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**KYRGYZSTAN**

# CASE STUDY

## A Community Keeps the Peace

### A group of leaders mobilizes to protect their community



Photo: Mercy Corps

The Turkishtak community initiative group made plans to ensure the safety of their village.

***The Turkishtak community initiative group quickly informed local residents of the situation in neighboring Uzbekistan and prepared for possible refugees.***

### Challenge

In the hours and days that followed the clashes of May 13, 2005, in Andijan, Uzbekistan, villages across the region's Eastern Ferghana Valley braced themselves as the violence — and those trying to escape it — moved toward the border with Kyrgyzstan. Many of the villages closest to the violence lack formal government representation and have poor communication infrastructures. The paucity of information about the rapidly unfolding events limited villagers' ability to react to the crisis and control the potential for chaos.

### Initiative

Since 2001, USAID has been working to mitigate tensions by mobilizing communities in vulnerable cross-border areas. In the village of Turkishtak, Kyrgyzstan, the effort to keep order was assisted by the community initiative group (CIG), a body of active community leaders formed with USAID training and support. Shortly after the Andijan violence began, a *Ailokmoto* (rural council) phoned the CIG, which immediately initiated measures to secure the community. The group formed a neighborhood patrol, went door-to-door to inform residents of the events in Andijan and kept watch for possible refugees from Uzbekistan. They even organized a makeshift refugee camp in the event that the situation worsened. One CIG member and two of his neighbors prepared a vacant hall in the *shipan* (a building where cotton laborers stay), supplying mattresses, materials and clothing, and selecting two families to prepare food if refugees arrived.

### Results

Fortunately, neither violence nor refugees descended on Turkishtak. Regardless, those CIG members who rose to the occasion and took responsibility for the safety of their community further solidified their role as leaders and decision makers. The communication structure organized and practiced by the CIG with USAID assistance prevented fear from turning into chaos — a success that will continue to enhance the lives and wellbeing of the residents of Tukihtak and preserve their relationship with neighboring Uzbekistan communities.

### Telling Our Story

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