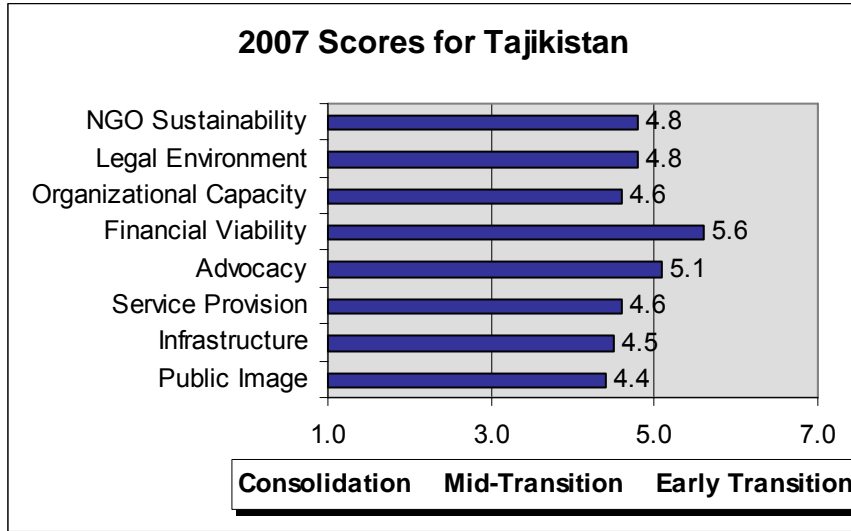


TAJIKISTAN



Capital: Dushanbe

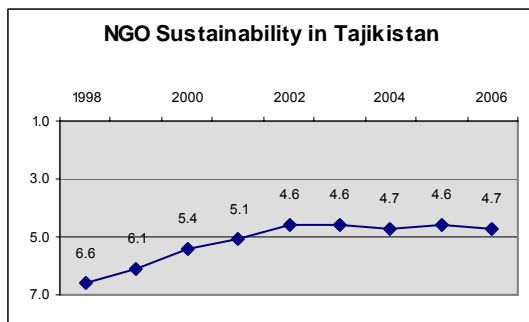
Polity: Republic

Population: 7,211,884 (July 2008 est.)

GDP per capita (PPP): \$1,600 (2007 est.)

NGO SUSTAINABILITY: 4.8

The situation faced by NGOs in Tajikistan deteriorated slightly over the past year. The presidential election and adoption of the new Law on Public Associations shaped the activities of some NGOs, while impeding the further development of others. A number of NGOs engaged in activities leading up to the presidential elections, including a number of voter education projects targeted especially at women and youth. During the same period of time, however, local governments exerted greater control over NGOs working on sensitive issues.



A new Law on Public Associations was adopted in May 2007 as a result of the lobbying efforts of numerous local NGOs, aided by international organizations, such as the International Center

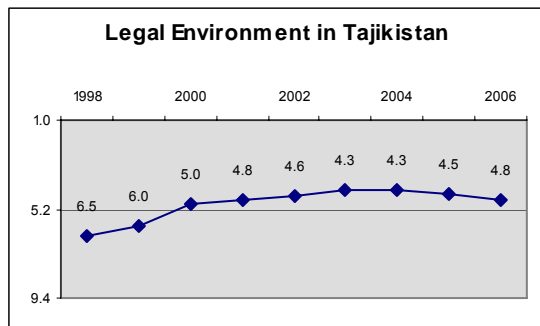
for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL). Some positive changes were introduced by the new law; however, the re-registration requirement in the new legislation has significantly reduced the number of NGOs in the country. According to the Ministry of Justice, after the re-registration period ended on December 31, 2007, the number of registered local NGOs dropped from a total of 3,130 to 1,040 as the majority of organizations failed to meet the re-registration requirements. Those organizations that were not re-registered by the end of December were automatically liquidated and removed from the official registration list. Approximately half of the more than 100 international NGOs applied for re-registration.

NGOs are facing a “moment of truth”: while international donors’ support – both financial and moral – has decreased considerably over the past year, local NGOs are far from being sustainable or independent. Many NGOs are only active when there are funds available, as they have no other means to sustain their activities. Additionally, information sharing, training and technical assistance is diminishing as donor funding recedes.

After many unsuccessful attempts to influence parliament and other government bodies involved in policy-making, NGOs have largely lost interest in working on advocacy.

Relationships with the government on both the national and regional levels remain difficult and marked by distrust.

LEGAL ENVIRONMENT: 4.8



The new Law on Public Associations, adopted on May 17, 2007, introduces many positive changes. NGOs are provided with tax exemptions on grants. However, they receive no deductions on the 25 percent social security or 13 percent income tax on salaries, which they find difficult to pay and which decreases the amount of funding available for implementing programs and hiring qualified personnel. The minimum number of founders required to establish a public association has been decreased to three. State support is provided through government grants and contracts to NGOs. NGOs are permitted to conduct business activities, establish business partnerships, companies, and other business organizations, and acquire property that can be used for business activities. Government officials, including prosecutors, registration officials, and mayors, no longer have the discretion to suspend the activities of a public association without a court decision. Finally, the Law ensures the basic right of citizens to form NGOs

independently, without any prior permission from the government or regulatory authorities, and entitles both natural and legal persons to be founders of a public association.

The new law required all local and international NGOs to re-register by the end of the year. The re-registration process presented several obstacles. The law required an NGO's official representative to appear personally in the registration office; this requirement was further complicated by the short period for re-registration. The Government subjected NGOs that work with foreign organizations to special scrutiny, making it nearly impossible for them to re-register. As a result, many NGOs decided not to spend the time and resources on the re-registration process. Reports of government officials asking for bribes in order to re-register an NGO were frequent, especially in the Khatlon region in the southern part of the country. As mentioned above, the number of NGOs decreased by 70 percent as a result of the re-registration process. While many inactive organizations were winnowed out, active organizations that were unable to complete the process because of these administrative obstacles were eliminated as well.

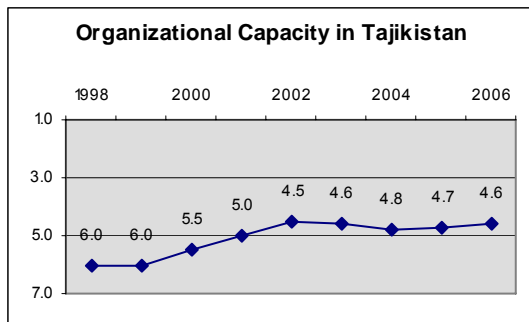
Other than the dramatic effect of the re-registration process, the new law has had minimal impact on NGO operations to date. While the new law more clearly defines the activities of NGOs, it has not solved the legal and organizational problems faced by NGOs.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY: 4.6

Most NGOs write strategic plans to meet donor requirements, as they lack the knowledge, understanding and experience to develop strategic plans based on their own priorities; other NGOs have no idea how to develop strategic plans. Only a few NGOs produce annual reports, as they are not legally required to

do so and have little understanding of their purpose or benefits. Most NGOs' boards of directors exist only on paper; consequently, there is no division of responsibilities between boards of directors, executives and staff members. Most NGOs depend on old office equipment and supplies, as current resources do

not allow them to upgrade or purchase new equipment.



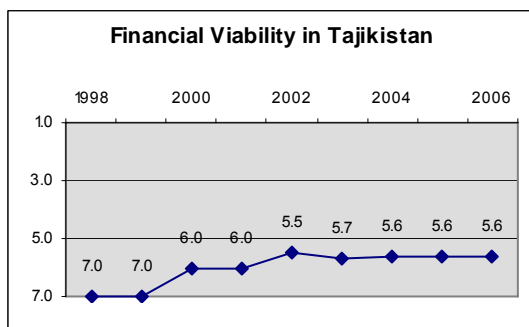
There are no institutions in the country focused on increasing the professional skills of NGO managers or staff, indicating an ongoing need to develop training opportunities to support NGOs. Donors have changed their approach from working directly with NGOs to hiring professional consulting companies to conduct research, surveys, and advisory services, which has forced NGOs to concentrate their efforts in fewer areas where they have expertise.

NGOs have experienced three changes of personnel since 1994, in part because NGOs are viewed as a way to gain experience and training needed to move on to better jobs. The first generation of NGO personnel consisted mainly of former Party and Komsomol activists and government officials; the second generation introduced people without previous Party experience; and the third generation consists of younger and more qualified people. As a result of this turnover, there is a concern that donors will be less interested in enhancing NGO capacities. NGOs still have very small permanent staffs and hire specialists to handle specific projects when they have funds.

Some try to re-register NGOs not out of any commitment to their missions, but to take advantage of grant opportunities. When the Government realizes that the number of NGOs has decreased too much, it is expected to create measures to stimulate the emergence of artificially-created, pro-government NGOs in order to meet the standards and requirements of the international community and donors.

FINANCIAL VIABILITY: 5.6

The financial sustainability of NGOs is linked to the economic development of the country, which is still weak. It is still early to talk about funding diversification for NGOs: donor funding remains the only source of financial support for NGOs, as there are no local financial sources or philanthropists. The government does not allocate any money in the budget for the development of the third sector.



While business entities do provide support and assistance to the poor and needy, they implement

these services directly, as businesses and NGOs lack experience in carrying out joint projects. Businesses are not interested in NGO efforts, nor do they take advantage of the beneficial services that NGOs could provide, such as consultations, market research, and trainings. Although the Government has reduced taxes for business entities providing humanitarian support to five percent, few businesses know about this incentive, so it has had little impact. An amendment recently introduced to the Tax Code also provides business entities supporting educational institutions with tax deductions.

Further complicating prospects for financial sustainability is the fact that NGO staff lack knowledge and experience in fundraising and NGOs are not involved in outreach and philanthropy development programs. Meanwhile, revenues from services are minimal and do not cover expenses.

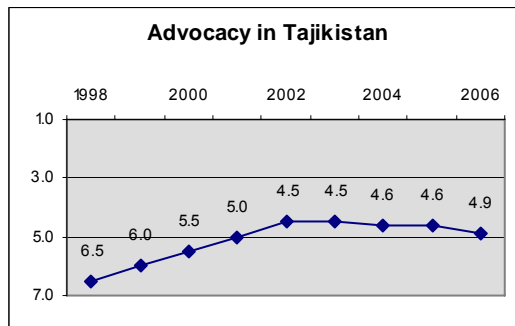
The channeling of international donor support through government agencies has led to the

development of artificially- or government-created NGOs. According to the Judicial Consortium, almost 1,000 NGOs have either

been created by the government, or have access to the government through official and unofficial channels.

ADVOCACY: 5.1

After many unsuccessful attempts to influence parliament and other government bodies involved in policy-making, NGOs lost interest in working toward this objective. NGOs' awareness about existing laws is unsatisfactory.



The replacement of local government leaders after the presidential elections on November 6, 2006, made cooperation between the third sector and government very difficult in various districts and regions of the country. Newly-appointed governors and mayors do not know about NGOs and do not want to cooperate and collaborate with them. Government distrust of NGOs increased after the events in Georgia,

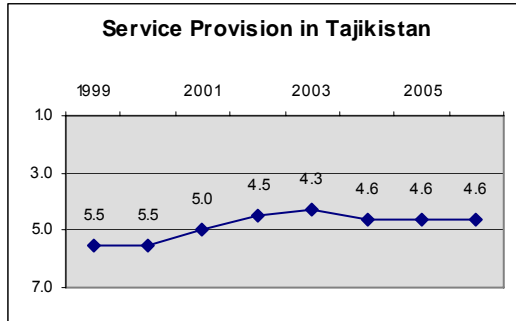
Kyrgyzstan, and Andizhan (Uzbekistan). NGO attempts to shape public opinion or implement advocacy campaigns are hampered or viewed with hostility by government bodies. The government still treats NGOs as subordinates, as opposed to equal partners. NGO leaders generally pursue their personal interests over public interests, which impedes the development of issue-based coalitions and the implementation of broad-based advocacy campaigns.

To some extent, advocacy does not exist in Tajikistan. Society does not understand the meaning of public interest and the government perceives all advocacy activities as being connected with the opposition, which is still associated with the civil war. As a result, it is common practice for NGOs to seek permission from local authorities before carrying out legal or political awareness raising activities. NGOs need to figure out how to deal with these issues in order to advocate for the interests of their constituents.

SERVICE PROVISION: 4.6

NGOs successfully engage in a broad range of services, from the provision of basic social services to conducting research and analysis for private and public entities. The provision of information and consulting services has significantly increased. There are three notable trends related to service provision: first, NGOs are more focused and committed to providing services; second, their services increasingly reflect the needs and priorities of their constituents and communities; and third, NGOs now act more proactively in organizing exhibitions and other events to promote their products and services, rather than relying on international donors to do this.

The number of government grants and contracts to NGOs for the provision of social services has increased, but the awards are poorly managed by the government. There is no transparency in announcing tenders, choosing contractors, or reporting on procurements. Furthermore, the procurements are not listed in the country's budget, making it difficult to monitor the process systematically. Only a limited number of



government institutions, ministries and government bodies are involved in contracting out social services. Many contracts go to GONGOs. Additionally, although the government recognizes NGO capacities, it prefers to invite international experts to provide

INFRASTRUCTURE: 4.5

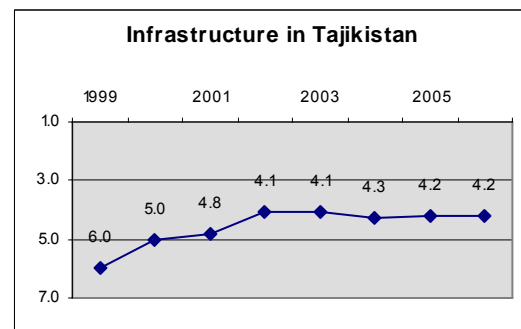
As donor funding recedes, there is less information sharing, training, and technical assistance. While the seven Civil Society Support Centers were very active at one time, now they are barely surviving. Fees for services rendered do not cover expenses and they only occasionally receive international funding to implement community-based projects, primarily from UN agencies. As a result of these financial problems, the Dushanbe CSSC is now in the process of closing down. There are no formal NGO coalitions in operation, although some informal coalitions exist. However, these coalitions were established artificially in the hope that they would ease access to grants and improve their members' image with the government and international community, as opposed to being based on common interests. There are few materials published in Tajik. Meetings and gatherings of NGOs, which were previously organized by donors, have become less common.

Both the government and international donors have compiled lists classifying NGOs by field, which allows for easy identification of NGOs that can work to address a particular issue. Partnership of NGOs with government agencies

consulting services or implement contracts. The new Law on Public Associations provides incentives for NGOs to apply for government contracts in the housing area, but the provisions are unclear and therefore considered much more difficult than the old law.

NGOs lack knowledge and expertise on marketing, export and import procedures, and participation in tenders, which is necessary if they want to extend their cooperation with and services to the business community. Furthermore, there is great distrust and competition among NGOs, which prevents them from consolidating their efforts or networking to provide jointly-developed services.

depends on the topic and the personal interest of the government officials. One important issue that continues to affect the sector is that local NGOs that were established with foreign support have not become "Tajik," but rather have remained either Russian or Western with little understanding of Tajik society and institutions.



The sector has high expectations for the first national forum of NGOs to be organized next spring. Two important documents – the Tajikistan National NGO Development Program and Code of Conduct – are expected to be adopted during the forum, which will analyze the existing situation of the NGO sector and contribute to its future development.

PUBLIC IMAGE: 4.4

Certain myths about NGOs have disappeared. At one time, NGOs were considered partners in reforming Tajik society's old Soviet practices. The government recognized the power of NGOs. NGOs presented their work through the mass media. High government officials, including the President, talked about NGOs and their role in the society. The sector was recognized to be strong and important and NGOs were invited to monitor important documents such as the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper for 2005-2015. Despite this, the NGO sector continues to have a weak public image and low public support. According to research carried out with the support of the Aga Khan Foundation, the 40 percent of the population that does not benefit from NGO work has no idea what NGOs represent or what types of activities they implement.

Unfortunately, the Tajik intelligentsia does not have an accurate perception of NGOs either. Even professors in higher educational institutions know little about NGOs and their role in society. In most cases, the intelligentsia associates NGOs with the provision of humanitarian aid and relief work and confuses this with the work of the UN, which engaged in such activities in the aftermath of the civil war.

There is a shortage of information about NGOs on TV and in other media. However, this is caused more by the mass media's own problems

than any conflict between NGOs and media. Attempts to publish a newspaper focused on the third sector have been unsuccessful to date. NGOs need to actively publicize their activities by writing about themselves and their accomplishments.

There are many contradictions when it comes to the public perception of NGOs. While some NGOs have a very strong image and have achieved a lot, they are little known in the country. On the other hand, others may have performed poorly and not accomplished much, but are perceived as active and have therefore become popular with the public. The public image of some previously well-known NGOs has declined because of weak financial sustainability, limiting their ability to provide humanitarian support; other well-known NGOs have suffered erosion of their public images, but have gained government support and therefore remain quite sustainable.

