact that so many youth have been radicalized to join terrorist groups is a cause for concern for the authorities, local civil society, other interested domestic and international stakeholders in the growing number of countries. In order to explain this phenomenon various think tank groups and academic institutions have collected and analysed empirical data in the countries directly affected by the issue of youth radicalism and religious extremism across MENA region and Soviet space. For instance, Bruno de Cordier in his paper ‘Can an Arab Uprising Scenario also Happen in Southern Eurasia?’ compared situation in several Arab Spring countries with socio-economic conditions, political and security situation in Azerbaijan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. David Muckenhuber in his paper ‘Why Has the Arab Spring Skipped Central Asia’(So Far)?’ explored the possibility of social destabilization in Central Asian region under the influence of the Arab Spring events. There is also a series of internal (closed) reports conducted by various international of papers and studies published

²⁹ Carolyn Kagan, “ Working with people who are marginalized by the social system”
www.compsy.org.uk/margibarc.pdf

³⁰ See. Peter R. Neumann, “The trouble with radicalization” *International Affairs*, Volume 89, Issue 4, 1 July 2013, Pages 873–893

³¹ Uthman Badar, ‘Hizb ut-Tahrir: is it now an offence to oppose government policy? If so, let it be said plainly?’, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/feb/23/hizb-ut-tahrir-is-it-now-an-offence-to-oppose-government-policy-if-so-let-it-be-said-plainly>

by post-Soviet authors with same set of questions and similar analyses. The comparative studies and research reveals a set of common causes and factors that promote youth radicalism and recruitment to extremist organizations both in Tajikistan and on broader regional/global levels:

First, internal causes and factors ranging from unemployment, shortages of social (vertical) mobility, social injustice, lack of education, poverty, religion discrimination, family background, and political and economic marginalization, among others. According to the most recent studies conducted by Tajik researchers one of the most vulnerable stratum are disconnected youth, those ages 16 to 24 who are not in school and are not employed. This groups includes young people who entering the job market with higher expectations and demands. Another vulnerable social group includes representatives of small business sector (bazaar retailers and traders), as well as middle-size entrepreneurs engaged in import operations. Representatives of this social group have experienced considerable financial losses and economic difficulties due to economic crisis and downfall of the Tajik Somoni.³² A considerable proportion of this group is made up by young professionals 29-35-year-old among them young professionals, retail (bazar) traders, entrepreneurs, blue and white collars etc. Correspondingly, in particular these two age-groups of Tajik young people (16-24-year-old and 29-35-year-old) appear to be most socially vulnerable and potentially exposed to the risk of radicalisation.

It is worth noting that this Tajikistan data on its many aspects corresponds to the data of comparative research studies conducted in several Arab spring and colour revolution countries. For instance, according to the Arab Barometer data (collected three years ahead of the Arab spring) the most outraged part of population in pre-revolutionary Tunisia and Egypt ready to immediate actions was so referred ‘middle class’ stratum, which included people with relatively higher income, education and social status. During the Arab Spring public disturbances, the street protesters were disproportionately recruited from the “middle class” made up by bazaar retailers, traders, bank employees etc. Thus, the core group of meetings participants in Tunisia and Egypt had higher levels of education and income than the general population and tended to be engaged in urban white-collar work.³³

Second, there is a set of external factors including ideological propaganda of radical religious and extremist groups conducted via Internet, social networks and online media. The ISIS (as well as other major Jihadist organizations) has developed a sophisticated “Soft Power” and propaganda machine, which turned into one of the most effective instruments of recruiting. All interviewed experts stressed that in the course of several years the amount of radical propaganda as well as the number of extremist online media targeting Tajik audience has been considerably increased. The most vivid example of such online resources was satellite channel “Visoli Haq” broadcasted from London in Persian/Tajiki, whose financing,

³² Interview with a Tajik sociologist May 2018, Dushanbe

³³ Michael Hoffman and Amaney Jamal, “The Youth and Arab Spring: Cohort Differences and Similarities, Book ‘Middle East and the Governance’, 4 (2012) 168–18

according to the British press, was carried out directly through the Embassy of Saudi Arabia in the UK.³⁴ The Jihadist propaganda is disseminated also through a network of specialized web-sites and video types in Russian, Tajik and Uzbek languages.

According to the Tajik authorities and experts the Jihadist and Salafi propaganda is often promoted by graduates of foreign Islamic institutions and universities based in Pakistan, Iran or Arab countries. With this regard, since 2010 the Tajik authorities implements a series of measures aimed at reducing the number of Tajik students seeking for religious education abroad.

Radicalization Phases

As it was mentioned above radicalization is a rather long, complicated and multi-stage process of mental, ideological and social transformation – although, of course, it differs with each individual case. Therefore, it is very important for any stakeholder to identify the exact stages and phases of radicalization process; this knowledge would allow various stakeholders – ranging from government bodies to civil society actors – to design their radicalism/violent extremism prevention strategy in the most effective way. Correspondingly, various groups of international experts, specialized police agencies attempted to explore and classify the process of religious radicalization with the aim to define its stages and phases. They developed a series of radicalization models, the majority of which include the following main phases:

- 1) Pre-radicalization, also defined in some models as social marginalization, when individuals or social groups – under the influence of various social and economic factors such as social exclusion, injustice, and economic crisis – assume a critical attitude towards the surrounding reality, political system, ruling regime, social order, etc. This stage is also defined as the phase of motivations/conversions;
- 2) Self -Identification, defined also as the conversion to and identification with radical Islam; during which individuals begin to explore and embrace the Salafi line and associate themselves with like-minded individuals and adopt this ideology as their own; he/she isolates him/herself from previous social life (receives religious training – often overseen – and basic paramilitary training). As usual (especially in Tajikistan conditions) this social isolation is artificially promoted from outside – by the ideologists and propagandists of radical Islamic organizations;
- 3) Indoctrination is the phase in which an individual progressively intensifies his/her beliefs, wholly adopts a Jihadi-Salafi ideology and concludes that the conditions and circumstances exist where action is required to support and further the cause; this is the time of immersions into a terrorist/social group and is a stage of getting ready for action;

³⁴ “How Saudi Arabia manipulates foreign media outlets”, Reporters Without Borders, July 9, 2015 – Updated on January 20, 2016, <https://rsf.org/en/news/how-saudi-arabia-manipulates-foreign-media-outlets>

4) Jihadization and recruiting to radical organizations, which is the final phase in which members of the cluster accept their individual duty to participate in jihad and to act on behalf of the cause. This is defined also as the phase of action, when individual knowingly engage in extremist activity and implement a particular terrorist action;

In general, all these phases seem to be applicable to the Tajik context as well. At the same time, many respondents stated that the process of actual recruiting of Tajik radicals to ISIS and other Jihadist organizations occurs mainly abroad during their labour migration in Russia. According to the Tajik respondents the Jihadist organizations created a wide and deep-rooted recruiting system in most of the Russian big cities, where the Tajik migrants are mainly employed. One of the experts described the situation in the following way: “jihadization and recruiting of Tajik migrants often happens though the mosques controlled by Salafists and Jihadists many of whom are descendants from Northern Caucasus, where the Salafi network has been always well-established. Therefore, we have observed so many labour migrants among the ISIS recruits. From this point of view, Tajik migrants should be considered as the most vulnerable social group especially exposed to the risk of recruitment.”³⁵

Typology of Radical Islamist Organizations in Tajikistan

Taking into account the international classification (typology) of extremist organizations³⁶ we may define the following two main groups of radical organizations in Tajikistan:

First, there is a group of ‘non-militant fundamentalists’, which officially rejects the use of violence and any involvement in political activities but shares the ideology of religious fundamentalist and extremist character based on a literal interpretation of the Quran. This group is represented in Tajikistan mainly by the Hizbi Tahrir (Hizb ut-Tahrir) party, which is an international, pan-Islamist political organization, which proclaims its aim as the re-establishment of “the Islamic (Caliphate)” or Islamic state.

There are also underground circles of so referred ‘peaceful Salafites’ (often referred to in Central Asia as ‘Madkhalists’ – followers of Rabe' Ibn Haadee 'Umayr al-Madkhalee, a well-known Salafi scholar based in Saudi Arabia)³⁷ that could be considered as a part of the ‘non-militant fundamentalist’ group as well. Officially, they deny any involvement into politics, insisting on the principle of loyalty to any ruling authorities (all power comes from

³⁵ Interview June 10, Dushanbe

³⁶ See: Olivier Roy, “The modernity of an archaic way of thinking – Neo-fundamentalism”, “Globalized Islam”, Columbia University Press, New York, 2004

³⁷ Rabi' Ibn Haadi 'Umayr al-Madkhali (المدخلي عمير هادي بن ربيع) is a former head of the Sunnah Studies Department at the Islamic University of Madinah. He is a Salafist Muslim scholar, founder of the Madkhalism movement and one of Salafism's most radical thinkers. see See: “Whatever Happened to the Islamists?: Salafis, Heavy Metal Muslims and the Lure of Consumerist Islam” Eds. Amel Boubekeur and Olivier Roy. — New York: Columbia University Press, 2012. — P. 291.

the God). However, a number of actions undertaken by ‘peaceful Salafites’ – such as active participation in the Government-led propagandist campaign against IRPT (Islamic Revival Part, see below), statements and struggle against Sufi brotherhood – are of a clear political character.

The second group of militant Jihadists includes organizations that consider armed Jihad, military actions and violence as the primary means to achieve their political goals. This group in Tajikistan is represented mainly by the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and Ansarulloh (Jamoati Ansarulla, JA), which is based today in the neighbouring Afghanistan. The Tajik authorities regularly disseminate information about the existence of an underground network related to ISIS (DAESH) in Tajikistan; since 2014 Tajik authorities have arrested several groups of men for hoisting an ISIS flag.³⁸

It should be noted that the Tajik authorities’ list of extremist organizations includes also the Islamic Revival Party of Tajikistan (IRPT), which played a key role in the United Tajik Opposition (UTO) structures during the Tajik Civil War (1992-1997). In September 2015 the IRPT was accused of organizing a military coup against the legitimate government; soon later it was banned by the unanimous decision of the Tajik parliament; the majority of its leadership was arrested or went into exile. However, until the present day the IRPT is not included yet into the list of extremist organizations on international arena; a part of its main leaders and leading activists received political asylum status in several EU countries.

Religious Radicalization and VE Dynamics in Tajikistan

The history of religious radicalization/violent extremist processes in Tajikistan could be relatively divided in three main states;

The first stage started approximately since the beginning of political disturbances in early 90’s and continued until its end and conclusion of the Peace Accords. This period is marked by the penetration of Islamist ideology into the country (mainly in the form of Muslim Brotherhood ideas); some oppositional groups subsequently employed extreme Islamic religious narratives. During the civil war the political and military violence had a widespread character in the country; the level of human rights abuses, atrocities and inter-community rivalry/hatred was extremely high as well.³⁹ However, the majority of experts describes the civil war as a struggle for political power and resources; at that time, ideology - including Islamist and Jihadist ideas - played a secondary role.⁴⁰ It should be mentioned that throughout the civil war the tactics of suicidal attacks wasn’t typical for Tajikistan; there were just a few cases of bombing and explosions in public spaces in the late 90’s;

³⁸ Catherine Putz, “Tajikistan Arrests 14 For Allegedly Hoisting an ISIS Flag”, *The Diplomat*, 01 Sep. 2015, <https://thediplomat.com/2015/09/tajikistan-arrests-14-for-allegedly-hoisting-an-isis-flag/>

³⁹ See: Human Right watch/Helsinki reports 1994-1996

⁴⁰ See: D.Mikuliski and V.Buzhkov “Anatomy of the Tajik Civil War”, Institute of Oriental Studies of RAN, Moscow, 1995

The second stage starts from the beginning 2000's when the first Salafi underground circles started to appear in Tajikistan. The penetration of Salafi ideology and formation of Salafi network reached its peak by 2009 when the Tajik Government eventually decided to ban the movement. In addition, a group of former UTO field commanders and fighters rejected to accept the Peace Accords and moved to Afghanistan where they joined Taliban and IMU. Later, several of them founded "Ansarulloh" organization (see above) under the overall Taliban umbrella. During this period sporadic outbursts of clashes between the Government troops and former UTO groups took place in several Eastern mountainous regions of the country;

The third stage launched approximately since 2014 when the number of Tajik recruits to ISIS and other Jihadist groups started to rapidly increase. At the same time, the religious extremists preferred to leave the country for Syria rather than to conduct violent actions inside the country. For this reason, the overall level of violent extremism in the country remains low until the very present time. The current attack on group of foreign tourists (occurred in Southern Khatlon oblast in August 2018) is actually the first case of terrorist action conducted in full accordance to the ISIS tactics and ideology.

Understanding "Countering/Preventing Violent Extremism"

There is a variety of definitions of CVE/PVE used by international agencies and stakeholders. Thus, USAID follows the US government definition of CVE as "*proactive actions to counter efforts by violent extremists to radicalize, recruit, and mobilize followers to violence and to address specific factors that facilitate violent extremist recruitment and radicalization to violence.*"⁴¹ In general, USAID focuses much of its work on a development approach to countering violent extremism, which reflects the common tendency in PVE evolution. Today, CVE policy includes a range of preventing measures and interventions aimed at undermining the attraction of terrorist and extremist actions that seek to promote violence and to destabilise the society.

In order to prevent and eliminate violence caused by terrorist acts the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (UNGCTS), also launched the Plan of Action on Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) in 2016. The UNGCTM envisages implementation of practical steps and measures ranging from strengthening state capacity to counter terrorist threats to better coordinating United Nations system's counter-terrorism activities. United Nations remains committed to the work of countering terrorism and preventing violent extremism and to strengthening Central Asia's strategic cooperation, including through a new joint UNRCCA and UNOCT-UNCCT initiative "Towards a

⁴¹ Promising practices engaging youth in peace and security and PVE/CVE. Summary of key interventions and examples, https://static.globalinnovationexchange.org/s3fs-public/asset/document/Promising%20Practices%20in%20Engaging%20Youth%20in%20Peace%20Security_print_combined.pdf?2Zq0oW5C8mDmkuS2Zn8dzgjGFK.xFhI3

Comprehensive Implementation of United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in Central Asia”.

A contemporary CVE strategy is expected to address the root causes of extremism through implementing various programs, projects and initiatives. For instance, the USA CVE strategy includes the following programs: 1) **Building awareness**—including briefings on the drivers and indicators of radicalization and recruitment to violence; 2) **Countering extremist narratives**—directly addressing and countering violent extremist recruitment narratives, such as encouraging civil society-led counter narratives online; 3) **Emphasizing Community Led Intervention**—empowering community efforts to disrupt the radicalization process before an individual engages in criminal activity.

The OSCE’s comprehensive approach to security includes work to prevent *Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism* (VERLT). The OSCE commitment to preventing VERLT reflects the growing awareness that law enforcement measures alone are insufficient without parallel efforts that focus on prevention.

Most CVE strategies are intended to promote youth participation, which is considered as one of the main tools in preventing political and religious extremism. Youth participation is considered as active engagement of young people in their society and community’s life, participation in political and social activities, influencing decision-making process, volunteering in public and social actions etc. Young people’s exclusion and disconnection leads to their radicalisation and make them receptive to radical ideology and propaganda.

New Trends and Approaches to CVE/PVE

In the course of the last decade the evolution of CVE/PVE approaches passed through several phases. In its early stages the traditional approaches included mainly security- oriented and counter-terrorism measures, changing legislations (both domestic and international), promoting cooperation. Later, the main attention was given to respond to the recruitment strategies utilised by Jihadist organizations; at this stage CVE focused on developing counter-recruitment and youth engagement strategies, religious counter-narratives to confront extremist propaganda etc.⁴²

In the recent years, the increasing attention is given to working and engagement of civil society actors with particular emphasis on promoting dialogue and interaction between various stakeholders such as state actors, religious groups, civil society institutions. The approaches include sustained dialogue initiatives, contributing to policy makers, capacity building and empowering programs.⁴³ With his regard, the studies conducted by UN agencies

⁴² M. Abu-Numer, “Alternative Approaches to Transforming Violent Extremism”, Berghof Foundation, https://www.berghof-foundation.org/fileadmin/redaktion/Publications/Handbook/Dialogue_Chapters/dialogue13_Abu-Nimer_lead.pdf

⁴³ Switzerland’s Foreign Policy Action Plan on Preventing Violent Extremism, FDFA Berne, 2016

especially stress the significance of the sustained dialogue approach as an effective “ tool in preventing violence: “programs that facilitate inter-group contact between youth in conflict, combined with long-term sustained dialogue initiatives, are found to significantly decrease the likelihood of participants joining extremist groups and create positive shifts in attitude towards the other.”⁴⁴

Today, the CVE/PVE strategies are focused on targeting the roots and causes of conflict. It implies the PVE program are designed to address the deep lying issues that foment extremist violence and fragility. Thus, USAID currently manages programs that specifically address drivers of violent extremism in various regions raging from Middle East to Central Asia.⁴⁵

Another common trend is to widen the scope and coverage of PVE programs by targeting social and economic factors that promote radicalization. The new PVE approach focuses also on conducting analytical research projects aimed at defining the real situation on the ground and providing stakeholders with better outline of intervention strategy. As a result, today PVE strategies include a range of projects, which on the first glance have a relatively indirect link to security/counter-terrorism issues; at the same time, they are designed to address the conflict social and economic roots and violence promoting factors. This approach is clearly expressed in the USAID policy documents: “based on rigorous, locally-informed assessments and analysis, USAID’s approach has concentrated on youth empowerment, social and economic inclusion, media and messaging, improved local governance, reconciliation, and conflict mitigation.”⁴⁶

The current PVE strategies are intended to address the needs of socially vulnerable groups of population exposed to the risk of radicalization among them labour migrants, youth, refugees etc. For instance, based on research pointing on labour migrants as the main group vulnerable to radicalization USAID piloted programs in Central Asia aimed at promoting reintegration of returning migrants returning from work abroad in Russia, exploring their livelihood support etc.

⁴⁴ UN Resolution 2250: Youth Toolkit (<http://unoy.org/2250-toolkit/>)

⁴⁵ “The Development response to Violent Extremis and Insurgency. Piloting Principle into Practice~, USAID, 2011, <https://www.usaid.gov/countering-violent-extremism>

⁴⁶ Ibid

1.1 Tajik Government PVE and Youth Policy

State PVE Policy

The Tajik Government pays increasing attention to the problem of religious radicalisation – partly because of increasing number of Tajik recruits in radical organizations, intensification of Jihadist underground network inside the country as well as increasing activities of Tajik extremist groups within Taliban and ISIS structures in Afghanistan (such as ‘Ansarulla’ extremist group made up by Tajik citizens, which has reportedly joined ISIS in 2016). With the aim to prevent and preclude this phenomenon the Tajik Government developed its *National Strategy on Countering Terrorism and Extremism (NSCTE) for the period of 2016-2020*, adopted on 12 November 2016 as an instrument aimed at the solving above mentioned issues. The NSCTE main aims are: 1) to analyse factors and trends that promote terrorism in the RT; 2) to develop the main directions of the state CVE policy; 3) improvement of legislative and institutional base 4) promoting tolerant consciousness and behaviour; 4) consolidation of efforts of official bodies, self-governance bodies, civil society institutions and international organizations; 5) promoting cooperation between various involved law enforcement and official bodies; 6) promoting cooperation on international level;

The *NSCTE* forms the base for the entire activities and measures implemented inside Tajikistan not only by the Tajik government but by other domestic and international initiatives aimed at preventing and countering youth radicalization. According to many respondents the NSCTE would potentially open doors for the contribution and more active involvement of various non-state actors, civil society institutions and international organizations. It would create new opportunities for the promotion of social partnership and cooperation between the Tajik state agencies and civic institutions, think-tank groups and international agencies.

In January 2017 Tajikistan launched *the second phase of the country's National Strategy on Countering Terrorism and Extremism for 2016-2020*. It was announced that during the second stage the major attention will be paid to the issue of youth radicalism and young people recruitment to radical organizations. With this aim, the Tajik government plans to develop a full list of extremist and terrorist organisations, their ideological platforms, and a description of the methods by which they recruit, as well as examples of terrorist attacks they have organised. The authorities are going to explore the issue of online recruitment and propaganda, which target the Tajik youth. The countering and prevention measures include blocking Internet web-sites, radicals’ media, publication of counter-propaganda booklets and materials, organising meetings and discussions with Tajik youth all over the republic. Authorities are also seeking to prevent extremism and radicalisation among law enforcement

and military personnel ‘as they are subject to the risk of infection by extremist propaganda. Their duty requires them to deal with individuals who have extremist inclinations.’⁴⁷

What is important to note the NSCTE prefers to concentrate on ideological and counter-propagandist campaign and initiatives; at the same time, social and economic causes of youth radicalizations look much less addressed and underestimated.

Government Measures Countering Religious Radicalism

During the last decade the Tajik authorities have developed their own approach and vision to the issue of prevention and countering religious radicalisation of the Tajik youth. Many (if not the majority) of these measures are actively criticized by local civil society organizations, independent experts, representatives of local religious groups, human rights NGO’s and international agencies. Among the most disputed measures and initiatives are the following:

With the aim to reduce the level of religiosity of the Tajik youth the authorities have introduced a set of restrictions on religious activities. Thus, under 2009 Law ‘On religious freedom and religious associations’ and the ‘Law on Parents responsibility’ the teenagers under age 18 are not allowed to visit mosques’ worships and to attend religious education courses established under the mosques.

In addition, the authorities banned the religious education at home and restricted the practice of holding religious courses under the mosques; prohibited worship at work, public places and institutions. There is also a strict control over religious content by monitoring and inspecting publications, video types, records, Internet sources, media, etc.

Introducing new dress code rules - there is also a ban on wearing *hijabs* and *satr* (Islamic scarf) in educational institutions and government agencies. Following the alleged government instructions, the Tajik police and other official bodies initiated a practice of shaving ‘Islamic’ beards and convincing local women not to wear ‘hijab’ and ‘satr’. In 2016 the Tajik police announced that police in Tajikistan's Khatlon region had shaved the beards of nearly 13,000 men as part of an "anti-radicalization campaign". It was also stated that over 2015, the police has closed about 160 shops where hijabs were being sold, and convinced 1,773 women to stop wearing hijabs.⁴⁸

Restrictions on religious education - the authorities closed unregistered religious school and circles; every religious teacher is supposed to receive a special teaching license; only certain number of mosques are allowed to open religious courses. In addition, the authorities pay a special attention to the Tajik students receiving religious education abroad. Since 2010 the

⁴⁷ Nadin Bahrom, “Tajikistan moves to new phase of counter-terrorism strategy” , Caravan, 2017-01-10, http://central.asia-news.com/en_GB/articles/cnmi_ca/features/2017/01/10/feature-01

⁴⁸ Anora Sarkorova, Tajikistan's battle against beards to 'fight radicalization', BBC, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-35372754>

Government implements policy of bringing back the Tajik students attending religious universities and madrasas abroad especially in Iran, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan.

Today, the Islamic University of Dushanbe is the main religious institution in charge for the education of Tajik young clergymen. At the same time in late 2013, five of the nine madrasas in Tajikistan's northern Sughd region had their activities suspended while all other provincial madrasas have been closed. By the start of 2015, the Government reduced the number of religious students at the Islamic Gymnasium of Dushanbe. However, later the authorities decided to close the Islamic Gymnasium for not properly explained reasons;

In addition, the Government has strengthened control over the religious clergy stratum; thus, Imam-Khatibs (heads of mosques) are deprived from the right to control people's religious donations (sadaqa) as they previously did. According to the new rules, the so referred 'sanduki khairiya' (donation box usually located at the mosque entrance) should be opened in the presence of local state authorities, which are in charge of the spending of donations. There is also a system of strict control over the mosques' activities and preaching content in place – Imam-Khatibs usually receive instructions and a list of allowed and recommended subjects for preaching. Imam-khatibs are requested to support the main government initiatives not only in the religious sphere but in the field of ideology, economy and politics;

One of the most peculiar features of the Government religious policy is so referred "Tanzim" (reordering, regulating) policy. Within Tanzim framework, the Tajik authorities implement a policy of restricting a range of traditional Islamic ceremonies – such as 'mavlud' (celebration of Prophet Birthday), traditional gatherings, ceremonies and festivities collectively referred to in Tajik as 'ma'raka. The restrictions include a special regulation on weddings, gatherings during and after the funerals, a ban on offering food during funeral repast, etc. These Tanzim rules are officially explained by the necessity of cutting down the people's spending for 'ma'raka' (traditional ceremonies) and in this way reducing the drop of living standards of the population. On the other hand, the restrictions would eventually reduce the influence of traditional Islamic clergy as they usually offer religious services during the traditional festivities and ceremonies.

Government Religious Policy: Main Results and Potential Outcomes

Therefore, the Tajik authorities' policy towards religion and religious sectors is distinguished by a rather hardline and strict approach. The Tajik Government has imposed a strict control on the entire religious activities including religious education, preaching and collecting and spending of religious donations. The religious infrastructure is also entirely subordinated and controlled by the correspondent official bodies. The Tajik Government successfully managed to destroy the Islamic Revival Party as well as underground Jihadist network; the most well-known Salafi leaders are under strict police surveillance or in prison. All experts stressed that today the Government enjoys a complete control over security situation inside the country, religious sector and activities of Jihadist underground groups.

On the other hand, the critics believe that the Tajik authorities proved to be less ready to counter ISIS and other Jihadist groups in field of ideological propaganda. In the sphere of ideology, the reliance only on force doesn't work, while the focus of the activities of radical organizations today is increasingly being shifted to the sphere of ideology and the Internet space.

In addition, the Tajik authorities are also often criticized for lack of clear criteria for determining the degree of radicalism of an individual citizen or organization. Such criteria should be used by law enforcement and state bodies in their activities. Otherwise, in the absence of such criteria, an ordinary Muslim can be accused of adherence to Salafism, only on the basis of his appearance or style of clothing. As a result, such excesses occur, as in Tajikistan, where police officers on their own initiative detained on the street and forcibly shaved beards of "suspiciously" looking young men.⁴⁹ In fact, this practice leads to a completely opposite effect, namely, to an increase in the number of unreasonably affected people and the expansion of the Salafi social base.

⁴⁹ Interview June 2018, Dushanbe

1.2 International Organizations' Programs

Dynamics of International Involvement and Civil Society Initiatives in PVE and Youth Programs

Introductory Notes: Classification of Conflict Resolution and PVE Initiatives in Tajikistan

It should be noted that Tajikistan has its own specifics regarding the design and implementation of the conflict resolution and PVE programs as well as the use of conflict resolution terminology. According to respondents the specifics is caused by post-war syndrome, which implies a rather negative and cautious reaction to the terms “conflict”, “conflict resolution”, “violence prevention” etc. As one of the respondents mentioned “I heard many times from officials that the term conflict resolution is not applicable any more to Tajikistan as the civil war is over many years ago. Therefore, local and international NGO’s prefer to frame their projects in more neutral terms – such as “confidence building”, “tolerance promoting” etc.” With this regard, the terms “PVE” is a new one for Tajikistan; it appeared to be used widely mainly after the Tajik Government has adapted its “National Strategy on Countering Terrorism and Extremism (NSCTE) in 2016. A considerable number of projects apparently has no direct link to conflict or violence prevention field; at the same time, they address social issues and factors that promote radicalization of socially vulnerable groups such as youth, labour migrants etc. Among them are the projects of youth empowerment, creation of business and job opportunities for vulnerable groups of population, reintegration of returning labour migrants etc.

In addition, the sensitivity of political situation affects the content and quality of PVE/CVE projects and programs in Tajikistan. The Government traditionally shares a rather cautious attitude towards all programs related to conflict /violence prevention field; probably because (it was explained by respondents) ‘such subjects are too close to politics’. As a result, such initiatives usually are the subject of special scrutiny and security clearance by the correspondent official bodies; a part of international initiatives were eventually not approved by the Tajik authorities. For instance, according to respondents in 2017 both UNPD and Mercy Corps were not allowed to implement their research projects intended to explore radicalization factors and causes in several rural regions of the country. As to local NGO’s the majority of them would hardly be able to implement any PVE/conflict prevention projects alone but only in partnership or under umbrella of international agencies and government bodies. Such limitations negatively affect the quality of PVE projects reducing their scope, coverage and potential impact. In addition, non-governmental and civic actors are not usually allowed to work directly with religious groups and institutions, they lack access to many vulnerable groups such as amnestied ISIS recruits, imprisoned members of radical groups, communities with higher number of recruits etc. Due to such objective limitations most of civic initiatives intended to prevent conflict and violence are framed mainly as economic and

social/youth empowering projects, correspondent gender initiatives, business and employment promoting programs. These initiatives address the social and economic roots and factors of radicalizations, the issues of social rehabilitation and integration of vulnerable groups without directly tackling security or religious issues.

In general, the entire conflict/violence prevention programs and programs implemented by international actors (and their local civic partners) in Tajikistan during the last two decades could be divided in four main groups:

The first group consists of programs intended to promote dialogue and interaction between conflicting groups, state and civil society, political parties, secular and religious parts of society. The majority of the dialogue projects are intended to build peace and confidence between parties with the aim to reduce further radicalization and conflicts. Some of dialogue projects (such as secular -religious projects implemented by PD-IV of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland). As such, most of these projects are in overall compliance with recent models of PVE strategies developed and adapted by the correspondent international agencies (such as UN; see above) and peacebuilding organizations (such as “Safeworld and International Alert).

The second group consists of youth and social/economic empowering projects - as it was mentioned above the majority of them has indirect link to conflict/violence prevention. At the same time the majority of our respondents - both representatives of local NGO's and international agencies – describe these initiatives as a part of conflict/violence prevention strategies. In their opinion, as the given project address the root causes and driving factors of radicalizations they should be referred as an integral part of conflict prevention mechanism. Moreover, most of respondents stated that in the conditions of current sensitive political situation of Tajikistan such economic empowering projects is the main available tool in targeting radicalization issues.

The third group consists of research projects intended to explore religious radicalization problems and issues in Tajikistan. Most of these projects and initiatives are implemented by international agencies have internal character and not subject for wider circulation and dissemination. Their main goal to provide main stockholders with analysis and data needed to draft their intervention strategy and methodological approaches. At the same time, some respondents stated that the research approach is the main available tool in addressing CVE/PVE issues in contemporary Tajikistan because as usual they are easier to implement and to get through the government scrutiny check.

Dynamics of International and Local Actors' Involvement in Conflict Prevention/Resolution Activities

The dynamics of involvement of International Agencies and local civic institutions in the implementation of youth and PVE programs could be relatively divided in three consequent and interrelated stages:

- I. **The First Stage** covered the period between 1995 and 2000; it was a time of active implementation of youth conflict resolution projects and initiatives many of which were launched even before the conclusion of the Peace Treaty in 1997. At that time the conflict potential and inter-ethnic and political tension in the country remained extremely high as the Tajik society lacked the atmosphere and culture of mutual tolerance and intercommunity dialogue.

Consistently, international and domestic stakeholders directed the majority of their programs to the conflict prevention and confidence building issues – especially on community level. Thus, international agencies based in Dushanbe – such as OSCE, UNCHR, UNOPS, Mercy Corps, OSI, Counterpart Consortium – initiated a series of projects intended to promote tolerance and prevent conflicts on community level. Especial attention was given to multi-ethnic communities of Southern Tajikistan (Khatlon oblast) directly affected by the civil war. The major attention was given to the capacity building of local NGO's and CBO's as well as traditional civic institutions (mahalla councils) and youth associations.

In 1995-1997 UNCHR, OSCE and IOM concentrated their efforts on ensuring safe and secure return as well as peaceful reintegration and rehabilitation of Tajik refugees returning to their villages from Afghanistan and CIS countries. The task was to prevent conflicts and to de-escalate tension between returnees and local population. In their efforts international organizations relied on local government bodies, mahalla councils, NGO's, community-based organizations, gender and youth activists. Consistently, International Agencies actively supported the institutional and professional development of local NGO's network.

At the same time, at the given period the contribution of Tajik NGO's into the peace and confidence building process of limited. The Tajik NGO's (by 1996 only 300 NGO's were officially registered in the country comparing to more than 2000 NGO's in 2016) preferred to specialize mainly in so called "safe" e.g. non-political fields of activities such as: education, ecology, statistics, research, economy (for instance promotion of small enterprises) etc. Actually, until July 1997 when the Peace Treaty was signed only a few Tajik NGO's have dealt with conflict resolution programs conducted mostly on community level in the form of training seminars, civic forums or research programs. There were just few exceptions – for instance, in 1996-1997 Tajik Centre for Citizenship Education conducted a public Dialogue on Tajik Regionalism – a series of round table meetings, academic and media publications devoted to the issue of inter-regional tensions between different ethno-regional groups of Tajiks.

- II. **The Second Stage** continued approximately from 2000 to 2010; it was the post-conflict period distinguished by increasing involvement of International Agencies and local NGO's in the post conflict resolution and confidence building process in

the republic. After the signing of the Peace Treaty the conflict resolution issues have stopped to be a politically sensitive topic – in contrary, the State officially declared a policy directed to further deepening and development of the post conflict confidence building and national reconciliation process. On other hand the International Agencies based in the country started to allocate more grants to the conflict resolution and youth promotion tracks. As a result, the situation in the country became rather conducive for conflict resolution and confidence building trucks turned into one of the most popular and attractive directions of activity for local NGO's. It led the rise of number of NGO's in rural areas and their increasing engagement in the field

As it was mentioned above, initially, the majority of conflict resolution projects have been conducted in the southern Khatlon province of Tajikistan– in the areas of former military confrontation where the inter-ethnic and inter –regional tension was still a rather serious problem. At that time the Tajik authorities and international stakeholders focused their efforts on promoting rehabilitation of returning refugees and IDP's (internally displaced persons) and precluding conflicts and violence between returnees and rest of the population. As usual such programs were implemented on community level in the form of civic forums or round tables or public dialogues.

Since 1999 the focus of inter-ethnic tension shifted to the North (to the cross-border zones of Fergana valley), due to the increased level of inter-community and inter-ethnic tensions caused mainly by competition for local economic, water and land resources as well as uncompleted border limitation process. Thus, a considerable level of tension was observed between local Uzbek and Kyrgyz communities in the Southern Kyrgyzstan (Osh and Jalalabad provinces). There is a protracted conflict over local land and water resources between Tajik and Kyrgyz communities in near-border Isfara- Batken zone. The increased tension several times led to sporadic outburst of violence threatening the stability in the region. Correspondingly, the attention of both domestic and international NGO's has turned to this area. There was a series of international conflict resolution projects involving local NGO's both from Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan sponsored by UN agencies, OSCE, Swiss Development Agency and conducted by the *Centre for Youth Initiative (Ittifoq)*, *Association of Scientific and Technical Intelligentsia of Tajikistan (ASTI)*, from Khujand city.

During this period international and local civic organizations widely used the so referred 'public dialogue' (public deliberation) approach and methodology; each dialogue project was distinguished by the gender and youth mainstreaming.

- III. **The Third Stage** started since 2010 and continues until the present time; it is a period of gradual but steady deterioration of the Government attitude towards political opposition, independent civil society and mass media. According to respondents and experts' observations the new turn in the Tajik Government policy

towards the civil society launched since 2010 parliamentary elections. Prior to 2010 the Tajik authorities relatively tolerated the local civil society institutions although the periods of temporal improvement of the state-civil society relations had been often succeeded by a new period of mutual suspicion and mistrust. However, since 2010 the State continuously increases its pressure over the civil society institutions adopting new legislative acts, introducing new restrictions and policy measures.

Thus, several changes have being introduced into the NGO's reporting procedures making it more complicated and detailed. The civil society in general is regarded as one of the main potential trouble makers and as a tool for external intervention. Correspondingly, the majority of locally based international agencies and organizations are distrusted as well. The NGO leaders complain that in the last several years the Government has considerably increased the number of tax and security inspections. It negatively affected the atmosphere of social cooperation in the country and led to considerable bureaucratization and excessive centralisation of the entire process of interaction between the authorities and international agencies civil society institutions. For instance, previously international NGO's could directly contact potential partners among state bodies; since 2011 they are obliged to apply first to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the RT. The civic institutions are required to obtain preliminary permission of the state authorities before holding any initiatives or assemblies on the ground. The implementation of research projects and field studies on the ground became more complicated and bureaucratized as well.

The new situation promoted an overall crisis of the Tajik NGO sector decreasing the number of active and professional Tajik NGOs – especially the once specialised in the conflict resolution and confidence building initiatives.

During this period the number of conflict prevention and dialogue projects in the country has been decreased as well. The majority of local NGO's prefer to avoid politically sensitive subjects including the topics related to the civic education, unemployment etc.

As a result, international and domestic civic actors concentrate today on relatively 'neutral' subjects such as labour migration, education, vocational training and gender. Many of these civic projects are designed and implemented in support to the Tajik authorities' policy initiatives. Thus, the Tajik Government declared 2017 as the National Youth Year in Tajikistan. It allowed international agencies' involvement in a series of initiative and projects in the country such as *Start-Up Chohona*, *Y-PEERs*, *Tajik Youth Climate Coalition*, *New Century Youth*, *Tajikistan Youth Generation* and many others.

The adoption of *the State National Strategy on Countering Terrorism and Extremism for 2016-2020* created favourable conditions for cooperation between

official bodies and international and domestic non-state actors. In result in growing number of projects and programs aimed at countering radicalism and extremism implemented by international agencies and civic actors in close conjunction with the correspondent governmental instructions. It should be noted that the majority of the implemented and current anti-radicalism projects are still limited mainly by the research activities. According to respondents this phenomenon could be explained by the sensitive character of the youth radicalization issue; therefore, it is still extremely difficult to get the government permission for more practical projects to be implemented on the ground and in the country's rural areas.

International Agencies: Mapping Main CVE and Youth Initiatives

Dialogue and Confidence Building Projects

The major dialogue programs in the field of conflict prevention and confidence building are brought in the Table 1 (see below). The majority of main dialogue projects were implemented through the period since 1994 to 2010 but several of them continued until the recent time. (see Annex I)

The sustained dialogue projects implemented in the field of conflict prevention in Tajikistan are distinguished by the specific and well-developed methodology, described in the relevant literature as well as by our respondents.

Sustained Dialogue Methodology

Sustained Dialogue approach is defined as a peacebuilding tool aimed at transforming conflicting relationship. The methodology of "Sustained Dialogue Approach" was developed first in the framework Dartmouth Conference - the longest continuous bilateral dialogue between American and Soviet (now Russian) representatives held from 1956 to 1990 (it was recently revived in 2014). Later, in 1992-1997 the approach was tested in the form of Inter-Tajik Dialogue - a peaceful joint American-Russian civic initiatives aimed at finding peaceful resolution to the Tajik Civil War.

The main aim of the approach is to establish a platform for leading representatives of various interest groups (conflicting sides), where they would be able to discuss their positions, causes and factors of disagreement and to search for common ground. Dialogue platform which would ideally serve as a deliberation platform and unofficial channel of communication between various interest groups – for instance, representing religious and secular parts of society. It is also described as a part of "Track II diplomacy" or "backchannel diplomacy", which is the practice of "non-governmental, informal and unofficial contacts and activities between private citizens or groups of individuals, sometimes called 'non-state actors'"

As usual, there are three main rules followed while organizing such dialogues:

First, the dialogue should continue over certain period of time; it is usually multi-stage and continues process with detailed agenda and set of issues to discuss.

Second, there is a core groups of dialogue members who meet regularly over a rather long period of time. The idea is to build the atmosphere of trust and confidence - first, within the core group to be later transferred beyond the dialogue circle. Meeting regularly the dialogue members gradually create working relationship, which helps to overcome existing stereotypes and

Third, the selected dialogue members should be enough independent in order not be bound by 'diplomatic code'; on the other hand, dialogue group members must have access to decision-making levels in their respective institutions/political structures. In this case, the results of the Dialogue discussions and proposals and suggestions of participants would immediately reach the top decision-making and political level.

The dialogue projects implemented in Tajikistan covered the following main thematic areas:

First, promoting peace and prevention violence, search for peaceful resolution of conflicts – this area was covered by *Inter-Tajik Dialogue*, a joint peaceful American-Russian initiative held from 1993 to 1997 with the aim to find the ways out of the civil war. The Inter-Tajik Dialogue paved the road to the official negotiations between the Tajik government and UTO started in 1994. Later, after the conclusion of the Tajik Peace Treaty a group of regular members of the Inter-Tajik Dialogue decided to establish an NGO inside Tajikistan aimed at promoting the further peace strengthening and democratic development of the country in the post-conflict period. A series of dialogue were conducted throughout the country in 2000-2006 covering important issues such as relationship between secular-religious parts of society, countering religious extremism, reforming religious education, preventing youth radicalism etc.

Second, promoting dialogue and interaction between religious sector and the state – this thematic area was covered by the two dialogue projects – first, by the German-Swiss Project "*Creating a Peace-building Dialogue with Moderate Islamists in Tajikistan and Central Asia*" (1999-2001) intended to promote dialogue and coming ground between religious groups and the Tajik government. The project was designed to bring together Islamic and secular politicians and scholars.

In 2003 the initiative was continued by "*The Tajikistan Dialogue Project (TDP)* implemented by the PD-IV of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland. The TDP project debuted in 2003 and continues until 2009 combining both research activities and dialogue platform meetings. Within the TDP framework five working groups were established made up by representatives of secular society, official bodies, expert community and religious groups including traditional clergy, Islamic Revival Party and various religious groups.

Third, bridging the gap between state and society, facilitates dialogue between government and civil society and promoting new ways to prevent youth radicalization – the areas is covered by several organizations and projects. Thus, International Alert implemented several projects to support the government efforts in preventing youth radicalization and building

bridge between various civic actors (including religious) and the state institutions. Within this thematic area a series of youth summer camps on civic education and tolerance was held with the aim to promote interaction and deliberation between representatives of students of religious and secular institutions, ethnic groups, political parties and social strata of the country.

Achievements and Challenges

There two main achievements of the dialogue projects mentioned by many respondents:

First, the dialogue promoted peace and atmosphere of trust and confidence in the country; a number of important issues related to CVE/PVE have been addressed such as religious education, countering radical propaganda, ways to improve relationship between religious and secular parts of society, political parties, civil society and the government. With the dialogue projects' framework, a series of important policy documents and concepts have been developed.

Second, a very positive achievement is the appearance of a wide network of local civil society organizations specialized and well-trained in the field of conflict resolution and peace building in the country. Thus, within the framework of Inter-Tajik Dialogue component several tens Tajik citizens received training in holding civic forums, round table meetings and focus groups. In addition, 8 Tajik Universities nominated 24 professors to participate in a series of training workshops and seminars on contemporary theory and practice of conflict resolution run by experienced Western scholars and teachers. The nominees studied not only the modern conflict resolution and peace building theory and approaches but also pay attention to conflict prevention means of local traditional society which do exist in Tajikistan.

On the other hand, the Dialogue projects and initiatives proved to be less sustainable in the long term. As soon as financing was over they failed to sustain and continue their activities. Without financial support from donor institutions local partners proved to be unable to proceed with the approach as well as to promote their ideas and initiatives on the government level. One respondent stated that there is no more conditions for such dialogues in today's Tajikistan – "as any dialogue requires participation from two sides." Meanwhile, today the authorities seem to be less interested in promoting this approach or in participation in such civic initiatives.

Table I. Main Dialogue Initiatives in Tajikistan

N	Project name/content	Institution	Years
1	Inter-Tajik Dialogue Projects within the framework of the Dartmouth Conference	Institute of Sustained Dialogue, Kettering Foundation (US), Russian Centre of Strategic Research (Moscow)	1994-2000
2	Series of public dialogues in Tajikistan	PCDP Public Committee) Dialogues (as outgrowth of Inter-Tajik Dialogue)	2000-2007
3	“CORE dialogue project” under the title of "Creating a Peace-building Dialogue to Promote Cooperation and Co-existence between Cultures and Civilizations in the OSCE Area." Dialogue between secular and religious scholars and politicians	German Ministry of Foreign Affairs	2001-2002
4	“The Tajikistan Dialogue Project (TDP)	the PD-IV of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland	2003-2009
5	Regional Dialogue and Development Project	SDC Agency for Development of Cooperation (SDC)	2001-2002
6	“Civil Society- State Dialogue on Development of Concept of State Policy towards Religion”	International Alert sponsored by EU	2010-2012
7	Project “Preventing Radicalism: Developing State Concept on Policy towards the Youth”	International Alert sponsored by EU	2010-2012
8	“Mainstreaming of Youth Policy Against Radicalism” (MYPAR)	International Alert	2010-2012
9	“Building trust between police and young people in Tajikistan” Designed as a tool of preventing youth radicalism	Saferworld	2015

Youth Empowering Projects and Initiatives

This set of programs and initiatives includes mainly the projects intended to build the young people leadership skills and to improve socio-economic situation of the Tajik youth. Youth empowerment programs are aimed at creating healthier and higher qualities of life for underprivileged or at-risk youth. They are intended to promote youth skills and knowledge via vocational training and specialized education in order to increase their chances in the local and international labour markets. (See Annex II)

As usual such economic empowering projects are essential and important part of any contemporary anti-radicalization strategy both on global and inside Tajikistan. In Tajikistan a considerable part of youth empowerment projects is aimed at promoting youth entrepreneurship skills and small business sector where many young people are employed.

Among international agencies UNDP and Agha-Khan Foundation are considered the main actors in promoting economic development programs on community level. Open Society Institute (OSI) is one the major stakeholders in implement civil society capacity projects of vulnerable groups of population such as labour migrants, returning migrants, unemployed youth etc.

The youth empowering projects implemented in Tajikistan could be divided in three main groups (see detailed description in the Annex section, Annex II):

The first group of projects is intended to promote economic development of local communities, supporting livelihood improvement of the most vulnerable groups of population. The main stakeholders in this sector in Tajikistan are UNDP and Aga-Khan Foundation. Thus, UNPD since the beginning 2000's is engaged in building economic development committees across the country in the forms of District Development Committees. There is believe – expressed by many respondents – that economic development of rural communities and increasing employment would preclude youth radicalization. According to UNDP data in the course of last several years about 600 thousand Tajik citizens benefited from its micro-credit and economic empowering projects.⁵⁰ The Aga -Khan Foundation is engaged in implementing socio-economic development projects of the Tajik rural communities since 1990's.

The second group of projects are implemented in the field of capacity building, promoting civic engagement and youth economic empowering. There is a range of relatively small projects intended to empower young businessmen, to support their business initiatives, to promote business opportunities for the youth, their capacity and knowledge. In addition, other youth empowering projects intended to support the most vulnerable groups of youth who seem to be especially suffered from economic crisis – among them labour migrants, returning migrants, unemployed youth, reprehensive of small business sector. Among the main contributors of these projects in Tajikistan are OSI (Open Society Foundation, Tajik Branch), UNDP, Aga-Khan Foundation and World bank.

⁵⁰ See: UNDP Tajikistan web-site

The third group of projects are implemented in the field of education and training in the field of promoting tolerance, civic education, countering terrorist narratives and propaganda. According to respondents, the most effective tool in promoting tolerance/anti-radicalism narratives among youth was the summer camp approach; thus, a series of youth summer camp projects on civic education and tolerance was implemented in Tajikistan by OSCE in 2000's. Later, a series of youth summer camps on preventing radicalism among youth was conducted by the International Alert (2010-2012).

Achievements and Challenges

According to respondents the main achievements and successes of the youth empowering projects are the following:

First, economic development projects rather effectively supported vulnerable groups of population; economic development committees to some degree promote business activities and youth engagement in the targeted communities. Some groups of youth benefited from OSI and World Bank business support and start-up projects.

Second, economic empowering project promoted the sustainability and capacity of local NGO's due to their partnership and cooperation with major international and donor agencies. Without this partnership many Tajik NGO's - especially in rural areas - would not be able to survive.

Third, there is a positive reaction to the civic education, tolerance promoting and anti-radicalism projects. Many of them proved to be successful initiatives in promoting anti-radicalism and extremism narratives, providing youth with training and knowledge on religious extremism.

At the same time, there is a considerable amount of criticism with regard to youth empowering projects. For instance, the amount and number of youth empowering project is not enough for Tajikistan. Several respondents believe that many of such projects are designed without considering the actual needs and real situation in the country. Some respondents stated that economic development projects have to promote policy changes in order to ensure the creation of more favourable conditions for youth employment and engagement. The interviewed experts in religious studies believe that international and local NGO's do not pay enough attention to anti-radicalism and PVE issues. In their opinion, the majority of youth empowering project have little impact on the situation with youth radicalization and recruitment to radical organizations.

Table II. Youth Empowerment Projects

N	Project	Organization	Thematic area	Years
1	Promoting small business development and entrepreneurship in Tajikistan.	OSI	Economic empowering of vulnerable groups (returning migrants)	2016-ongoing
2	Enterprise Development and employable skills	Aga-Khan Foundation (AKFED)		ongoing
3	District Development Programme	UNDP	Economic empowerment	2005-ongoing
4	“Promotion of social and economic opportunities for women and youth in Zerafshan Valley of Tajikistan	UNDP	Welfare and economic resilience	
5	“Cross-border Cooperation for Sustainable Peace and Development”:	UNDP	Preventing cross-border conflicts	2018-2019
6	Financial Inclusion Project intended to support financial inclusion for vulnerable households play an important role in Tajikistan.	AKFED	Supporting vulnerable groups	Since 2006
7	The Mountain Societies Development Support Programme (MSDSP)			
8	Youth Entrepreneurship Forums in Tajikistan in	World Bank Group	Youth empowering capacity building	2016 -2017
9	‘Choihona’ Project,	initiated by the	Youth	2014 -ongoing

		United Nations Volunteers (UNV)	economic empowerment	
10	Young Leaders in Tajikistan Program	Counterpart International funded by USAID.	Youth empowerment	2011 -2015
11	OSCE Summer Camps on Civic Education and Tolerance	OSCE		(2000 -2010)
12	Series of youth Anti-radicalism summer camps office in Tajikistan within the framework of Secular-Religious Dialogue and MAYPAR projects	International Alert		2010-2012
13	Series of public lectures and courses “Preventing and Countering Youth Radicalism IWPR in Tajikistan”	IWPR		2017
14	UNDP Innovative solutions for nationalizing and localizing SDGs and economic empowerment of women, youth and PWD	UNDP		2018-2019

Research Projects on Youth and Religious Radicalism Issues

Today, there is an increasing tendency on focusing on research activities in Tajikistan. Partly, this phenomenon could be explained by the fact that the research projects are easier to implement because as usual they do not require longer process of agreeing with authorities – at least comparing to the non-research, ‘more practical’ projects implemented on the ground. In addition, research projects are usually conducted as a part of preparatory activities – in order to lay a solid foundation for designing and implementing new strategy, project or action plan.

At the same time, many respondents have mentioned that it is becoming increasingly difficult to implement research projects on the district and community levels and to conduct field studies on the ground. It is especially the truth with regard to ‘sensitive’ topics including the issue of radicalism and youth subject. Probably for this reason, there is still a limited number of research reports devoted to the subject of youth radicalization in the country. The majority of the most current reports are for internal use and not for wider distribution.

Surveys and Research

Most of research devoted to the youth problems have more quantitative sociological character among them ‘Life in Transition Survey’ (LITS) (2006, 2010 and 2014) ‘Demographic and Health Surveys’ (DHS) (2012) that explored Tajik households with some aspects devoted to the youth thematic. There is also a series of international and regional studies where Tajikistan is included as one of the case studies. They are studies ‘Youth of Central Asia’ (2014-2017) and ‘Management, values and way of life of youth in Central Asia: Uzbekistan and Tajikistan’ devoted to the values shared by younger generation in the region.

Labour migration and employment of youth - A series of sociological surveys are devoted to the issues of labour migration and employment of youth in the labour market. Thus, the World Bank experts developed the following surveys:

- Basic education accessible for all Tajiks, 2012;
- Tajikistan - Higher education sector study, 2014;
- Tajikistan Jobs Diagnostic: Strategic Framework for Jobs, 2017

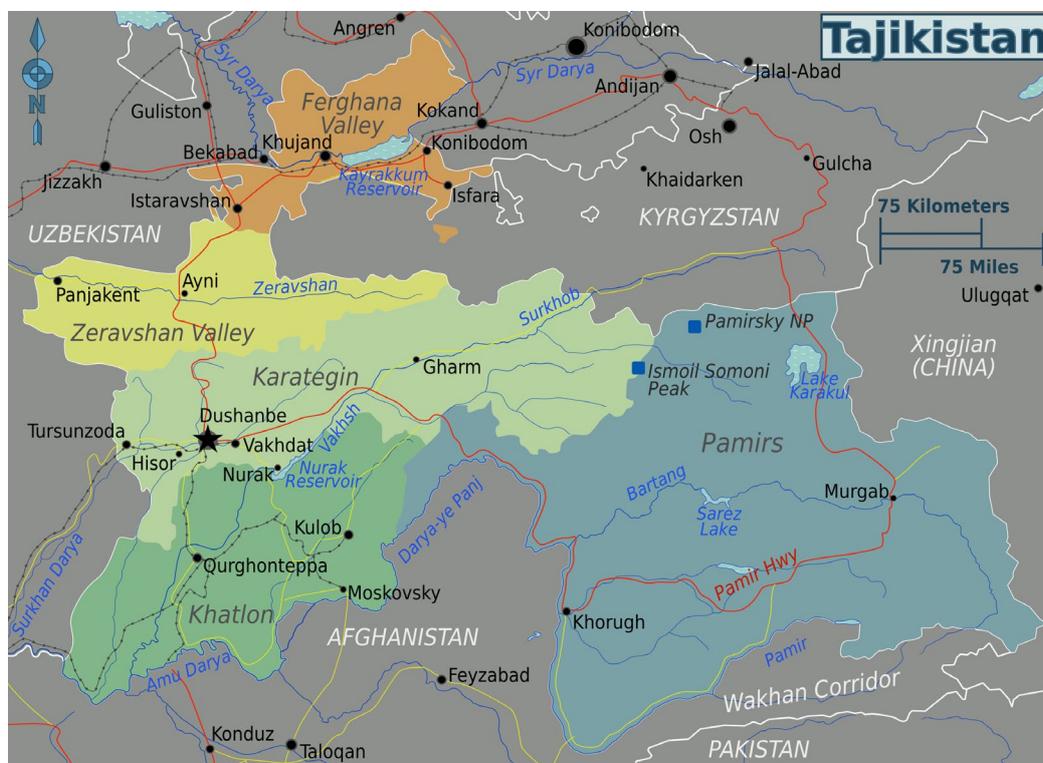
Another group of surveys and reports on employment and migration is prepared by the state research institutions such as Center of Strategic Research under the President of Tajikistan, several local NGOs (such as *Sharq* and *Zerkalo*).

The issues of gender, vulnerability and poverty of various youth strata are covered by UNICEF, DFID, EU sponsored surveys– among them ‘UNICEF RO CEECIS with UNICEF Tajikistan’; ‘Child Poverty in Tajikistan’ (UNICEF and DFID); ‘A Case Study of Education Quality for Youth in the CEECIS Region’ etc.⁵¹

⁵¹ See. ‘Youth of Tajikistan’, NGO ‘Sharq’ Report, Dushanbe 2017; UNICEF Data Base https://www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/index_23701.html

1.3 Tajik NGOs' Initiatives

Map: Tajikistani main regions



Introductory Note

As it was mentioned above (Project Description and Methodology Section, p.5) our research project is intended to conduct survey among local Tajik NGO's – both in the capital and in the country's main regions. The main aim of this survey was defined to what degree the local NGO's are involved in CVE/PVE related activities and to conduct mapping of such project if any.

Following this task, the report authors conducted a series of field trips (October 2017-June 2018) to the following regions of Tajikistan – Dushanbe and surrounding areas, Vahdat district, (near the capital), several districts of Sughd Oblast (North), Rasht (eastward to Dushanbe), GBAO (Khorog town and surrounding districts).

The methodology of survey included mainly in-depth interviews and small focus-groups. The list of questions included information about situation in their regions, information of local NGO's implemented projects, respondents' opinion on religious/security situation, existing radicalization drivers/causes, youth situation and radicalization trends among youth, situation in NGO sector, existing PVE projects, presence and activities of international agencies in the regions etc. Among respondents are local NGO's leaders and activists, managers and coordinators, related staff of the correspondent international agencies' offices, youth projects

beneficiaries, representatives of civil society groups; representatives of local expert community, leaders of locally based NGOs, community-based organizations, local mass media leading representatives.

The main results of the Tajik NGO's survey are presented in this section in the form of overall analysis of discussion result. The detailed breakdown of all conducted interviews is presented in the ANNEX sector (see ANNEX III.)

Tajik NGO Sector: Structure and Specifics

Today, the Tajik network of officially registered NGO consists of two main groups of civic organizations:

First, a group of NGOs located mainly in the capital working as usual on national level. This group of civic organizations plays a role of 'boundaries- spanning' NGOs able to work on both national and local (district and community) levels. This group of 'central' NGOs usually has better access to funding and have well-established working relations with international agencies and official bodies. Some of these NGOs are established by former employees of governmental agencies being engaged mainly in infrastructural projects related to PIU funding (Project implementation unites).

The second groups of NGOs consist of civic organizations located in provincial centres and rural areas working predominantly on oblast, district or community levels. Some of these NGOs are rather well- established and influential enjoying good working connections with local authorities and stakeholders. However, in general they are considered less sustainable comparing to central NGOs with lower level of expertise and professional experience. Unfortunately, there is a process of decreasing number of 'non-registered' community-based organizations (CBOs and public associations on the ground (according to respondents because non-registered status

Summary of Interviews: Main Findings

First of all, the study reveals that today the majority of national and rural NGO's prefer to avoid projects on religious/youth radicalisation due to the sensitivity of the subject. At the same time many of them are involved in sociological studies and research projects devoted to the youth and gender issues – such education for girls, organizing vocational trainings etc. Some of them assisted international agencies and national NGOs in implementing their projects on youth issues and religious radicalisation – mainly by organizing surveys, interviews, focus groups, meeting with local authorities, collecting data etc. Moreover, many representatives of Tajik NGOs (especially in rural areas) have a very vague knowledge on the issues related to PVE and specifics of activities in the field.

As usual, the 'central' (national) NGOs as well as International Agencies while implementing projects on district and community levels rely on local NGOs/CBOs network. Therefore, as usual both local and national civic organizations are engaged in the implementation of the

same projects sponsored by their international partners. In the majority of cases local NGOs are engaged in collection data and conducting surveys on the ground; in addition, they are usually take responsibility for getting permission and approval from local authorities.

The majority of Tajik NGOs focus today on less sensitive subjects and thematic areas such as the following: access to education, migration, preventing drug addiction among youth and gender. At the same time many of these thematic areas are indirectly related to the issues of youth radicalization, conflict prevention and countering violent extremism. Some of respondents (mainly representatives of Dushanbe based NGOs) believe that the situation is gradually changing as the authorities started to understand the necessity to explore and to counter the issues of youth radicalism and religious extremist propaganda in the country. In particular, the adoption of the National Anti-Radicalism Strategy creates favourable conditions to develop social partnership in the field.

The research revealed the increasing lack of sustainability of local NGOs. Thus, even in the capital only 20-30 (estimation of our respondents) of non-governmental organizations could be considered sustainable. As to the rural areas the list of active NGOs' includes only a few organizations and the most of them are not considered sustainable in the long term. For instance, in Rasht region only four local NGOs remain acting. The majority of them have only one project and remain heavily dependent on outside partners such as international agencies or Dushanbe based NGOs. For instance, over the last 5 years NGO "Marifatnoki" participates in the project "Young Leaders" implemented by Counterpart Consortium and sponsored by USAID; this is still the only its project over the period.

In general, the common tendency across the country is the decreasing number of active NGO's. For instance, there are fourteen NGOs registered in Vose district (nearby Kulab city) but only four of them continue their activities. According to respondents, the local civic organizations were seeking support from donor agencies and Dushanbe based organizations but with no results. As one of the civic activists stated: "they come to us with big promises and we help them to organize their seminars on the ground but as soon as the project is over they just disappear".⁵²

Meanwhile only a small number of central (capital-based) NGO's are directly engaged in the projects related to the countering and preventing violent extremism and youth radicalism. Among them are "Academy of Dialogue", "Sharq" (Orient) Informational- Analytical Centre. "Zerkalo" (Mirror) research NGO. The NGO 'Academy of Dialogue' is specialised today in conducting research and studies on the issue of radicalization; the last study is devoted to the problem of online propaganda run by extremist organizations via Internet and social networks. Previously, NGO 'Academy of Dialogue' was a partner organization for SDC (as well as PD-4 of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland, see above) projects and initiatives on religious-secular dialogue. IA "Sharq" and NGO "Zerkalo" are engaged mainly in research projects, some of which are devoted to the radicalization and VE issues.

⁵² Interview in Kulab district

As to the rural NGO's they are not directly engaged in implementation of any PVE/CVE projects. The overwhelming majority of acting NGOs focus mainly on following thematic areas: youth education, civic education, ecological projects, vocational trainings etc.

According to respondents, rural NGO's are not willing to initiate PVE project due to their sensitivity and government restrictions. Several respondents stated that restrictions on NGO's activities and thematic areas started since 2005 – after the violent anti-government riots in Andijan city (Uzbekistan) and series of 'colour revolutions' in post-Soviet countries. Prior to this period, an NGO willing to get permission for holding a seminar with school children could solve the problem on the level of school director. Today, even the Head of Educational Department of Oblast/District Hukumat is not entitled to give such permission. In order to organize such event on school level the official approval of the Ministry of Education of the RT is required. The NGO's activists believe that such restrictions considerably hamper the implementation of anti-radicalisation and PVE initiatives on the ground; as a result, the majority of civic organizations prefer to avoid participation in conflict prevention and PVE programs.

Meanwhile, some rural NGOs (especially the once established in 90's and 2000's) have rather rich experience and history in designing and implementing conflict prevention and confidence building projects. Among them is NGO "Kalam" (GBAO), which for many years was engaged in implementation of various projects on tolerance and conflict prevention. One of such initiatives is the project aimed at reducing tension between different groups of local youth from different parts of Khorog city engaged in regular street fighting and clashes. In addition, there is a tension and contradictions between local youth leaders and the city authorities. In general, many representatives of local younger generation share a rather critical attitude towards officials accusing them in corruption and lack of effectiveness. The projects implemented by "Kalam" were intended to build a bridge between the both sides by teaching young people culture of tolerance, peaceful mediation, peaceful solution of existing contradictions, conflict resolution approaches etc. Due to continues investments from the Agha-Khan Foundation network local youth have better chances to improve their entrepreneurial skills and to open his/her own business.

Many rural respondents (both representative of local NGO's and communities' members) expressed a bit of criticism with regard to the content of projects initiated and sponsored in rural regions by donor agencies. Some respondents stated that many projects implemented in their region have a little impact on the situation and do not reflect the real needs and requirements of population.

Another common point is the deteriorating relationship between local authorities and civil society groups. According to respondents many officials share a very critical and suspicious attitude towards civil society and professional NGO's network. It is negatively affecting the overall atmosphere of social partnership in the region as well as their capacity to design and implement projects of 'sensitive character' -such as the once on the field of conflict and violence prevention.

Meanwhile, the majority of respondents across regions stated that the most important and potentially conflict generating problems in rural area are youth unemployment and social

inequality. For instance, according to GBAO civic activists about 50% of the total population of the city and 70-75% of local youth are partially or completely unemployed. The majority of youth remain socially passive planning to leave for labour migration as soon as possible.

Chapter II. Analyzing Impact: Challenges, Successes and Obstacles

2.0 Successes and Failures

There are different opinions concerning the results and outcomes of the implementation of PVE, conflict prevention and peacebuilding programs in Tajikistan. For many years the Tajik Government and official propaganda presented the inter-Tajik peace process and following PVE and conflict prevention practices as a unique example of successful peacebuilding. The international society and expert community also for many years considered the Tajik peace and peace building experience as a success story of international involvement. Recently, the Tajik Government announced that in 2017 the number of Tajik recruits to ISIS has considerably reduced – as it was mentioned “mainly due to successful implementation of the government anti-radicalization strategy and PVE programs in Tajikistan”.

Today, after the banning of IRPT in 2015 (see above) and deteriorated civic society situation the international society and the majority of independent experts started to share much more critical attitude towards the results and outcomes of the peace building and PVE programs in the country. In general, the overall opinion is that the real impact of PVE programs in Tajikistan should be assessed as a combination of both failures and successes.

Successes and Achievements

The following set of results and outcomes of the PVE programs implementation in the country could be considered as positive achievements (as they were described in literature and by interviewed experts):

First, one of the most positive outcomes is the creation of atmosphere of public dialogue in the beginning and middle of 2000's – predominantly after the conclusion of Peace Treaty and following positive changes in political sphere such as holding elections, creation of multi-party system etc. During this period a number of Dialogue projects were implemented in the country both by international donors and domestic actors. That was a dialogue platform for religious -secular parts of the society and political parties sponsored and supported by UNTOP, OSCE, UN agencies, SDC, PD-IV of the Foreign Ministry of Switzerland, US Embassy, German Foundations etc.; there was as series of youth summer camps on civic education and tolerance, which promoted interaction and deliberation between representatives of ethnic groups, political parties and social strata of the country.

This public dialogue continued approximately until 2012 -2013 when the last dialogue programs and youth summer camps had been organized.

Second, a very positive achievement is the appearance of a wide network of local civil society organizations specialised and well-trained in the field of conflict resolution and peace building in the country. By 2003 the list of NGOs directly engaged in the implementation of peacebuilding and conflict resolution projects included 13 civic organizations (the list of created by Counterpart Consortium) but the actual number of civic actors engaged in the field was much higher. The overall number of officially registered civic organizations has been also considerably increased. Thus, there were only 300 registered NGOs in 1997 but in March 2000 the number of registered NGOs reached 625 organizations including 45 gender NGOs. In 2007-2008 the Tajik Government has launched a process of re-registration of the Tajik NGOs, which decreased their number almost in two times; nevertheless by 2011 the number of registered NGOs is has increased again – up to almost three thousand organizations.

This growing number of professional and well-trained NGO's started to play role of one the most important internal drivers of civil society development in the country. It should be noted that at that time – in the situation of collapsing academic institutions – the Third Sector attracted the best representatives of local intellectual stratum, which considerably promoted the quality and professionalism of local NGO's.

The trend led to the creation of rather wider and growing stratum of civic activists and experts specialised in conflict resolution and peace building; most of them actively participated in international capacity building programs and trainings both inside the country and abroad. During this period Tajik civil society was distinguished by the existence of an extremely effective pool of trainers and training NGOs specialised in teaching tolerance, conflict resolution, NGO management fundraising etc.;

Third, the most positive outcome of this period was the phenomenon of increasing youth participation. Thus, only the youth summer camp initiative covered at least several thousand the most active and talented representatives of Tajik youth stratum. Many summer camp graduates later joined civic organizations and organized their own NGOs or business companies. Therefore, the youth empowering component proved to be enough effective, productive and relatively sustainable in the longer terms.

Failures and Shortcomings

First, the main failure is that peace and confidence building impact proved to be less sustainable in the longer term – this fact was stressed by the majority of experts. The same phenomenon was repeatedly mentioned by international observers and scholars. The failure led to the actual revision and abolishment of main provisions of the Peace Accords; it led also to the changing and deteriorating attitude towards the civil society actors and local NGO sector, which are widely considered as a 'foreign agents'.

Second, the public dialogue approach and confidence promoting projects failed to lead to the creation of a relatively long-term and sustainable dialogue platform in the country, where various interest groups, centres of power representing different parts of Tajik society could interact and seek for common ground.

The positive effect of boosting civil society observed in the 2000s also turned to have a short-lived character. Today, according to all respondents the Tajik civil society has entered the period of deepening decay, which covers its entire aspects ranging from financial and organizational sustainability to the lack of cadres. In general, the Tajik Third Sector in which international donors have invested considerable amount of resources and efforts proved to be less sustainable. According to respondents, today the overwhelming majority of Tajik NGOs exist only on paper; approximately only 10-15% of registered NGOs could be considered relatively sustainable. In order to sustain local NGO's must have several projects, which is not achievable for many civic organizations.

Many of NGO leaders would wish to close their organizations but the official procedures are too complicated and expensive. Thus, one of the Dushanbe civic leaders described the situation with his NGO in this way:

“I already attempted to close my NGO not only due to the lack of funding. The NGO work in general becoming too troublesome and complicated; if you are not misusing the received grant the income (salary rate) is not enough for living. You must have several grants at once to sustain but it is too difficult now. However, I found out that today is much easier to open new NGO than to close the existing one. It is too much paper work and now I just regularly submit empty reports to the Tax Committee. Probably, the Government doesn't allow us to close NGOs because it would spoil its image on international arena”.⁵³

According to rural respondents rural and provincial network of NGOs is in much more difficult situation comparing to civic organizations in the capital. In each of the regions covered by the research there are only few (three-four) organizations, which could be relative considered sustainable – at least for the next couple of years.

One of the most noticeable failures is the decreasing number of local civic organizations willing and able to implement PVE and conflict resolution projects in the country -especially in rural areas. Correspondingly, there is also a process of gradual disappearance of the experienced pool of NGO trainers and conflict resolution experts in the country as well as journalists trained in covering conflict cases and issues. In 2010 the List of Tajik conflict resolution experts prepared by the PCDDP included 10 names; plus, there was an equal number of independent journalists regularly publishing articles and papers on conflict resolution issues, history of peace process in the country etc. Nowadays, the majority experts mentioned in the List either left the field or country; the same is with the list of independent journalists.

⁵³ Interview with NGO leader, Dushanbe, April 2018

2.1 Limitations and Obstacles

The positive impact of the peace building and PVE initiatives are limited today due to the following major factors and obstacles:⁵⁴

First, the Tajik Government's changing attitude towards peace building initiatives and civic organizations engaged in the field of conflict resolution and peace building. The official attitude turned to be much more suspicious comparing to the past. The NGO sector in general is regarded as an alien phenomenon and as an instrument of promoting 'colour revolutions'. Partly, this anti-Western and anti-civil society ideology is imported from the Russian Federation; it is promoted throughout the post-Soviet space via online propaganda, popular TV shows etc. Therefore, today such vigilance are shared not only by the Government but by the wider strata of population. According to our rural correspondents the same suspicious attitude is observed in their regions as well – to some degree with the exception of GBA, where (according to respondents) the relationship between civil society organizations and population was traditionally better.

It doesn't mean that the Government refuses the idea of joint implementation of PVE and anti-radicalization projects in the country. According to many NGO respondents most of official institutions understand the necessity to implement such projects and express willingness to cooperate but the process of agreeing and security checking is usually too complicated. In some cases, the government doesn't allow even international agencies to implement their PVE projects in rural areas, which considerably reduces the projects' effectiveness and final outcome. Therefore, many local NGOs prefer not to tackle such sensitive issues despite its acuteness and importance for the country and for many rural areas.

Many of the most acute aspects of radicalization phenomenon are still too sensitive to cover – among them not only the issue of youth radicalization, but also the issue of radicalization of returning migrants, imprisoned members of radical groups, amnestied fighters, clergy etc. As a result, despite availability of potential funding such subjects/projects remain less implementable for many stakeholders. It considerably undermines the potential and future prospects for the implementation of PVE programs in Tajikistan.

The second important limitation is related to the current state of the local civil society, which is supposed to be one of the key actors and partners in implementation of PVE projects and programs. Many respondents stated that the majority of local NGOs are not prepared for running PVE projects as the NGO sector in the deepening crisis. The current organizational weakness of the Tajik society is caused by the three main factors:

⁵⁴ The interviewed experts – among them among them leading scholars and civic activists many of whom started their professional career in 90's – were asked about their opinion on limitations/obstacles. They themselves framed the answers the majority of which are reflected in this section. There is certain common ground among them on the issue. Some respondents from rural NGOs found it difficult to describe situation on national level.

1. ***The shortage of a powerful and influential network of registered NGOs supposed to play a role of connector and major facilitator of interactions between traditional grass-roots organizations, political parties, mass media etc.*** Therefore, one of the major reasons of weakness of the Tajik civil society (enhanced by the government internal policy) is the absence of the given network of professional, modern-type and officially registered NGOs. This decrease of professional and active NGOs was mentioned by almost all respondents.

This group of professional NGOs are intended to play a role of connector and major facilitator of interaction between traditional grass-roots organizations (low level), political parties, organizations, mass media etc. As professional organizations, the NGOs are usually the main designers and initiators of civic actions; as a boundary – spinning (boundary-crossing) organizations only the NGO’s are able to work on different levels often simultaneously playing a role of mediator and facilitator of civic initiatives;

2. ***The decreasing access to financial resources and lack of financial sustainability*** – at the end of 1990’s there were about 12 international agencies in Tajikistan that concentrated their efforts and grant giving programs on the promotion of NGO sector and the level of professionalism of civic organizations. However, today the number of such grants giving organizations, the size and amount of civil society promotion programs have decreased at least in three times. There is an obvious shift in IAs approaches occurred gradually since 2000; it implies mainly the preference of working directly with the Government on the pretext of necessity to promote its capacity. The slogans and ideological basis of international involvement remain the same – “promotion of democracy and civil society”. However, in reality the civil society promotion funds constitute today only a small proportion of the entire amount allocated to the country;
3. The ***lack of professionalism and leak of professional cadres*** – due to the lack of financial sustainability local NGOs are not able to offer decent salaries to their employees. As a result, the overwhelming majority of local organizations complain that they can’t keep the younger and educated cadres – as soon as a younger specialist gets some training and experience he/she seeks for another better paid job outside. There is also a shortage of NGO cadres (comparing to the previous times) specialised and trained in PVE, conflict resolution and counter-terrorism field.

Interestingly, many NGO leaders believed the current restricting policy implemented by the Government towards the civil society plays a secondary role in the weakening the Tajik NGO sector. The major cause of the decay – in their opinion -is related to the overall decrease of financing. One of the respondents stated with this regard:

“The government current restrictions (such as requirements for regular reporting, inspections) are not the decisive factor. We can deal with this. The major problem is that we don’t have own financial

resources and there are not so much options for getting grants. The available opportunities could be enough to remain afloat but not to train people, attract more professionals and to keep them”⁵⁵

The third obstacle is related to the different interpretations of radicalization, youth radicalization phenomenon in the country. Thus, the Government officials and analytics usually define radicalization as a phenomenon driven mainly by external factors such as radical online propaganda, ideological influence from outside. International experts also pay attention to domestic factors of social character and economic character such as social inequality, lack of social mobility etc. The majority of independent domestic experts stress the importance of internal factors – in their opinion external propaganda plays an important but not the decisive role. Such methodological discrepancies often hamper the process of developing joint projects and programs causing misunderstanding and making negative impact on the realization joint PVE initiatives in Tajikistan.

⁵⁵ Interview with NGO leader Dushanbe

Conclusions and Recommendations

3.0 Summarizing Remarks

The following main conclusions could be made from the above chapters:

First, it should be admitted that Tajikistan and Tajik society as well as international stakeholders have gained a reach practice and expertise in implementation of projects in the field of conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

Second, the dynamics of implementation of PVE and peace building initiatives in the country combines both achievements and failures. The majority of success stories and positive achievements are related to the Second Phase of the dynamics of international involvement in Tajikistan (see above) – meaning the first decade of the post-conflict period in Tajikistan, approximately during the period from 2000 to 2010. It was actually the period of wider and active youth participation in PVE and peace building initiatives, growing Third Sector, formation of well-trained professional NGO's, experts and specialists specialized in the field.

The major reason for successful implementation of peace building initiatives during this period is an atmosphere of dialogue and social partnership existed in the country. The interaction between the Government, international agencies and local civil actors had a rather flexible, active and open character, which predetermined the overall positive impact on the society.

Later, along with the overall deterioration of relationship between the state and civil society, deepening socio-economic crisis and changing relationship between the authorities and civic society the level of social partnership in the country has been gradually decreased. It affected the whole process and pattern of implementation of peace building and PVE initiatives in Tajikistan. There is a series of serious limitations and obstacles on the way of implementation PVE programs in the country among them restricting policy of the Government, the lack of social partnership, weakening civil society and different and often contradicting interpretations of the nature and content of the PVE and anti-radicalism strategies.

Lessons Learned

The following three main lessons could be drawn from the Tajik context and experience:

First, in the countries like Tajikistan where the Government is the main defining factor the implementation of PVE programs usually face considerable difficulties. It is extremely difficult to ensure sustainability of PVE/conflict prevention efforts in a complicated political/socio-economic context. The authorities often share very different understanding and interpretation of PVE initiatives. Therefore, in such countries an international stakeholder

usually faces a complicated dilemma: how to ensure implementation of its PVE strategy or program without sacrificing its mission and nature of an effective PVE approach;

Second, the experience of Tajikistan shows that any successful implementation of PVE and peace building/conflict prevention programs requires the higher level of social partnership. The cooperation between the Government (as main decision-making power), International Agencies (as a source of technical expertise and financial support) and local civil society (as a source of local expertise and cadres);

Third, the experience of Tajikistan shows that the long -term sustainability of any PVE/peace building effort depends on the level of development of local civil society. In particular, the existence of an effective and wider stratum of professional, modern-type NGO's is the key factor in ensuring sustainability of peaceful efforts. This group of NGOs is supposed to play a role of boundary-spinning organizations able to work on different levels as connectors and mediators between different stakeholders. They provide training to government partners and CBOs on the ground; render support to international stakeholders in passing their expertise and knowledge to other local partners, mobilize local communities and involve local international expert groups into the projects.

The main reason of the limited long-term effect of the peace building efforts in Tajikistan is the actual disappearance (at least as an influential stratum) of this groups of NGOs. International society while implementing and sponsoring its peace building efforts in Tajikistan in 2000's has relied upon and invested considerable efforts and finances in particular in this groups of NGOs promoting its capability and professionalism. Finally, the weakening of this group of NGOs after 2010 has negatively affected the long-term sustainability of the previous peace building efforts in the country.

3.1 Recommendations

Recommendations to the international agency and donor community⁵⁶

- First, there is still shortage of research and studies on the youth and youth radicalization problems. Therefore, there is a need to promote and support further exploration, research and analyses of the youth issues, youth radicalization, youth problems, online propaganda of radical organizations, social and economic factors and causes of radicalization etc.;
- To promote further revision of the current strategies with regard to the local civil society actors; today, the major attention should be given to the promotion of institutional capacity and long-term sustainability of local NGO sector;
- To promote the formation of local think tank groups promoting local experts' capacity in countering radicalization and violent extremism;
- To initiate projects and programs intended to establish a wider Dialogue platform to promote Dialogues and exchange ideas between the State and civic society, religious and secular parts of society;
- To initiate the capacity building programs for law enforcement agencies responsible for the implementation of the national anti-radicalization strategy and youth policy;

Recommendations to the Tajik Government

- To shift from power/law enforcement measures to the means of ideological, Soft-power and prevention character;
- To recreate opportunities for the wider public dialogue in the country;
- To ensure the development of social partnership in the country -especially while elaborating new policies or making major decisions important for the country and the entire society;
- There is a need for the capacity building programs for government employees responsible for the implementation of the youth and anti-racialization policies;
- There is also a need to revise the methodology and approaches used by the Tajik security agencies and police in fighting religious extremism;
- Increasing cooperation between official and NGO institutions, think tank groups;
- To introduce asap comprehensive socio-economic/administrative reforms to limit ensure improvement of living standards of youth, their active social participation and

⁵⁶ The recommendations are based on the research findings, available research data (literature, reports) and in-depth interviews.

involvement; to limit level of corruption and to improve the situation with absence of social lifts, ensuring equal access to resources etc. – the issues that promote radicalization of Tajik youth;

ANNEXES

The Annexes section consists of resource materials, detailed data and information gathered in the course of the study. It includes detailed description of major projects and initiatives implemented by international and local stakeholders in the field of conflict prevention, youth support and anti-radicalization in the course of the last 20 years. The section includes also summary of interviews with Tajik civil society institutions, representatives of local expert community conducted by the authors in the capital and rural areas.

List of Annexes

Annex I. Dialogue and Confidence Building projects

Annex II. Youth Empowering Projects and Initiatives

Annex III Youth Education, Civic Education Initiatives

Annex IV. Tajik NGOs' Initiatives

- 1) *Dushanbe NGOs' Initiatives/ Summary of Interviews*
- 2) *Regional NGOs' Initiatives/Summaries of Interviews*

ANNEX I. Dialogue and Confidence Building Projects

As it was mentioned above the main dialogue projects had been implemented in the course of the first decade of the post-conflict period – approximately since 1999 to 2009. Among the main dialogue projects were the following:

1. In 2001, CORE, initiated the Tajikistan Project under the title of "Creating a Peace-building Dialogue to Promote Cooperation and Co-existence between Cultures and Civilizations in the OSCE Area." ⁵⁷

The dialogue process - under the direction of Dr. Arne Seifert - was designed to bring together Islamic and secular politicians and scholars – former members of the CNR or participants in the intra-Tajik dialogue of the Dartmouth Conference – to discuss their experiences and to transform their exchanges into an established, ongoing dialogue process. Taking into account the academic background of most Tajik participants, the approach offered a promising entry point to study Tajikistan's unique negotiation process in Central Asia, which had led to the legalization of the IRP and its participation in the transition government. It also offered the opportunity to explore possible political solutions among secular and Islamic forces for providing a space for a moderate Islam in Tajik politics.

With the financial support of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the CORE

Tajikistan project organized and implemented an Islamic-Secular Dialogue in the country. The project Working Group members participated in a series of dialogue meetings and outlined the further projects and potential directions of secular-religious dialogue and co-existence in the country.

2. Religion and Politics: Tajikistan Dialogue Project⁵⁸

"Religion & Politics: Initiatives and Applied Research" is a joint programme of Political Affairs Division IV of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA – PD IV) and the Centre on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding (CCDP) at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva. The programme combined research on and facilitation of practice-oriented dialogue; The **Tajikistan Dialogue Project (TDP)** was the

⁵⁷Moncef Kartas "The Tajikistan Dialogue Project (TDP)", Religion and Politics: Initiatives and Applied Research CCDP Project Report The Centre on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding – January 2011, Geneva

⁵⁸ Ibid

programme's first initiative, born out of the above mentioned German-Swiss Project "Creating a Peace-building Dialogue with Moderate Islamists in Tajikistan and Central Asia."

The TDP project debuted in 2003 and continues until 2009 combining both research activities and dialogue platform meetings. Within the TDP framework five working groups were established made up by representatives of secular society, official bodies, expert community and religious groups including traditional clergy, Islamic Revival Party and various religious groups. The topics of the five working groups were:⁵⁹

- Confidence-building measures;
- The place and role of Islam in the national state;
- Reform of religious education;
- Further 'concretization' of the principles of separation between religion and the state;
- Approach to religious radicalization.

In addition, the TDP organizers contributed with two related dialogue projects that took place at the provincial and district levels:

- The continuation of the Inter-Tajik Dialogue, also referred to as the "Dartmouth Dialogue". This project carried out sustained dialogue sessions in seven regions of the country on the theme of "Islam, State and Society";
- The "***Law and Religion***" seminars, organized by the OSCE in Sughd Oblast, and later in the south of the country, at the local level. This cooperation between several international agencies and domestic NGO's led to the creation of wider network of dialogue initiatives covering different levels of Tajik society. The three processes were integrated into a multi-level and multi-track dialogue project, which combined both [profound gender and youth mainstreams.

3. Public Dialogues Program

Conducted by Public Committee for Democratic Development of Tajikistan(PCDD) - an outgrowth of the Inter - Tajik Dialogue, a peaceful joint Russian-American initiative held within the framework of the Dartmouth Conference since 1993. *After the conclusion of the Tajik Peace Treaty a group of regular members of the Inter-Tajik Dialogue decided to establish an NGO inside Tajikistan aimed at promoting the further peace strengthening and democratic development of the country in the post-conflict period. The PC was officially registered in March 2000 and has developed the following main Tracks or directions of its activities:*

⁵⁹ Moncef Kartas " The Tajikistan Dialogue Project (TDP)", Religion and Politics: Initiatives and Applied Research CCDP Project Report The Centre on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding – January 2011, Geneva

Regional Dialogue Track (2000-2007)

The main aim of the track was to promote national dialogue ground the most acute problems of Tajik society. It consisted of a series of public dialogues held on a regular basis in 7 regions of the republic including the capital. In each region there were two moderators trained by skilled trainers, representatives of the International Institute for Sustained Dialogue (USA). In the first two years the group of fourteen moderators conducted 25 Dialogues all over the country – mainly for the youth audience. Usually the Dialogue participants selected topics to be discussed themselves. For instance, the first Dialogue meeting was devoted to the problems of Tajik national statehood and independence. In several meetings the Dialogue participants discussed the problem of traditional democratic values of the Tajik society. But the main attention was given to different aspects of the problem of interrelations between State, Society and Religion

Economic Development Committees (EDC)

The main aim of this track was to promote the peace strengthening and democratic processes of the country via economic development on the community level. The idea is to provide ordinary citizens with the opportunity to define themselves what is needed for their own community in terms of economic and social development. Working together, representatives of different strata and ethnic groups create cohesions and sense of trust which is extremely important for successful community development.

The first EDC's were organized at the Jamoat level in Kafirnighan and Shartuz rayons of the country. Each EDC consists of 12 –15 members representing all parts of the local society and led by two local moderators. The PC has organized a series of training workshops both for the moderators and the EDC members. For instance, for each EDC two training workshops on proposal writing and fund raising were held. In the course of their monthly meetings, members of the 2 EDC managed to discuss and prioritize the most acute problems of their communities and developed action plan aimed at changing the existing situation. Each committee has developed and proposals and programs on local community development and implemented the most acute and important of them.

Tajikistani National Issue Forums (TIF) (2000-2004)

The main aim of this track is to overcome the existing gap between ordinary citizens and politics in Tajikistan by promoting public deliberation on most important and acute problems of the country.

There are 24 skilled moderators all over the republic trained by representatives on the methodology of civic forums and public deliberation of the Russian Center for Citizenship Education.

In the course of the projects each moderator conducted 4 forums in his/her region devoted to three major topics selected by the majority of civic forums activists. In 2002, 96 forums tackled 3 topics respectively: Education, Drugs and Poverty. A special editing group consisted of the best civic forums moderators developed an issue-book on each selected topic. The issue-books were printed and distributed as a base for discussion among participants of 96 Tajik civic forums.

The results of the forums discussions are presented in a booklet published and distributed among the Tajik public, interested institutions and government bodies of the country.

Conflict Resolution University Curriculum

It was a joint educational program started in the fall of 2000 in conjunction with the Kettering Foundation (USA) and the Ministry of Education of Tajikistan and being implemented by the Public Committee. The main aim of this program was to establish conflict resolution courses in 8 main Tajik Universities.

The 8 Tajik Universities nominated 24 professors to participate in a series of training workshops and seminars on contemporary theory and practice of conflict resolution run by experienced Western scholars and teachers. The nominees study not only the modern conflict resolution and peace building theory and approaches but also pay attention to conflict prevention means of local traditional society which do exist in Tajikistan.

The university textbook '*Nizoshinosi*' (*Conflict Studies*) and teaching materials was based on both modern and traditional conflict prevention and resolution approaches. It was published and approved by the Ministry of Education of RT in 2007.

4. Regional Dialogue and Development Project (RRDP) implemented by the Agency for Development of Cooperation (SDC) in Fergana valley (2000-2007).

The RRDP was initiated and sponsored by SDC; RRDP was designed as a regional project to be implemented in border areas of Fergana valley covering the territories of three countries – Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. It is built on three previous SDC initiatives operated since 1999: 1) the Kyrgyz-Tajik Conflict Prevention Projects and rehabilitation Social Infrastructure Project later implemented by the UNDP's Reconstruction, Rehabilitation and Development Program (RRDP). In addition, SDC has built a mediation network consisted of Goodwill Ambassador's Initiative and a mediators and facilitators' network on the ground mainly on the both sides of Kyrgyz-Tajik border.

The RRDP relied on the network of local NGOs led by the NGO 'Ittifoq' (Agreement) on the Tajik side of the border and FTI (Foundation for Tolerance International) of the Kyrgyz side of the border. The project was engaged in local business facilitation, creation of business incubators, sport centres for local youth, organization of festivals and summer camps for local youth etc. There was a also series of research studies and publications in Russian and

local languages devoted to conflict prevention and anti-radicalization projects. In 2006 the ‘Ittifoq’ and FTI have developed a joint textbook on conflict prevention and mediation under title ‘Guide for Moderation and Mediation’. The Guide was intended to serve as a resource book for the Tajik and Kyrgyz youth engaged in conflict prevention activities in the near border areas.

5. “State-Civil Society Dialogue Project” (2009-2010) implemented by German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ)

The dialogue aim was to promote productive dialogue between the Tajik civil society and the Government on the most acute problems and challenges the country facing with. The dialogue consisted on a series of forums devoted to the main development problems including which included three dialogue forums dealing with education, economy, migration and employment. The aim of the project was to facilitate a sustainable dialogue, bringing various stakeholders from civil society, politics and the economy together to discuss relevant societal and political issues. The Dialogue Working Group consisted of the most prominent representatives of civil society, political parties, intelligentsia, civic sector and correspondent official agencies.

6. International Alert Dialogue Programs

International Alert is an international NGO engaged in peacebuilding and confidence building programs. In Tajikistan, Alert presents since 2010 although some small-scale initiatives were implemented prior to that period. For instance, there was a seminar in Dushanbe devoted to the Inter-Tajik talks and peaceful process organized for a group of participants of Nagorno-Karabakh – Azerbaijan Dialogue Project sponsored by Alert.

In Tajikistan, Alert promotes the role and capacity of civil society institutions to bridge the gap between societal concerns and democratization process, facilitates dialogue between government and civil society and supports conflict prevention. In the course of next several years the Alert office in Tajikistan was engaged in the implementation of the following main initiatives:

1. “Civil Society- State Dialogue on Development of Concept of State Policy towards Religion” Project (2010-2012) sponsored by EU Delegation in Tajikistan

The Project main objective was to establish a continues dialogue platform between the State and religious groups. The project promoted a dialogue between the civil society and the State, cooperation and exchange of ideas between the secular state and local religious groups, between political Islam, religious groups and secular government;

Within the Project framework a joint Working Group made up by representatives of expert society, various religious groups, clergy, political Islam, non-Islamic confessions was established with the aim to develop a new Concept on state policy towards religion.

The WG conducted regular meetings where various approaches and aspects of the state-religion relations' issues were discussed. A special authors' group made up by the WG leading members developed several drafts of the Concept to be presented to the plenary session of the WG.

The Concept draft was presented and discussed on regional and district levels by representatives of local expert society, religious and secular groups, municipal authorities. The Concept was presented on national and regional levels to the wider strata of Tajik society attracting public attention to the issue of the state-religion relations in contemporary Tajikistan;

2. Project “Mainstreaming of Youth Policy Against Radicalism” (MYPAR)

The MYPAR project was implemented in the Sughd region, Tajikistan from December 2010 to May 2012 it operated under the framework of the EIDHR, funded by the European Union

The Project main objective was to bridge societal divides and strengthen the role of civil society and local government in the peaceful conciliation of group interests. The project was implemented in cooperation with local partners: State Committee for Youth, Sports and Tourism of the RT, Association of Scientific- Technical Intelligentsia of Tajikistan (NGO ‘ASTI’) and Public Committee for Democratic Processes (NGO “PCPD)

The Project resulted in formulation of recommendations on radicalism prevention initiatives, building of professional capacity of local government employees working in the field, promotion dialogue on radicalism issues;

3. Project “Preventing Radicalism: Developing State Concept on Policy towards the Youth (2010-2012) sponsored by EU Delegation office

The main objective of the project was to promote dialogue between the civil society, expert community, youth NGO's and correspondent official bodies on the issue of preventing youth radicalism. By the time of the project the similar concepts were developed and adopted in several post-Soviet republics such as Russian Federation and Kyrgyzstan. The project methodology was to create a dialogue platform where representatives of various civic groups and official institutions would work together for finding common ground and development the most comprehensive and effective policy approach.

The Project activities included the creation of a joint Working Group, conducting regional seminars and round table around the country; in addition, in cooperation with OSCE two summer camps were conducted in the Northern Sughd province. The final variant of the Concept was agreed and accepted by the State Committee for Youth, Sports and Tourism of the RT.

4. Project “Building bridges: Promoting the role and capacity of civil society to close the gap between society and democratization processes in Tajikistan” (2013-2015) The project is supported by the European Union (EU).

The Project *overall objective* is to promote inclusiveness and pluralism in policy-making processes related to democratization, human rights and peacebuilding in Tajikistan. The project represents a continuation of Alert’s efforts in promoting the role of Tajik civil society in policy debates, an issue it has been engaged on since 2009; it also marked a new phase of the organization’s work in Tajikistan, as the project seeks to involve new, and younger, civil society representatives.

The specific objectives of the intervention are:

- To create a safe forum for a diverse group of civil society representatives to engage each other on important policy topics
- To increase their capacity in policy analysis and advocacy; and
- To promote civil society positions on key policy issues vis-à-vis international institutions and national government representatives.

Activities included the creation of a civil society contact group (CSCG), comprising established and younger civil society representatives, training workshops for CSCG members, research assignments and policy dialogues both in Dushanbe and in other cities of the country.

7. “Building trust between police and young people in Tajikistan” Project by Safeworld (since 2015)

Communities and authorities in Tajikistan worry that young people are vulnerable to recruitment into violent groups, such as the Islamic State (ISIS). Saferworld is bringing police and youth together to collaboratively find peaceful solutions to problems faced by young people. The project is implemented in several central and southern regions and districts of the country.

The Project established community policing partnership teams made up of religious and informal leaders, women and youth, local authorities and police. Having identified informal leaders and representatives from marginalised groups, the Project team led dialogue workshops to help them prepare for some of the issues that could be raised in the discussions. The idea is that by sitting together and talking about problems that affect them all, local experiences can be taken into account and trust built on both sides. It also helps police to

understand the reasons people are drawn to violent groups, and how their own actions might affect these decisions.

ANNEX II. Youth Empowering Projects and Initiatives

1. OSI project on promotion of small business development and entrepreneurship in Tajikistan.

OSI/AF-Tajikistan is a part of international network of the Foundation, one of the National Foundations, which are in Open Society Institute network. Strategic mission of the Foundation is a support for development and promotion of democratic processes in Tajikistan, involvement and development of democratic society.

The project aim is to promote social and economic rehabilitation and employment of returning labour migrants as well as women and young people. A special attention is given to the regions with higher level of unemployment and labour migration such as GBAO, RRP and Southern Khatlon province. The project target group includes mainly young entrepreneurs among them returned migrants, women, representatives of socially vulnerable strata of population. During the first phase of the project implementation (2013-2014) a network of 21 local partner NGO's was established. Their task was to train the target group of selected young entrepreneurs in developing their business ideas and designing business plans. The trained entrepreneurs received small micro-credit funds to implement their business ideas and start their business. In two years the project participants have developed 199 business plans; 147 of them finally were approved for funding.

2. UNDP Community Development Program Initiatives

The mission UNDP CP (Community Development) is to support livelihood improvement efforts of the Government of Tajikistan through enhancing local governance conditions for sustainable local economic development. Within this framework UNDP CP implemented a series of larger projects in field of youth economic and social empowerment. The following CP initiatives are worth to mention:

District Development Programme – intended to promote economic development by promoting cooperation between local authorities and local communities. The DDP's methodology led to empowerment of local authorities in designing and implementation of their district development priorities. It assisted in the development of Trade Development Programme of Khatlon Region for the period 2016-2018. Within the District Development Program 67 districts, GBAO, Sughd and Khatlon Regions have elaborated their District Development Programmes. The established DDC (district development committees) received funds for economic and social initiatives on local and community levels;

“Promotion of social and economic opportunities for women and youth in Zerafshan Valley of Tajikistan”: The Project is funded by the Government of the Russian Federation at the amount of US\$ 1.7 million with the duration of July 2017- December 2019. Target districts of the Projects are Ayni and Kuhistoni Mastchoh of Sughd Region. The Project aims to enhance welfare and economic resilience of Zerafshan Valley population;

“Innovative solutions for nationalizing and localizing SDGs and economic empowerment of women, youth and PWD”: The Project is funded by Government of Norway at the amount of US\$1,1 million with the duration January 2018 – December 2019. The Project aims at enabling development stakeholders at national and local levels, including governmental institutions, community-based organizations and private sector to effectively plan, monitor and implement sustainable and inclusive development strategies in the context of Agenda 2030;

“Cross-border Cooperation for Sustainable Peace and Development”: The Project is funded by United Nations Peace Building Support Office/ Peace Building Fund at the amount of US\$1 million with duration 2018– June 2019. The Project is implemented by a group of UN Agencies (UNDP, WFP, UNICEF, UN-Women and FAO). The Project aims to increase cooperation and trust between communities of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to mitigate risks of renewed violence;

“Wider Europe: Aid for Trade for Central Asia (Phase III), Tajikistan”: The Project is financed by the Government of Finland at the amount of US\$2.9 million, with the duration of February 2014 - June 2018. The Project supports inclusive growth by promoting trade and economic competitiveness of local entrepreneurs and supports the country’s efforts to reduce poverty;

“Innovative solutions for nationalizing and localizing SDGs and economic empowerment of women, youth and PWD”: The Project is funded by Government of Norway at the amount of US\$1,1 million with the duration January 2018 – December 2019. The Project aims at enabling development stakeholders at national and local levels, including governmental institutions, community-based organizations and private sector to effectively plan, monitor and implement sustainable and inclusive development strategies in the context of Agenda 2030.

3. Aga Khan Fund For Economic Development (AKFED) Initiatives

AKFED is making long-term investments in Tajikistan with the aim to promote foreign investment and to strengthen the role of private sector in the country. Its approach focuses on the development of local human resources, including managerial, technical and marketing and financial skills. The major target groups are youth, women, representatives of vulnerable

strata of population, small business sector etc. Its major initiatives in the field are the following:

Enterprise development and employable skills

The Mountain Societies Development Support Programme (MSDSP) recognises the need to diversify income sources for rural households as a means of managing risk and strengthening livelihoods opportunities. In its non-farm work, MSDSP's approach has evolved over the last few years.

Initially, MSDSP provided business support services, such as advisory services, training, marketing services, and information resources directly to local micro, small and medium enterprises. In an effort to promote sustainability, MSDSP now works to support interaction between market players, and builds administrative and technical skills of actors in specific value chains such as tourism and handicrafts.

MSDSP also works with intermediary organisations including business or marketing associations that represent the interests of small businesses. MSDSP currently supports 205 groups (2,125 people) through training and linking enterprises to services and markets.

Tourism activities benefit 1,800 people in Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO), including home-stay providers, guides, drivers and tour operators.

Overall, MSDSP's enterprise and market development activities reach almost 60,000 people and are supported by the Mastercard Foundation, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), the European Commission (EC), and USAID.

Financial Inclusion Project intended to support financial inclusion for vulnerable households play an important role in Tajikistan. Since 2006, the Mountain Societies Development Support Programme (MSDSP) has established five micro-lending organisations (MLOs) that have benefitted over 7,000 people (36 percent women).

Village organisations and their federations own the MLOs, which enables the latter to take advantage of trust within the community to reduce the risks of financial service provision to households with limited collateral. Approximately half of the loans are for agriculture.

The credit services provided by MLOs are supported by the EC and USAID, and have been complemented in recent years by 2,600 community-based savings groups (CBSGs). CBSGs generally reach poor women and offer savings and small loans that can meet immediate consumption needs. CBSG membership currently stands at 50,600 and 98 percent of groups have continued their activities beyond the first year.

The Mountain Societies Development Support Programme (MSDSP); The Aga Khan Foundation (AKF) is committed to putting local communities at the centre of its work. This helps to make interventions directly relevant to local people and contributes to long-term sustainability. Since the late 1990s, MSDSP has fostered a network of over 1,600 *village*

organisations (VOs) and 105 *Social Unions for the Development of Village Organisations (SUDVOs)*, reaching almost 700,000 people (55 percent of the total population) in targeted regions. The Mountain Societies Development Support Programme (MSDSP) trains VOs and SUDVOs to develop village development plans (VDPs), which define local priorities for social and economic development. Many identified priorities have been taken up by MSDSP with donor funding, or through village development funds.

Currently, MSDSP has increasingly sought to link VDPs more closely with government budgeting processes so that capable community-based institutions are able to attract government resources to address their priorities.

4. Local NGOs' Youth Empowerment Projects supported by International Agencies

World Bank Group Supports Youth Entrepreneurship Forums in Tajikistan in 2016 - 2017 – The “Youth Entrepreneurship Forums” were held in Dushanbe in 2016 and 2017 in Dushanbe– each of them brought together over 200 participants – young people, private sector companies, civil society, government representatives, higher education institutions, and development partners. The second Forum supported by the World Bank Group, celebrated youth entrepreneurship successes to date and raised awareness on the relevance of youth empowerment and capacity development for job creation and economic growth in Tajikistan. The Forum major attention was given to the promotion of youth participation in economic and social life of the country as well as in the decision making and reforming processes in the country.

The ‘**Choihona**’ Project,⁶⁰ initiated by the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme, is a joint initiative of government, development and private sector partners to support innovative entrepreneurship to increase youth employment. It is partnership project and a joint initiative shared by UNV and UNDP; the key partners of the project are Accelerate Prosperity (AKDN), which provides prizes for entrepreneurs, the School of Young Entrepreneurs and the Club of Young Entrepreneurs. Since the launch of the project in November 2016, over 100 entrepreneurs have pitched their business ideas and shared their marketing skills in competitions in the sectors of agriculture and ICT as well as in small production and services businesses. The project aim is to support at least 300 start-ups across Tajikistan within two years through trainings on marketing, legislation, regulation and taxes, among others. The objective is that at least 200 small entrepreneurs will be self-employed at the end of the two years.

⁶⁰Increasing youth employment in Tajikistan through the promotion of entrepreneurship, <https://www.unv.org/our-stories/increasing-youth-employment-tajikistan-through-promotion-entrepreneurship>

Y-PEER Discussion Club Tajikistan Project was initiated by UNFPA in Tajikistan in 2007 and was registered as local NGO '*Hamsol be Hamsol*' in April 2012. The Y-PEER Discussion Club is formally intending to serve as the unalterable, fundamental platform for young generation to sophisticate their leadership skills, to be heard and elucidate their basic core messages to the modern world. Moreover, the club could be assessed as the unique platform with diversified horizons, that warmly welcomes the diversity of interpretations, perceptions and along with that promotes the conception of pluralism. The designated club entirely dedicated to the construction of efficient discussion within the relevant areas, reshaping and properly formulating the precise visions and glances, excogitation of ground-breaking and innovative approaches for settling the actual problematic issues.

Young Leaders in Tajikistan Program (2011 -2015) implemented by Counterpart International and funded by USAID. The Young Leaders Program supported youth leadership through:⁶¹

- Leadership and civic engagement training;
- Partnerships with local government to secure public spaces for youth to convene;
- Collaboration with international organizations to maximize grant funding and technical assistance for youth-led development projects.

During the span of project, Counterpart:

- Provided small grants and technical assistance for 206 development projects designed by young leaders and expected to improve the lives of 12,800 people;
- Trained 315 youth on civic education issues during an intensive, 10-week course and after school activities;
- Trained 600 youth on topics such as leadership, communications and women's rights;
- Helped 270 youths build networks with one another, including at six summer camps where youth learned lessons of leadership, volunteerism, democracy, human rights and government.

EFCA-Tajikistan “Voices of Youth Project” – EFCA-Tajikistan was contracted by the World Bank in Dushanbe for implementing the program Voices of Youth.

An in-depth research was conducted to capture the opinions and recommendations of young people on development challenges and opportunities in Tajikistan. Surveys documented the opinions of more than 100 young people from all over Tajikistan and were combined with 40 interviews. Main findings highlighted the potential of youth to contribute to the development of the country. They also revealed that migration is perceived as a short-term experience dedicated to increasing skills, gaining an education or finding a temporary job. Nevertheless,

⁶¹ Tajikistan Young Leaders Program (YLP). Local Youth and Civic Education Assignment. Scope of Work, <http://tajikngo.centreict.net/tj/component/k2/item/1539-tajikistan-young-leaders-program-ylp-local-youth-and-civic-education-assignment-scope-of-work.html?tmpl=component&print=1>

young people are willing to come back to Tajikistan. Lastly, a large gap exists between the goals of actors of development and young people's perceptions and expectations of development programming.

In addition, EFCA-Tajikistan organized five debate tournaments and a final in Dushanbe that gathered more than 120 young people in order to gather more insights from young people on development opportunities in Tajikistan. Main recommendations focused on access to education such as international student exchanges, quotas for girls; improving public services; corruption and labor force.

This *Voices of Youth* program is based on the belief that the opinions and recommendations of young people will genuinely contribute to improving the design and the implementation of development related activities; and hopefully increase the impact of programming. EFCA-Tajikistan recommends disseminating this information to the different actors of development.

ANNEX III. Youth Education, Civic Education Initiatives

Courses and Summer Camps on Civic Education, Religious Radicalism and Tolerance

OSCE Summer Camps on Civic Education and Tolerance (2000-2010) - The first civic education summer camps for Tajik youth had been held by the OSCE office in Tajikistan since the beginning 2000's. The teaching of the youth summer camps usually included civic education modules, courses on basics of democracy, elections, values and norms.

In the course of the following years a series of youth summer camps have been organized all over the republic – as usual in cooperation with local and international partners. Thus, in cooperation with local partners the OSCE conducted annual youth summer camps in Khujand area bringing together young people from all over the country. In 2002 OSCE organized summer camp in Gahrn with the aim to create a network of young activists in Rasht Valley, inform them how to create youth NGOs and strengthen a basic education on environment and drug prevention.⁶² In 2003 the OSCE Centre in Dushanbe and Field Office in Kulyab, in cooperation with the Youth Eco Centre in Dushanbe, Biological Faculty of Kulyab University conducted a youth summer camp on ecology.

In 2010-2012 a series of youth anti-radicalism summer camps had been conducted by International Alert office in Tajikistan within the framework of Secular-Religious Dialogue and MAYPAR projects (see above). The summer camp brought together students from both religious and secular educational institutions of Tajikistan. The curriculum included teaching modules and courses on tolerance, world religions, history of Islam, information of Islamic mazhabs (law schools), democratic values, freedom of expression and believe, tolerance etc. The moderators and teachers were the best experts on religion and political science in the country, representatives of civil society, political parties and official institutions. A special course was devoted to the issue of religious radicalism and prevention of violent extremism.

Series of public lectures and courses “Preventing and Countering Youth Radicalism in Tajikistan” was conducted by the IWPR office in Dushanbe in 2017. The series of lectures was conducted in all major universities of Tajikistan and covered 1700 students. The lectures' topics were the following: ‘Islam and Terrorism’, “Educating Tolerance”, ‘Tolerance in Islam’, ‘What is Jihad in Islam and How it is Interpreted by Extremist Recruiters’.

In addition, the IWPR offered lectures for officers and soldiers in several military bases of the country.

⁶² See OSCE website <https://www.osce.org/tajikistan/65495>

The National Testing Center (NTC) was established by the Government of Tajikistan in 2008 as a first step in establishing a national education assessment system, with the goal of contributing to improved access to and quality of education in the country. According to interviewed representative OSI organization the National Testing Center is one of the key projects in promoting equal access to education, transparency and preventing corruption in the country's educational center. Therefore, NTC is an important tool in preventing radicalization and social discontent among Tajik youth.

The World Bank, as one of Tajikistan's longstanding partners in education, has been supporting the NTC since 2009 through its two projects. The Russia-financed *Russia Education Aid for Development Project (READ)*, administered by the World Bank, provided US\$4.1 million to build the institutional capacity of the National Testing Centre, including in the area of introducing the Unified University Entrance Examinations. The International Development Association (IDA) supported the *Education Modernization Project* with a US\$2 million grant for the construction of the NTC building and provision of furniture and equipment.

The Open Society Foundation provided US\$1.5 million for capacity building of the national experts and the NTC staff in the assessment area and the development and delivery of a public relations and communications strategy.

Educational Exchange Programs

A number of educational exchange programs are offered by various international organizations such as OSI, US Embassy, DAAD etc.

The U.S. Embassy in Dushanbe offers a series of exchange programs for Tajik youth. The students are provided with opportunity to study in the United States through a variety of programs that offer study exchanges as well as opportunities to prepare Tajiki students to improve their success at being accepted to universities in the United States with financial aid packages. Just a few examples of these programs include:

- The Future Leaders Exchange Program (FLEX), a year-long program for 15-17-year olds, offers students an opportunity to study at a U.S. high school and live with a U.S. family;
- The Global Undergraduate Exchange Program (UGRAD), in which undergraduate students spend an academic semester at an American university;
- Study in the United States Summer Institute (SUSI), for female undergraduates who want to participate in intensive academic programs on leadership; and
- The Fulbright Foreign Student Program, a two-year program for students who wish to pursue their Master's degrees in the U.S.

The OSIAF Scholarship program is operating in the Republic of Tajikistan for about twenty years now.

Even though during this period Scholarship Program went through different lifecycles the program continued working towards achieving its primary objective, which is provision of opportunity to youth, students, faculty, academic staff, graduates to upgrade their knowledge and experience in fields of their interest, implement the skills/knowledge/experience gain for development of Tajikistan upon completion.

Open Society Foundation Scholarship Programs offer applicants to make their flexible and individual own choice of study. It should be noted that this reflects our belief in empowering individuals to freely choose to improve their capacities per their need and convenience.

The program in Tajikistan specifically support humanities and social sciences graduate and professional study. Developing unique expertise in specific place at specific time of need can be one of the success stories of the program as an example of Social Work Fellowship Program.

The German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) is the world's biggest funding agency for the international exchange of students and scientists. Its main task is to support academic relations with other countries. The DAAD Information Centre Dushanbe operates within the framework of the German-Tajik Cultural Agreement and in close cooperation with the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in Dushanbe.

IWPR + OSCE Academy: Program for Young Analytics and Analytical Journalistic School⁶³

In 2018 The Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR) and OSCE Academy in Bishkek have launched a three-year project to enhance the capacity of the new generation of analysts and journalists in Central Asian region. In the three coming years, the representative office of IWPR in Central Asia and OSCE Academy in Bishkek through a series of intensive theoretical and practical programs will work over the creation of a new pool of young experts and analyst journalists who can provide quality analysis for public authorities and general public. It is intended to have 20 young journalists and 20 young analysts to be selected for the first year classes.

The project is funded by the Foreign Ministry of Norway. Helene Sand Andresen, Deputy Director, Section for Russia, Eurasia and Regional Cooperation, MFA Norway, has stated that Central Asia is a very important region and Norway is interested in the development of all five states. Participants of the program to be selected on a competitive basis in five Central Asian states will take an intensive Summer School, where they will be identifying the

⁶³ IWPR website

problems in the region, learning the fundamentals of expert analysis, and getting valuable advices from the key specialists in the region and invited experts from abroad.

Upon completion of the Summer School, young experts will be allocated to IWPR CA offices and will start practical training, where they will be analyzing the problems within their area of expertise and will be writing analytical articles under the supervision of analysts and editors of IWPR. Along with beginner experts, IWPR will also be training young journalists. Also, young journalists will be openly selected in the countries of the region, will take Summer School, and will be practicing in IWPR offices to produce news, reports, news analysis and multimedia material. Their works will be published on the platform of CABAR.asia and on the global website of iwpr.net.

After the first stage of the program, a group of most active and ambitious experts and journalists will be sent to Eastern Europe for practical training, where they will be studying the local situation, successful reforms, sharing their experience and knowledge with local colleagues, and adopting their best practices in their expert and journalist activities.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Cabar Asia <https://cabar.asia/en/iwpr-and-osce-academy-in-bishkek-to-enhance-capacity-of-young-experts-in-central-asia/>

ANNEX IV. Tajik NGOs' Initiatives

Initiatives and Projects Implemented by Dushanbe-based NGOs

The list of leading and sustainable Dushanbe NGOs includes just a limited number of active organizations such as: research NGO *'Zerkalo'*, Informational-Analytical Centre *'Sharq'*, NANSMIT, National Association of Small and Medium Businesses of the Republic of Tajikistan (NASMB RT), *'Youth EcoCenter'*, *'Multikid'* (youth education), *'Fidoko'r'*, Centre of Free market of Tajikistan, NGO *'Iqtidor'* (former Manizha), *Note Bene*, *Bureau on Human Rights* etc.

Only a very few of them are directly engaged in the projects related to the countering and preventing violent extremism and youth radicalism. The NGO *'Academy of Dialogue'* is specialised today in conducting research and studies on the issue of radicalization; the last study is devoted to the problem of online propaganda run by extremist organizations via Internet and social networks. Previously, NGO *'Academy of Dialogue'* was a partner organization for SDC (as well as PD-4 of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland, see above) projects and initiatives on religious-secular dialogue.

The IA *'Sharq'* conducted a series of studies on labour migration covering the issues of youth and migrants' radicalization as well. The most recent research under the title *'Molodezh Tadjikistana'* (Youth of Tajikistan) is conducted in 2017. The research report summarises the results of the sociological survey and opinion polls held by the NGO experts in different regions of the country.

Another groups of surveys devoted to the issue of migration and youth problems is implemented by NGO *'Zerkalo'*, which is specialized mainly in sociological and quantitative analysis. Since 2000 the NGO is engaged in conducting regular survey under the title *'Monitoring Public Opinion'*, which is intended to analyse the population perception towards major changes in social and economic life of the country. Later the NGO initiated another related project ***"Public Opinion Monitoring"***, supported by the Eurasia Foundation.

NGO *"Fidokor"* has implemented several projects aimed at strengthening capacity and sustainability of youth NGO's in Khatlon, Hissar, and Khorog through creation of mobile theatres network supported initially by GIZ; later the project was continued under the title ***"The Youth Theatre for Peace"*** (January 2010- 2011) sponsored by IREX. The project resulted in creation several mobile theatre groups in Khorog, Vakhsh, Khatlon, Sarband, Jomi, and Hissar districts. The mobile theatres have conducted more than 200 performances on the most important and acute youth economic and social issues.

Among the most active gender NGOs are "Union of Women in Tajikistan", "Women in Development Bureau", "Women of Science of Tajikistan", "Women's Initiatives", "Open Asia", and "League of Woman Lawyers". These NGOs encourage Tajik women to think in new ways about gender and about efforts to improve their position. The Centre for Gender

Education is continuously engaged (since 2001) in implementation of educational and capacity building programs and courses for Tajik youth, women, girls and students.

“National Association of Small and Medium Businesses of the Republic of Tajikistan” (NASMB RT) is one of the most well-known Tajik NGO’s working in the field of building favourable business environment and promotion of small business sector. The NGO focuses on protection of the rights of entrepreneurs, lobbying their interests, their capacity building, dissemination of information relevant for the expansion of enterprises/companies, developing partnerships and reduction of administrative barriers.

NASMB RT is distinguished by the active lobbying activities promoting legislative changes and initiatives aimed at improving business environment. One of the proclaimed aims is to assist the beginning entrepreneurs, especially the young and promising managers, university students in order to minimize errors in the starting up and developing their businesses; organizing scientific, scientific-methodological and educational activities in order to prepare modern and advanced young candidates for future jobs.

Youth EcoCenter – Public social-ecological organization, whose mission is «Improving environmental condition by more sustainable use of natural resources and creating alternative livelihoods for local communities». The Youth Ecological Center (YEC) was established in 1997 by teachers, scientists and students as public organization to protect ecological rights of citizens and distribute independent ecological information.

Currently, YEC operates in Dushanbe and rural areas of Tajikistan covering such issues as secure livelihoods, climate change adaptation, awareness raising about sustainable development. YEC is currently implementing a range of projects aimed at development of Local Action Plans, formation of demonstration plots for farmers, construction of solar greenhouses and energy saving stoves, establishment of compost producing centres, introduction of drip irrigation, introduction of draught resistant crops and protection of knowledge of native population.

Public Organization “The Centre of Information-Communication Technologies” (The Centre of ICT⁶⁵) is specialised in developing human resources in Information Technologies (IT). The Centre of ICT is engaged in information and educational activities working with universities, government institutions, commercial and non-commercial organization. From 2006 the Centre realized a considerable number of projects, related to youth, universities and civil society development. The Centre of ICT activity implements in borders of three strategic programs: capacity building of university teachers, young specialists, youth, students in using IT technology; capacity building of public associations’ representatives; training professionals and developing open standards and technologies as well as promoting electronic government system in the country;

Centre of Free Market of Tajikistan is one of the most active Tajik NGO’s in the field of promoting business environment and raising public awareness on economic and development

⁶⁵ The ICT web-site http://centreict.net/cictweb/en_US/about_cict/

issues; promoting open market values and approaches. The Centre was organized by a group of young economists and experts; since the beginning it actively engaged in research and training activities targeting predominantly younger generations, students and young specialists. Among its main implemented projects are the organization of Free Market School and Free Market Clubs, and School of Economic Reforms aimed at building capacity of Tajik young specialists and involving them into the reforming process. The Centre has been conducting active lobbying activities promoting economic and social reforms and policy changes on decision making level. It was one of the first Tajik NGOs which has introduced the methodology of online seminars (webinars) where young audience had opportunity to listen to the most well-known scholars and economists from other countries.

‘Iqtidor’ (Capacity) organization was described as an experienced training NGO’s in the country engaged in conducting seminars and trainings for civil society representatives, students and youth on civic education and tolerance. One of its major youth initiatives was a project aimed at supporting students’ projects on new technologies for adaptation to the climate changes.

Regional NGOs’ Initiatives

Khujand

The field trip of our research team to Khujand was conducted in December 2017; during this period 14 in-depth interviews with representatives of local civil society group, expert community and NGO’s sector had been conducted. The following results of the discussion are worth to mention:

First, all respondents pointed at the process of decreasing civic organizations’ activities in Khujand areas and Sughd oblast. Comparing to the previous years the number of active NGOs has been considerably reduced as well. Today, there is a small group of well-established and professional NGO’s (many of them trace their history to the mid of 90s) considered relatively sustainable. However, most of these NGOs implement only one or two projects experiencing considerable difficulties in getting new funding - therefore, none of them could be considered fully sustainable in the longer term. Among the most active local NGOs are the following: “YGPE”, “*Youth Generation of Tajikistan*”, “ASTI” (*Association of Scientific Technical Intelligentsia*), “*New generation*”, “Ehyo, Farhang, Taraqqiyot” (Revival, Culture and Development), “Public Association “Dunyo” etc.

All respondents complained that the activities of young people in Khuajnd are also decreasing. Previously many of them actively participated in all civic events but today it is very difficult to ensure their participation. This social passivity of younger generations is usually explained in the following ways:

- Economic hardship and decay of living standards of youth – as a result, many of them are less interested in local affairs relating their future prospects and hopes to labour migration;

- Overall public and young people frustration and ‘tiredness’ from public and social activities;
- Civic organizations also turned to be less active mainly due to decreasing financing; in addition, their professional level is also decreasing because of retirement and leaving of the most experienced cadres.

Confidence Building and Countering Radicalism Projects implemented in 2000s

Previously, in the beginning of 2000s, NGO’s of Khujand region were perceived as the most active and experienced civic organizations specialised in the field of conflict prevention and confidence building. Many of them - such as NGO *Ittifoq* (recently closed) and NGO *ASTI* – actively participated in conflict prevention projects implemented by donor agencies in Fergana Valley, first of all along the Tajik-Kyrgyz zone.

The most efficient conflict prevention projects implemented by Khujand NGOs in 2000’s are the following:

Civic Education Summer Camps

1. The above mentioned **OSCE Civic Education Youth Summer Camps** (2000-2009) in which local Khujand NGOs (such Youth and Society) actively participated;
2. The **“Law and Religion” (“Fariza”)** Summer Camps (2007-2011) sponsored by SDC office in Tajikistan, Ebert Foundation and OSCE. The local implementing partners were *“ASTI”*, *“Youth and Civilization”*, and *“Youth and Society”*;
3. Summer Camps on **Secular-Religious Dialogue and Tolerance** implemented by International Alert (2010-2012); the first of them had been organized in cooperation with OSCE;

Conflicts Resolution and Prevention Projects

There was series of small and medium size projects aimed at decreasing conflict potential and promotion of tolerance implemented by the same groups of local NGOs specialised in the field – among them *“ASTI”*, *“Ittifoq”*, *“Fariza”*, *“Youth and Civilization”* and *Youth and Society”*. The projects were sponsored by SDC, PD-4 of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland, USA Embassy in Dushanbe, OSCE and EU.

Another a series of projects aimed at countering youth radicalization and religious extremism being sponsored and implemented by the same group of actors and donor agencies. In addition, NGO *“Fariza”*, *“GIV-Accent”* (Group of Innovative Volunteers) and local *“Centre for Civil Society Support”* implemented a circle of civic education and civil society support projects with the support of the US Embassy, OSCE, OSI, and EU delegation.

Summary of Interviews in Khujand

Today, the overwhelming majority of local NGO's are engaged in non-sensitive projects - mainly in such thematic areas as reproductive health, prevention of drug addiction among teenagers etc.

According to respondents the restrictions on NGO's activities and thematic areas started since 2005 – after the evens in Andijan and series of 'colour revolutions' in post-Soviet countries. Prior to this period, an NGO willing to get permission for holding a seminar with school children could solve the problem on the level of school director. Today, even the Head of Educational Department of Oblast/District Hukumat is not entitled to give such permission. In order to organize such event on school level the official approval of the Ministry of Education of the RT is required. The NGO's activists believe that such restrictions considerably hamper the implementation of anti-radicalisation and PVE initiatives on the ground; as a result, the majority of civic organizations prefer to avoid participation in conflict prevention and PVE programs.

Some of respondents pointed at the importance of corruption issue; according to them bribery and corruption penetrated all levels of NGO sector. Thus, some 'successful' NGOs are established by former or current officials and their relatives; some of them are called 'one day' NGOs being created only for implementing one or two projects. Another side of the issue is the corruption in international agencies. There is a believe expressed by some respondents that local staff of some international donor organizations extort bribes for getting grants or distribute grants primarily among their relatives and friends.

One of the most experienced NGO's with the rich history of grants in the field of PVE and conflict prevention initiatives is ASTI (Association of Scientific Technical Intelligentsia). In the 90's and 2000's ASTI actively participated in almost every major conflict resolution project implemented in Khujand and Fergana valley. Today, ASTI has limited its activities to the projects in the field of youth education, vocational training, health reproduction and building youth leadership skills. For instance, ASTI implements the EU sponsored project on vocational training for youth in several rural districts of Sughd oblast. The project is intended to provide participants with the knowledge and skills required to launch their own business project; the best graduates are expected to complete their entrepreneurial skills in Germany.

The *YGPE* (Young Group for Protecting Environment) and *Youth Ecological Centre* are engaged almost exclusively in ecological and environment protection projects related to the problems of youth, schoolchildren and students. Another objective is to involve more young people into ecological actions and activities. Thus, one of the YGPE implemented projects is intended to improve heating system in several educational institutions of the oblast; another project supported by the Ministry of Education of the RT is aimed at organising 'green patrols' and involving them into activities of the oblast development programs.

The other leading NGO's such as "*Young Generation of Tajikistan*" and "*Youth of Sughd*" are engaged mainly in implementation of health reproduction projects and humanitarian initiatives. Thus, NGO "Young Generation of Tajikistan" has implemented a project "Improving youth health in practice" (2011-2013); the "Youth of Sughd" NGO is engaged in providing humanitarian assistance vulnerable and socially disadvantaged families based on the list provided by the government or population.

Gharm (Rasht valley) NGOs' Initiatives

According to respondents there are only five acting NGOs in Rasht region: four of them are in Rasht; two in Tajikabad district; two in Lakhs district and one in Sangvor district. The rest of registered NGOs are not active mainly due to the absence of funding.

The NGOs engaged in implementation of youth projects are the following: “**Marifatnoki**” (Education), “**Niso**”, “**Rasht Centre for Civil Society Support**”, “**Women Resource Centre**” in Rasht and NGO “**Surkhob**” in Sangvor.

NGO Activities

There is almost no PVE projects in the region implemented by local NGO's; one respondent event stated that the youth religious radicalization phenomenon is less threatening their region comparing to some other parts of the country. Thus, only 21 local young people who joined ISIS, which proportionally much less than in Khatlon and Sughd provinces. Another possible reason is related to the post-war syndrome which is still shared by the wider groups of local population. As a result, the sensitivity of radicalization and conflict resolution issues could be higher than in other regions.

The only exception is the local NGO “**Marifatnoki**” participation in the project “Building trust between police and young people in Tajikistan” implemented by international NGO “Safeworld” in Rasht valley. Since 2015 NGO “Marifatnoki” assists “Safeworld” in organizing meetings and other project activities on the ground.

The overwhelming majority of acting NGOs focus mainly on following thematic areas: youth education, civic education, ecological projects, vocational trainings etc. The majority of them have only one project and remain heavily dependent on outside partners such as international agencies or Dushanbe based NGO's.

For instance, over the last 5 years “Marifatnoki” participates in the project “Young Leaders” implemented by Counterpart Consortium and sponsored by USAID. The project includes several directions of activities including courses of English language, promotion local civil society groups, promoting opportunities for local girls and public debates.

Summary of Discussions and Interviews in Rasht Valley

The majority of respondents pointed at the decreasing number of acting civic organizations in the Rasht region. According to them today the majority of local NGOs exist only on paper;

The respondents believe that the main reason of weakening of local civic institutions the lack of access to funding; previously the number of donor agencies interested in Rasht valley was much higher, which considerably promoted the rise of the Third Sector;

Similar to Khujand NGOs the civic activists in Rasht valley pointed at increasing corruption in the country's civil society sector. It was also stated that local NGO's are divided in to

groups: 1) the privileged once related to officials or donor agencies' local staff; 2) the ordinary NGO's that don't have connections and links with local authorities or grant giving organizations;

The respondents expressed a bit of criticism with regard to the content of projects initiated and sponsored in the region by donor agencies. Some respondents stated that many projects implemented in the region have little impact on the situation and do not reflect the real needs and requirements of population;

Another common point is the deteriorating relationship between local authorities and civil society groups. According to respondents many officials share a very critical and suspicious attitude to civil society and professional NGO's network. It negatively affecting the overall atmosphere of social partnership in the region;

In general, local civic activities share a relatively pessimistic point of view concerning the future prospects for civil society organizations on the territory of Rasht valley. The only solution – as they believe – is to promote institutional and organizational capacity of local NGOs via ensuring better access to funds and new grant opportunities.

GBAO

The network of civic organizations in GBAO is traditionally considered to be more effective and better developed in compare to the majority of other regions of the country. According to respondents, among the most active NGOs in the region are *“Kalam”, “Umedvor”, “Madina”, “Ehyo”, “Savob”, “Khirad”, “Youth Centre “Nilufar”, “Lojvar”, “Marifat”, “Volunteer”, “Association “Soi”, “Oson”, “Marifati Pomir”, “De-Pomiri”, “Entrepreneurship and Development”. “Nur”, “Oyandasoz”* etc.

Some of the current NGOs (especially the once established in 90's and 2000's) have rather rich experience and history in designing and implementing conflict prevention and confidence building projects. Among them is NGO “Kalam”, which for many years was engaged in implementation of various projects on tolerance and conflict prevention. One of such initiatives is the project aimed at reducing tension between different groups of local youth from different parts of Khorog city engaged in regular street fighting and clashes. In addition, there is a tension and contradictions between local youth leaders and the city authorities. In general, many representatives of local younger generation share a rather critical attitude towards officials accusing them in corruption and lack of effectiveness. The projects implemented by “Kalam” were intended to build a bridge between the both sides by teaching young people culture of tolerance, peaceful mediation, peaceful solution of existing contradictions, conflict resolution approaches etc.

Today, *“Kalam”* as the rest of civic organizations is engaged mainly in educational, capacity building, health and humanitarian programs. In general, comparing to other regions a considerable number of local NGO's is engaged in the business promotion and youth empowering projects. Due to continues investments from the Agha-Khan Foundation network local youth have better chances to improve their entrepreneurial skills and to open

his/her own business. At the same time, according to respondents the level of youth unemployment in GBAO is still higher than in other regions. Thus, out of total youth population of Khorog city 2-3% are employed in local educational system, 1-2% work for official bodies, 70% left for labor migration (the number of labor migrants in rural areas even higher reaching 85% of youth).

One of the largest youth empowering initiatives in the regions is the project implemented by NGO ***“Entrepreneurship and Development”*** founded by the Agha-Khan Foundation. The NGO occupies a three-floor building in the city center where local young businessmen receive training and professional orientation. The young people who have developed their own business-plans attend three months training course, which includes courses on standardizations, taxation, business management etc. The students present their business plans to be allowed for the second term when they will work on further improvement their business-plans. The successful graduates may apply for start-up funding provided by the Agha-Khan Foundation. Throughout their study all students receive technical support and assistance. Later, during the following three years they would receive constant consultations from a special group of mentors designated by the donor. During the last year 210 young people participated in the project and 10 of them received funding for their business projects; about 14 business plans remain under consideration and at least 8-10 of them would receive funding.

NGO ***“Madina”*** implemented about 40 youth empowering projects and initiatives sponsored by ADB and EU Delegation in Tajikistan. According to the project design (actually implemented with the use of Islamic banking approach) young entrepreneurs receive not loans but equipment needed for launching their business. This approach proved to be more effective in promotion business opportunities because local businessmen do not have funds to pay off the interest rates. In addition, this year NGO ***Madina*** provided nine grants (in the form of equipment) for the labor migrants deported from the Russian Federation.

Summary of Interviews in GBAO

According to Khorog respondents there are two potentially conflict generating problems in the regions which are not properly addressed yet. The first one is the problem of youth unemployment, increasing labour migration and lack of job opportunities for the youth. As a result, up to 70-80% of local youth remain unemployed or less employed; the brain drawn in the regions is growing as well as the majority of well-educated youth prefer to leave for employment in abroad.

The second important issues are social alienation and exclusion of local youth from the local government structures. Comparing to other provinces the GBAO youth share more critical attitude towards official institutions. The youth people criticize oblast Hukumat for the widespread bribery and corruption – the phenomenon which is relatively new for the traditional Badakhshan society. However, few respondents stressed that corruption penetrated also locally based international donor institutions.

The respondents also pointed at decreasing number and influence of professional NGO's in the oblast. In their opinion the main reason of the decay is the lack of financing. Local NGOs remain heavily dependent on international funding, which is gradually decreasing.

There is also criticism regarding the international agencies' long-term intervention strategies. They believe that donor agencies didn't pay enough attention to the issue of financial and organizational sustainability of their local partners while allocated grants or implementing joint projects. As a result, many local NGO's are forced to shut down as soon as the funding was over.

Some respondents pointed at deteriorating and suspicious attitude of governing bodies towards NGO's network. As a result, local civic organization started to avoid engagement into conflict resolution and prevention projects.

At the same time, the peculiar feature of the GBAO region is the better relationship between local civic organizations and population. In other regions of the country civic organizations seem to be less trusted but in GBAO they are still largely regarded and accepted by the wider social strata. The overall atmosphere for the NGO work is more conducive and favourable in GBAO comparing to the rest of provinces. The civil society groups seem to be more flexible and open in expressing their opinion and positions.

Kulab

There is no civic organization in the Kulab city engaged directly specialised in the youth issues. The only exception was NGO "Kalidi Donish" (Key of Knowledge) but has been recently closed – according to respondents mainly due to financial problems and lack of financing. At the same time, there is a group of NGOs, which partly cover the youth problems as well, among them: NGO's "*Shahrvand*", "*Nakukor*" "*Imron*", "*Mairam*", "*SVON-Plus*" "*Zarshedabonu*" "*Najoti Kudakon*" (*Saving Kids*).

Previously, about 8 years ago a network of youth centres existed in the city but it has been closed due to the lack of financing as well. The Youth centres provided local youth with access to Internet, teaching language and computer courses. Today, there is only one Youth Centre in the city established by the local Hukumat.

The majority of local civic organizations are engaged migration, health, drug use prevention and educational problems. Thus, NGO "Mairam" supports labour migrants due to financing from IOM; Zarshedbonu is engaged in assisting disabled children.

NGO "**Imron**" is specialized in family planning, holding educational courses and trainings for students and schoolchildren; the NGO has received a grant from the State Committee for Youth, Sports and Tourism of the RT. In addition, the NGO has signed a cooperation agreement with local official bodies. NGO "**Shahrvand** (Citizen)" is one of the first civic organization in region; for many years it was served as a local civil society resource centre. Its major implemented projects are the following: "Healthy Society" Project (2003-2005) sponsored by Counterpart Consortium and aimed at supporting local civil society groups; Project "Promoting Potential of District Development Communities" (2003-2006) sponsored

by the UNDP; and Project “Support for Civil Society” sponsored by IREX-USAID in 2003-2006.

NGO “Najoti Kudakon” (NJ) is one of the few local organizations, which has experience in implementing projects devoted to the youth radicalization process. Thus, for several years NJ conducted opinion studies on the youth radicalization in Kulab city schools and several rural communities.⁶⁶ In addition, the organization was engaged in organising debate clubs, educational facilities for local girls and prevention violence on family level.

Summary of Interviews in Kulab district

The number of acting NGO’s in Kulab district is dropping as well; for instance, there are fourteen NGOs registered in Vose district (nearby Kulab city) but only four of them continue their activities. According to respondents, the local civic organizations were seeking support from donor agencies and Dushanbe based organizations but with no results. As one of the civic activists stated: “they come to us with big promises and we help them to organize their seminars on the ground but as soon as the project is over they just disappear”.⁶⁷

According to respondents today the main part of local NGOs is not directly engaged in the PVE projects but some of them may render support to their partners from Dushanbe in conducting their seminars in Kulab region. In addition, some of NGOs prefer not to disclose their participation in such PVE programs due to sensitivity of the problem. In general, local NGOs seem to be much less flexible and open comparing to their colleagues in other parts of the country.

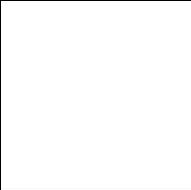
The majority of respondents stated that the most important and potentially conflict generating problems in the city are youth unemployment and social inequality. In general, according to them 50% of the total population of the city and 70-75% of local youth are partially or completely unemployed. The majority of youth remain socially passive planning to leave for labour migration as soon as possible.

The government is trying to involve young people in the official events, celebrations and ceremonies by using mainly administrative and forcible means. For instance, students are often forced to subscribe to official media or to buy tickets to theatre plays or exhibitions organized by official bodies, but it leads to the opposite results, rising young people’s frustration and irritation.

As in other parts of the country local civic organizations complain on deteriorating attitude of local authorities towards the non-profit sector. One of the major factors that negative affects local NGO’s image and influence is the lack of their financial and organizational capacity. Local civic organizations are especially suffering from the lacking access to donors and

⁶⁶ <https://rus.ozodi.org/a/27436841.html>.

⁶⁷ Interview in Vose district



financial resources; as a result, old professional cadres are leading the sector while young people prefer other fields of activities and employment.