



## Project “Community based tourism in the Zerafshan valley”

### Introduction:

Tourism to the two main attractions of Tajikistan, the Pamir and the Fann Mountains in the Zeravshan Valley, is slowly resuming – however at a fraction of its former volume. Consequently, tourism has currently just a marginal impact on the overall Tajik economy. The central government's interest in the tourism sector is therefore rather limited. In the resource poor mountainous areas however, authorities are increasingly putting their hopes into tourism as an alternative economic sector.



*Pic.1 Summertime in Iskanderkul, Ayni*

The responsibility to develop tourism in Tajikistan was delegated to the state agency “Sayoh”, which was contracted by the “Ministry of Economy and Trade” to support and regulate tourism in the country. However, this initiative has so far failed to produce tangible results and the government has been urged by international experts to review the role of Sayoh<sup>1</sup>.

The action aims at the assistance to local public association ASDP Nau ([www.agencynau.tj](http://www.agencynau.tj)), local authorities (district, jamoat, village level) and local initiatives as counterpart to the Central State authorities in order to develop and maintain a sustainable Community based Tourism Program in Zerafshan which provides additional income to the target group (service providers) and improves small business opportunities in the Valley.

The project has to be seen as part of the development program, which DWHH/GAA is currently implementing in the Zerafshan Valley (Household Food Security- EC funded, Community and Agricultural Watershed Management- in Cooperation with the Tajik Government- World Bank funded), the Zerafshan Development Program implemented by UNDP, and Socio-economic Development Strategy of Jamoat Fon-Daryo implemented by ASDP Nau. The proposed action will complement the efforts of these programs in a specific niche, but it will as well benefit from the results of these programs, especially with regard to Community mobilization.

### Project Objective

To revitalize of tourism as a viable economic sector in Tajikistan’s Zerafshan Valley in an effort to diversify sources of income of the valley’s inhabitants.

### Beneficiaries:

Taking into account special requirements (housing) moderately vulnerable households (low, instable income, limited access to land, labour migration/ female-headed households, but stable, acceptable housing and hygienic conditions) will be considered. It is expected, that during this

<sup>1</sup> GTZ “Tourism Study Tajikistan”, 2004



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pilot project with its geographically limited scope, the number of direct beneficiaries will be around 200.

The number of indirect beneficiaries (owing to the multiplier effects) is estimated at approximately 12'000 (inhabitants of 6 clusters/15 target villages in Ayni, Penjikent and Gornaya Matcha).

**Location:** Tajikistan, Zeravshan Valley: districts of Ayni, Penjikent and Gornaya Matcha

**Project period:** 01.02.2007- 01.08.2009

### Financed by:

European Commission (IBPP) – 200000eur (71,72%)  
Co-financed by the Welthungerhilfe – 78880eur (28,8%)

Total: 278880eur (100%)



*Pic.2 Tourist in the Alauddin lakes, Ayni district*

### Main Project Activities:

- Creation of Tourism Interest Groups (TIG) in 6 pilot areas and provision of standardized training.
- Creation of a Tourism Development Association and registration as local entity
- Technical training of individual service providers in order to meet required standards
- Support to community based tourism start-ups and existing individual service providers
- Exchange with similar, but more advanced CbT projects in Tajikistan and its neighbouring countries in order to learn from peers
- Standardization and certification of services
- Creation of attractive packages for external marketing
- Lobbying for removal of barriers to tourism at local and national level
- Improvement of infrastructure in the pilot areas
- Creation of information and promotion material
- Creation of an updated tourist map of the region
- Creation of a web-site presenting Community based Tourism in the Zeravshan Valley
- Establishment of contacts with tourism agencies and tour operators
- Development of new marketing strategies
- Organization of „familiarization tours“ for tourist agencies and media
- Creation of a tourist information point in the Ayni Crossroads Marketing Centre.

### Status of implementation

By the end of 2008, all six Tourist Initiative Groups (TIGs) from 15 target villages have been created and capacity building activities have been implementing; 10 members from 6 TIGs have participated in exchange visit organized by KCBTA (Kyrgyzstan Community Based Tourism Association), and they started to put into practice gained knowledge which is applicable in the project area. Rehabilitation of touristic infrastructure is finished, except of 3 homestays out of



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20; building materials, billboards and signboard are distributed among the target clusters and service providers; have been created Zerafshan Tourism Development Association (ZTDA); two tourist information points in the Ayni Crossroads Marketing Centre and Penjikent have been created; marketing strategies for project progress and ZTDA promotion are developed; at least 10 touristic packages are formed and started to realize; established contacts with local and regional authorities, tour and development agencies; created web-site presenting Community based Tourism in the Zerafshan Valley ([www.ztda-tourism.tj](http://www.ztda-tourism.tj)); have been created Zerafshan Tourism Development Association (ZTDA); project and ZTDA staff took part in the several International Tourism Fairs hold in Tashkent, Dushanbe, Khiva, and Stuttgart where new contacts were found to closely collaborate in joint itinerary development and realization; familiarization tour was organized in Seven Lakes of Penjikent where representatives of Media, tour-operators, government, NGO and other international development agencies have been involved; Zerafshan Promotion Day ‘Sadoi Kuhiston’ have been organized jointly with WHH, DED, Bactria Cultural Centre; standardization and certification of ZTDA services have been started; basic touristic equipment for the project beneficiaries have been purchased and its dissemination is planned to hold before May 2009; creation of an updated tourist map of the region is started jointly with National Agency for Landuse, Geodesy and Map Factory (finalization period – July ‘09); project and ZTDA staff took part in the several national round tables and conferences (in the frame of TCBTA – Tajik Community Based Tourism Association and meetings initiated by the Committee for youth affairs, sport and tourism under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan) to lobby removal of barriers to tourism at local and national level.

The remaining half a year will concentrate on the touristic map elaboration printing, conducting two more technical trainings for guides and other service providers, conduction one more test tour including such clusters as Veshab, Madrushkat and Yagnob, institutional development of the ZTDA, strengthening of TIGs and assistance in improvement of available service quality, standardization and certification of the services and implementation of marketing strategies to promote Zerafshan valley as a tourism destination in local and international level as well as attract more tourists to the region.

### Project Achievements/challenges

- Members of Touristic Initiative Groups (service providers) contribute to their own development (15-20%) while the action supports them in rehabilitation of their touristic infrastructure, development of tour products and joint capacity building;
- Creation of Tourism Development Association for Zerafshan, it’s registration as a legal entity and gradually authorizing of community to prioritize their problems, find solutions and control over the development processes by themselves could lead to sustainable community driven development and “incremental innovation” in the area challenging of participation and self-responsibility;
- The project intends to revitalize traditional system of eco and agro tourism development (supporting handicrafts, folklores, presenting local culture and customs to outsiders) by preserving nature and its unique resources which is the most actual topic challenging the fight against Global warming.

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