KfW Development Bank

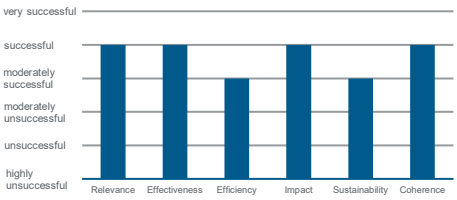
Ex post evaluation
School construction, Tajikistan

Title	Community funds for promotion of basic education and rehabilitation of communal infrastructure – Phase III and IV		
Sector and CRS code	Basic education 11220		
Project number	Phase III BMZ 2012 65 644 plus complementary measure (CM – BMZ 2012 70 321) and Phase IV BMZ 2016 69 050		
Commissioned by	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)		
Recipient/Project-executing agency	Ministry of Economic Development and Trade (MEDT)/National Social Investment Fund of Tajikistan (NSIFT)		
Project volume/ Financing instrument	Phase III: EUR 5.5 million; CM EUR 0.5 million; Phase IV: EUR 4.0 million/BMZ budget funds		
Project duration	Phase III plus complementary measure: Dec. 2013 – Oct. 2018, Phase IV: June 2018 – Dec. 2020		
Year of report	2022	**Year of random sample**	2021 & 2022

Objectives and project outline

The outcome-level objective was to sustainably improve access to and an appropriate use of newly built or renovated primary and secondary schools in the programme region Khatlon. At impact level, the aim was to improve the quality and quantity of basic education in the programme region Khatlon. By financing the construction of 29 new schools, improved and expanded school places were created; girls and boys benefited equally from these schools.

Overall rating:
successful



Key findings

The projects are rated as “successful” as improved access to primary and secondary education was made possible, and a significant improvement in the learning environment was achieved, according to which an improvement in learning success can be assumed.

- The construction of the new schools was relevant due to the shortage of much-needed school places given the high demographic growth and lack of funding.
- The projects were coordinated within the scope of donor coordination and were also coherent with other German DC measures.
- The effectiveness can be rated as good, as improved and expanded classroom places were created in 29 schools for 13,728 girls and boys. Schools are operated in double shift as usual in the country and designed in an architectural learning-friendly environment and with an energy-efficient construction method. The good to very good condition of the schools around two to six years after commissioning also speaks for the low-maintenance design.
- The complementary measure in Phase III enabled additional separate support to be provided for strengthening the capacity of both the executing agency and the Parents’ and Teachers’ Association (PTA).
- Thanks to the executing agency’s experience and the increasing qualifications of the local construction companies, the new schools were built and set up with reasonable effort.
- To date, the schools have been successfully operated and maintained overall thanks to the involvement of the PTAs. The ongoing government financing bottleneck is a risk for the sustained coverage of operating costs and reinvestments and thus for long-term use.

Conclusions

- Water quality and connections are inadequate. The improvements in the hygiene sector that have been addressed should be continued, and hygiene training for pupils and teachers (WASH) should be implemented.
- Community participation through the involvement of effectively trained Parents’ and Teachers’ Associations (PTAs) has strengthened ownership. The continuous support in operation and maintenance has therefore led to a sustainably improved learning environment.
- The donor community must develop an exit strategy at the executing agency NSIFT, which depends on donor financing.

Rating according to DAC criteria

Overall rating: 2

Access to education and the learning environment at schools have improved considerably, and an improvement in basic education in the programme region can be plausibly assumed. The insufficient government financing for operation and maintenance has been and is being compensated for by the involvement of parents and teachers, which is why long-term effects can be assumed in spite of the reductions in sustainability.

Ratings:

Relevance	2
Coherence	2
Effectiveness	2
Efficiency	3
Impact	2
Sustainability	3

General conditions and classification of the project

The evaluated projects were carried out from 2014 to 2020 in the province of Khatlon, in southern Tajikistan. These phases III and IV represent a continuation of the rehabilitation and renewal of municipal infrastructure in Khatlon that began in phases I and II. The previous phases (BMZ No. 2002 66 429* and 2005 66 315) were evaluated in 2018 with good results. The present evaluation assesses the two phases together along a uniform logic of impact, as there are no significant differences in conceptual design or implementation.

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Tajikistan became independent and experienced a collapse in financial transfers from Moscow, which had supported social services and infrastructure in the past and was estimated to account for up to 40% of gross domestic product (GDP) by the end of the 1980s.[1] In addition, markets disappeared, and the dramatic destruction of the civil war (1992–1997) caused many deaths, particularly in the province of Khatlon, and severely destroyed the infrastructure. In order to soften the impacts of the civil war, the Tajik government established the National Social Investment Fund of Tajikistan (NSIFT) in consultation with the World Bank. This was intended to rebuild community infrastructure with significant input from communities, contributing to poverty reduction nationwide. Until 2007, the World Bank co-financed NSIFT to get involved in reform projects in the education and health sectors via the sector ministries at the request of the government of Tajikistan. Following the withdrawal of the World Bank, German Financial Cooperation (FC) temporarily remained the only external financier of NSIFT. FC had previously acted as a co-financier of the World Bank for the Khatlon region. Donor diversification has been emerging since 2020, as the World Bank and the EU, for example, are once again increasingly using NSIFT as the project-executing agency.

[1] https://reliefweb.int/report/tajikistan/tajikistan-poverty-biggest-threat-peace

Breakdown of total costs

	Projects Phase III (actual)	Projects Phase III (planned)	Accompanying measure Phase III (actual)	Accompanying measure Phase III (planned)	Projects Phase IV (actual)	Projects Phase IV (planned)
Investment costs (EUR million)	6,431,271	6,914,000	500,000	500,000	4,544,799	4,466,415
Counterpart contribution* (EUR million)	931,271	914,000	0.00	0.00	544,799	466,415
Financing (EUR million)	5,500,000	5,500,000	500,000	500,000	4,000,000	4,000,000

*) The counterpart contribution includes counterpart contributions from the municipalities and the Tajik state.

Relevance

Since the appraisal of the two phases in 2013 and 2017, Tajikistan has recorded a rapidly growing population of approx. 8.06 million inhabitants in 2013 and 9.1 million in 2017, respectively, to 9.75 million in 2021[2] and a tendency towards declining economic growth (measured by GDP) of approx. 7.4% p.a. (2013) and 7.1% p.a. (2017) to 4.4% in 2020. Nevertheless, the poverty rate was reduced from over 70% in the last decade to around 30% in 2016 (2019: 26.3%).[3] Tajikistan remains the poorest country in the Central Asia region and among the countries of the former Soviet republics with a per capita GDP of USD 897 (2021)[4]. 73% of the population lives in rural areas. The number of jobs in the economy is still growing too slowly to allow full employment and absorption of school graduates. This is why a large proportion of the working population looks for work abroad, especially in Russia and Kazakhstan. Remittances by Tajiks living abroad still account for close to one third of GDP, at the time of the assessment 43.8% (2013)[5]. The qualification level of the country's employees is low.

The persistently high demographic growth of 2.2–2.5% per year[6] and the years of underfinancing of the education sector, as well as the consequences of the civil war, have led to enormous capacity bottlenecks in Tajikistan's school infrastructure. The lack of school places means that the vast majority of schools (82.2%, 2018–2019) work in double shifts, only 6.6% in single shifts, and the remaining schools (5.2%) even teach in three shifts[7] – with reduced hours per day[8]. Compulsory education includes primary and lower secondary education (1–9), followed by upper secondary education (10–11) in the form of general secondary or vocational education, with the majority of schools covering all levels from 1–11, as in the present phases. Classes are coed. According to the 2019 Joint Sector Review, there are still large financial gaps in the education sector of over USD 500 to 640 million in investment costs.

In addition, many schools (1–11) lack basic equipment such as lighting, heating, water and sanitary facilities. Due to the above-mentioned conditions, the need for new schools and classrooms remains high. The poor conditions are sometimes hazardous to health in the old school buildings and speak to the high relevance of the projects.

[2] Population, total – Tajikistan: https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=TJ

[3] Poverty headcount ratio at national poverty lines (% of population) – Tajikistan: https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.NAHC?locations=TJ

[4] GDP per capita (current US$) – Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyz Republic, Turkmenistan | Data (worldbank.org) (regional comparison)

[5] Personal remittances, received (% of GDP) – Tajikistan: https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.TRF.PWKR.DT.GD.ZS?locations=TJ

[6] Population growth (annual %) – Tajikistan: https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.GROW?locations=TJ

[7] NSED 2030 (2020): https://assets.globalpartnership.org/s3fs-public/document/file/2020-12-tajikistan-education-sector-plan.pdf?VersionId=Po_HQUF2OYm.S83vuP_gge.F1MciWSKc

[8] Tajikistan Education Sector Analysis 2019: https://assets.globalpartnership.org/s3fs-public/document/file/2020-19-Tajikistan-%20ESA.pdf?VersionId=nOxhN4qMJKp5uUuFZvV0BXA7.csgdPwq

Strategic reference documents were the National Development Strategy (NDS) of the Republic of Tajikistan (2007–2015, 2016–2030) and the National Strategy for the Development of Education (NSED) of the Republic of Tajikistan (2012–2020, 2021–2030). The project's objectives were also aligned with the goals of the 2030 Agenda, in particular SDG 4 (Education) and SDG 1 (Poverty), as well as the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development's education strategy (2015).

From today's perspective, the core problem of a lack of school infrastructure was correctly identified and adequately addressed with the construction and rehabilitation of schools and their equipment as part of a participatory approach in order to improve access and the learning environment in a way that facilitates educational success. Nevertheless, the continuing lack of qualified teachers and educational material limits the quality of education, whereby the topics are addressed by other donors (see Coherence).

Given that the precarious school situation is far from over, and progress is being overtaken by strong population growth, the need for educational infrastructure remains high. In summary, the relevance is rated as good, since the project was aimed at solving core problems in Tajikistan that are important in terms of development policy, and was in line with the objectives of Tajikistan, the German Federal Government and the international community.

Relevance rating: 2 (both projects)

Coherence

As part of German Development Cooperation (DC), the project exploited the synergy potential. Close cooperation was established with the Technical Cooperation (TC) project "Reform of the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) System in Tajikistan" (2008–2016), whereby new workshops were built and equipped at six FC school locations, each with three technology classes for the vocational secondary level (10–11), and existing buildings were renovated and also equipped at three other locations. In phase III, NSIFT also held courses for 22 technical teachers at FC schools, using training materials created as part of the TC project "Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Central Asia". With financial support from the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany, fenced-in sports fields (three) and school gardens (four) were added at six locations.

The complementary measure focused on the establishment and training of Parents' and Teacher's Associations (PTAs), on training measures for NSIFT and those responsible for operations in the schools, and on extending NSIFT's work to the Rasht Valley region, which is critical for security. In the context of a debt conversion (BMZ 2006 65 737), NSIFT counterpart funds were provided by the government of Tajikistan for 12 school buildings in the Rasht Valley.

Both phases are integrated into the National Strategy for Education Development (NSED), which receives support from the World Bank, ADB, EU, UNICEF, USAID, WFP, Agha Khan, JICA, OSI and German TC, among others. Tajikistan has a well-established cross-sectoral donor coordination mechanism, the Development Coordination Council (DCC), to support the National Development Strategy (2016–2030). The DCC is composed of various sectoral working groups; the Education Working Group is led by UNICEF and the EU (deputy). In addition, there is a local education group (LEG), which is made up of representatives of the development partners and the government and coordinated by UNICEF. Tajikistan joined the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) programme in 2005 and has since received eight grants, two of them from the Fast Track Initiative (FTI). Within the DCC mechanism, the World Bank (WB) has the supervisory role and UNICEF has the coordination responsibility for GPE Tajikistan. The World Bank addresses the quality of teaching at national level through the training of teachers, the improvement of curricula and teaching materials and their availability within the GPE. In addition, competency-based learning and improvement to the Education Management Information System are also supported as part of GPE. In order to avoid a geographical overlap between GPE and FC school construction programmes, the Khatlon region was removed from the GPE-FTI grants' area of application. There was coordination on design issues, but the participatory approach in Khatlon remained a unique feature of NSIFT.

Due to the phase being embedded in the broader-based education programme, the focus on construction and sustainable maintenance of school infrastructure in the Khatlon region was a sensible move within donor coordination. However, a coherent approach was evident, especially with regard to the DC

measures of the international donor community in the education sector and in the cooperation with Tajikistan. For this reason, we still rate the coherence of the project as a good result that meets expectations.

Coherence rating: 2 (both projects)

Effectiveness

The objective of the projects at outcome level was to sustainably improve access to and appropriate use of newly built or renovated primary and secondary schools in the Khatlon programme region. The target achievement at outcome level was measured as part of the evaluation using the following indicators, whereby there is no systematic monitoring with reliable data. Therefore, the evaluation estimates are based on plausibility considerations that take into account the impressions on site and the incomplete data.

Indicator	Status at appraisal 2013 Phase III / 2017 Phase IV	Target	Final inspection status 2019 Phase III / 2020 Phase IV[9]	2022 Evaluation (EPE) Phase III and IV
(1) Utilisation (a) The classrooms of the programme schools are used by around 30 pupils each (b) The schools do not conduct more than two shifts of teaching	(a) 25 / 25 (b) 2 - 3 / 2 - 3	(a) < 30 / approx. 27–33 (b) < 3 / ≤ 3	(a) 24 (reporting) / Ø25 (b) 1–2 (reporting) / n.a.	(a) Partially achieved in schools visited (b) Achieved at schools visited → Demand grows
(2) Around 80% of the financed furniture is available in the programme schools and in functional condition (new)	< 80% / < 80%	≥ 80% / ≥ 80%	100% (reporting) / n.a.	Achieved for both phases
(3) 80% of sanitary facilities are functional and maintained	< 80% / < 10 %	≥ 80% / ≥ 80%	100% (reporting) / n.a.	Partially achieved for both phases
(4) 80% of the programme schools have a functioning power connection and heating and the connections are used	< 80% / < 75 %	≥ 80% / ≥ 80%	100% (reporting) / n.a.	Achieved for both phases

[9] The final inspection of Phase IV took place virtually under coronavirus conditions. Two sites were examined by the local specialist on site, and all 12 sites were visited by the consultant. Videos of the sites were also made, which are available to KfW.

(5) The Parents' and Teachers' Associations still exist at 90% of the programme schools and fulfil their tasks	< 90 % / < 90 %	≥ 90 % / ≥ 90 %	100% (reporting) / 100%	Achieved for both phases
(6) At 70% of schools where the prerequisites for the construction of training workshops were met, these workshops were built and equipped and are used according to their intended function (new)	< 70 % / < 70 %	≥ 70 % / ≥ 70 %		Achieved for both phases

Data for EPE according to EPE surveys. Where no final inspection data was available, final reporting data inserted.

At the time of the EPE, a total of 17,215 girls (49%) and boys (51%) visited[10] the 29 schools financed from FC funds (17 in Phase III, 12 in Phase IV) in the double shift operation customary in the country. Both phases' schools were fully utilised, partially overcrowded in primary and lower secondary education, with the classrooms already designed for 30 pupils instead of the standard 24 pupils. Improved and expanded classrooms have been created with architecture conducive to a learning environment and energy-efficient construction. All schools are in operation, the number of pupils has risen by 28.3% in Phase III schools since the appraisal (2013) and by 9.5% since 2018 in Phase IV schools by the time of the EPE (2022), meaning that capacities are more than utilised. Boys and girls benefited from the measure equally, whereby girls can be kept at school for longer with sewing and cooking thanks to vocational secondary education.

The demand for pupil places has been increasing steadily since the appraisal so that, in addition to the new buildings, the older school buildings are also used intensively and maintained as well as possible by the PTAs. All new school buildings have been equipped with stable furniture that can be repaired under local conditions. The school environments (garden, water supply[11], sports facilities, fencing) were created by the PTAs in every case and were predominantly in good condition. In all buildings, particular emphasis was placed on energy efficiency (insulation of floors and roofs, double windows). All schools are supplied by two coal-fired stoves via a central heating system. These are much more energy efficient than the coal-fired stoves previously used in the classrooms, which polluted the rooms with soot, smoke and dust. The teachers no longer need to put on the heat, the air is cleaner, and the classrooms are warm and dry. The heating material (coal/wood) is provided by the parents, as the public funds for heating material are not sufficient.

In Phase III, NSIFT worked with the consultant's architects to develop an innovative proposal for new schools that is architecturally and aesthetically of outstanding quality. These schools are now commonly referred to as "banana schools", as they are slightly curved and the corridor is on the rear (longer) side to the north with minimal openings. The classrooms are facing south, with large windows – so they heat up much faster in the winter months when the sun is low. The interiors are attractively designed and the architecture gives the school a special and distinctive identity. In NSIFT's view, for cost reasons, a standard design was mainly used in Phase IV, which builds on the design of Phases II and III, but with improved energy efficiency: in two schools, the classrooms were equipped with underfloor heating with electrical cables instead of the traditional coal-based heating system, which reduces carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions.

The community members were actively involved in design, building and financing (own contribution of 2%) in all the schools. The contributions of the PTAs are often the most important resources for maintenance and repairs. The school buildings are in good condition, regardless of how long they have already been in

[10] Data provided by NSIFT, the total number here refers to actual usage and not places created.

[11] With the restriction to indicator 3) (see table above).

use (observations after two to six years of use[12]). PTAs are involved in various activities: construction of additional classrooms, library, gardening and landscaping, fencing, water supply, development of new projects and discussions with regional and central authorities, provision of heating material. The discussions pointed out that school meals offered in some schools by the World Food Programme (WFP) make school attendance more attractive to pupils. Many schools therefore want a cafeteria and a sports hall so that they can also conduct physical education classes in winter.

The toilet buildings at the schools visited are in good structural condition, separate toilets (latrines) are available for boys and girls, the new toilets in phase IV even have cabin doors, but there are often no hand-washing facilities directly in front of the toilets, or no water, soap is always missing. Some schools do not have their own water access – so water tanks were purchased. Even if water provision falls within the remit of the public authorities, water supplies are often paid for by the PTAs. Water quality is often poor in schools visited, e.g. due to chemical contamination. In most cases, drinking water is boiled and brought by the pupils.

Vocational training courses in sewing, cooking and works are offered for upper secondary education. The workshops are very tidy, fully functional and are used intensively for the courses, including for the repair of chairs/tables; the teachers are trained for teaching. The courses are highly appreciated and the relevance of technology classes has been frequently emphasised in schools, as it not only gives pupils the opportunity to learn new practical skills, but also encourages girls to continue attending school after grade nine. The choice of subjects still corresponds to classic roles, whereby the subjects can be freely selected regardless of gender.

The condition of the schools, which affects the learning environment and atmosphere, was rated as very good at the time of the EPE. In addition to a low-maintenance design, a maintenance and operating plan based on experience gained in the previous phases is crucial here. In summary, we rate the effectiveness of both phases as successful, in line with expectations. In the evaluation, the quantitative target achievement of the project dominates in terms of the use of the partially expanded and improved school places for children of primary and secondary school age in a conducive learning and teaching environment.

Effectiveness rating: 2 (both projects)

Efficiency

The production efficiency of both phases is rated as good overall, as the 29 new schools were built and set up with reasonable effort – also in comparison with schools supported by the Tajik state or other donors. Of the 29 schools built, 17 were built in phase III and 12 in phase IV, of which 7 were built as banana schools. In phase III, 166 (phase IV: 120) classrooms were completed, including the 27 (phase IV: 12) newly built technology classrooms, with a total capacity of 3,984 (2,880) school places (or 7,968 (phase IV: 5,760) in two-shift operation).

At EUR 265 in Phase III and EUR 259 in Phase IV, the construction costs per square metre of usable area were only slightly higher than the comparable unit costs of Phase II (EUR 253 in 2015). Converted to the newly created pupil places (24 per classroom), the net construction costs (EUR 1,174) were, however, below the unit costs of phase II (EUR 1,292). These costs were achieved through further optimisation of design and increased competition among the now more competent small construction companies, even though rising prices for petrol and imported construction materials were recorded in phase IV. We consider the costs to be very reasonable. The costs for equipment and furnishings increased, mainly due to the very high costs for equipping the “technology centres” developed with the help of TC.

Even though the average construction costs for the six “banana schools” were only slightly higher than the costs for the similar “standard schools”, NSIFT has not yet pursued the approach. It would have been important to record the savings in the operation in order to be able to make a final assessment of the approach, even if NSIFT is not in charge of the operation.

[12] As part of the EPE mission, similar schools from phases I/II were also visited (2 to 14 years of use); even these schools were in good condition, with the exception of one that was in a satisfactory condition.

While the implementation time for phase III was extended from 36 to 55 months (June 2014 – December 2018), phase IV was achieved in 30 months (July 2018 to December 2020) instead of 36 months. The delays in phase III are attributed to extended execution times and implementation of residual funds for 16 additional classrooms. According to Tajik stipulations, construction measures generally have to be discontinued in winter due to the low temperatures, which may not have been sufficiently taken into account in the scheduling.

Since NSIFT, as an autonomous authority, is not financed by the Tajik state or is financed with very limited funds, the operating and implementation costs must be covered by donor funds. This must be viewed critically for reasons of efficiency and in view of the fact that FC funds do not usually finance operating costs. The operating costs of NSIFT compared to the total budget of phases III and IV are stated as approx. 8.1% of phase III and 5.8% of phase IV, whereby the figures cannot be assessed as valid. According to the information provided, implementation via the Ministry of Construction would not have been possible in Khatlon, and the quality and in particular the participatory approach of NSIFTs counteract the costs in a relative manner. However, NSIFT also had to be supported by an international consultant, which further increased implementation costs.

Due to the concept of usually only renovating ten classrooms instead of covering the total needs of a school, old school buildings that are still in use result in high maintenance and operating costs. This in turn decreases the availability of funds for the operation and maintenance of the new buildings, which is critical from the point of view of allocation efficiency. In addition, it can be assumed that economies of scale could have been achieved by rehabilitating all the needs per school. It must also be taken into account that the parallel operation of modern and dilapidated schools can cause considerable potential for tension in the communities; it was not possible to find out how pupils are assigned to the old and new buildings.

The implementation of the schools via the executing agency NSIFT, which does not have sufficient funds to implement the projects in spite of a public mandate, in principle incurred additional costs here compared to implementation via the responsible authorities. In view of the experience and quality of the participatory design, these costs can be recorded as appropriate. Nevertheless, the capacities built up at NSIFT are not ensured over the long term, which is critical in the evaluation of efficiency. Allocation efficiency is therefore below expectations but is still rated as satisfactory due to the current demand for school places.

Efficiency rating: 3 (both projects)

Impact

The objective at impact level for the evaluation is the qualitative and quantitative improvement of basic education in the project region of Khatlon for both phases. The impact is estimated and assessed for both phases on the basis of the following indicators, whereby the data are very sparse and the assessment from available data is plausibly derived and estimated in comparison to national developments.

Indicator	Appraisal 2013 Phase III / 2017 Phase IV	EPE 2022 Phase III / Phase IV
(1) Three years after commissioning, the net enrolment rates in the primary school level (1–4) in the programme schools are constant or have improved.	2013 status / target: n.a. 2017 Status: < 95% Target: ≥ 95%	Data are missing, but the number of enrolled primary school pupils (1–4) has increased according to the information.

(2) Three years after commissioning, the effective transition from the primary level (1–4) to the lower secondary level (5–9) has improved in the programme schools.	2013 status / target: n.a. 2017 status / target: n.a.	Data are missing, but pupil numbers have increased in both levels. Enrolment is almost equal.
(3) Three years after commissioning, the effective transition from the lower (5–9) to upper secondary level (10–11) in the programme schools is at least at the national average of 75%.	2013 status / target: n.a. 2017 Status: n.a. Target: ≥ 75 %	Data are missing. Schools have not provided information on effective transition rates, but the number of enrolled pupils in upper secondary level II (10–11) is significantly lower than in secondary level I (5–9).
(4) New* Three years after commissioning, the pupil-teacher ratio (full-time positions) at the programme schools is around the national average of 2014 (16.2)	2013 Status/target: n.a. 2017 Status: Ø 2014 (16.2) Target: ≥ Ø 16.2	for phase III: 17.1 and for Phase IV: 15.7. It is unclear whether teachers have full-time positions.

* Included in Phase IV, therefore no data for 2013

The new schools and classrooms offer an incomparably better learning and teaching environment for children and teachers

The number of pupils in all schools has increased since the project appraisal until the time of the EPE (2022). However, it is obvious that the total number of pupils from primary school (1–4) and lower secondary school (5–9) to upper secondary school (10–11) decreases significantly. In primary and lower secondary education (grades 1–9), the numbers of boys and girls are almost the same; in upper secondary education (grade 10–11), a significant imbalance between the sexes can be observed, reflecting a lower number of enrolled girls.

In principle, the data available for the indicators at the programme schools is very thin and difficult to interpret, but it can plausibly be assumed that the expanded offer was accepted by an increasing number of pupils, whereby the enrolment rates in the compulsory school levels are better than in the upper secondary level (10–11). This is also in line with national developments, which show that enrolment rates in both primary and lower secondary education, as well as the completion rate of lower secondary education, have increased between 2012 and 2017. The number of out-of-school children in primary school fell between 2012 and 2017, as did the dropout rate in primary school from 1.6% in 2013 to 1.0% in 2016. In general, the proportion of children who do not go to school is higher for girls than for boys.[13] Usually girls in rural areas tend to drop out of school after grade nine. The interviews pointed out that, after the construction of the new schools and the improvement of learning conditions, the attendance rate at the programme schools rose.

According to information, the pupil-teacher ratio in the primary area is better in the programme region than at national level with 22–23 (2012–2017). However, the number of teachers at general education schools has increased by 23% from 2012 to 2017. The interviews and the feedback from the schools show that the majority of teachers at the FC-funded schools have higher education and the total number of teachers

[13] Summative Evaluation of GPE's Country-Level Support to Education, Batch 5, Country 20: Tajikistan, FINAL REPORT | MARCH 2020: Final Report – Tajikistan (globalpartnership.org)

has also increased. Nevertheless, there is a lack of qualified teachers, especially in core subjects such as science and languages. The discrepancy between men and women with higher education is significant. The lower the teachers' level of education, the higher the proportion of women.

The data available in the Education Management Information System suggests that rural areas perform worse than urban areas in some educational indicators, using various explanations, such as: the predominance of poverty and the inability of households to pay for the education of their children in higher grades, the remoteness of educational institutions and the distance to school and poor school infrastructure. In general, vulnerable groups such as children with disabilities, ethnic minorities and children from poor families have higher absenteeism and early school leaving rates than peers of the same age.

The increased number of school places and the improved learning environment with committed teachers and parents suggest an improvement in primary education without making it possible to derive this conclusion from the data for the programme schools. Attractive schools and committed PTAs suggest that educational opportunities are being seized and that the improved physical conditions also lead to better learning outcomes.

The construction of the schools has resulted in safer and shorter trips to school; pupils from other villages are trying to apply for the new schools because they are more attractive (safe, healthy, warm in winter, cool in summer), and some of the pupils of the new schools have received presidential scholarships due to excellent school performance. The commitment of the communities shows that education is of great importance. Even without a solid data basis, it can be assumed that motivation and education have improved.

During the COVID pandemic, schools were closed for only about a month on average, and the school holidays directly followed the closure. There was no distance learning, but schools resumed lessons earlier after the summer holidays.

In general, the construction of the new schools and the energy efficiency measures undertaken have led to a reduction in the costs to be borne by the parents, according to their statements, in terms of the costs for laundry detergents (the old schools include white blouses in the school uniforms, which became dirty more quickly, especially in winter, because smoke rose from the heating system), for heating and for the treatment and care of children who have become sick due to the health-endangering conditions (smoke and mould) in the old schools.

The programme schools are a model for the Ministry of Education and the World Bank in terms of high-quality construction standards and participation. For UNICEF, selected FC schools are regarded as models for construction of features to improve disabled access.

Even if no direct effects can be derived about the indicators with regard to the programme schools due to the lack of data, it can be plausibly assumed after the discussions and impressions on the ground that the teaching and learning conditions have been improved so significantly, that positive contributions to primary education in the communities have been made and health risks have also been reduced. For this reason, we rate the impact as good, in line with expectations.

Impact rating: 2 (both projects)

Sustainability

The schools were put into operation between 2016 and 2020, so there was two to six years of usage experience. At the time of the EPE, the schools were in a very good or good state of repair and maintenance. The schools confirmed (as expected) the lower maintenance and operating costs of the new FC-financed schools compared to older schools. The operation and maintenance of the created school infrastructure is theoretically the responsibility of the school departments of the rayon administrations[14], but they do not have sufficient funds, which is why the communities, and parents and teachers in particular, play a decisive role in operation and maintenance.

[14] The administrative regions, known as "oblasts", are divided into districts known as "rayons".

Overall, total spending on education has risen steadily since 1999, at 5.9% of total GDP (2019)[1]. In 2017, the government of Tajikistan, as a GPE partner country, made a financial commitment to raise government spending on education from TJS 3,013 million in 2017 to TJS 3,893 million in 2020 to maintain the share of government spending on education at 17% of total government spending. The Tajik government's spending on education has increased over the years, but by far not in line with demand at all levels – at national level with regard to investment expenditures, as well as at local level for the sustainable operation of schools. While wage costs have risen significantly since 2010, capital expenditure has fallen accordingly. Nevertheless, the average remuneration in the education sector is 22% lower than the average remuneration in the entire public sector.

At the programme schools, school administrators are confronted with chronic bottlenecks on the part of the public authorities for the fulfilment of their tasks (including investment, operating and maintenance costs). Funding for ongoing maintenance, operating costs and periodic reinvestment needs for the schools is therefore not guaranteed. In general, schools charge low annual fees to parents and sometimes benefit from private grants (including companies). The decisive factor for the successful operation of the schools to date is the commitment of parents and teachers to maintenance and repair tasks and also the financial cushioning of inadequate state financing.

In order to limit the sustainability risk, however, the longer-term financial hedging of operating and maintenance costs by the public sector would be particularly necessary. Given the existing risks, it cannot be ruled out that the positive impacts of the project achieved with the schools and the commitment of parents and teachers will decline over the years and decades. The consistently positive results, even in phases I and II, make it plausible to assume that the commitment will remain positive – at least as long as NSIFT exists as a partner.

Although the executing agency NSIFT has a mandate and a role as an infrastructure financier for small, participatively implemented projects, NSIFT has no mandate to operate the schools. The ministries are also represented on NSIFT Board and thus structurally in decision-making processes. Despite this, in financial terms, NSIFT only receives a small contribution from the government to cover its operating costs, so it fundamentally still depends on donor financing for its own continued existence. Since the objective of the appraisal was not to establish a sustainably functioning institution, and NSIFT theoretically has no mandate to operate the schools, the lack of NSIFT's sustainability should not be fully assessed. Nevertheless, NSIFT plays a key role in participation and in matters for the Parents' and Teacher' Association, also in operational matters, which is why participation and ownership are likely to decrease in the long term if NSIFT is discontinued. From an FC perspective, it would be desirable if the Tajik government supported NSIFT in fulfilling its tasks and reduced its institutional dependence on donor contributions. When cooperating with project-executing agencies that are set up and maintained by donors, a clear exit strategy must be developed from the outset so that the positive effects of institutional capacity building are also sustainably ensured.

Since the schools have been well maintained and run successfully so far, and the PTAs continue to be heavily involved, we assume that the development effectiveness will continue, even though the positive impacts will decline if government financing continues to be inadequate. Due to financial constraints, long-term reinvestments are at risk, the continued existence of NSIFT to preserve participation and ownership continues to depend on donor financing, and public funding is insufficient. From today's perspective, the sustainability of the project is rated as just satisfactory.

Sustainability rating: 3 (both projects)

Notes on the methods used to evaluate project success (project rating)

Projects (and programmes) are evaluated on a six-point scale, the criteria being relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency**, sustainability** and impact. The ratings are also used to arrive at an overall rating of a project's developmental efficacy. The scale is as follows:

Level 1	very successful: result that clearly exceeds expectations
Level 2	successful: fully in line with expectations and without any significant shortcomings
Level 3	moderately successful: project falls short of expectations but the positive results dominate
Level 4	moderately unsuccessful: significantly below expectations, with negative results dominating despite discernible positive results
Level 5	unsuccessful: despite some positive partial results, the negative results clearly dominate
Level 6	highly unsuccessful: the project has no impact or the situation has actually deteriorated

Rating levels 1-3 denote a positive assessment or successful project while rating levels 4-6 denote a negative assessment.

The **overall rating** on the six-point scale is compiled from a weighting of all six individual criteria as appropriate to the project in question. Levels 1–3 of the overall rating indicate a "successful" project, levels 4–6 an "unsuccessful" project. It should be noted that a project can generally be considered developmentally "successful" only if the achievement of the project objective ("effectiveness"), the impact on the overall objective ("impact") **and** the sustainability are rated at least "moderately successful"
(level 3).