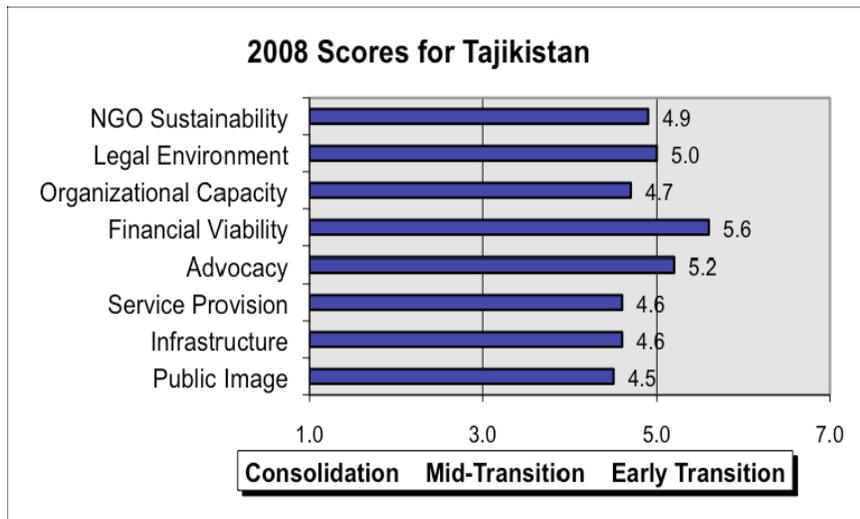


TAJIKISTAN



Capital: Dushanbe

Polity:
Republic

Population:
7,349,145 (July 2009 est.)

GDP per capita (PPP):
\$1,800 (2008 est.)

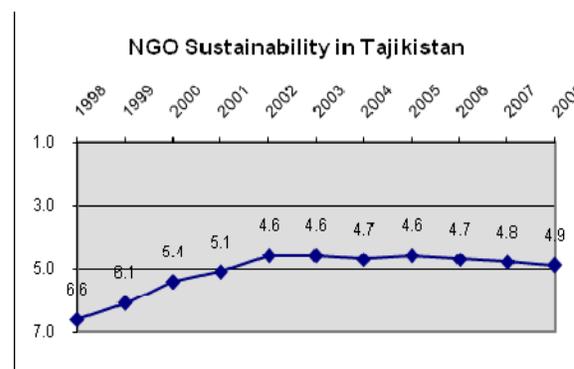
NGO SUSTAINABILITY: 4.9

Overall NGO sustainability declined modestly over the past year. Despite significant changes to the NGO legal environment in 2007, many NGOs in 2008 experienced bureaucratic impediments and a lack of clarity about their status. Some NGOs were unwilling to re-register as required by the Law on Public Associations, partly because of the lack of incentives to compete for scarce donor funding, the inability to retain professional staff, and a deteriorating public image. Nonprofit lawyers worked hard to help unregistered NGOs clarify their status. Overall, the number of NGOs decreased from 3,130 in 2007 to 1,040 by January 2008. By the end of 2008, the number of officially re-registered NGOs was about 1,700.

Individual NGOs' attempts to forge new partnerships had little impact across the sector. The growing distrust and increased competition among NGOs prevented them from consolidating their efforts or networking. The new Law on State Social Orders may facilitate

future NGO partnerships with government agencies. Organizations continue to be financially unstable.

The first Tajikistan National NGO Forum and the adoption of two very important documents, the Tajikistan National NGO Development Program and the NGO Code of Conduct, were significant steps in the political and social life of the country as well as major achievements for NGOs. The forum also created an environment of trust between the government and NGOs.

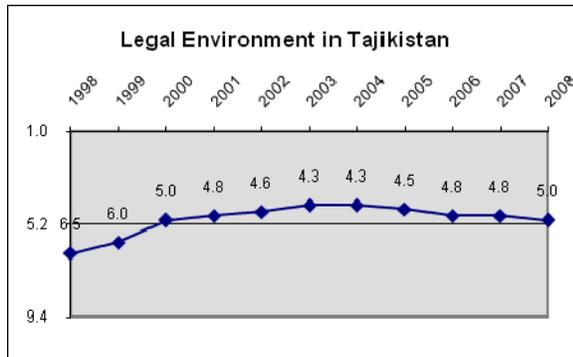


LEGAL ENVIRONMENT: 5.0

The Law on Public Associations adopted in 2007 required all local and international NGOs to re-register by the end of the year. On March 3, 2008, the Ministry of Justice issued a

resolution cancelling the registration certificates of NGOs that did not re-register before March 2008 even though they were still registered with other government agencies, such as statistics and

tax authorities. The re-registration procedures required the submission of numerous documents. Registration officials often complicated the bureaucratic process by scrutinizing every document.



At the beginning of March 2009, of the 3,130 previously registered NGOs, 66 percent were without certification, while 1,040 NGOs had managed to re-register. Within seven months, 1,700 NGOs had officially re-registered. No data was available on the number of NGOs that registered with regional departments of justice. An overall decrease in the number of registered NGOs was expected, as many previously registered NGOs existed only on paper or were established to raise funds from donors. Now that donor funds are declining, many of these NGOs have become inactive.

Despite improvements to the Law on Public Associations, NGOs fear that the law has the potential to restrict their activities. The law gives authorities undue powers of intervention. For example, it permits them to sit in on the meetings of registered groups. Furthermore, the registration process allows authorities to demand arbitrarily inordinate amounts of information. For example, one NGO was required to provide all of its project reports from the past seven years. Another negative aspect is that the new law requires the branch offices of national organizations to register with their respective regional departments or local governments. The additional time, money, and effort involved with obtaining local registration could discourage NGOs from establishing branch offices.

Administrative obstacles to registration are present at the local level as well. Regional and local governments still have an attitude of distrust toward NGOs. It takes time for local NGOs to earn the trust of new local government officials. The changes of mayors and administrative staff in Khatlon region often contribute to harassment of NGOs in cities and rural areas, as new staff are not aware of NGO activities and had a negative attitude toward NGOs. The situation in Kuhistoni Badakhshan is not as difficult for NGOs, while no data was available on the Sughd and RRS regions.

There is a shortage of attorneys who specialize in civil society issues, especially in the regions. The number of local and national centers providing legal consultations to various target groups increased to one hundred, and almost ten organizations are involved in noncommercial consultations. The increase does not ensure quality, however, as the number of lawyers experienced in noncommercial legislation is limited.

The law exempts NGOs from paying VAT, as well as taxes, on their grants. NGOs are required to pay social security tax, income tax, and other taxes. The law allows NGOs to engage in economic activities, but to date has failed to provide mechanisms that facilitate contracting between the government and NGOs for social services.

In 2008, two laws facilitating the development of civil society in Tajikistan were adopted. The Law on Public Initiative Bodies adopted on January 5, 2008 enables the growth of community-based organizations in Tajikistan. The Law on State Social Orders adopted on December 31, 2008 provides a legal basis for governmental institutions to outsource social service contracts to local nonprofit and for-profit organizations.

The legal framework provides incentives and mechanisms to promote philanthropy.

Corporations may take a tax deduction of up to 5 percent of their incomes for donations to NGOs.

The number of businesses that make donations has slightly increased.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY: 4.7

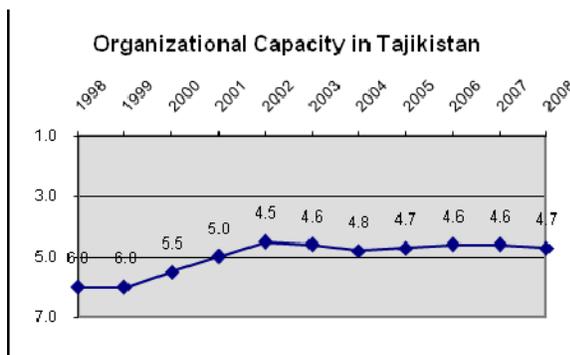
Constituency building is still a challenge for local NGOs in Tajikistan. Due to economic hardships including a decline in remittances from Tajik migrants working in Russia, NGO attempts to get individual citizens or citizen groups involved in their activities have not been successful. Many unregistered groups at the neighborhood or community level, so-called nongovernmental initiatives (NGIs), and village organizations (VOs), which are primarily in Badakhshon Oblast, were established in rural areas due to the direct intervention of international donor organizations at the local level. Some of these initiatives duplicate the roles of local NGOs, while others cover new areas, like *dehqan* farms (formed when groups of farmers jointly lease land for the purpose of cultivation). These NGIs address local needs and the interests of citizens' groups through implementation of small community-based projects, such as construction of sports fields or rehabilitation of water pipelines.

A few NGOs have strategic plans, although they are not analyzed or updated on a regular basis. Many organizations fail to understand the importance of strategic planning. Only a few NGOs produce annual reports, as they are not required to do so and have little understanding of an annual report's purpose or benefits.

The majority of local NGOs has clearly defined missions, management structures, and responsibilities of boards of directors and staff, but often minimizes the roles of boards of directors. NGOs are transparent to some extent, but choose not to disclose fully their staffing and budget information to local officials in order to avoid administrative impediments and state harassment.

Most organizations have small permanent staffs and hire employees only when funding is available for specific tasks. Over the past year, many leading NGOs failed to attract volunteers, as the third sector no longer has a reputation as a prestigious workplace. Many NGOs do not keep records of their personnel.

Numerous organizations have very basic office equipment and communications technology. Generally, donor support does not provide resources for replacing older equipment. Access to the Internet remains an obstacle to information sharing, though it has improved over the past year. In many regions, use of equipment and the Internet is hampered by an irregular energy supply. NGOs have little or no access to software or funding to maintain their equipment and supplies.

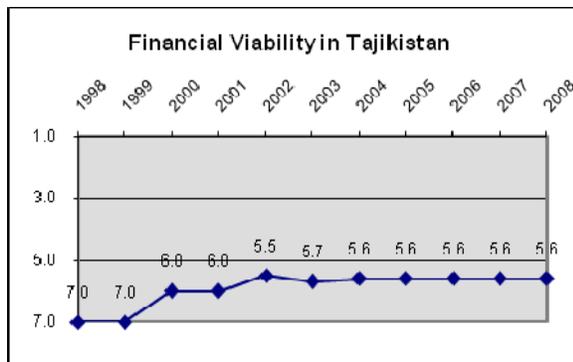


FINANCIAL VIABILITY: 5.6

While the decrease in foreign funding continued to limit the availability of grants, most leading organizations are actively searching for alternative sources of funding. Some organizations are paying close attention to

expanding and developing membership, local philanthropy, and fee-for-service activities, including leasing office space and equipment and providing training and capacity building services. Local philanthropy seems to be weak,

however, and other economic opportunities for NGOs are limited. Fundraising has increased as a result of training and consulting, but NGOs continue to be financially unstable.



The law does not restrict the ability of NGOs to engage in income-generating activities, but does not provide tax benefits for endowment incomes. Some organizations fear that, given the current environment, they could be easily targeted by tax authorities should they engage in economic activities. No clear mechanisms exist that enable the state to support NGOs financially.

The relationship between the NGO and business sectors is still undeveloped, and business support for NGOs occurs only at the grassroots level.

ADVOCACY: 5.2

NGOs often have productive relationships with local authorities, but frequent changes in local government leaders have set back relations. Not all NGOs possess a sufficient degree of professionalism to maintain a full-fledged dialogue with government authorities.

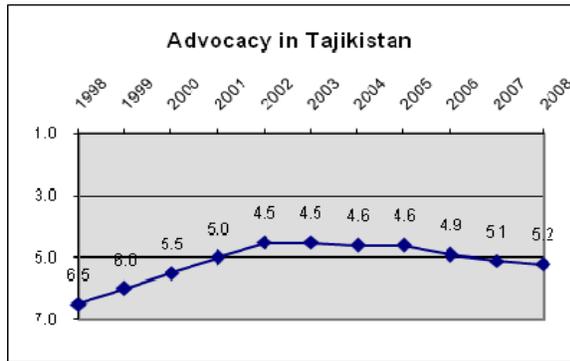
Some NGOs have had training in advocacy, though many of them are passive and prefer not to be involved in political issues. NGOs' awareness and understanding of existing laws is poor. NGOs continue to have difficulties lobbying for their interests and have limited access to decision makers. When necessary, NGOs use the Internet, list-servs, and other means of communication, as well as personal relationships with government officials, to

Few businesses are aware of the 5 percent tax benefit to business entities involved in charitable activities and socially oriented projects. NGOs are trying to urge private business owners to support their activities. For example, in July, the Aga Khan Foundation Civil Society Development Program conducted a workshop on corporate philanthropy and charitable activity for interested commercial partners. As a result, some commercial banks and telecommunications companies started to support local NGO activities. The board of trustees of the Agroinvest Bank launched a grant program, while Babilon Company provided free access to Internet services. Local philanthropy is supporting media associations.

Some organizations lack financial management systems and do not understand the need for financial transparency and accountability. While many NGOs can adequately account and report to donors and tax authorities, there is a need for improved management in both attracting and using resources. Local NGOs are mostly using traditional fundraising methods and do not plan for financial sustainability or asset diversification.

further their advocacy efforts. After many unsuccessful attempts to influence Parliament and other government bodies, however, many NGOs lost interest in working toward this objective. While lobbying for policy change requires long-term intervention to achieve successful results, many international donors support start-up initiatives or one-year projects. One example is the Association of Young Politologists of Tajikistan effort to conduct a survey on household consumption and to lobby Parliament for a new law on consumption capacity. The project was funded for one year and then closed. NGOs have formed issue-based coalitions to increase the effectiveness of their advocacy activities, but their strategies and methods of influencing public opinion have

generally lacked impact. Coalitions have formed to focus on issues such as women, media,



SERVICE PROVISION: 4.6

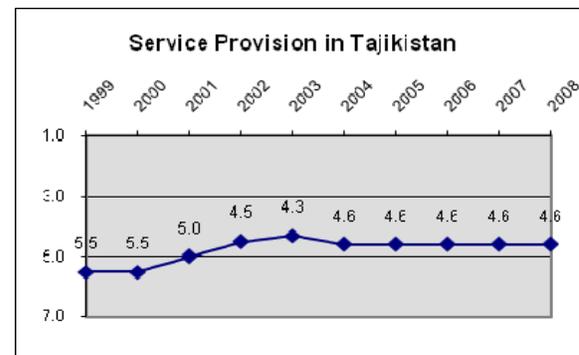
NGOs continue to provide a variety of services ranging from basic social services to conducting research and analysis for private and public entities. The most frequently provided NGO services are consultations, education and social services to vulnerable groups, and environmental preservation. NGOs have little opportunity to expand their clientele as a result of decreasing donor support and an undeveloped local culture of philanthropy. Instead, leading NGOs are focusing on assessing existing clients' needs and introducing feedback and quality control mechanisms. For example, intermediary support organizations are modifying their training and consultation modules to be more focused on client needs. While some organizations have capacity to compete for government contracts, government funds for outsourcing services are limited. Only a limited number of government bodies, such as women's and youth committees, are involved in contracting out social services.

The number of government grants and contracts to NGOs for the provision of social services increased in comparison with previous years, but the government poorly manages the process. There is no transparency in announcing tenders, selecting contractors, or reporting on procurements. The new Law on Public Associations provides incentives for NGOs to

children, the environment and adult learning. An Adult Education Association of Tajikistan with twenty-two local NGO members was created.

Most coalition representatives meet once a month in Dushanbe to discuss problems and exchange information to create cross-cutting programs. These monthly meetings are known as the Dushanbe Informal Club of NGOs. Despite NGOs' attempts to form coalitions, the number of advocacy campaigns and lobbying efforts did not increase.

apply for government contracts in the housing area, but the provisions are unclear and considered much more difficult than under the old law.



The new Law on State Social Orders determines the priority areas for social services and proposes possible mechanisms to outsource social partnerships, which will provide opportunities for NGOs to apply for social service contracts.

Some NGOs were invited to conduct monitoring and evaluation of Tajikistan's Poverty Reduction Strategy for 2005–2015. Such examples of collaboration demonstrate growing state recognition of NGOs' expertise.

INFRASTRUCTURE: 4.6

A donor-supported NGO infrastructure has existed for several years, consisting of leading NGOs that developed into seven civil society support centers providing training and grants to smaller NGOs throughout the country. Support centers are experiencing financial problems, as donor funding has significantly decreased over the past few years. The centers can no longer provide the same level of support to their target NGOs and communities. Fees for services do not cover expenses, and the centers only occasionally receive international funding. The center in Dushanbe is no longer active. At the same time, the number of community resource centers providing services to communities and citizens' groups increased over the past year. A total of 134 UNDP-supported centers at the district and *jamoat* (local self-government) levels operate throughout Tajikistan. While these centers do not provide support services to NGOs, they promote intersectoral partnerships to address local development issues.

Informal NGO coalitions were established in the hope that they would ease access to grants and improve NGOs' image with the government and international community. The first National NGO Forum was held in May 2008. Delegates from NGOs across the country discussed and adopted two important documents, the Tajikistan National NGO Development Program and the Code of Conduct. The national program is based on an NGO sector situational analysis and sets goals for future development. After the National NGO Forum and a series of regional meetings, ten local NGOs founded the National Association of NGOs of Tajikistan, which was registered in November 2008.

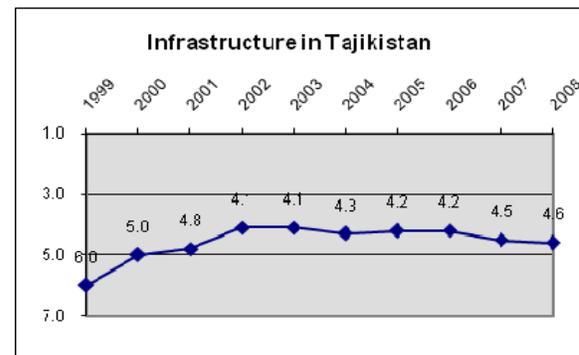
Open information exchange is now available to NGOs through the information portal

PUBLIC IMAGE: 4.5

Media coverage of NGO activities is scarce and often limited by the inability of NGOs to pay. In general, the media understands that social advertising is different from that of a

www.tajikngo.tj. The newly established national association will create another information-sharing portal, www.cso.tj.

Both the government and international donors have compiled lists of NGOs classified by fields. This allows for the selection of organizations that can address a particular issue, but at the same time it impedes transparency. Often there is no bidding process, and NGOs that are not on the list have little chance to apply for funding. Partnerships between NGOs and government agencies are generally subject to the personal interests of government officials.



The NGO sector does not enjoy a collaborative partnership with media outlets due to the commercial nature of the independent media and the uncooperativeness of the state-run media. Media associations are trying to assist with this issue, however.

Businesses' tendency to conceal their actual income hampers the development of partnerships between NGOs and businesses. Local entrepreneurs try to keep a low profile to avoid harassment and are not interested in partnerships.

commercial nature. At the same time, the media rarely provides free or discounted advertising or broadcasting opportunities to NGOs because their primary interest is in increasing their

revenues. Media outlets receive the same 5 percent tax benefits as businesses if they are involved in charitable activities, but only a few media outlets know about this incentive.

The public perception of NGOs is not always positive. The term “nongovernment” tends to be associated with the opposition. The Ministry of Justice requires registering NGOs to use “public organization” in their titles instead of NGO. According to the ministry, this helps to reduce the negative public perception of NGOs as opposition organizations. The negative public perception is partly the result of a lack of transparency and accountability regarding NGO activities. Some organizations work in a limited

environment, serving their constituencies and communicating only with donors. The general population, especially outside of urban centers, remains relatively uninformed about the NGO sector.

According to case studies of public opinion, 45 to 65 percent of the population lacks information about NGOs and their activities. Leading organizations attempted to increase public awareness of the sector through the National NGO Forum and other events. The websites, list-servs, and electronic newsletters that NGOs employ mainly cater to the limited number of people employed in the sector and are not widely accessible due to the lack of Internet access. People in Tajikistan are more accustomed to using newspapers and meetings to exchange information rather than modern communications technologies.

