

# Tajikistan

## Common Country Analysis

### Annual Update 2023



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## 1. Introduction

The current document is the 2023 annual update of the Tajikistan Common Country Analysis (CCA). CCA is an ongoing analysis of the national development landscape and it examines the major factors influencing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the national development goals. CCA aims to identify the underlying causes of inequality and vulnerability in line with the commitment to leave no one behind, UN Charter values, and international norms and standards. As the primary source of reference for the UN System in the country, the CCA aims to guide engagement with the Government and the people of Tajikistan to implement policies and programmes to promote sustainable development. Under the leadership of the UN Resident Coordinator, the CCA update was prepared by the Programme Management Team (PMT), which comprises senior programme staff of the UN Agencies. The updating of the CCA was an iterative process that fed into and benefited from the wide-ranging consultations organized as part of the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) formulation process. The stakeholders consulted during the formulation of the UNSDCF included line ministries, non-state organizations, private sector representatives, civil society, academia, and international development partners. CCA draws from various sources, including national surveys, administrative data, thematic analysis, and global and regional reports. Getting frequent and disaggregated data in Tajikistan is a challenge. This affects the scope of research and a thorough review of deprivation and inequality, especially for groups at risk of being left behind.

## 2. Progress toward the 2030 Agenda

**Tajikistan has made steady progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), but the progress has been uneven.**<sup>1,2</sup> The National Development Strategy (NDS-2030) adopted in 2016 provides the overarching development framework. It is closely aligned with Agenda 2030. NDS-2020 is being implemented through three mid-term development programmes (MTDPs), each with a five-year duration. Currently, the second MTDP (2021-2025) is being implemented. The national poverty rate fell from 83 per cent in 2003 to 22.5 per cent in 2022 (SDG 1).<sup>3</sup> There has also been progress in education (SDG 4), with higher enrolment rates at the primary and secondary school levels. Other SDGs on track include access to clean water and sanitation (SDG 6), affordable and clean energy (SDG 7), and climate action (SDG 13).<sup>4</sup> However, progress has been relatively modest on SDG 3 (Good health and well-being), SDG 5 (Gender equality), and SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth). At the current rate, the SDGs that may not be achieved by 2030 are SDG 2 (Zero hunger), SDG 5 (Gender equality), SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth), SDG 9 (Industry, innovation and infrastructure), SDG 15 (Life on land), and SDG 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions). There is no recent data on responsible consumption and production (SDG 12). Inter-relational analysis of SDGs<sup>5</sup> shows that SDG 7 (Affordable and clean energy) has a significant multiplier effect of influencing the achievement of other SDGs in Tajikistan, followed by SDG 2 (Zero hunger), SDG 17 (Partnerships for the goals), SDG 4 (Quality education), SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth), and SDG 6 (Clean water and sanitation). Despite progress, inherent vulnerabilities can undermine Tajikistan's future development. Low economic development, high exposure to environmental hazards and socioeconomic disparities make Tajikistan vulnerable to internal and external shocks. With a governance system under capacity constraints, the cascading effects of COVID-19, and the conflict in Ukraine feeding a global cost of living crisis have made it even more challenging for Tajikistan to achieve all the SDGs and realize national development aspirations.

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<sup>1</sup> See: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>, <http://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/indicators-list/>

<sup>2</sup> Sachs, J. et al., 2020, The Sustainable Development Goals and COVID-19, Sustainable Development Report 2020.

<sup>3</sup> Agency of Statistics

<sup>4</sup> Status based on selected targets and an SDG targets' index. [<https://dashboards.sdgindex.org/profiles/TJK>]

<sup>5</sup> Technical consultations between the UN, government partners, CSOs and think tanks to assess the extent of SDGs interrelation, 2016 (unpublished).

### 3. National vision for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

**Many SDG targets and indicators have been incorporated into national strategies, but gaps remain.** The national development framework is broadly aligned with the SDGs,<sup>6</sup> but SDGs-driven investments and plans still need to be fully developed. The NDS-2030 focuses on economic diversification and competitiveness, sustainable jobs, improving energy supply and transport connectivity, ensuring food security, enhancing public administration, and developing human resources.<sup>7</sup> It is estimated that USD 118 billion can be mobilized to implement NDS-2030 from 2016 to 2030, roughly translating into USD 7.8 billion annually.<sup>8</sup> In this regard, a national roadmap for financing the NDS and the SDGs was formulated to understand better the gaps and measures needed to increase financing for development. A working group under the National Development Council, a multi-stakeholder forum chaired by the President of Tajikistan, was established to promote policy dialogue and support for implementing the roadmap. These are significant developments that can help in formulating a coherent response to emerging development challenges and address the gap in financing. However, substantial capacity and institutional challenges still lie ahead.

### 4. Political and institutional analysis

Tajikistan is a presidential republic with a bicameral parliament. The Constitution defines Tajikistan as a democratic, law-based, secular and unitary state.<sup>9</sup> After the disintegration of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in 1991, the country immediately entered a phase of high political instability, with a five-year civil war. Political stability and peace have been maintained since the end of the civil war. Although several reforms have been undertaken, institutions and capacities remain relatively weak. There is a high level of perceived corruption. Transparency International ranked Tajikistan 150 out of 180 countries on its perception index in 2022.<sup>10</sup>

**People face obstacles in accessing justice and public services<sup>11</sup> which undermines trust.**<sup>12</sup> The Government has undertaken several legislative and policy reforms to foster an effective justice system. Implementation lags due to the need for clear mechanisms for implementing legislative acts. Access to justice is negatively affected by weak capacities, insufficient access to information, and lack of transparency.<sup>13</sup> In addition, the capacity of rights-holders to claim their rights is weak. Although nearly 50 per cent of the total population is covered by state-run free legal aid, legal aid centres are insufficient and with limited funding. Moreover, the Law on Legal Aid adopted in 2020 does not recognise victims of violence as eligible to receive free (state-funded) legal aid in criminal cases.<sup>14</sup>

**Achieving a meaningful tripartite social dialogue between the government, employers and workers' associations is challenging.** There is a lack of genuine collective bargaining, insufficient compliance with international labour standards, weak labour administration, and poor organizational capacities amongst trade unions and employers' organizations. Women are under-represented in bipartite and tripartite mechanisms. Labour inspections are a serious concern. The labour code reform in 2016 and Law No. 1505 (2018) present serious concerns with regard to ratified international labour standards.<sup>15</sup>

**Gender inequality is pervasive and systemic.** The institutional mechanisms for ensuring gender equality are underdeveloped and underfinanced. While there have been some advances, opportunities for

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<sup>6</sup> The Rapid Integrated Assessment (RIA) determined that about 64 per cent of the SDG objectives are reflected in two national strategic documents (76 of 119 relevant SDG goals). A broad review of 10 national strategies has shown mainstreaming of SDGs in these documents is 78 per cent.

<sup>7</sup> [<https://medt.tj/en/strategy-and-programmes/nds2030>]

<sup>8</sup> Annually in nominal terms over 15-year period; GDP in 2019 was over USD 8.11 billion. World Bank, 2020.

<sup>9</sup> Constitution of the Republic of Tajikistan - Генеральная прокуратура Республики Таджикистан. [[www.prokuratura.tj](http://www.prokuratura.tj)]

<sup>10</sup> Ranked 150 out of 180 countries in 2022. [<https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2022>]

<sup>11</sup> Safarzoda et al, 2017, Analysis of execution of the state programmes of the Republic of Tajikistan in the field of judiciary and legal reform, pp. 6-7.

<sup>12</sup> Sputnik News, 7 February 2020, 'Рахмон провёл перестановки в судебной системе Таджикистана'.

<sup>13</sup> Among others, see Open Budget Survey & Transparency International.

[<https://www.internationalbudget.org/open-budget-survey/country-results/2019/tajikistan> of Tajikistan]

[<https://www.transparency.org/en/countries/tajikistan#>]

<sup>14</sup> Adopted on 4 July 2020, No.1694.

<sup>15</sup> With regards to ILO Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 (No. 81). Comments adopted by the CEACR: Tajikistan. C081 - Observation (CEACR) - adopted 2019, published 109th ILC session (2021). [[https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:13203:0::NO::P13203\\_COUNTRY\\_ID:103547](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:13203:0::NO::P13203_COUNTRY_ID:103547)]

women to hold public offices are limited, especially at the top level of the government. After the last national elections in 2020, women constitute 14 out of 63 Members of the Parliament and chair two out of nine Parliamentary Committees.<sup>16</sup> There are also some female cabinet ministers. Around 15 per cent of all the judges and 25.6 per cent of the judges in the Supreme Court were female.<sup>17</sup> A woman was appointed as a Chair of the Supreme Economic Court. However, the number of women chairing regional, city and district courts is relatively low.

## 5. Economic transformation

**With a per capita GDP of USD 1,279 or USD 3,903 (PPP) in 2021,<sup>18</sup> Tajikistan is the poorest country in Central Asia and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).<sup>19</sup>** <sup>20</sup> Contrary to forecasts, all the Central Asian Republics recorded relatively healthy growth in 2022, averaging close to 5.5 per cent. Tajikistan's GDP increased by 8 per cent, lower than in 2021 (9.2 per cent) but slightly higher than the historical average between 2000 and 2021.<sup>21</sup> However, aggregate economic growth, driven mainly by domestic consumption fuelled by remittances,<sup>22</sup> has not led to better job opportunities and a significant increase in household income. **Low-end services, subsistence agriculture, and commodities characterize the nature of the economy.** Although the share of agriculture has declined, it remains the primary source of livelihood. Tajikistan has not seen sufficient diversification of its economy. While the proportion of people living under the national poverty line fell from 80 per cent in 2003 to 22.5 per cent in 2022,<sup>23</sup> over 20 per cent of the population is still vulnerable to multidimensional poverty and income inequality. Residents of rural areas, Khatlon province and Regions of Republican Subordination (RRS) are particularly prone to poverty. In 2021, the Human Development Index (HDI) score for Tajikistan was 0.685, a slight increase compared to 2020, and it was ranked 122 out of 191 countries.<sup>24</sup> Employment disparities are linked to sex, age, and skills.

**The economic outlook 2023 is reasonably positive, with possibly more fiscal space.** Tajikistan's fiscal situation improved in 2022 with a moderate increase in revenues and expenditure. In nominal terms, budget revenue increased by 3.8%, but the fiscal deficit widened slightly from 0.7% to 1.4% of GDP, mainly due to increased capital spending. Tax revenues increased by more than 10% (nominal terms), enabling the government to exceed its budget target for 2022.<sup>25</sup> The budget expenditure in 2022 increased by almost 15% compared to the same period a year earlier. Public spending for education (19.1%), energy (18.8%), and social protection (12.3%) increased slightly. Compared to last year, the public expenditure on health care fell. The dark cloud hanging over the economy is the war in Ukraine and the future state of the Russian economy. Besides disruptions in food and energy supply and the threat of higher inflation, a deep recession in the Russia Federation will considerably reduce employment opportunities for Tajik labour migrants. At present, it appears that there is adequate demand for migrants workers in the Russian Federation. Although the final figures are not available yet, other proxy indicators<sup>26</sup> suggest that the number of Tajik migrants who left for Russia increased significantly in 2022. Apart from a dip in the first quarter, the aggregate inflow of personal remittances to Tajikistan increased by almost 75% in 2022.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Website of the Parliament of the Republic of Tajikistan. [<https://parlament.tj/ru/kumitaho>]

<sup>17</sup> According to data from 2017.

<sup>18</sup> GDP in constant USD 2015 (2020). GDP per capita at the current USD is USD 897. The current market value of GDP in purchasing power parity (PPP) adjusts for the price of non-traded goods & services. World Bank database. [<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.KD?locations=TJ>]

<sup>19</sup> Calculations based on national poverty rate latest year in CIS, World Bank database. [<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.NAHC>]

<sup>20</sup> From 2007 to 2014, Tajikistan had the world's highest remittances to GDP ratio. For instance, in 2014, remittances were equivalent to 48 per cent of country's GDP, although this figure in 2015 was close to 19 per cent (World Bank data, 2016). In 2019 remittances amounted to over USD 2.3 billion, equivalent to 28.6 per cent of GDP. [<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.TRF.PWKR.DT.GD.ZS?locations=TJ>]

<sup>21</sup> Own calculations using latest GDP figures from countries in Central Asia, including AoS Tajikistan.

<sup>22</sup> From 2007 to 2014, Tajikistan had the world's highest remittances to GDP ratio. Remittances were equivalent to 48 per cent of country's GDP in 2014, and close to 19 per cent in 2015 (World Bank data, 2016). In 2019 remittances amounted to over USD 2.3 billion, equivalent to 28.6 per cent of GDP.

[<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.TRF.PWKR.DT.GD.ZS?locations=TJ>]

<sup>23</sup> World Bank data. [<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.NAHC?locations=TJ>]

<sup>24</sup> [https://hdr.undp.org/system/files/documents/global-report-document/hdr2021-22pdf\\_1.pdf](https://hdr.undp.org/system/files/documents/global-report-document/hdr2021-22pdf_1.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> As of December 2022

<sup>26</sup> e.g. departures, remittances, listening to Tajikistan survey

<sup>27</sup> Own calculations using NBTJ balance of payment data

This has contributed in increased household spending and domestic demand.<sup>28</sup>

As a share of the GDP, public expenditure increased from 13 per cent in 1998 to almost 22 per cent and has gradually risen to over 30 per cent.<sup>29</sup> Average tax revenue covers around 60-65 per cent of the total public expenditure, with the budget shortfall being mainly covered by grants for public investment programmes funded by International Financial Institutions (IFIs). The fiscal deficit in 2023 is expected to reach 2% of GDP, limiting borrowing to keep the total debt level manageable. Tajikistan is still at risk of debt distress; thus, any significant increase in external borrowing on commercial terms can affect debt sustainability.<sup>30</sup> More development partners are considering providing direct budget support to Tajikistan. World Bank approved USD 53 million for direct budget support to Tajikistan. The EU and the Eurasian Fund for Stabilization and Development have also made initial commitments, amounting to USD 40 million and USD 60 million, respectively, to provide direct budget financing in 2023.

**Lack of appropriate qualifications, skills, and competencies<sup>31</sup> are affecting the employability of young people.** In 2016, 1 in 3 young people (ages 15 to 24) were not employed, receiving education or enrolled in training (NEET).<sup>32</sup> The vocational education system does not meet the needs of employers, and entrepreneurs are not engaged in developing the technical and vocational education and training (TVET) system.<sup>33</sup> <sup>34</sup> Many people have opted for employment in the Russian Federation, where the demand for low-skilled workers is high. Many others who enter the labour force in Tajikistan end up in informal employment. A rapidly growing population with an increasing number of young people who enter the labour force can strain the economy, especially when not enough jobs are being created. The fact that around half a million Tajiks annually go overseas for work has eased the pressure on the labour market. Outmigration for employment is a primary coping strategy. Remittances account for nearly a third of GDP. Over the next 30 years, lower fertility rates and a declining dependency ratio<sup>35</sup> can create a demographic dividend.<sup>36</sup> Matched with quality investments in health, education, and employment, especially for women and youth, can foster rapid, more inclusive economic growth and improve Tajikistan's human development.

**A limited role of the private sector is a major constraint to inclusive growth.** While investment climate is on the agenda and changes are being initiated, business reforms are not progressing at the desired pace. A large proportion of the 315,369 registered businesses in the country<sup>37</sup> are microenterprises, individual enterprises and own-account workers. Small and medium enterprises number about 20,000. Around 1,100 state-owned enterprises (SOEs) account for a large share of production. According to estimates, SOEs produce approximately 70 per cent of the industrial output, but available evidence suggests declining profitability and unsustainable debt loads.<sup>38</sup> Private sector investment is low, amounting to only 4-5 per cent of the GDP.<sup>39</sup> Businesses are overregulated, compliance costs are high, and they are subjected to numerous inspections. The Doing Business Index ranks the country 106 out of 190 countries. Tajikistan underperforms in several dimensions of the index: Dealing with Construction Permits, Getting Electricity, Paying Taxes, Trading Across Borders, and Resolving Insolvency.<sup>40</sup> Tajikistan

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<sup>28</sup> Between 1995 and 2006, the fiscal deficit decreased from 11 per cent of the GDP to around 3 per cent. World Bank, 2008, Fiscal Policy for Growth and Development in Tajikistan. [<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/6494>]

<sup>29</sup> Calculations based on budget data, Agency of Statistics

<sup>30</sup> IMF Initial Assessment, Article IV consultations: <https://asiaplustj.info/ru/node/320340>

<sup>31</sup> 21<sup>st</sup> century *transversal* skills include communication, team work and networking, critical thinking and problem solving, initiative and resilience. See: ILO, Skill-up, dtd Nov 2019; AES, What are 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, dtd 2020.

<sup>32</sup> Labour Force Survey, 2016. While routine employment periodically updated by the Agency on Statistics do not include disaggregated figures, the Labour force survey is a household survey which captures the employment situation including unemployment, labour underutilization, and NEET.

<sup>33</sup> ILO, 2020, Assessment Report State Strategy for Labour Market Development of the Republic of Tajikistan until 2020, Working Paper, forthcoming.

<sup>34</sup> Rodrik, D., 2015, Premature Deindustrialization. [<https://www.nber.org/papers/w20935>]

<sup>35</sup> The dependency ratio is the ratio of working-age population (15-64 years old) to non-working age population. United Nations.

<sup>36</sup> This is the boost to economic growth that occurs when there are more working age people relative to dependents. UNFPA, 2020.

<sup>37</sup> Data of the Tajikistan Agency on Statistics as reported in the UNDP's Impact Assessment on lives, livelihoods, and MSMEs, 2020.

<sup>38</sup> World Bank Group, 2018, Tajikistan Country Economic Memorandum: Nurturing Tajikistan's Growth Potential. World Bank Group, May 2018, Tajikistan - Systematic Country Diagnostic.

<sup>39</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>40</sup> World Bank Group, 2020, Doing Business Index, Economy Profile Tajikistan.

[<https://www.doingbusiness.org/content/dam/doingBusiness/country/t/tajikistan/TJK.pdf>]

was placed 104 out of 141 countries in the Global Competitiveness Index.<sup>41</sup>

**Tajikistan should pursue greener industrialization.** The data on the carbon intensity of manufacturing in Tajikistan is scarce. Available data show that CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per unit of manufacturing value added (MVA) has been on an upward trend. The use of coal for energy generation and in industrial production – including the growing cement industry – has been on the rise. By 2018, Tajikistan's emissions reached 1.05 kg of CO<sub>2</sub> per unit of MVA, a much higher level than in its neighbours.<sup>42</sup> Reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions must be urgently pursued as part of an industrial strategy to reach higher degrees of sustainability. Similarly, the emission of other pollutants in the manufacturing sector should be reduced. Overall, better environmental monitoring, improved waste and water management and regulatory changes to foster green industries with a lower environmental impact are needed for green industrialization in Tajikistan.<sup>43</sup> In 2022, the Government launched the Green Economy Strategy, which provides the country with a framework to decarbonize economic development. The green transformation was also adopted as the overarching theme in the Second Voluntary National Review, the results of which Tajikistan will present at the High-Level Political Forum at the United Nations in New York in July 2023.

**Although some budget data are made available, there is limited public participation in the public budget preparation.** The Open Budget Survey ranks Tajikistan 101 out of 117 countries in terms of budget transparency.<sup>44</sup> Public expenditure for energy and social sectors is prioritized. Social spending accounts for the largest share of public expenditure, with education receiving approximately one-third of it. Around 60 per cent of the economic expenditure is allocated to the energy sector,<sup>45</sup> while agriculture and industry account for less than 10 per cent.<sup>46</sup> Low public investment in employment-sensitive sectors, such as agriculture and industry, shows that the fiscal policy is not fully aligned with inclusive growth.

**Regional integration and connectivity are critical for Tajikistan as a landlocked country.** Developing trade and transport links is crucial for income growth and economic diversification. Moreover, Tajikistan heavily depends on imports of food grains from its neighbouring countries. Benefits from greater connectivity and trade depend mainly on the extent of domestic reforms to create a suitable regulatory environment and tackle logistic and transport bottlenecks. Intra-regional trade amounts to only 5 per cent of the total trade volume of Central Asia countries.<sup>47</sup> A large share of Tajikistan's trade within the region comprises wheat imports from Kazakhstan.<sup>48</sup> The work on improving the capacity of Tajikistan to implement the World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement to implement the Special Programme for Economies of Central Asia (SPECA) Trade Facilitation Strategy and its national trade facilitation strategy, assistance for the digitalization of multimodal transport data and document exchange, exchange of information on trade procedures and trade facilitation among the customs services in the region are some of the most critical areas for improving regional integration and connectivity.

**Besides trade, environmental protection and climate change have a transboundary dimension.** Climate change in Central Asia is a significant threat that demands prompt action. The need to address competition over water resources amidst increasing water scarcity, low water efficiency and strong interdependencies calls for an integrated and coordinated approach to the energy, water and land use nexus. Moreover, domestic problems regarding managing industrial or mining facilities can lead to negative spillovers across countries, thus becoming a source of tension. Overall, resource efficiency, as measured by domestic resource consumption by a unit of output, is low, although it compares favorably with other Central Asian countries. There is scope for improvement, with multiple potential benefits,

<sup>41</sup> World Economic Forum, Global Competitiveness Report, 2019. [[www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_TheGlobalCompetitivenessReport2019.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_TheGlobalCompetitivenessReport2019.pdf)]

<sup>42</sup> In 2018 CO<sub>2</sub> per unit of MVA stood at 0.93 kg in Kyrgyzstan, 0.8 kg in Uzbekistan and 0.67 in China with no data available for Afghanistan, [<https://stat.unido.org/SDG/TJK>]

<sup>43</sup> [[https://unece.org/DAM/env/epr/epr\\_studies/ECE.CEP.180.Eng.pdf](https://unece.org/DAM/env/epr/epr_studies/ECE.CEP.180.Eng.pdf)]

<sup>44</sup> Open Budget Survey Tajikistan 2019 | International Budget Partnership.

<sup>45</sup> Major expenditure under fuel & energy sector is for building the Rogun Hydropower Plant.

<sup>46</sup> Calculations based on data from the Tajikistan Agency on Statistics, World Bank and IMF.

<sup>47</sup> International Transport Forum, 2019, 'Enhancing Connectivity and Freight in Central Asia', Policy Papers, No. 71, OECD Publishing, Paris.

<sup>48</sup> It is estimated that 29 per cent of Tajikistan's trade is intraregional. Calculations based on the Agency of Statistics Trade Data, Socioeconomic Report, December 2020. [<https://www.stat.tj/en/news/publications/the-publication-social-economic-situation-in-tajikistan-for-january-december-2020-was-released>]

including higher resilience, enhanced competitiveness and improved health outcomes.

## 6. Environment and climate change

**Due to its geology, hydrology, and topography, Tajikistan is disaster-prone and highly vulnerable to climate change.** Tajikistan has vast natural wealth, including minerals,<sup>49</sup> rivers with hydropower potential, and rich biodiversity.<sup>50</sup> Tajikistan is considered the most vulnerable country to climate change in Central Asia.<sup>51</sup> In 2019, disasters triggered the internal displacement of 4,800 people.<sup>52</sup> Climate change and natural hazards affect agriculture and can trigger technological accidents (so-called “NaTech” events). According to estimates, economic losses from weather-related disasters vary from 0.4 to 1.3 per cent of Tajikistan’s GDP per annum.

**Urgent action is needed to build resilience in agriculture, promote low-emission land use and meet the country’s adaptation and mitigation targets.** Climate change puts at risk the short and long-term economic performance of the country. Agricultural risks could lead to increased food insecurity, poor nutrition and worsening livelihood opportunities for the rural population, especially among women, young persons, and vulnerable groups, who are less likely to access information and resources.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, the government has limited resources and capacity to implement climate change adaptation and mitigation measures.

**A weak legislative and institutional capacity makes it challenging to effectively manage environmental resources,**<sup>54</sup> including land, water, flora, and fauna, and supervise business activities to protect the environment. While the NDS-2030 contains ambitious targets for environmental protection, funding is limited. Environmental programmes rely heavily on donor funding. To ensure environmental protection and build the resilience of communities and vulnerable groups, there is a need to further strengthen governance, rule of law and transparency. Efficient use of natural resources, improved infrastructure, institutional capacity, and higher budget allocation are also needed.

**Tajikistan has rich biodiversity<sup>55</sup> but faces increasing losses.** The country hosts part of the Central Pamir-Alai region supporting 4,300 species and 1,400 endemic plants, but data on threatened vascular plant species and the location of endangered plants are lacking. Existing programs and strategies to support biodiversity conservation and management of protected areas are insufficiently funded, initiatives are poorly monitored, and data is lacking and, if available, it is not shared among different institutions.<sup>56</sup>

**Tajikistan needs to balance energy security, efficiency, and management of renewable energy sources.** Tajikistan ranks eighth worldwide in terms of gross theoretical capability of hydropower resources.<sup>57</sup> Tajikistan is also rich in minerals, but the price volatility that characterizes commodities impedes strategic investments in the mining sector. Water resources are critically important for the country and the region, particularly its use in the agriculture and energy sectors. Integrated water resources management needs to be fully operationalized along with greater cooperation at the regional level. The hydro-energy of small rivers, solar energy, geothermal waters, wind energy and bioenergy are potential energy sources but require a sustainable approach to energy production.

**As water availability decreases and desertification increases, a transboundary approach to water management is essential.** Identifying and coordinating with national and international stakeholders at the nexus between climate change, water management, and sustainable use of natural resources can be complex. Partnerships and coordination are required to ensure the implementation of interdependent

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<sup>49</sup> [<https://eiti.org/tajikistan>]

<sup>50</sup> World Bank Group, May 2018, Tajikistan - Systematic Country Diagnostic.

<sup>51</sup> World Bank Group, 2013, Tajikistan: Overview of Climate Change Activities, Washington, DC. [<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/17552>]

<sup>52</sup> IDMC, 2020, Global Report on Internal Displacement. [<https://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2020/>]

<sup>53</sup> FAO, 2016, National gender assessment of agricultural and rural livelihoods. Tajikistan. Country gender assessment series. [<http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5766e.pdf>]

<sup>54</sup> [[www.eco.tj](http://www.eco.tj)]

<sup>55</sup> The territory of Tajikistan is recognized by the NGO Conservation International as a hotspot of biodiversity.

<sup>56</sup> Report of the state of environment in Tajikistan, 2018. [[http://stat.wv.tj/publications/October2019/tphifzi\\_muhiti\\_zist\\_-\\_2019\\_nav.pdf](http://stat.wv.tj/publications/October2019/tphifzi_muhiti_zist_-_2019_nav.pdf)]

<sup>57</sup> Out of the potential 527 billion kWh per year, the country’s technical exploitable and economic capabilities are estimated to be 264 billion kWh per year, out of which very modest resources have been exploited so far. WEC, 2010, Survey of Energy resources.



transboundary activities. Formal agreements on transboundary water management are not common in Central Asia. Many stakeholders are involved, from the community up to the government level. This requires an inclusive consultative process and an effective implementation of measures.

## 7. Social exclusion

**Tajikistan's Constitution guarantees equal rights and opportunities for all citizens.** However, some segments of the population experience social exclusion. The population is young (median age is 23) and is growing faster than in any other country in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Deprivations and vulnerabilities are more concentrated in rural areas, where about 74 per cent of people live. Social exclusion is generally associated with gender, age, disability, and ethnic identity. Migrants, including seasonal migrants, returnees, stateless persons, refugees and asylum-seekers, are also at risk of being left behind.<sup>58</sup> Limited disaggregated socio-economic data further compounds appropriate policy responses to address social exclusion.

**Poor households are often the most vulnerable.** Poverty, deprivation, and vulnerabilities are concentrated in remote and rural areas. Lack of quality physical infrastructure and access to services are key challenges faced by people in remote areas. Around one-third of the population in rural areas is experiencing poverty.<sup>59</sup> The poverty rate among women is higher, including cases of extreme poverty which is more common among female-headed households. Thirty-four per cent of children live in low-income households, and 16 per cent live in extreme poverty.<sup>60</sup> Living in rural areas is also one of the key determinants of labour migration. In 2019, nearly 90 per cent of Tajik labour migrants were from rural areas.<sup>61,62</sup> The poverty rate among children is higher than among adults. The share of children in low-income households was as high as 25.3 per cent in 2021, meaning that every fourth child in the country lives below the national poverty line. Sughd region has the lowest proportion of children living in low-income families (3.9 per cent), while the child poverty rates in GBAO (40.4 per cent) and Khatlon (37.1 per cent) are significantly higher than the national average.<sup>63</sup>

**The health system faces several challenges, from funding to a lack of quality data and capacities.** Population growth and increasing health needs<sup>64</sup> will require higher public investments. Despite government efforts, health spending is insufficient to achieve Universal Health Coverage (UHC). Despite improvements, efforts are needed to improve the quality and coverage of sexual and reproductive health services. Birth rates for adolescents are high. Too many women and newborns die from childbirth complications. Young people have various health concerns: mental health, depression, obesity, violence, stigma and discrimination, suicide, and unwanted pregnancies. Medical care and psychological support to children, adolescents and youth can only meet a third of the national demand.<sup>65</sup> Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) are increasing. There are also significant gaps in access to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services, especially in rural areas.<sup>66</sup>

**HIV infections are increasing.** The number of people living with HIV in Tajikistan is 12,876,<sup>67</sup> of which about a third are women. There are gaps in the quality of HIV testing and counselling services, particularly in rural areas. Stigma and gender discrimination contribute to the spread of HIV and hinder access to adequate testing and treatment services.<sup>68</sup> HIV-related stigma worsens pre-existing social inequities

<sup>58</sup> Tajikistan hosts the largest number of refugees and asylum seekers in Central Asia, primarily from Afghanistan, and over 48,000 stateless persons, the majority of whom are women and girls.

<sup>59</sup> 30.2 per cent in rural areas, 18.4 per cent in urban areas. World Bank Group, 2020, Poverty in Tajikistan 2020 infographic. [<https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/infographic/2020/10/15/poverty-in-tajikistan-2020>]

<sup>60</sup> Tajikistan Agency on Statistics, 2018, Child poverty report.

<sup>61</sup> Asian Development Bank, 2020, Migration in Tajikistan.

<sup>62</sup> Ministry of Labour, August 2020, Migration and Employment of Population.

<sup>63</sup> Date from the Agency of Statistics

<sup>64</sup> According to UNFPA projections, the population at high health risk, 0-5 aged people and childbearing women aged 15-49, will increase by 19% and 58% in 2030 and 2050, respectively. UNFPA, 2020, Population Situation Analysis Report for Tajikistan.

<sup>65</sup> UNICEF Tajikistan, 2018, Rapid Assessment of the system response to adolescents' mental health, including prevention of suicidal behavior, in the Republic of Tajikistan, Key Results; Strategic Research Centre under the President of Tajikistan, UNICEF, 2019, Report on findings of the Adolescent Baseline Study.

<sup>66</sup> According to the 2017 World Bank report, access to improved water on premises is 87 per cent in urban areas, and only 36 per cent in rural areas.

<sup>67</sup> State AIDS Centre. [<http://www.nc-aids.tj/statistika.html#sdfootnote3anc>]

<sup>68</sup> SPIN-Plus, 2015, The People Living with HIV Stigma Index, Analytical report, Dushanbe.

based on race, class, gender, and sexual orientation. Women and girls often have less information about HIV and fewer resources to take preventive measures.

**A large proportion of the population is at risk of becoming food insecure.** According to the latest food security assessment, 25 per cent of households in Tajikistan were classified as food insecure, with one per cent found to be severely food insecure.<sup>69</sup> While the proportion of severely food insecure households has been relatively stable since August 2021, the share of moderately food insecure households increased by seven percentage points compared to September 2022. In terms of households adopting livelihood-eroding coping strategies to access food, there was a decrease of 7 per cent in the proportion of households. The approach adopted included reducing the cost of healthcare and education and spending savings to buy food. Households' access to food can be negatively affected due to economic vulnerability arising from job losses, reduced remittance, and sickness of working household members. Furthermore, 25 per cent of the households reported a decline in their income compared to the previous year. More than half of these households primarily depended on unstable income sources, including daily wages and remittances. In contrast, most households reporting an income increase had regular income through salaried employment. A regional comparison shows that in all the regions, between 54-64 per cent of the households were marginally food secure. Around a third of the households in the DRS and Khatlon regions were moderately food insecure.

**Malnutrition is a significant health problem, more prevalent in remote areas.** Although the malnutrition rate has decreased in the last decade, the number of undernourished has remained stagnant.<sup>70</sup> Tajikistan has the highest rate of malnutrition among the former Soviet Republics.<sup>71</sup> Access to nutritious food and feeding practices are the leading causes of malnutrition. About 1 in 3 children are exclusively breastfed.<sup>72</sup> Micronutrient deficiencies affect the lives of many infants with high rates of anaemia and iodine deficiency.<sup>73</sup> According to a survey, only 9 per cent of children between 6-23 months of age are given a minimum adequate diet and 58 per cent of children do not consume any vegetables or fruits.<sup>74</sup>

**Despite increased budget allocations and services, equal access to education is a concern.** This is especially the case in rural areas for girls and children with disabilities, refugees, and undocumented children. A third of children with disabilities are in residential care institutions.<sup>75</sup> Although measures are being taken, girls do not enjoy equal access to education compared to boys, especially in upper secondary education.<sup>76</sup> The projected increase in primary and secondary school students will further stretch resources. There is limited capacity and preparedness to deliver digital learning<sup>77</sup> and to provide 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills for young people to improve their employability and active participation in society.<sup>78</sup>

**Compared to men, women face barriers to political participation and access to economic resources, including land, finance, and assets.** In 2020, Tajikistan ranked 137 out of 153 countries in the Global Gender Gap Index (0.626), a fall of 14 places compared to the 2018 ranking.<sup>79</sup> In 2019, less than 29 per cent of working-age women were in the labour force, compared to over 50 per cent of men.<sup>80</sup> Since 2000, the gender pay gap has narrowed, but, on average, women still only receive about 64 per cent of the monthly wage for men. Traditional social norms disempower women and limit their contributions to the

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<sup>69</sup> World Food Programme: Food Security Monitoring Report, December 2022.

<sup>70</sup> According to the 2017 Demographic and Health Survey, stunting among children under 5 years of age fell from 27 per cent in 2012 to 17 per cent in 2017. With an annual population growth rate of 2.5 per cent, however, the current decline rate is insufficient to meet the 2025 target of a 40 per cent reduction in the number of stunted children under five years of age.

<sup>71</sup> Global Hunger Index. [<https://www.globalhungerindex.org/tajikistan.html>]

<sup>72</sup> UNICEF, Drexel University & Ministry of Health and Social Protection of the Republic of Tajikistan, 2016, Formative Research on Infant and Young Child Feeding and Maternal Nutrition in Tajikistan, Dushanbe: Polygraph. [<https://www.unicef.org/tajikistan/resources.html>] (Accessed: 10/10/20).

<sup>73</sup> Anemia: 28 per cent; iodine deficiency: 55 per cent. UNICEF & MoHSPP, 2016.

<sup>74</sup> UNICEF, 2019, The State of the World's Children.

<sup>75</sup> MoES, 2020, EMIS.

<sup>76</sup> Republic of Tajikistan, 2020, Draft National Strategy for Education Development, 2021-2030.

<sup>77</sup> Internet coverage is low: 48 per cent of urban and 32 per cent of rural adolescents have access to internet. Rates are lower for girls. UNICEF and EU, May 2020, Rapid Education Needs Assessment.

<sup>78</sup> 21<sup>st</sup> century transversal skills and deep skills. EC, 2019, Skills for Industry Strategy 2030; AES, 2020, What are 21st century skills.

<sup>79</sup> World Economic Forum, 2020, Global Gender Gap Report 2020, p. 329. [[http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GGGR\\_2020.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2020.pdf)]

<sup>80</sup> ILO Modelled Estimate for 2019. [<https://ilostat.ilo.org/topics/population-and-labour-force/>]

economy. Family preference to invest in boys' education, early marriages, and limited/lack of decision-making authority in the family (especially among young women) provide women with few options to pursue their professional careers.

**Gender inequality is pervasive and systemic and fuels violence against women and girls.** In 2017, 24% of women aged between 19 and 49 experienced physical or sexual violence. In 97 per cent of these cases, the current or former husband was responsible for such acts. Around 80 per cent of married women reported that their husbands exhibited at least one form of marital control.<sup>81</sup> Tajikistan has not yet criminalized all forms of violence against women in line with 2013 CEDAW recommendations.<sup>82</sup> Lack of investment, weak capacities combined with a culture of deference, low awareness of legal rights, and gender-based stereotypes are key barriers to achieving gender equality in the country.

**A social protection system exists, but it is fragmented and underfunded.** Around 12.6 per cent of the public expenditure in 2022 accounted for social transfers. Moreover, the public health expenditure amounted to 7.6 per cent of the budget.<sup>83</sup> A significant proportion of social transfers include pensions. Older people, people with disabilities, including children, and victims of domestic violence and trafficking were the primary recipients. Only 46 per cent of the poorest 20 per cent of the population receive social protection and labour (SPL) programme benefits.<sup>84</sup> There is limited or no data about other vulnerable groups, including children left behind by migrant parents, stateless children, or victims of labour exploitation. Tajikistan's social protection system is characterized by low capacity and limited financial resources. In addition to limited financing, there is no standard and unified approach for determining the eligibility criteria of the population, especially those who receive cash transfers. Identification and registration procedures are complex and cumbersome, and there is no consolidated database of beneficiaries and limited data-sharing among responsible institutions. Another bottleneck is the lack of a qualified social protection workforce.<sup>85</sup>

## 8. Compliance with international human rights, norms and standards

**Human rights situation in the country has not improved.** Gender inequality, child labour, limited freedoms of association, expression, peaceful assembly, statelessness and limitations to the right to seek asylum are some of the pressing concerns.<sup>86</sup> Conditions in prisons require urgent attention. In 2016, the Law on Ombudsperson was amended to bring the institution closer to the Paris Principles. Still, full compliance with fundamental standards related to its independence has yet to be achieved.<sup>87</sup>

In November 2021, Tajikistan was reviewed under the third cycle of Universal Periodic Review (UPR). Tajikistan received 234 recommendations from 80 Member States, and out of those, Tajikistan accepted 169. The UPR national action plan, drafted with the support of the civil society and OHCHR in December 2022, was adopted on 1 April 2023. As of 1 February 2023, Tajikistan has ratified seven core human rights treaties out of 9 and 4 optional protocols out of 9. The remaining treaties to be ratified include the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances. In 2022, Tajikistan submitted its national reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, Committee against Torture and Committee on Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Tajikistan accepted all the recommendations related to gender equality and women's empowerment provided under the 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle of UPR. However, national gender equality policies are not aligned with the recommendations contained in the UPR.

In addition, Tajikistan has been reviewed by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights as

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<sup>81</sup> Demographic and Health Survey, 2017, p. 208. [<https://dhsprogram.com/publications/publication-fr341-dhs-final-reports.cfm>]

<sup>82</sup> [[https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Sharedper cent20Documents/TJK/INT\\_CEDAW\\_CSS\\_TJK\\_32597\\_E.pdf](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Sharedper cent20Documents/TJK/INT_CEDAW_CSS_TJK_32597_E.pdf)]

<sup>83</sup> AoS: Socioeconomic Report January 2023.

<sup>84</sup> These include: social insurance, social safety nets, and unemployment benefits and active labor market programs. World Bank, November 2020, ASPIRE.

<sup>85</sup> There is only one University that trains social workers at bachelor and master's level. Initial and para-professional vocational education is non-existing.

<sup>86</sup> [[https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolNo=CCPR/C/TJK/CO/3&Lang=En](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolNo=CCPR/C/TJK/CO/3&Lang=En)]

<sup>87</sup> Human Rights Committee, 2019, Concluding Observations on the third periodic report of Tajikistan, para 9.

[[https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolNo=CCPRpercent2fCpercent2fTJKpercent2fCOpercent2f3&Lang=en](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolNo=CCPRpercent2fCpercent2fTJKpercent2fCOpercent2f3&Lang=en)]

well Committee on Migrant Workers. Although Tajikistan has not issued a standing invitation for the visits of Special Procedures, overall, ten mandate holders visited the country since 2004. In early December 2022, Ms Mary Lawlor, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, visited the country and observed that trials of human rights defenders were frequently held in places of detention, were de facto closed to the public without a formal decision by the court, and in general they did not meet the international fair trial standards. In April 2023, Ms Nazila Ghanea, the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, visited the country and issued her preliminary observations and recommendations.

The Ombudsman Office needs to fully comply with the Paris Principles, which set standards for national human rights institutions. The Office did make much progress during the last decade in implementing the recommendations of the Subcommittee of the International Coordinating Committee on Accreditation.

Torture and ill-treatment in places of detention remain a matter of concern. Tajik prisons are generally overcrowded and ill-equipped. Authorities continue to restrict the freedom of peaceful assembly. The only known protests in the country in 2022 took place in GBAO in May. There has been no progress in 2022 with easing restrictions on freedom of religion and belief.

On a positive note, Tajikistan adopted the law “On Equality and Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination”, which came into force on 22 July 2022. Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsperson) has been designated as an institution in charge of implementing the law. Adopting the Law is a welcome step and it is expected to promote equality and benefit the most vulnerable segments of Tajikistan’s society.

**Tajikistan has ratified only 50 out of 190 ILO labour conventions.**<sup>88</sup> Moreover, implementation is difficult to assess as Tajikistan must regularly report to the ILO Supervisory Bodies. These bodies have raised several concerns, notably regarding gender equality, the prevalence of child labour and serious restrictions on the labour inspection system.<sup>89</sup>

**Legal framework for refugees and asylum seekers is closer to international standards, but major gaps remain.** Asylum seekers and refugees do not have access to free legal assistance and protection other than provided by legal partners of UNHCR.<sup>90</sup> Reform of the system is impeded by the removal of UNHCR observer status on the RSD Commission in 2018. Persons arriving in Tajikistan to seek asylum must possess valid passports and enter the country with a Tajik visa. Not meeting these conditions results in exclusion from asylum procedures, subsequent penalization, and possible deportation.

**Tajikistan has not ratified the 1954 Convention on the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.** Despite this, the country progressed well in harmonizing its legislation with international standards, and authorities report about 840 *de jure* stateless persons in Tajikistan. In January 2018, the Government adopted the “Law on the Legal Status of Foreign Citizens and Stateless Persons”. However, this law considers a stateless person who enters Tajikistan as ‘stateless’ and does not provide a status determination procedure.

**Juvenile delinquency is increasing.** Over the last ten years, it increased from 589 offences in 2009 to 907 in 2018.<sup>91</sup> Most crimes are theft. Tajikistan has taken steps to reform the juvenile justice system. In 2015, Government policy and practice shifted from juvenile justice to justice for children, recognising children as alleged offenders, victims and witnesses of crime. New codes helped to bring the system in line with international standards, for example, by including conditional sentences and educative measures and

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<sup>88</sup> This includes all eight fundamental human rights conventions of the ILO. In January 2020, the country ratified the Protocol of 2014 to the ILO Forced Labour Convention.

<sup>89</sup> The Labour Code reform in 2016 presents serious concerns to the compliance with the provision of the ILO Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 (No. 81). Comments adopted by the CEACR: Tajikistan. C081 - Observation (CEACR) - adopted 2019, published 109th ILC session (2021). [[https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:13203:0::NO::P13203\\_COUNTRY\\_ID:103547](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:13203:0::NO::P13203_COUNTRY_ID:103547)]

<sup>90</sup> Law No. 1182 of 2015 does not provide for free assistance to asylum seekers and refugees.

<sup>91</sup> Tajikistan Ministry of Interior.

prohibiting solitary confinement. In 2017 a national program on justice for children was approved. The program is based on internationally recognized principles and standards. Data about the status of the juvenile justice system is available but not fully disaggregated.

**Despite various measures to create equal opportunities for people living with disabilities, there are still many unresolved issues.** By signing the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) by the President on March 22, 2018, Tajikistan demonstrated its commitment to paying utmost attention to the rights of this vulnerable group of population. According to official statistics, there were 149,704 registered people as persons living with disabilities, including 29,517 children.<sup>92</sup> Unfortunately, these statistics only include registered individuals, and probably more are not registered or not aware of such a registry. The situational analysis “State of Rehabilitation in Tajikistan”<sup>93</sup> estimated that only 12 per cent of all registered children with disabilities attended state schools. Children with disability living in remote areas often face barriers. Women and girls with disabilities living in rural areas usually face numerous obstacles in accessing legal support. Most service providers are located in urban areas, and some specialized services are provided only in the provinces.

## 9. Development, humanitarian, and peace linkages

**Tajikistan is one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change in Europe and Central Asia.** Around 93% of the territory of Tajikistan is mountainous. The population is more than 9.6 million, and there is only 0.06 ha of irrigated land per inhabitant. Over the past decades, the number of disasters in the country has increased significantly. Disasters have caused enormous socio-economic and environmental damage, which in turn hinders the sustainable development of the country. There has been an increase in the melting of glaciers, average annual temperatures, a change in precipitation, and more frequent periods with extreme weather conditions (such as hail, snowfall, and drought). Relative to global standards of disaster risk, Tajikistan is at a “medium” level of disaster risk in terms of exposure to natural and human hazards.<sup>94</sup> While the country’s disaster risk has decreased from “high” to “medium”, the country is still prone to numerous environmental hazards, such as floods, earthquakes, mudflows, landslides, epidemics, droughts, avalanches, and insect infestations.

**Many households below or close to the poverty line are affected by external shocks.** Although the poverty rate has been falling and the country has experienced a relatively high growth rate in the last decade, household income remains low. Many families rely on personal remittances equivalent to over 33 per cent of the GDP. Since 2005, Tajikistan ranks as one of the top countries in remittances as a share of GDP. Personal remittances are a vital source of income for rural households. Any decline in remittances can negatively impact poverty and vulnerability in Tajikistan. More than 80 per cent of households receiving remittances reported spending them mainly on food and other necessities.<sup>95</sup> On average, Tajik households spend 50-60 per cent of their income on food.<sup>96</sup> Food prices are also a good indicator of the fragility in Tajikistan. Any abnormal increase in global food prices directly affects consumption behaviour and increases food insecurity in the country.

**Afghanistan's political and security situation remains uncertain, with an increased risk of terrorism that can spill into Tajikistan.** Tajikistan and Afghanistan have deep cultural, ethnic, and linguistic ties, and before the takeover by the Taliban, the two countries enjoyed good neighbourly relations. Both countries have tried to build on cultural and social ties to promote cooperation in other spheres, such as education

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<sup>92</sup> Ministry of Health and Social Protection of the Population. Statistics published in 2016 by the Agency on Statistics under the President of Tajikistan: [http://oldstat.www.tj/ru/img/958885d5dec55ce6eba4ebdeac71c911\\_1470381040.pdf](http://oldstat.www.tj/ru/img/958885d5dec55ce6eba4ebdeac71c911_1470381040.pdf)

<sup>93</sup> WHO, Ministry of Health and Social Protection of the population of Tajikistan. Situational analysis “State of rehabilitation in Tajikistan”, 2015, 88 pages. [https://www.euro.who.int/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0009/276480/State-Rehabilitation-Tajikistan-Report-en.pdf](https://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/276480/State-Rehabilitation-Tajikistan-Report-en.pdf)

<sup>94</sup> European Commission, Inter-Agency Standing Committee Reference Group on Risk, Early Warning and Preparedness, Index For Risk Management (INFORM), Country Profile – Tajikistan. [<https://drmkc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/inform-index/INFORM-Risk/Country-Risk-Profile>]

<sup>95</sup> World Bank, Factsheet - Economic and Social Impacts of COVID-19. [<https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/factsheet/2020/07/13/economic-and-social-impacts-of-COVID-19-update-from-listening-to-tajikistan>]

<sup>96</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/tajikistan/fill-nutrient-gap-tajikistan-summary-report-july-2018>

and the economy. As the United States and other allied troops completed their withdrawal from the country, the Taliban seized power. In response to Afghanistan's rising security threat to Central Asia, including terrorism and organised crime, several large military drills were organized in the Tajik, Kyrgyz and Uzbek border areas, including the Russian military units. Intelligence cooperation and coordination have increased among the Central Asian countries. The Tajik authorities also hosted several meetings and consultations in Dushanbe in various formats, including the Common Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) defence ministers' summit and Shanghai Cooperation Organization's (SC) Ministerial Contact Group meeting. Further deterioration of security in Afghanistan can also endanger the aims of the June 2021 Tashkent Declaration to develop joint projects for economic and cultural development that rely on Afghanistan as the "regional bridge. Uncertainty in Afghanistan limits the implementation of large investment projects to improve connectivity and energy security in the region. These include the Central Asia-South Asia power project (CASA-1000), a USD 1.17 billion power transmission and trade Project. CASA-1000 aims to connect the power systems of four contiguous countries in Central and South Asia: the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. Once completed, CASA-1000 would enable the Central Asian countries to transmit and sell 1,300 MW of electricity to Pakistan to meet its rising electricity demands.<sup>97</sup>

**Border dispute with Kyrgyzstan in the Fergana Valley can spiral into further hostilities.** Due to large swathes of un-demarcated borderlands and increasing mistrust between the two nations, Tajikistan's long-standing border dispute with Kyrgyzstan has become more acute with recurring deadlier clashes. The ethnically diverse and heavily populated border region is highly fertile and geographically distanced from the capitals. On 15 and 16 September 2022, the worst violence in decades broke out at a disputed section of the border between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. A heavy military conflict that broke out led to over 110 casualties on both sides, increasing enmity and polarization over border issues. Previously, in April 2021, more than 50 Tajik and Kyrgyz citizens were killed and over 200 were injured. Houses, schools, strategic infrastructure, hospitals, mosques, and shops were destroyed along the border while tens of thousands of people were displaced. These two major clashes significantly diminished goodwill and trust between the two countries to resolve the border conflict and increased fear and enmity between the two borderland communities. During early 2022, minor border incidents leading to fatalities and skirmishes were occurring. In the last quarter of 2022, the two countries intensified bilateral negotiations, and a more positive narrative has started to emerge. Around 625 out of the 985 kilometres of the border between Tajikistan and the Kyrgyz Republic has been demarcated so far.<sup>98</sup> The Russian Federation and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) have offered help to resolve differences over maps and support confidence-building measures.

## 10. Financial landscape

**Achievement of the SDGs and NDS-2020 targets will depend on leveraging diversified sources of financing.** Tajikistan is not mobilizing sufficient financing for sustainable development. A financing roadmap aligned with the national priorities and sector strategies is needed. Moreover, a multi-stakeholder dialogue platform can help the country increase private investments and explore innovative financing for the SDGs. Regarding public spending, education, energy, social insurance and protection are considered priorities. Challenges in the area of public expenditure include transparency, efficiency, and equity. Public financing relies highly on foreign aid and concessional loans. Among others, the effective implementation of the Public Finance Management Strategy 2030, introducing programme budgeting, fiscal decentralization, and control and accountability of public expenditures is critical.

**Tajikistan is at a high risk of "debt distress".<sup>99</sup>** Tajikistan continues to receive concessional grants and budget support, but owing to its external situation, such as the net trade deficit, it is considered at a high risk of debt distress. The country attracts different forms of financing from multilateral and bilateral

<sup>97</sup> <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/speech/2016/05/10/central-asia-south-asia-electricity-transmission-and-trade-project-casa-1000>

<sup>98</sup> <http://president.tj/node/29968>

<sup>99</sup> [<http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/209181595281237113/pdf/Tajikistan-Joint-World-Bank-IMF-Debt-Sustainability-Analysis.pdf>]

donors, such as grants and concessional credit.<sup>100</sup> Full implementation of the NDS-2030 will require a significant increase in financing but also maintaining a balance between development investments and managing sustainable levels of public debt.<sup>101</sup>

### **A weak policy, regulatory, and tax environment limit the role of the private sector role in the economy.**

The private sector accounts for about 60 per cent of the GDP. Domestic private sector investment has been declining and is low compared with similar countries. FDI is also low, with net inflow estimated at around 3.8% of GDP in 2021.<sup>102</sup> The investment inflow is negatively affected by the poor business environment and lack of regulatory and legal protections for investors. Although the equivalent size compared to GDP is high, personal remittances mainly support consumption. Despite efforts to increase the country's Doing Business ranking, an unfavourable business environment negatively affects long-term domestic and foreign investment.<sup>103</sup> Innovative financing schemes involving the private sector and IFIs can be leveraged to increase the resource base. Public and private partnerships, social impact investments, thematic bonds, and blended finance are some of the schemes that Tajikistan can tap into for additional financing. Furthermore, through an improved regulatory environment and incentives, remittances and diaspora savings can be mobilized for long-term investments.

## **11. Conclusion**

The national development vision calls for a *steadily growing, competitive country that provides decent living standards and equal opportunities for each person to realize his or her potential based on equality, justice and respect for human dignity*.<sup>104</sup> Over the last two decades, Tajikistan has made tangible progress across several socio-economic indicators.<sup>105</sup> While poverty rates have fallen, Tajikistan remains the poorest country in Central Asia.<sup>106</sup> A child born today is expected to be only half as productive as he or she could be with good health and education,<sup>107</sup> and 1 in 4 people is vulnerable to multi-dimensional poverty.<sup>108</sup> Below are four key pillars that provide a framework for future cooperation between the Government and people of Tajikistan and the United Nations System.

### **Well-being: Invest in people and protect them from harm**

Providing quality, affordable and accessible services in education, health, social protection, water supply, and sanitation is central to achieving the NDS-2030 goals and the SDGs. As the Voluntary National Report (VNR, 2017) notes, *'empowering women economically, politically and socially'* is essential for more inclusive development in Tajikistan.<sup>109</sup> More effective social services and spending will better protect vulnerable groups, reduce pressures for seasonal migration, and help to counteract polarization. Moreover, a healthy, productive population can better support the shift to a more diversified, digital, knowledge-based competitive, resilient, and sustainable economy.

### **Sustainable, inclusive economic growth: Unleash private sector capabilities for job creation, develop skills, and invest in greening the economy**

The quality of growth since 2000 has not reduced income disparities, nor has it done enough to create an adequate number of decent jobs, significantly raise household incomes, and increased investments in human capital. Economic growth has been driven by domestic consumption and remittances and less by private investment. Informality remains a concern. Future policies should invest in digital infrastructure and skills, high technology adoption, environmental sustainability, and effective climate change

<sup>100</sup> Claussen, J., Sultanov, F., 2018, Financial Analysis to support the SDGs implementation in Tajikistan, p. 15. [[https://untj.org/?page\\_id=9821](https://untj.org/?page_id=9821)]

<sup>101</sup> World Bank Group, May 2018, Tajikistan - Systematic Country Diagnostic.

<sup>102</sup> Own calculation based on preliminary data on FDI and GDP 2021

<sup>103</sup> The Doing Business Index ranked the country 106 out of a total of 190 countries (2020), gaining twenty positions from 2018. World Bank Group, 2020, Doing Business Index, Economy Profile Tajikistan. [<https://www.doingbusiness.org/content/dam/doingBusiness/country/t/tajikistan/TJK.pdf>]

<sup>104</sup> Government of Tajikistan, 2016, National development strategy of the republic of Tajikistan for the period up to 2030, p. 8.

<sup>105</sup> Sachs, J. et al., 2020, The Sustainable Development Goals and COVID-19, Sustainable Development Report 2020.

<sup>106</sup> World Bank, 2020, Poverty headcount ratio at national poverty lines (% of population); Poverty headcount ratio at \$1.90 a day (2011 PPP) (% of population). The number of people living in extreme poverty, or on less than \$1.90 per day, is unchanged for the past 15 years.

<sup>107</sup> World Bank, 2019, Early Childhood Education and Care: A Focused Review of Preschool Education in Tajikistan.

<sup>108</sup> Government of Tajikistan, 2017, Voluntary National Review, p. 9.

<sup>109</sup> Government of Tajikistan, 2017, Voluntary National Review, p. 24.

adaptation and mitigation. Weaknesses in manufacturing growth must be countered through greater private sector investment, improved economic governance, a transparent regulatory environment, and incentives for small enterprises. These should promote greater economic participation of women and other vulnerable groups. Agriculture is still the primary source of livelihood. Inclusive and climate-smart agriculture can enhance smallholder productivity, increase farm incomes, and generate decent employment.

**Natural resource base: *Strive for an integrated response to environmental and climate fragilities***

Sustainable economic growth, health, and wellness of the population are at risk from the degradation of water, air, forests, agricultural land, and biodiversity loss. Tajikistan is disaster-prone, and climate change is expected to increase the magnitude and frequency of climate-related hazards. Sustainable management of the country's natural resources *will depend upon* policy and regulatory change and capacity development for climate change adaptation and mitigation, more efficient use of natural resources, especially water, effective disaster risk management and increased community readiness to respond to disasters and emergencies.

**Governance and the rule of law: *Increase effectiveness and accountability of public institutions, open civic space, and promote trust***

Awareness about rights and due process amongst the population is low. More coherent and transparent governance institutions that are accountable and free from corruption are needed. Embedding equality and non-discrimination in the legislative framework and ensuring freedoms of association and participation are central to enhancing the fairness and legitimacy of laws and building trust and social cohesion. Major bottlenecks include gender-based discrimination and exclusion at many levels. Lastly, reliable, timely, and disaggregated statistics are essential for strengthening governance and effective policymaking and programmes.