Switzerland began its cooperation with Tajikistan in 1993, and over time the relationship between the countries has grown into a long-term technical and financial cooperation. Since that time, Switzerland has approximately provided USD 7.5 mln as humanitarian assistance, USD 10.1 mln as technical cooperation, and USD 13.8 mln under financial cooperation, totaling to USD 31.4 mln to the benefit of Tajikistan.

Today, the Swiss program in the country aims to support human rights, gender balance, improve living conditions, foster cultural development and protect the environment while promoting political and economic stability. At high-level meetings with country representatives President Emomali Rahmon expressed his appreciation of the Swiss Development and Cooperation Office (SDC) contributions, stressing that “We consider Switzerland as one of our important partners in Europe and attach particular attention to the expansion of ties with it”.

(Information and photo taken from www.president.tj)

Switzerland & UNDP:
A Strategic Partnership in Tajikistan

Water Supply and Sanitation

Access to safe drinking water and sanitation in rural areas is a key development challenge for Tajikistan, with only 57% of the rural population estimated to have access to safe drinking water, and fewer with access to improved sanitation. In 2009 the UNDP launched the “Tajikistan Water Supply and Sanitation” Project, with SDC financial support (USD 1,200,000) and in partnership with Oxfam GB. The project aims to strengthen policy development, governance and help reform water supply and sanitation management. Seeking to improve access to piped water supply in rural communities and the lives of people living in poverty, project activities will be scaled-up at district levels while advocacy for change and development recommendations for further reforms at the policy level continues.

Switzerland has supported national efforts to develop sustainable water and sanitation systems since 1998, and through UNDP over 30,000 people in rural communities have benefited from these efforts.

Integrated Water Resources Management

Tajikistan’s water sector is undergoing a reform towards Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM). IWRM is a process that promotes the coordinated development and management of water, land and related resources in order to equitably maximize economic and social welfare without compromising the sustainability of vital ecosystems.

For example, currently water management is based on administrative boundaries, which often infringes the rights of downstream water users. Instead, IWRM calls for transition to hydrographic management method that provides stable and equitable water supply to users regardless of location. With SDC support (USD 500,000), UNDP water management programmes aim to develop and implement water efficiency strategies at national and basin levels. The intervention strategy supports water governance and institutional reform, as well as projects to improve irrigated agriculture, rural water supply and sanitation, and small-scale hydropower service delivery. At the regional level, UNDP is contributing to cross-border confidence building through strengthening water cooperation mechanisms in Fergana valley.
In 2012, Government of Tajikistan has officially established the National Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), as a standing sub-committee to the State Commission of Emergency Situations. Within the framework of the project on “Improved policy making mechanisms for disaster risk reduction initiatives in Tajikistan” UNDP in cooperation with SDC (USD 277,995) supports the successful functioning of the National Platform for DRR, the main objective of which is to formulate and implement a unified DRR policy focusing on the reduction of human and economic losses. It is a consultative and advisory body tasked to coordinate the activities of the Government and partner agencies and organizations in disaster risk reduction, which requires political and legal commitment, public understanding, scientific knowledge, careful development planning, responsible enforcement of policies and legislation, people-centred early warning systems, and effective disaster preparedness and response mechanisms. A multistakeholder National Platform for DRR can help to provide and mobilize knowledge, skills and resources required for mainstreaming DRR into development policies, planning and programmes.

**Development of “111” Emergency Call**

Tajikistan is a highly disaster prone country, vulnerable to a number of natural hazards such as earthquakes, landslides, floods, avalanches and extreme climate conditions. To alleviate the negative impact of disasters a joint emergency phone number “111” was established within the Committee of Emergency Situations. This number is intended for use in emergency circumstances only, and is to be used in urgent life-threatening situations such as fire, ambulance and civil emergencies. UNDP with financial support of SDC (USD 317,720) implements “Improved Information Management in Emergencies” project, with the objective of ensuring intra- and inter-agency information exchange among agencies responsible for providing emergency services (e.g., Ministry of Health, Ministry of Interior and Committee of Emergency Situation) and strengthening their capacities. The project will also provide support with the essential equipment and public outreach which is of vital importance.

**Rule of Law and Access to Justice**

The reform process to strengthen rule of law and empower people in Tajikistan is ongoing. However, vulnerable groups in remote areas, especially the poor and marginalized, are too often denied the ability to seek remedies in a fair justice system. In the absence of access to justice, people are unable to have their voice heard, exercise their rights, or hold decision-makers accountable. Rule of law is the foundation for both justice and security. The UNDP has, together with Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation, sought to help established a sustainable free legal aid system in the country with the financial support from SDC (USD 4,337,266), which also leveraged additional funds from Finland (USD 2,720,000). The project also contributes to public awareness raising as well as capacity building of justice sector officials and other service providers. It also established a high-level Rule of Law Policy Dialogue platform chaired by the Minister of Justice and attended by high-level justice institution representatives such as Supreme Court Judge and Prosecutor-General.

**Better Livelihoods in Rasht Valley**

In 2013, a project on “Empowering Communities with Better Livelihoods and Social Protection in Rasht Valley” was launched with the support of SDC (USD 350,000) and leveraged additional funds from the UN Human Security Trust Fund (USD 3,141,131). The project aims to improve economic, food, environmental, health and personal security, and will benefit 180,000 people, 56% of which are women. The project is implemented in five districts of Rasht Valley by five UN Agencies including UNDP, each with unique comparative advantages and responsibilities in addressing different issues.