



Concept Environmental and Social Review Summary

Concept Stage

(ESRS Concept Stage)

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BASIC INFORMATION

A. Basic Project Data

Country	Region	Project ID	Parent Project ID (if any)
Tajikistan	EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA	P173977	
Project Name	Modernizing the National Statistical System in Tajikistan		
Practice Area (Lead)	Financing Instrument	Estimated Appraisal Date	Estimated Board Date
Poverty and Equity	Investment Project Financing	3/8/2021	5/21/2021
Borrower(s)	Implementing Agency(ies)		
Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Tajikistan	Agency for Statistics under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan		

Proposed Development Objective

The PDO is to enable the Agency for Statistics improve statistical production, dissemination, and user satisfaction.

Financing (in USD Million)	Amount
Total Project Cost	10.00

B. Is the project being prepared in a Situation of Urgent Need of Assistance or Capacity Constraints, as per Bank IPF Policy, para. 12?

No

C. Summary Description of Proposed Project [including overview of Country, Sectoral & Institutional Contexts and Relationship to CPF]

The project will contribute to achieving the objectives of the Government in transforming the system of state statistics to an advanced institution that will support the development of economic and social policies based on evidence by providing reliable and high quality data, providing easy access to statistical data and enhance the use of administrative data resources as well as data developed by the private sector.

The project will focus on strategic objectives included in the NSDS-2030 to strengthen the capacities of the National Statistical System (NSS) and the Agency for Statistics (AS).



The proposed project will be implemented over four years and will be structured around three components:

- (i) Strengthening the Institutional Capacity of AS and Improving ICT Infrastructure;
- (ii) Enhancing the system of statistical production, dissemination and data use;
- (iii) Project management.

D. Environmental and Social Overview

D.1. Detailed project location(s) and salient physical characteristics relevant to the E&S assessment [geographic, environmental, social]

Tajikistan is a small low-income land-locked country in the heart of Central Asia, bordering Afghanistan, China, the Kyrgyz Republic, and Uzbekistan, with an area of 143,100 square kilometers. The country consists of 4 administrative divisions, Sughd, Khatlon, Gorno-Badakhshan (abbreviated as GBAO) provinces, and the Region of Republican Subordination (RRP) around the Capital, Dushanbe. Each region is divided into several districts, subdivided into jamoats (village-level self-governing units) and then villages. There are 62 districts and 440 sub-districts (jamoats). About 70 percent of the population lives in rural areas, and the agricultural sector is by far the largest employer in the country. Rural and remote areas are significantly poorer than urban settings on average, and face highly volatile incomes compounded by strong seasonality – the national poverty rate rises by as much as 8 percentage points during the winter and spring months.

Tajikistan has mountains covering more than 90% of the country rendering livelihoods and accessibility extremely difficult. Natural hazards such as floods, earthquakes, landslides, mud-flows, avalanches and heavy snowfalls are quite common resulting in significant economic losses and human casualties. It is also home to interesting endemic flora and fauna, including some protected species like the snow leopard, though their ranges and other critical habitats and protected areas are not expected to be affected by the Project.

The population is currently 9.3 million and is expected to reach nearly 13 million by 2040. Nearly 61 percent of the population is under the age of 30, out of which approximately half live in urban areas. Gross domestic product (GDP) growth slightly accelerated through nine months of 2018, reaching 7 percent. Though real GDP growth has averaged 7.5 percent over the past years, a significant portion of Tajik citizens work abroad, providing remittances that help lift significant parts of the population out of poverty. Based on the national definition, the poverty rate fell from 30.3 percent in 2016 to 29.5 percent in 2017. Though urban poverty has declined at a faster pace, the overall poverty response to growth has slowed significantly in recent years, challenging expectations of economic inclusion of growth and its distributional effects, especially for the lower-income segments of the population. Despite its achievements in reducing poverty, Tajikistan faces significant longer-term challenges in growth related to the digital economy and youth employment.

The National Statistical System (NSS) is characterized by (i) ineffective institutional coordination between various statistical data producers and the AS; (ii) lack of well-developed human resources framework; (iii) inadequate analytical capability and qualifications of personnel of the statistical system; (iv) weak statistical infrastructure, and (v) poor physical and information technology (IT) infrastructure particularly in rural and remote areas.

The project aims to improve statistical production, modernize the system of data management, and enhance statistical dissemination practices. The Project will be implemented nation-wide mostly in the statistical offices in the



capital and provincial centers, including Dushanbe (Capital), Khujand (Sughd Province), Khorog (Badakhshan Province) and Bokhtar (Khatlon Province). Some district level offices will also benefit, however their locations are not known at this stage, as the needs assessment will be conducted during project implementation. Stakeholder consultations will be held at the national and provincial level with participation of key stakeholders.

D. 2. Borrower’s Institutional Capacity

The project is the Bank’s third project to support the Government of Tajikistan in implementation of key initiatives to statistical reforms in the country. The Agency for Statistics under the President of Tajikistan (AS) served as the implementation agency for the TAJSTAT II project (P145185) closed in 2018. Given the satisfactory performance of the AS, the Bank team proposed to establish a Project Management Unit (PMU) at the AS to hold administrative, fiduciary, environmental and social risk management and monitoring responsibilities. The previous project did have similar environmental and social impacts, which were minor in scale and rated low.

The PMU to be established has no experience with the Bank’s Environmental and Social Framework. Since the project environmental and social risks are low and moderate respectively, the Bank’s environmental and social specialists will guide the PMU staff in assessing and mitigating potential environmental and social risks and impacts.

II. SCREENING OF POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL (ES) RISKS AND IMPACTS

A. Environmental and Social Risk Classification (ESRC)

Moderate

Environmental Risk Rating

Low

The Environmental Risk Rating is Low. The project does not support civil works, and environmental risks are confined to minor rehabilitation for the installation of new ICT equipment, disposal/recycling of electronic waste when equipment is replaced/repared, and improvement of the physical infrastructure of statistical authorities. These are easily mitigable with an Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP), which the client will prepare and review with the Bank prior to project appraisal.

Social Risk Rating

Moderate

Social risk is rated Moderate. While none of the interventions per-se will have any adverse impacts, setting up of appropriate management systems and procedures as well as reporting could have serious impacts on the outcomes. The key social issues relate to data collection and collation; ensuring its accuracy; meaningful analysis and interpretation; data dissemination /disclosure; and data privacy safeguards. These issues need to be addressed as a part of the overall project design through investments in the following: i) consider and resolve the issue of discrepancies between data published by the AS and information received and used by other institutions; ii) ensure accurate and timely publication of data; and iii) facilitate more sophisticated analysis using anonymized micro-data, including by independent researchers engaged in policy-design. Publication of anonymized micro-data and administrative data files will allow third-party analysis and verification. At the same time, it is very important to manage expectations with these triangulations.

Public Disclosure



During implementation key social challenges are related to interagency compatibility, institutional competency, and data privacy. The project will invest only into the AS, while other state data producers (local governments, civil registry etc.) may face challenges, as they have to comply with updated statistical methodology, formats and ICT modules. Besides, access to the AS sampling designs is to be provided to other data producers to avoid creation of parallel partial statistical data. Increased methodological complexity and ICT modules will require more competent staffing, but due to low salaries this might be an issue that affect the project results. Primary data is produced at the sub-regional level, it is therefore a major task of local statistical offices to store micro-data and to prevent any unauthorized access to, or, losses of confidential information.

A particular challenge will be addressing the country's currently limited public access to updated official data, which stifles broad engagement in prioritizing and developing effective policies, as well as accountability for implementing those policies. With increasing methodological complexity, the issues of substantive differences and release timing differences will appear as well. Timely access to the same publications and releases should be secured so all users not only the government agencies, particularly at the regional/sub-regional level.

Finally, since minor small scale repairs and rehabilitation and IT equipment installations will be implemented within the existing buildings only, no resettlement impacts are expected. Other risks such as labor influx and forced/child labor are low.

Overall, the social risk is rated Moderate at this stage.

B. Environment and Social Standards (ESSs) that Apply to the Activities Being Considered

B.1. General Assessment

ESS1 Assessment and Management of Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts

Overview of the relevance of the Standard for the Project:

The project recognizes the following standards as relevant to the project: ESS 1; ESS 2; ESS 3, ESS 4 and ESS 10.

The project will have mostly positive benefits as the interventions will set up a robust statistical system in the country which thence will result in, among others, correct estimates of poverty, gender & vulnerability assessments, and SDG indicators. Environmental impacts expected from the project are negligible and confined to minor rehabilitation for the installation of new equipment, disposal/recycling of electronic waste when equipment is replaced/repared, and improvement of the physical infrastructure of statistical authorities. No civil works will be conducted within the project. As minor rehabilitation of the physical infrastructure and generation of electronic waste are envisaged, the Borrower will prepare an Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP) with the provisions on electronic waste management. The ESMP will be prepared to a standard acceptable to the Bank, consulted, and disclosed prior to project appraisal.

The project will have positive social impacts nationwide by modernization of the NSS focusing on a) expanding the existing statistical indicators dis-aggregated by gender, age, and vulnerable groups; b) digitizing data collections and processing; c) improving the quality of household budgeting survey analysis and poverty statistics; d) ensuring



accurate and timely publication of data; e) facilitating more sophisticated analysis using anonymized micro-data; and f) integrating various NSS databases with line ministries and bodies/data producers.

Key challenges during project implementation are related to interagency compatibility, staff competency, and data privacy. Modernization of the national statistics system will require more system-wide coordination of statistical activities. While project investments are made only into the AS, other statistics producers (other raw data producers) may have challenges, as they have to comply with updated statistical methodology, formats and ICT modules. Besides, access to the AS sampling designs are to be provided to other data producers to avoid creation of parallel partial statistical data. Recruitment, development and retention of qualified staff are among the main challenges of the AS. Increased methodological complexity and ICT modules will require more competent staffing, but due to low salaries this might be an issue that affect the project results. Primary data is produced at the sub-regional level, while the project investments will be mostly made at the central and regional levels. Therefore, information security of the AS local offices should be addressed during project design to prevent any unauthorized access to, or, losses of confidential information.

A particular challenge will be addressing the country's currently limited public access to updated official data, which stifles broad engagement in prioritizing and developing effective policies, as well as accountability for implementing those policies. Some attention should be given by the AS to the institutional transparency at the regional/sub-regional levels, timely access to the same publications and releases should be secured to all users, not only the government agencies.

The project aims to make public the new high-quality data and statistics generated by default. These issues will need to be taken care while designing the interventions, stakeholder engagement plan (SEP) will address many of the issues related to ensuring valid and reliable data as well as its dissemination. The SEP will be publicly consulted with all stakeholders and interested parties and, once acceptable to the Bank, disclosed both nationally and on the World Bank's external website.

REFERENCE MATERIALS:

1. "Tajikistan Macro Poverty Outlook, Spring 2020, World Bank
<https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/infographic/2020/04/27/tajikistan-macro-poverty-outlook-spring-2020>
2. Global Assessment of Official Statistics of Tajikistan, 2012
https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/stats/documents/technical_coop/GA_Tajikistan_ENG.pdf
3. Tajikistan Risk and Resilience Assessment, 2017, World Bank
<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/191141570826500962/Tajikistan-Risk-and-resilience-assessment>
4. "The Skills Road: Skills for Employability in Tajikistan." 2014, World Bank, Washington, DC.

Areas where "Use of Borrower Framework" is being considered:

Given the newness of the ESF for the AS, which is implementing the project, the borrower's framework will not be used for the Project as a whole or for any of its parts.



ESS10 Stakeholder Engagement and Information Disclosure

The project recognizes the need for an effective and inclusive engagement with all of the relevant stakeholders. The key relevant stakeholders are the AS and its branch offices, line ministries, academia and researchers, data producing companies, NGOs, broader business community, other data producers and data users, media and the general public.

The project will not disproportionately impact vulnerable or disadvantaged individuals or groups. On the contrary, a lack of the needed data does not allow the government to use data for targeting the most vulnerable segments of population, especially at district/city and jamoat level.

The project aims to ensure that data is readily accessible and available for use by different stakeholders in order to hold government accountable and have a better understanding of what has and has not been achieved. The media will play an important role by helping to sensitize the public about the activities of the National Statistical System, and to disseminate statistics to the general public. The AS will make statistical data publicly available through its website to encourage public debate on economic, financial and social issues, and enhance citizen engagement in policy development and allocation of public resources. Semi-annual consultations between data producers and data users will be facilitated by the AS Advisory Council to share their needs, ideas, recommendations, and feedback. The project will rely on this platform to directly engage with citizens in the process of strategic planning, implementation, monitoring of statistics and activities supported by the project. The project will also adopt innovative civic technologies to conduct a user satisfaction survey on a rolling basis on the AS website. This mechanism will seek user feedback on key dimensions of statistical data services: (i) importance, relevance, accessibility, visibility and readability of data products and services; (ii) user-friendly features of the AS website (relevance of the content, ease of navigation and search); (iii) transparency, independence, credibility and reliability of the AS as an institution; and (iv) professionalism of AS staff. The AS will discuss feedback with the Statistical Advisory Council with the purpose of adapting processes and will post survey results and actions taken in response on the AS website semi-annually.

More details regarding the stakeholder engagement activities will be described in the Stakeholder Engagement Plan to be prepared by the project, and it will serve the following purposes: (i) stakeholder identification and analysis; (ii) planning engagement modalities viz., effective communication tool for consultations and disclosure especially while a large gathering of people is not possible under COVID situation; and (iii) enabling platforms for influencing decisions; (iv) defining roles and responsibilities of different actors in implementing the Plan; and (iv) a grievance mechanism (GM) for project activities, as well as outlining the broader communications the project will support as part of project design. A draft SEP will be prepared at the earliest during the project preparation and will be disclosed before the project appraisal, and it will be updated during implementation, if needed. As a part of the SEP, the existing AS Grievance Redress Mechanism will be adapted to address the project related grievances from any of the stakeholders at the national, regional and district levels. The existing web-based feedback mechanism will be also used to file complaints and to receive stakeholders' feedback on the project activities. In addition, the hotline operational at the national level will be used to receive project related feedback.

B.2. Specific Risks and Impacts

A brief description of the potential environmental and social risks and impacts relevant to the Project.



ESS2 Labor and Working Conditions

The project shall be carried out in accordance with the applicable requirements of ESS 2, in a manner acceptable to the World Bank, including through, inter alia, implementing adequate occupational health and safety measures (including emergency preparedness and response measures), setting out grievance arrangements for project workers and incorporating labor requirements into the ESHS specifications. These measures will be documented in labor management procedures (LMP) that will be included in the POM to be prepared after the project effectiveness.

The Project encompasses the following categories of workers: direct workers and contracted workers. Direct workers include PIU staff, and other consultants to be governed by mutually agreed labor contracts. Contracted workers will be employed as deemed appropriate by contractors, sub-contractors, and other intermediaries, details of which will be known as and when activities' implementation begins. Civil servants to be engaged in the project, whether full-time or part-time, will remain subject to the terms and conditions of their existing public sector employment agreement or arrangement, unless there has been an effective legal transfer of their employment or engagement to the project. ESS2 will not apply to such government civil servants, except for work force provisions and occupational health and safety.

Given the Covid-19 situation, an EHS checklist as part of the ESMP and Code of Conduct as part of the LMP will be prepared for governing the conduct of all workers to ensure health and safety and to prevent Sexual Exploitation and Abuse/Sexual Harassment (SEA/SH). All workers will have access to the project specific GRM.

ESS3 Resource Efficiency and Pollution Prevention and Management

Dismantled electronic equipment and materials generated during the upgrading of statistics infrastructure may cause risks to human health and the environment if not disposed of in an environmentally sound and safe manner. Where obsolete equipment and materials cannot be reused, they should be recycled or disposed of by licensed contractors. The relevant provisions will be included in the electronic waste management plan. The electronic waste management plan should address the proper dismantling, storage, handling, and final disposal of e-waste in accordance with internationally recognized practices, and should include the monitoring of the types/quantities of waste electrical and electronic equipment disposed of and document evidence of proper management (e.g. recycled, refurbished, discarded, exported). The waste electrical and electronic equipment will be collected at the statistics offices in the capital and provincial centers and transported to the e-waste licensed collection facility in Isfara (in the north of Tajikistan), where e-waste is sorted and compacted before selling to recycling/treatment facilities in China. The relevant e-waste management provisions will be included in the ESMP.

ESS4 Community Health and Safety

Equipment will be installed within the existing footprint of facilities. The volume of the electronic wastes will be small, and they will be managed by the licensed collection facility existing in the country to prevent exposures to the community health and safety. E-waste management provisions will be included into the ESMP to be prepared by the project.



ESS5 Land Acquisition, Restrictions on Land Use and Involuntary Resettlement

Since equipment installation and rehabilitation works will be implemented within the existing buildings only, no involuntary acquisition of lands is expected; nor will there be any restrictions on land use and access. Hence, this ESS is not relevant.

ESS6 Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Management of Living Natural Resources

All works will be conducted within the existing footprint of facilities; hence, ESS 6 is not relevant to the proposed project interventions.

ESS7 Indigenous Peoples/Sub-Saharan African Historically Underserved Traditional Local Communities

This standard is not relevant as there are no indigenous peoples as described in the Standard in Tajikistan.

ESS8 Cultural Heritage

All works will be conducted within the existing footprint of facilities; hence, ESS 8 is not relevant to the proposed project interventions.

ESS9 Financial Intermediaries

Project does not envisage any financial intermediaries.

C. Legal Operational Policies that Apply

OP 7.50 Projects on International Waterways No

OP 7.60 Projects in Disputed Areas No

III. WORLD BANK ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL DUE DILIGENCE

A. Is a common approach being considered? No

Financing Partners

There are no other financing partners.

B. Proposed Measures, Actions and Timing (Borrower’s commitments)

Actions to be completed prior to Bank Board Approval:

1. Develop a Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) and begin implementation as soon as possible; and



2. Prepare an Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP) with the provisions on electronic waste management.

Borrower assisted by the Bank's Environment and Social Team will prepare a draft Environmental and Social Commitment Plan (ESCP) to be acceptable to the WB.

Possible issues to be addressed in the Borrower Environmental and Social Commitment Plan (ESCP):

Prepare a Project Operations Manual (POM) acceptable to the Bank that includes measures to address all the environmental and social risks identified. Conduct an environmental and social review of work designs and E&S risk management following procedures spelled out in the POM;

2. Develop Labor Management Procedures (LMP) as part of the POM and apply LMP (including measures on occupational health and safety and Code of Conduct for all project staff, consultants and workers);
3. Ensure that a qualified environmental and social specialist or consultant is employed to support the Project Management Unit throughout implementation;
4. Ensure compliance with the ESMP and the waste management requirements throughout project implementation.
5. Implement continued stakeholder engagement throughout project cycle and beyond project closure; and
6. Ensure the functionality of the GRM throughout the implementation period.

Public Disclosure

C. Timing

Tentative target date for preparing the Appraisal Stage ESRS

16-Feb-2021

IV. CONTACT POINTS

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Borrower/Client/Recipient

Borrower: Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Tajikistan

Implementing Agency(ies)



Implementing Agency: Agency for Statistics under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan

V. FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT

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VI. APPROVAL

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Safeguards Advisor ESSA	Agnes I. Kiss (SAESSA) Cleared on 29-Nov-2020 at 23:30:39 GMT-05:00