



Building Blocks for a Sturdy Country

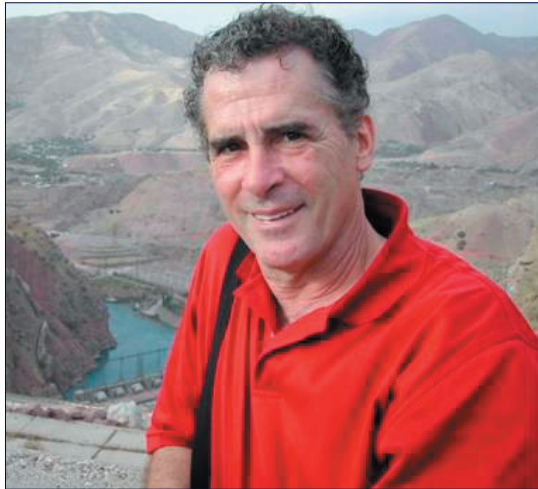


Photo: CDC

USAID Volunteer Patrick King on assignment in Tajikistan to help improve the construction industry.

Construction in Central Asia has grown since the USSR fell, yet production practices are still inefficient, costly, and suffer from a general lack of technical expertise. Construction firms in Tajikistan import materials from China at two to three times the cost of their U.S. value, and homes are built using low-quality, Soviet-style bricks made from pressed mud, which use 50% more material and energy to produce. The bricks also hinder the construction of large, sturdy buildings, since they cannot support their own weight.

USAID brought volunteer Patrick King to Tajikistan to consult with local businesses on how to find a solution to using better bricks. The project's goal is to expand opportunities for participation, livelihood, and quality of life for the citizens of the Central Asian Republics. USAID supports the project to enhance the competitive and managerial capabilities of small and medium-sized businesses in all five republics of Central Asia.

During King's initial assignment, he addressed the problem of high import costs by promoting the local production of construction materials. He developed projects to encourage the building of local brick and drywall manufacturers, using updated machinery and technology. This new technology would produce cheaper, stronger bricks, and given the high deposits of gypsum in the region, King believed Tajikistan could utilize its own resources to boost local production. Before he left Tajikistan in 2003, King also introduced the establishment of a construction association in Dushanbe made up of contractors, architects, designers, and building suppliers in the industry to focus on issues relating to the construction industry in their city and country. Companies are enthusiastic about the association, and progress is well under way.

Photo & Caption

