

**'EXPERT' Center for Social Research (Uzbekistan)**

# **Consultations with the Poor**

**Participatory Poverty Assessment in Uzbekistan  
for the World Development Report 2000/01**

National Synthesis Report

**Uzbekistan**

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The findings, interpretations, and conclusions expressed here are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the World Bank, its Board of Executive Directors, or the governments they represent.

## Preface

This study is part of a global research effort entitled *Consultations with the Poor*, designed to inform the *World Development Report 2000/1 on Poverty and Development*. The research involved poor people in twenty-three countries around the world. The effort also included two comprehensive reviews of Participatory Poverty Assessments completed in recent years by the World Bank and other agencies. Deepa Narayan, Principal Social Development Specialist in the World Bank's Poverty Group, initiated and led the research effort.

The global *Consultations with the Poor* is unique in two respects. It is the first large scale comparative research effort using participatory methods to focus on the voices of the poor. It is also the first time that the World Development Report is drawing on participatory research in a systematic fashion. Much has been learned in this process about how to conduct Participatory Poverty Assessments on a major scale across countries so that they have policy relevance. Findings from the country studies are already being used at the national level, and the methodology developed by the study team is already being adopted by many others.

We want to congratulate the network of 23 country research teams who mobilized at such short notice and completed the studies within six months. We also want to thank Deepa Narayan and her team: Patti Petesch, Consultant, provided overall coordination; Meera Kaul Shah, Consultant, provided methodological guidance; Ulrike Erhardt provided administrative assistance; and the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex provided advisory support. More than a hundred colleagues within the World Bank also contributed greatly by identifying and supporting the local research teams. Anis Dani and Nora Dudwick helped to adapt the study methodology and provide guidance to the research teams from Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

The study would not have been possible without the generous financial support of the U.K. Department for International Development (DFID), numerous departments within the World Bank, the Swedish International Development Agency, John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and several NGOs.

The completion of these studies in a way is just the beginning. We must now ensure that the findings lead to follow-up action to make a difference in the lives of the poor.

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This work would have been impossible to accomplish without the assistance provided locally by the leaders and active members of the Rural Citizen Assemblies and the *Mahalla* Committees at sites where the research was conducted. We are grateful to many representatives of the local authorities for not interfering, and in some cases for helping, with the realization of our research. Uzbek people and other nationalities in Uzbekistan traditionally esteem knowledge and revere those who possess it. This fact played a decisive role in making this rather precarious research possible.

The Uzbekistan team gives special thanks to the World Bank. Because of the research design and the methods utilized, we were given the opportunity of taking a fresh look at our own country, thus allowing us to sense and experience the concerns of the millions of people that surround us. Every person whose life path our own happened to cross became for us a unique and fascinating universe. Honestly speaking, the sympathy and sense of sharing the destiny of each person encountered which arose during the research was an experience never achieved in any of our previous studies, either qualitative or quantitative. Beyond the regular harvest of figures, quotations and transcripts obtained in the course of any study, we gained something from this particular project which is impossible to express in any kind of analytical report, including this one. This sensation of insight and sympathy for our own people is the most important finding of this study. We hope that despite the translation inaccuracies, our readers will be able to feel the concerns and worries of people living in Uzbekistan.

We also appreciate deeply the contribution of American researchers, students and citizens who, with great enthusiasm, proofread and edited the English translation of the text of several of the reports, doing this work for only a token fee because the lion's share of resources was spent on translation proper. We are particularly grateful to the sociocultural anthropologist Theresa Truax who was such an ardent editor, revising and correcting the texts she edited as though they were part of her own dissertation. Her knowledge, precision, questions, remarks and comments went beyond the responsibilities of an editor and became part of our analysis. In a word, the research under this project has been made possible owing to the eager and concerned participation of many people who, together with the research team directly involved, constituted a true fusion of allies.

# 1. Background

## 1.1 Study Purpose

The purpose of *Consultations with the Poor* is to enable a wide range of poor people in diverse countries and conditions to share their views in such a way that they can inform and contribute to the concepts and content of the *World Development Report 2000/01 (WDR)*.

"Expert" Center for social research was assigned to conduct fieldwork in Uzbekistan. The purpose of the fieldwork was to gather information on three sets of the following issues:

- ◆ Well-being and trends over time, including security, risk, vulnerability, exclusion, opportunity, and crime and conflict.
- ◆ Priority problems and concerns, including unemployment, wage arrears, asset depletion, status of social services and other entitlements, access to productive resources and economic opportunities.
- ◆ Institutional analysis, including institutional responsibility for maintenance of social assets and delivery of social services; information about functions, entitlements from, and rules of public institutions; trust and confidence in, and ratings of the effectiveness of different institutions, including governmental, NGO and market institutions.
- ◆ Changes in gender relations at the household and community levels.

## 1.2 Selected Sites and Configuration of Work

Three regions of the country similar in socio-economic features were selected: the Tashkent «zone,» Karakalpakstan, and the Ferghana Valley.

1. The first region we have named provisionally the Tashkent zone. This includes Tashkent city and Tashkent province, located in the northwest of the country. The Tashkent zone is the most industrially developed region of the republic and has a high share of Russian-speaking groups such as Russians, Ukrainians, Tatars, Koreans, Germans, and others. It is in this region that the majority of scientific research and educational institutions are located. In recent years a class of so-called «new poor» has formed due to a decline in scientific research and education connected with budget cuts in this field and in the field of social services in general. The core of this class of «new poor» consists of the intelligentsia<sup>1</sup> and highly qualified specialists; that is, that highly educated segment of the population which constituted the core of the Soviet middle class. One of the sites in this region was selected because of the probability of inclusion of representatives of these urban «new poor» in the OEGDs.
  - ◆ First to be selected in the Tashkent zone was Ulughbek village, built during the Soviet period expressly for employees of the Institute of Nuclear Physics, one of the largest academic institutions in the country. After the breakup of the Soviet Union and the termination of financing from the Soviet military-industrial complex, significant personnel reductions took place at the institute and many villagers found themselves suddenly in the class of poor people after they lost their jobs.
  - ◆ Oitanghali village of Oqqurghon district was selected as the second site, because it appeared to be representative of the rural population of the Tashkent province.

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<sup>1</sup> By this, we mean that portion of the populace who: 1) had received a higher education; 2) had professional careers as doctors, lawyers, professors, school teachers, instructors, scientific researchers, etc.; and 3) were involved in the fine arts or literature.

- ◆ The Industrial city of Almalyk was selected as the third site. The capital of Tashkent city is surrounded by a belt of industrial cities, including Almalyk. After the loss of economic ties which had formerly incorporated Uzbekistan into the economic complex of the USSR, many industrial enterprises of this region saw a reduction in operations and jobs. Thus, it seemed important to examine the social consequences of such reductions in the industrial sector.
2. Karakalpkstan, located in the northeast of the country, is a republic with rights of autonomy located within the territory of the Republic of Uzbekistan. As such, Karakalpakstan has its own parliament and its own state language (Karakalpak).<sup>1</sup> Karakalpaks constitute the main segment of the population of Karakalpakstan (40%). Moreover, this region is burdened by the ecological disaster of the Aral Sea, located in the north of Karakalpakstan. Over the last 20 years, the Aral Sea has all but dried up due to unlimited use of its feed-waters for irrigation. These waters were diverted from the two rivers of the Amu Darya and the Syr Darya, the main tributaries feeding into the Aral. The three following sites were chosen in Karakalpakstan:
- ◆ Turtkul district, which is located in the south of the autonomous republic in the same oasis areas as Khorezm province. Uzbeks constitute the majority of the population of Turtkul. Because this region is an ancient farming zone, Tazabagyab village was selected there so as to achieve a representative sampling of the variety of rural economies present in the republic. The Qyzyl Qum desert is located around this oasis zone.
  - ◆ Takhtakupyr district is located in the north of the autonomous republic. Here Kazakhs and Karakalpaks constitute the majority of the population. Farming was developed here relatively recently, in the last 30 years or so, and the local population traditionally breed cattle. Here another rural settlement was chosen, that of Takhtakupyr village. This district is also surrounded by the Qyzyl Qum desert.
  - ◆ Muynak city is located in the far north of the autonomous republic. About 30 years ago Muynak was located on the banks of the Aral Sea, but since the drying up of the inland sea, the Aral shore has moved some 200 km from the city and the fishing industry which formed the basis of the city's economy has gone into gross decline. This progressively dying city has become a symbol of ecological disaster, both in Uzbekistan and abroad.
3. Ferghana Valley is located in the southeast of the country and constitutes the most populated oasis within the whole of Central Asia. Although the hot climate and availability of water resources from the Syr Darya river have created favorable conditions here for farming, population density in this region makes for much social tension. It is here that the heart of the Islamist opposition to the existing Uzbekistan regime is located. The valley itself is divided by three states: Kyrgyzstan, represented by Osh province; Tajikistan, represented by Leninabad province, and Uzbekistan, represented by the three regions of Andijan, Ferghana and Namangan. In the beginning we had planned to carry out work in three sites of Andijan province, but after finishing our work in the first two sites originally chosen, our team was forced to move to the neighboring province of Ferghana due to interference by the local provincial *hokimiyat*.<sup>2</sup> The following two rural and one urban sites were selected:
- ◆ Oq Oltyn *sovkhov*<sup>3</sup> in Ulughnor district of Andijan province is an area of virgin lands which were opened up in the 1960s, somewhat unusual for Ferghana valley an ancient farming zone. Oq Oltyn *sovkhov* was

<sup>1</sup> Together with the Uzbek language which is the state language for the entire territory of Uzbekistan.

<sup>2</sup> *hokimiyat* – Uzb. An organ of executive power in Uzbekistan which exists at each level of state administrative division – provincial, city, and district. The *hokim*, the highest authority in the *hokimiyat*, is appointed by the senior executive branch and approved by the relevant body of representative power. Provincial leaders and the mayor of the national capital of Tashkent city (both termed *hokim*) are appointed by the president of the republic and approved by the *Oliy Majlis*, the Supreme Parliament, the senior legislative authority.

<sup>3</sup> *sovkhov* – Rus. An abbreviation of *Sovietskoye khozyaistvo*, a state farm. In the site in question the term is still in use, although the «Oq Oltyn» *sovkhov* has formally been renamed as the Oq Oltyn association of *shirkats*

established in 1968 when emigrants from neighboring districts and provinces settled there. Ulughnor district is considered to be one of the poorest districts in the province. Ulughnor district is located in a valley steppe zone.

- ◆ Dilqushod village in Khodjaabad district of Andijan province is located on the Uzbek-Kyrgyz border. In 1990 ethnic conflicts between Uzbeks and Kyrgyz broke out in the neighboring city of Osh and extended at least as far as this village. The site was chosen because of the ethnic mix of Kyrgyz and Uzbeks and because it is geographically distinct from Ulughnor district. Dilqushod village is located in the foot-hills of the Tien-Shian mountains and the growing of fruits and vegetables is widespread.
- ◆ The city of Dangara of the Ferghana province is a small metropolis we held in reserve as a possible alternative in case problems emerged with the authorities of Andijan province.<sup>1</sup> Because the authorities began to interfere with our research, Dangara was suggested as an alternative because Dangara district is considered to be one of the poorest areas of Ferghana province.

In addition to the eight standard OEGDs conducted at each site, three special OEGDs which reflected noteworthy sections of the overall population were also conducted. Two group discussions were conducted in Tashkent: one with students who study in universities of the capital and who have come from the provinces; and one with women *mardikorlar*<sup>2</sup> recruited at the *mardikor* market. The third of the special OEGDs was conducted with Central Asian gypsies in Qoqand city, where they have their own community.

The composition of the OEGDs in each site was as follows:

- ◆ 1 group mixed both by gender and socio-economic class, in order to obtain a social mapping of the community or settlement
- ◆ 1 group of younger poor women
- ◆ 1 group of older poor women
- ◆ 1 group of younger poor men
- ◆ 1 group of older poor men
- ◆ 1 group of youths (or children)
- ◆ 1 group of the elderly
- ◆ 1 group discussion with a special group

The composition of the case studies conducted in each site was as follows:

- ◆ 1 poor man who was not poor ten years ago
- ◆ 1 poor woman who was not poor ten years ago

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(*shirkatlar uyushmasi*, Uzb.). Former work brigades (basic *sovkhos* units) are now called *shirkats*, with the word «*shirkat*» referring in Uzbek to «a cooperative society.» However, the gloss of a new name has changed the organization of the *sovkhos* very little: it is still an enterprise fully controlled by the government and is obliged to fulfill plans and goals dictated from «above.» This fact was testified to by the story told to us in the OEGDs concerning the plastic film used to cover the cotton crops to protect them from precipitation and frosts (see below). The *sovkhos* was compelled to cover the area sown under cotton crops with this film despite the obvious economic loss to the *sovkhos* and the health problems induced by it. Furthermore, because the *sovkhos* chairman is appointed by the *hokimiyat*, he is bound to comply with the chain of command which put him in office. The *sovkhos* leadership is also influential in the *de facto* allocation of land plots for housing, household subsistence plots (*tamarka*) and private farm plots.

<sup>1</sup> Alternative sites were conceived for each site selected in case of problems.

<sup>2</sup> *mardikorlar* – Uzb., pl. Itinerant hired workers who work on a daily basis.

- ◆ 1 man who is better off now than he was ten years ago
- ◆ 1 woman who is better off now than she was ten years ago
- ◆ 1 poor youth
- ◆ 1 poor elderly person

### 1.3 Methodology and Process

In general, the methods outlined in the research design worked quite well for Uzbekistan. Exceptions to this include the failures encountered with the method of scoring institutions according to the criteria of "trust," «provides help when needed,» «effective,» and «people play a role in the decision making process.» Many participants of the groups tended to evaluate institutions in a more generalized fashion without differentiating between such discrete criteria.

Research was conducted in the following sequence. After our return from Bulgaria and once the preparation of the necessary fieldwork and training documents in the Uzbek and Russian languages had been accomplished a 5-day training course was conducted from the 26<sup>th</sup> to the 30<sup>th</sup> of March. During training 3 OEGDs and 2 case studies were conducted in full program, and all team members participated there as observers except for some members of the Karakalpak group of facilitators who were not able to come for training. Instead, Arustan Zholdasov performed local training with them at a later date. All key team members acted both as facilitators and as interviewers during the training. Collective analysis, discussion, and analysis of mistakes was carried out according to the outcome of each group discussion and interview.

Fieldwork in the Tashkent zone and in Andijan province began between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and the 4<sup>th</sup> of April. In Karakalpakstan fieldwork began on April 7<sup>th</sup>. Prior to this, Arustan Zholdasov conducted a training session for the local facilitators who were not able to come to Tashkent earlier. Fieldwork was finished in the Tashkent zone on April 27<sup>th</sup>, in the Ferghana Valley on April 30<sup>th</sup>, and in Karakalpakstan on May 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Outside of the eight OEGDs carried out in the selected sites, three special group discussions were conducted later: one on May 20<sup>th</sup> with Tashkent city students who had come from the provinces; one on May 22<sup>nd</sup> with women *mardikorlar* in Tashkent city; and on May 24<sup>th</sup> with gypsies of Qoqand city.

The following organizational and technical problems occurred during fieldwork:

- ◆ After two days of work in Tazabagyab village in the Turtkul district of Karakalpakstan, Arustan Zholdasov and his team were woken up in the middle of the night by a special police crew called over from the district center by a local policeman. The latter reported to his bosses that some group headed by a bearded man<sup>1</sup> was conducting strange discussions with the population of Tazabagyab village. The overall situation in that district was tense at that time because just prior to the start of fieldwork several armed men had hijacked a bus going from Khorezm to Bukhara filled with passengers. Three security officers and policemen and two passengers were killed in the shootout that ensued. Prior to this event, several bombs exploded in the capital of Tashkent on February 16<sup>th</sup>. Responsibility for both of these acts was placed by the government on Islamist and democratic opposition forces. Given such a context, the activities of the research team could not help but be seen as suspect by the local security authorities. On the morning after, the identification of the team members was clarified and they were released. However, they had to stop their work in that region. They moved to the city of Nukus and then to Takhtakupyr district for work at a second site where fieldwork was completed without incident. After work in Takhtakupyr district was completed Arustan Zholdasov managed to get permission to carry out work in Turtkul district.

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<sup>1</sup> By this, the policeman meant to signal that the person in question, team leader Arustan Zholdasov, must be a «Wahhabi,» a member of the Islamist opposition. The wearing of the *hajji* beard has been forbidden and is highly censured by the authorities.

- ◆ At the moment of the conclusion of fieldwork, local authorities in Khodjaabad district began to pay conspicuous attention to the activities of the research team members. Every day representatives of the *hokimiyat* came to the group and asked when they were to finish their work. The team began to have misgivings and suspected that the authorities might take some actions against them. They quickly moved to Andijan city after the conclusion of the triangle session. After agreeing with Alisher Ikhamov, the decision was taken to discontinue work in Andijan province so as to avoid problems with the local authorities. Dangara city was thus selected as the next site in the neighboring province of Ferghana. Located in the Ferghana Valley, these two provinces are similar to one another in several ways: both are located in the same oasis; both have high population density; both have almost the same range of social and economic problems; and the ethnic Uzbeks dominate in both regions.
- ◆ The Andijan research team did not have much experience in writing analytical reports, and therefore the synthesized part of report preparation was done for the first two sites by the national team leader. In general, all three teams progressed very slowly with the preparation of reports and a long period following the conclusion of fieldwork was needed for the reports to be completed.

#### 1.4 Members of the Study Team

Work on the collection and processing of data was executed by the following persons:

No	Name	Position	Area of work
1	Alisher Ikhamov	National team leader	Uzbekistan
2	Igor Pogrebov	Regional team leader	Tashkent zone
3	Munisa Sharipova	Facilitator	Tashkent zone
4	Suyun Muhammedov	Facilitator	Tashkent zone
5	Sadriddin Yadgorov	Facilitator	Tashkent zone
6	Hayat Bahromov	Facilitator	Tashkent zone
7	Mavlyuda Ashtuhtarova	Facilitator	Tashkent zone
8	Arustan Zholdasov	Regional team leader	Karakalpakstan
9	Sanym Zholdasova	Facilitator	Karakalpakstan
10	Sali Sadykov	Facilitator	Karakalpakstan
11	Erkin Alimjan-uly	Facilitator	Karakalpakstan
12	Salimash Baimagambetova	Facilitator	Karakalpakstan
13	Nigar Davletbayeva	Facilitator	Karakalpakstan
14	Saken Zhulamanov	Facilitator	Karakalpakstan
15	Tamara Zhulamanova	Facilitator	Karakalpakstan
16	Hasan Nazarov	Regional team leader	Ferghana Valley
17	Dilorom Gulyamova	Facilitator	Ferghana Valley
18	Shamurad Bahromov	Facilitator	Ferghana Valley
19	Muqaddas Azizova	Facilitator	Ferghana Valley
20	Zainiddin Khodjayev	Facilitator	Ferghana Valley
21	Theresa Truax	English Language Editor	Country Report, Ulughnor & Oitamghali Site Reports
22	Sara Beares Comeau	English Language Editor	Ulughbek Site Report

## 2. Executive Summary: Main Findings

In most of the groups the three following blocks of criteria were proposed as criteria of well-being:

- ◆ Economic prosperity of a family: availability of a house, an apartment, enough money for food and food products.
- ◆ Peace and calm in the family, country and one's own community.
- ◆ Security of one's children, especially when they grow up and have families of their own.

The participants identified the following categories of households and their proportion in their own communities:

1. The very rich – 1-2%
2. The rich – 3-5%
3. The well-to-do – 5-10%
4. The middle class – 20%
5. The poor – 40-80%
6. The destitute – 1-5%

The study revealed that the most important factors of belonging to a certain category are as follows:

- ◆ Availability of land and cattle which are one of the main sources of livelihood for households, especially in rural areas.
- ◆ Availability of a permanent full-time job essentially in government-funded organizations, where salaries are paid regularly and without delays.
- ◆ Expected or effected costs of one's adult children's wedding. Those who were able to give their children in marriage without outside assistance can be considered to be among the current middle class. Those who have yet to assume these costs, on the other hand, find themselves on the edge of impoverishment and bankruptcy. This problem is particularly acute in Karakalpakstan where the practice of paying *qalym*<sup>1</sup> for the bride has been recently revived.

Comparison with past eras has shown that the last decade has brought a high degree of social stratification. If ten to fifteen years ago only three social classes could be distinguished – the middle class, the rich, and the poor – nowadays there are more than six. New categories have appeared, such as the rich and the very rich, the poor and the destitute. If formerly the middle class constituted 80-85% of the population, today most people can be considered poor (in accordance with the evaluations made in the OEGDs their number varies between 40%-80%). This means that pauperization of the largest portion of the population has occurred over the last ten to fifteen years.

When discussing criteria of well-being such as social security, risks, opportunities and social cohesion, the OEGD participants noted that the quality of life of the majority had deteriorated. Medical services, secondary and higher education have declined in quality and have become more expensive. Even a job can no longer assure well-being because of the problem of wage arrears, and the fact that current wages can in no way keep pace with the rate of inflation. Housing problems have become more acute because the government no longer guarantees the provision of homes to its citizens. At the same time, under current socioeconomic conditions, poor people cannot afford to buy homes. In rural areas this problem is in part resolved by means of individual construction of houses on land

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<sup>1</sup> *qalym* – Karakalpak. «Bride-price». Wealth or money given to the bride's family by the groom.

plots provided by the local authorities and with the help of relatives. Regularly paid pensions and allowances provided by *mahalla* committees<sup>1</sup> assure a certain degree of security for the poorest households.

In some areas new opportunities have emerged. Because the ban on entrepreneurial activity was lifted following the break-up of the Soviet Union, some people were able to improve their economic situation through engagement in trade and other kinds of business. The provision of new land holdings and the privatization of cattle enabled rural people to make ends meet in this difficult transition period when salaries go regularly unpaid. Young people now have the prospect, however slim they may be in rural areas, of receiving an education abroad.<sup>2</sup> Those regions located in the vicinity of large markets and areas with well-developed and functioning industry are in the most favorable situation.

Several OEGD participants noted the community of Central Asian gypsies (*lulilar*, Uzb., pl.) as a socially excluded group. However, these gypsies themselves reject their ethnonym of *luli* and try to integrate into the local Uzbek community. These people often face insults and a contemptuous and disdainful attitude on the part of the surrounding community, officials, and law enforcement agencies in particular. Also mentioned in some OEGDs was the socially excluded group of "immoral women" who engage in prostitution and have become more numerous in recent years.

The majority of households survive or achieve well-being owing to the following coping strategies:

- ◆ Breeding their own cattle or growing agricultural crops on their own land plots.
- ◆ Entrepreneurial activity, particularly in the sphere of commerce, transport services (private taxis and *aravakashlar*<sup>3</sup>) and grain processing.
- ◆ Reciprocal support among relatives, friends and neighbors provided both directly in emergency situations, and through closed societies such as *gap*<sup>4</sup> or mutual aid funds.
- ◆ Finding jobs with businessmen and rich farmers.
- ◆ Seasonal day work in large cities (*mardikorlar*, Uzb., pl.) and in the sphere of the informal economy.

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<sup>1</sup> ***mahalla komiteti*** – Uzb. Literally, neighborhood committee. The *mahalla* committee is the basic organ of neighborhood local self-governance in Uzbekistan. Because the *mahalla* committee is the administrative body of the *mahalla* (neighborhood), the Chairman of the committee is as a rule one of the most respected members in the *mahalla*. Legislation permits the establishment of this entity if there are 350-400 households, but in rural areas the *mahalla* is considered to be identical with the entire dwelling settlement. The local *hokimiyat* provides for two staff positions for the *mahalla* committee – a chairman elected by the citizens and their representatives, although following the recommendation of the *hokimiyat*, and his secretary. Among its many activities in the community, the committee distributes and makes decisions on subsidies for low-income households and on family allocations for children. It also decides along with *selsoviet* and *sovkhos* leadership on the allocation of housing plots and provides legal advice and settles family disputes. Sometimes the committee is also able to provide material aid outside of government subsidies.

<sup>2</sup> Very few individuals, indeed only those whose parents are able to support themselves economically during their studies, can actually achieve this.

<sup>3</sup> ***aravakashlar*** – Uzb., pl. Workers who carry cargo on small two or three-wheeled dollies in large markets.

<sup>4</sup> ***gap*** – Uzb. Informal groups formed on the basis of some affinity among the members. These groups are, as a rule, formed on the basis of peer groups, or just groups of friends. There are both male and female *gaplar* (Uzb., pl.). Under the term *gap* is understood both the actual group and the regular meetings organized by the group. At these meetings, food and drink is offered to the members, while the members exchange conversation. The conversation can take the form of just «chats», or can be more serious discussion of various problems. These group meetings not only provide a forum for conversation and discussion, but can also have a financial element. Male and female *gaplar* establish a sort of «emergency fund», a custom which dates back to the Soviet times. Each of the *gap* members makes contributions to the fund on either a monthly basis or at an interval decided by the group. Every so often one of the members can take a certain amount of the money for their own personal use.

- ◆ Some of the youth choose the path of crime. Cases of stealing company property and cattle belonging to private individuals, as well as the illicit sale of bootleg alcohol have become more frequent.

Two types of priority problems were distinguished: 1. economic problems per se such as insufficient resources in the family, wage arrears or the impossibility for wages to keep pace with inflation rates, undernourishment and hunger, unemployment, lack of land for the construction of houses and difficulties in obtaining land for one's own household subsistence; and 2. problems connected with social services and infrastructure such as the irregular supply of gas, electricity, and water, and the high cost of medical and utility services. Particular emphasis was given to the problem of bribe-taking which has come to permeate all spheres of life. Without a bribe it is difficult to get a job, to provide education after secondary school for one's children, and even for farmers to be able to bring their produce to the market.

A number of problems which have become acute today were either altogether nonexistent in the past or were not nearly as critical. These include the problems of unemployment, the high cost of medical services which must now be paid for privately, rising inflation, wage arrears or low salaries, and hunger. It was also recalled that in the past bureaucratic rigmarole and procrastination thrived, goods were in short supply, the rights of the Uzbek people were encroached upon, there was no freedom of confession, and labor in the *kolkhozes* and *sovkhozes* was performed through coercion. «People were driven out to the fields,» whereas now they are lured into them.

The causes of poverty indicated by the OEGD participants included job attrition, unemployment, inflation, increase in prices (which, in its turn, was associated with privatization and the slackening of government price controls), the idleness of various enterprises, non-payment of wages, cheating on *kolkhoz* workers and the «rotation» of their money by *kolkhoz* (*sovkhov*) management, difficulties in obtaining land for farming, and various other reasons.

Among the institutions mentioned by the participants, the following have been identified as the most important:

- ◆ Relatives, parents, friends and neighbors who generally serve as more reliable sources of support than do official institutions.
- ◆ Employers. In the cities these are mostly industrial enterprises, and in rural areas *sovkhozes* or *kolkhozes*. The importance of the latter is owing to the fact that they control the distribution of land suitable for farming and the construction of houses. In some places participants mentioned farmers who provide jobs for their fellow villagers and pay them well and on time.
- ◆ Local agencies of self-governance such as *mahalla* committees and rural citizen assemblies<sup>1</sup> which are in charge of distributing allowances to low-income families and families with children under the age of 16. Local agencies of self-governance are also guardians of the institution of the family, serving as arbiters in internal family conflicts, helping to assume the costs of weddings, and sometimes in Karakalpakstan raising money for *qalym* to be given for a bride. These agencies also perform a number of other important social functions.
- ◆ No references to non-governmental organizations (NGO's) were made except in Muynak, where people mentioned aid provided by the national aid organization ECOSAN and the International Foundation for Saving the Aral Sea.

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<sup>1</sup> **selsoviet** – Rus., abr. for *Selskii Soviet*. Literally, Rural Council. This is the former Soviet term for the institution which is now called *Fuqarolar Yigini* (Uzb.), or Rural Citizen's Assembly. However, participants usually referred to this by its former name. The *selsoviet* is one of the organs of self-governance of the local population, and one of its most important functions is to distribute social welfare subsidies to low-income households. The Rural Citizen's Assembly formally helps in deciding on the allocation of lands, but in fact the lands are under the control of the *sovkhov* management. The *selsoviet* is an entity whose position in the hierarchy lies somewhere between the *mahalla* committee and the *hokimiyat*.

When discussing gender issues, it was noted that over the last few years the burden of responsibilities borne by women has increased significantly. As many men have lost their jobs or have not received their wages for a long time, women have had to take over and become the primary providers for their families. They have been particularly successful, it seems, in the business of trade and commerce. This new economic role assumed by women has entailed a number of consequences: the emergence of a category of women, however small, nick-named «trump queens,» or «iron ladies» who are successful businesswomen distinguished by their independence and autonomy and who embody new behavioral patterns and identities for women. In other cases, although no such radical changes in the roles of husbands and wives have taken place, men have become more actively involved in doing household chores, taking on the roles of their wives who travel to other cities and even to other countries to buy or sell goods. In some cases, however, men have refused to compromise their status as household «master,» and as a result the burden of women's responsibilities has increased. Carrying out household work as before, women are also providing their families with means of subsistence. Men themselves said that such women «have 40 souls.»

Recently cases of family arguments and disagreements have become more frequent, and sometimes these conflicts develop into instances of violence against women. Most often these conflicts are connected with the dire circumstances of a family, or with the fact that women assume the role of family provider. Increasingly, women have taken on the responsibility of protecting their family interests against the arbitrary rule of the *sovkhos* or *kolkhos* management. In situations where men usually give up, women demonstrate courage and an uncompromising attitude. Their resoluteness finds its source in their sense of responsibility toward their children and the desire to protect their well-being.

In Karakalpakstan, the rights of young women are encroached upon due to the revival of the tradition of abducting or paying ransom for brides. The abduction of young girls, which often takes place either with their own consent and in agreement with their fiancés, but which sometimes occurs against their will, is again on the rise on account of the tremendously high amount of *qalym* demanded by the bride's family from her candidates. The size of the *qalym* and the scale of the wedding ceremony have become a distinctive sign which clearly marks the difference between the rich and the poor.

### 3. Perceptions of Poverty: Well-Being Definitions and Trends

#### 3.1 Well-Being: Issues for Narrative

The majority of the group participants and informants understood well-being as a good and comfortable life for their families. Family and responsibilities before one's family are central to all matters related to the concept of well-being. The four most frequently applied criteria for a good life were as follows:

- ◆ Material prosperity: the availability of a house or apartment, enough money for food and sufficient quantity of food itself. An important indicator of well-being was the consumption of meat. If a family consumes meat regularly, it can consider itself to be well off. Many measured the degree of their impoverishment over the last 10 years by the quantity of meat by which their diet had decreased. In Karakalpakstan economic well-being was measured by flour and its quality. It was noted that if a decade ago an average salary could buy 5-6 sacks of flour, today it is worth not more than one sack. If formerly everyone could afford to buy fine grades of wheat flour, now this kind of flour has become a luxury for many, and the flour used every day is of low quality or is sorghum flour. Many households are compelled to grow wheat themselves and have it ground at private mills.
- ◆ Peace and calm in the family and in the country and the absence of conflict. As many participants testified, they had been strongly affected by the collisions between Uzbeks and Meskhet Turks which took place in 1989 and between Uzbeks and Kyrgyz in 1990, and by the bomb explosions in Tashkent in February, 1999.
- ◆ Security of one's children, or the availability of real possibilities for securing their lives and livelihood. Security is understood as the parents bearing the costs of their children's wedding, providing «startup» conditions for their family life, such as a house, household goods and furnishings, and educating them after secondary school.

«As you may see, I have helped all my children to get married, and now I live without anything, sitting on the floor. I gave up everything and gave it all to their families

We help each other in the village. How much we can help depends on how much money we have in our pocket. Each gives as much as he can. For example, if close relatives celebrate a *toi-sadaka* (traditional ceremonial celebration) or a son's wedding you have to give them cash equal to one sheep or calf. If the relatives are not so close, I contribute 100, 200 or 300 *soum*.

To marry your son you have to pay a *qalyim* (Kpk., wealth paid to the bride's family), and *qalyim* costs 2000-3000 thousand *soum*. We marry our children only if they agree, we do not force them to marry. The children decide whether to marry or not. However, the size of the *qalyim* is discussed only among the parents of the bride and groom, and the children do not participate. The boy and girl decide about marriage between themselves and only after that each talks to their parents. The wife plays a large role in the decision of such questions.» [Turtkul district, Karakalpakstan.]

- ◆ Receiving a good education. This ranked first or second among the criteria of well-being depending on the class to which informants belonged. Many of those for whom agricultural labor was the primary source of livelihood, tended (or had) to assign a secondary role to post-secondary education. However, for many rural families, education as a coping strategy is still so important that parents are ready to spend all their money and even sell their cattle in order to obtain it for their children.

In accordance with their perception of well-being the participants created the following picture of social stratification in their community. Depending on the level of their education, the participants distinguished a larger or smaller number of household categories. Those who were better educated (particularly in Ulughbek settlement

near Tashkent) identified up to 8 categories, while in some rural districts only three categories were identified: the rich, the middle class, and the poor. In most of the groups, however, approximately six categories were identified:

- 1) The very rich (*uta boilar* in Uzbek, or *ote bailar* in Karakalpak);
- 2) The rich (*boilar* in Uzbek, *bai* in Karakalpak);
- 3) The well-to-do (*uziga tuqlar* in Uzbek, *qurghyn* in Karakalpak);
- 4) The middle class (*urta hollar* in Uzbek, *orta torghynlar* in Karakalpak);
- 5) The poor (*qambaghal* in Uzbek, *zharly* in Karakalpak);
- 6) Beggars or the destitute (*qashoq*, *nochorlar* in Uzbek, *tylenshi*, *qaiyr soraushilar* in Karakalpak);

There was not much differentiation between **the very rich and the rich**. One of the very few key differences was that the rich were personally known to the participants, while the very rich were only rumored about and judged on the basis of hearsay or stereotype. At times, it seemed that the participants built their idea about the life of the very rich not on the basis of an encompassing reality, but from soap operas which are now broadcast on television. [These soap operas, made in Mexico, most often show the lifestyles of wealthy Latin Americans.] What else can explain the fact that criteria for the very rich included «traveling to the Canary Islands» and «giving children 50-100 *soum* daily for school»? [According to our observations, many families in Tashkent who are far from being rich, but rather belong to a stratum of the upper middle class, give their children 100-200 *soum* every day for pocket expenses; this money is just enough to buy a simple lunch in a regular cheap canteen.]

In reference to **the rich**, the most frequently mentioned criteria were as follows: engagement in business; possession of firms and stores; in rural areas they possess at least 3 hectares of land and a large number of cattle. In accordance with the evaluation made by the groups, the rich have large, beautiful houses and are able to give their children a good education, arrange their children's weddings and provide them with private living spaces. The social base of this category was assessed as twofold: it was suggested that some people became rich owing to their hard work, insight and enterprise; and it was also said that rich people are the former and current ruling elite and top-level management who had accumulated their capital by means of using [often immorally] their authority and power. Material from the case studies suggest that in rural areas rich farmers used to work as chairmen, chief accountants or as other kinds of managers in the *kolkhoz* (*sovkhov*). As a rule, they were better educated than their fellow villagers and were able to benefit from current rural policies, using their knowledge to obtain land, machinery and bank credits.

The most important criterion of **the well-to-do** is that they can afford to pay for things beyond mere food products such as clothing and an education and or wedding for their children. As a rule, these people belong to the intelligentsia and local management; in rural areas they are small-scale farmers and families possessing several heads (at least 3-4) of cattle.

In accordance with the estimates given by the groups **the middle class** is characterized primarily by the fact that they do not experience any major problems in procuring enough food for their families. They can afford to eat meat regularly, although this is fundamentally where their capacity ends. It is usually difficult for them to spare money for needs other than food. They do not starve, they have their own homes, and in rural areas, and sometimes in small towns, they own 1-2 heads of cattle, a few sheep (???do you mean they have both or they may have either, cattle means animals, not just cows, so say say cows if you mean cows???). Unlike the well-to-do they are not capable of assuming the costs of a wedding for their children. The participants considered the employees of government-funded organizations such as doctors, teachers and other members of the intelligentsia to be among the middle class.

**The poor** are: ordinary *kolkhoz* (*sovkhov*) workers who have not been paid their wages for a very long time; the unemployed; families who have lost their primary provider due to sickness or death. They are barely able to make ends meet, and are often hungry. Meat is seldom a part of their diet, they can afford to eat meat only on important

holidays or to feed a sick member of the family. Although some of the poor may own cattle (especially in rural areas), they are able to support themselves by selling their possessions, and in the first instance this would mean selling their cattle. Characteristically they are large families who wear clothes bought in the Soviet period, and whose children wear hand-me-downs. They may also be people with illnesses who are unable to work and must spend all their savings and sell all their possessions for treatment.

In spite of the extra income, Bainazar does not see any prospects for the future. "Even if our income were 4-5 times more, we would still be poor. But in comparison with other people, our situation is like a *halva* [«dessert» Uzb.] compared to theirs. If my income was 200-300 times as much, then I would feel myself a free man. But now, even if I take four jobs, there would still be no prospects. The problem is that I stand far away from the *qozon* ["cooking pot," «resources,» Uzb.]. The contents of the *qozon* have already been distributed and people like us go empty-handed."

Who has access to the *qozon*? "During the transition period the Gamma-Unit [where Bainazar works] was privatized. While before 20 people were employed there, now only 8 remain and they have become the owners of the revenue generated through that unit. High quality, expensive equipment has been given free of charge to 8 people, mainly with the help of the institute's management. This, of course, could not have happened without the involvement of «acquaintances.» And here's another example. They started to produce and sell the tagged atoms generated in the cyclotron abroad. However, the salary for the people who operated the cyclotron was in arrears for 2-3 months during which time their salaries were used in the turnover. The revenue from selling the tagged atoms was not even registered legitimately. This is the income the "owners" get. And then there is one more complicated method. They opened branch companies managed by the "owners" relatives. Resources from a particular fund of the institute are transferred to the branch company and the budget is pumped into private hands, naturally, using acquaintances and bribes. [Case study 1, scientific worker, Ulughbek urban village, Tashkent city.]

According to the participants, **the destitute and beggars** are those among the poor who have already sold all their possessions, have fallen into decline, and have lost faith in themselves. While the poor are still struggling to survive, still hope to improve their situation and work hard, the destitute have already lost all trace of hope. They are often homeless, in which case they are *batraks* and *bomzh*. The former find occasional day work for which their only reward is food given to them during and after their labor. The latter live in apartment basements or barns and eat whenever they get a chance. Valuations of this category sometimes had a hint of contempt or antagonism. In Almalyk people believed that the destitute spoiled the scenery with their appearance and were carriers of infectious diseases. The destitute are the embodiment of a state to which poor people can fall given a certain combination of circumstances. Thus, a woman in Almalyk confessed with fear, «When you look at them, you are overcome with a feeling of dread. You can't help but fear the same destiny.»

The participants identified the following categories of households and their proportions in their own communities:

1. The very rich – 1-2%
2. The rich – 3-5%
3. The well-to-do – 5-10%
4. The middle class – 20%
5. The poor – 40-80%
6. The destitute – 1-5%

It is important to note that there are considerable differences in the way in which the groups identified these proportions. This is partly connected to the fact that similar criteria are present in adjacent categories, that is, the categories often overlap. As mentioned earlier, there are no principal differences between the rich and the very

rich. Similarly, it is possible to identify a number of criteria common to both the rich and the well-to-do: engagement in business, commerce, farming. The assessment of proportions of the population thus depended upon what the participants understood by this or that category. Alongside this, different groups offered up different criteria for the same category. Women, for example, tended to point out features related to household styles (a nice house, good or bad clothes), while men spoke about economic characteristics (availability of land, occupation). Therefore, the same household could be categorized differently depending on which of its characteristics was determined to be a criterion. On the other hand, in all definitions, regardless of age or gender, the participants emphasized the criterion of security. Thus, many of them stressed the fact that the rich and the very rich (and sometimes the well-to-do) have a confident air about them, their future is secured and there is peace in their families. By the same token, in poor families conflicts are triggered chiefly by a lack of the most essential ingredients in life.

Beyond the household categories outlined above, some of the groups identified a few other special categories. For instance, in Ulughbek (Tashkent province) the younger women pointed out as independent categories a few intermediate ones, such as a category lying somewhere between the middle class and the poor (the lower middle class). This fact reflects an ability to distinguish halftones when describing social stratification, possibly gained through higher education. The group of younger women from the settlement in Oq Oltyn *sovkhov* (Andijan province) identified «immoral women,» (*buzuq khotinlar*, Uzb.) or prostitutes, as a separate category. They ranked this category below the destitute and beggars in terms of their social standing, while from the standpoint of economic security they hardly differentiated them from those ranking third or fourth in the hierarchy of wealth. Most of these women have a house of their own, dress well, and do not experience any problems with food. However, due to their contempt for this category of people, the participants from the group of younger women were unwilling to elevate the category of prostitutes any higher than the rank they assigned to it.

In Almalyk, participants of the special group of unemployed specialists offered up a notion of social stratification in which the basic criterion was the degree of power concentration within the population. Rather than naming the very rich, they suggested a category of households which were made up of top level managers in local authority establishments such as the *hokimiyat*, the office of public prosecution, and the local tax inspection office. People in other managerial positions such as directors, foremen, heads of workshops and head physicians in hospitals were included in the category of the rich.

Speaking about tendencies which have expressed themselves over the last ten years, the participants unanimously noted the increase in the rate of poverty and destitution. In their assessments of the past, the majority said that their life had been better economically. They were earning more from the point of view of the buying capacity of their wages, prices for food and other goods and services were not high, medical services were of a better quality and basically free of charge (although some people said that they had still been obliged to give bribes to doctors), and there were enough jobs to go around. Many said that the household categories themselves had been fewer in the past. The majority (sometimes up to 80-85%) had been part of the middle class (a much more well-to-do category than it is now), and both the rich and the poor were few in number. The criteria describing the rich and the poor have also changed dramatically. In reference to the rich, the participants often mentioned that in the past rich people tried to conceal their prosperity, and they were not as rich as they are today. Now rich people are usually entrepreneurs, while formerly entrepreneurial activity had been prohibited (some underground entrepreneurs and «speculators» did exist).

In the past, participants noted that the middle class encompassed the majority of the population, both the intelligentsia, and *kolkhoz* and industrial workers. Nowadays, while intelligentsia is still considered to be among the middle class or even the well-to-do, *kolkhoz* workers find themselves in the category of the poor. Today the notion «*kolkhozchilar*» (*kolkhoz* workers, Uzb., pl.) has come to signify the poorest category of the population who are deprived of all rights. It is important to note here that this term is applied to all agricultural workers engaged in work at the major enterprises – entities such as shareholder societies or so-called *shirkat* or farmers' associations – into which *sovkhovs* and *kolkhozes* have been legally transformed. Despite these transformations, the essence and actual status of such enterprises has undergone few principal changes, and therefore people still refer to them as

*kolkhozlar* and *sovkhoslar*, and those who work there are still called *kolkhozchilar*. *Kolkhoz* workers are now included in the category of the poor because their wages have not been paid to them for years, and the only means of subsistence are the goods they produce on their household subsistence plot, what means of subsistence may be derived from their cattle, and for some people from pensions and low-income allowances.

Our analysis of the participants' responses has revealed that the most important factors in belonging to a category are as follows:

- ◆ The availability of cattle, one of the key sources of livelihood for a household, particularly in rural areas.
- ◆ The availability of land which can be cultivated and used to grow crops such as potatoes, wheat, carrots and other vegetables, both for personal consumption and for selling at the market.
- ◆ The availability of a permanent job, specifically in government-funded organizations. Salaries are usually paid regularly in such institutions. This group of occupations include doctors, teachers, and local management. It has already been several years since direct budget funding has been cut to *kolkhozes* and *sovkhoszes*. The funding scheme is as follows: the *kolkhoz* (or *sovkhos*) is given a credit by the state or by commercial banks which are fully controlled by the government; this credit must be repaid by selling crops back to the government; artificially low purchase prices (what are known as 'price-scissors») are set by the government for cotton and grain – crops which are mandatory for *kolkhozes* and *sovkhoszes*; the latter find themselves trapped by debts and do not receive money to pay wages to their employees. Only during harvest time does the government provide direct cash funds paid out to the workers for their harvest in order to speed up the process.
- ◆ Expected or concluded wedding expenditures. That is, whether the head of household has already managed to give his children away in marriage, or whether he still has this responsibility before him. Those who have been able to set up their children before their economic situation worsened can relax and are more likely to be considered to be among the middle class. Those who have yet to lay out for these costs may very well find themselves on the verge of impoverishment and bankruptcy. Creating new households and hosting wedding parties has taken on varying degrees of drama depending on the region. However, the most commonplace drama consists of the paradoxical fact that while it is impossible for parents to forsake their duties before their children due to both the pressures of tradition and to the parent's own understanding of the purpose of their life – a life almost completely dedicated to their children – yet still they are unable to properly fulfill these duties as their resources are limited. This problem is the most acute in Karakalpakstan where the tradition of paying a bride price is still strong. A man aspiring to a woman's hand must pay her family a *qalym*. While the size of the *qalym* varies depending on how well-off his family is, it is always at the very limit of the maximum financial capability of the groom's family.<sup>1</sup> Because of the fact that the groom's family cannot afford to bear the cost of the *qalym*, cases of bride-stealing have become very frequent. Indeed, the «abduction» may be organized with the bride's consent, or with the consent of her family. The purpose of abduction is to reduce the size of the *qalym* and to defray the costs of a wedding party. Often the bride's family agrees to reduce the size of *qalym*, but since they must preserve their dignity, the «abduction» is performed with the connivance of her family. Besides *qalym*, the groom's family is also obliged to bear the costs of the wedding party and of gifts given to numerous relatives. The bride's family prepares the dowry and shares the costs of the wedding party. These costs are so tremendous with their aggregate burden aggravated by the presence of many children [in Karakalpakstan a large number of such families has been recorded], that they can ruin a family. Thus, according to one of the case studies, one large farm became poverty-stricken because all the cattle was sold

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<sup>1</sup> For poor families, the size of a *qalym* can run up to 50,000 *soum*, while the average salary is within the range of 3-5 thousand *soum* per month. For those who are better off, a *qalym* can run 50-150 thousand, while people who are rich pay 150-250 thousand *soum* or more. During one interview it was noted that one rich family had been charged a *qalym* of 500,000 *soum*. Beyond the *qalym*, there are also the rather substantial costs for gifts and the wedding party.

in order to assume the costs of weddings for the children. In Andijan and Tashkent provinces while no cases of *qalym* were mentioned [although this is practiced among Kazakhs and Kyrgyz in these regions], the costs of wedding parties and of providing for young families were also said to be unbearable. In such situations the practice of sacrificing family comfort and one's own livelihood for the sake of giving one's children in marriage and securing good starting conditions for their family is nowhere criticized. They only regret that the prospects for achieving this objective have narrowed dramatically over the last ten years.

### 3.2 Discussing Security, Vulnerability and Risks

The notions «security» and «vulnerability» have been translated as *sotsial'naya zashchishchennost'* and *uyazvimost'* respectively, and presented for group discussions with the use of these terms. As such, however, the notions of social security and vulnerability are seldom used by people in Uzbekistan. However, in the course of discussions, the participants often touched upon problems connected with these concepts. It was noted that the degree of social security for the majority of population had significantly decreased over the last ten years. Causes of this change in security are outlined below.

The loss of jobs due to the closing of enterprises or staff reduction, particularly in the thickly populated areas of the Ferghana Valley and Turtkul district, is one of the main causes of decreasing security. Many people living in Khojaabad district and Andijan province are highly educated, having received degrees from higher education establishments and vocational training schools. During the Soviet period, many people living in Dilqushod and Ordai villages traveled daily to work in the neighboring Osh province located within the territory of Kyrgyzstan, or to other enterprises within Andijan province. At that time enterprises which needed qualified employees were able to provide buses at their own cost to transport people from home to work and back. After the disintegration of the USSR, many enterprises began to close or reduce their operations. Due to the lack of resources, they were unable to provide transport for their employees. Public transport services became more expensive, and salaries were began to fall behind the prices for goods and services. Because salaries could hardly cover cost of transportation, it was no longer profitable to travel outside one's residence area for work. Those people deprived of their jobs had difficulties moving into new activities. Having learned one profession in the sphere of industry, few were willing to dedicate themselves to agricultural labor and there was too little land to give out to everyone who might try their hand at farming. This section of the population thus turned out to be unprotected and vulnerable. The labor market could offer them neither a job for which they were trained, nor any kind of gainful employment at all; work on a *sovkhoz* or *kolkhoz* had brought no wages for years.

Families with children under 16 have also found themselves in an unfavorable situation from the point of view of social security. Government allowances for this category of families had been limited. Currently, it is the responsibility of *mahalla* committees to provide these allowances which now can be given only to families considered as low-income. In accordance with current legislation, a family is entitled to receive this kind of allowance for three months, after which time it must apply to the *mahalla* committee for an extension of the term of allowance. In order to do this, all papers must be collected anew (certificates confirming the income of the family members), and once again a special commission of the *mahalla* committee must make a decision. In theory, this kind of allowance can be paid for a quite lengthy period, provided that a new application is filed every three months. In practice, however, the time period is much shorter. Part of this is due to the fact that poor families with many children are numerous, especially in rural areas. In Andijan province, for instance, this allowance has been paid for not more than 6 months per year to each household to which it was granted.

Social security has also been undermined by natural calamities. In Oqqurghon district floods can occur every so many years when the Angren river overflows. In 1997 a storm tore off the roofs of several houses, but the *kolkhoz* failed to help these households restore their houses. In Takhtakupyr (Karakalpakstan) unexpected snowfall cut off the pastures of Kazakh cattle-breeders from their settlements. The *sovkhoz* to which they belonged was unable to evacuate them or to deliver food, warm clothes, food, and medicines. As a result, many cattle perished and several cattle-breeders became ill. Naturally, no compensation or reimbursement was offered. In the past, such uncivil behavior toward employees on the part of *kolkhozes* and *sovkhozes* was almost completely unimaginable. Many

participants mentioned fire as one of the causes of impoverishment, because people are no longer able to insure their house and possessions.

The quality of medical services has also deteriorated, thus leading to increased vulnerability of households to the ravages of illness. The risk of surrendering the economic well-being of one's family to the ruin of illness has become very high. Formerly, all medical services were free of charge, and patients were provided with free medicines. Today medical services are officially free. However, unofficial extortion on the part of doctors and nurses, practiced in mitigated form during the Soviet period, have increased, and patients are required to pay for hospital bedclothes, food (daily charge is currently 150 *soum*), and medicines themselves. Formerly, medicines were subsidized by the government and thus were accessible to everyone. Nowadays, after prices have been liberalized, the cost of medicines has increased many fold, and government control in this sphere is completely nonexistent. Even those categories of people who are entitled to buy medicines at a discount are unable to do so because there are too many bureaucratic obstacles to overcome. As a result, if someone in the family falls seriously ill, it may very possibly ruin the entire family. Treatment eats up family savings and available cattle. Sick people and their families have thus become a more vulnerable group than ever before. Children suffer most of all: inoculations, medical examinations and other preventive therapies which used to be free of charge are now performed for money. As a result, some children do not undergo such checkups, leading to an increasing number of cases of tuberculosis, scarlet fever and other illnesses which may be easily prevented.

Young people can also be regarded as a vulnerable section of the population. In Takhtakupyr they noted an increase in the number of people who die at a young age. The reason given was a deterioration in the physical, mental and material well-being of young people due to unemployment and greater difficulties in setting up a new family due to the lack of means for *qalym* and a wedding party. In Khojaabad district the participants noted the growing rate of drug addiction and crime among the youth, which they associated with unemployment. In cases when young people have tried to find more or less lucrative work, as was the case with the young people from Oitamghali village who went to Tashkent to work as *aravakashlar*, they immediately faced a number of risks to their well-being such as conflicts with the police. The police demand to show them their residence authorization, and when they fail to produce it, they humiliate and rob them.

Risks of conflicts with police are higher for men than for women. This is the reason why in the «shuttle» trade women are in a more advantageous position than are men. This was particularly evident in Andijan province. In recent years Uzbek men prefer not to go to Osh province in neighboring Kyrgyzstan to sell agricultural products in the local large markets. The reason is that when they cross the Kyrgyz border, many of them are detained by the local police and customs officers who surreptitiously toss drugs into their belongings. In order to avoid prosecution, Uzbek men have to pay off their captors by leaving some portion of their goods or proceeds at the border station. As a result, only women travel to the Osh market. While they are away the men look after the households, thus reversing gender roles.

From the point of view of inter-regional differences, all inhabitants of Karakalpakstan can be regarded as a vulnerable group. People in the Karakalpak OEGDs said that because they live in the lower reaches of the Amu Darya river, the inhabitants of Karakalpakstan receive poor quality water which is polluted and with high degree of salinity and pesticides. Other participants mentioned the remoteness of these areas from the main national markets and industrial centers. During the interview with a nurse named Natasha from Takhtakupyr it was discovered that the number of cases of tuberculosis has grown from 5% in the past to 10% in the present, and the rate of some other diseases has increased from 20% to 50%.

Compared to the past, new risks connected with the transition to a market economy have emerged, affecting mostly those who do not have sufficient knowledge of the principles of the market. A typical story was told by a woman in Almalyk who bought onions and carrots in the nearest village and tried to resell them in the local market. Because she did not have any idea of the market prices for these goods, nor any understanding of the concept of demand, she incurred losses right from the start and had to quit. It is probably no accident that many participants suggested stories concerning the unsuccessful business adventures of their acquaintances as one of the causes of pauperization.

### 3.3 Opportunities, Social and Economic Mobility

The most frequently listed opportunities for the improvement of one's station are listed below.

1. Remoteness from or proximity to major markets and industrial centers. In a number of sites the problem of high transport fares was mentioned as a factor preventing access to possible sources of livelihood. In Ulughbek settlement (Tashkent), after the Soviet military industry stopped subsidizing the Institute of Nuclear Physics, many residents of the settlement became jobless with practically no employment alternatives. The only possibility of employment is in Tashkent located 25 km away from Ulughbek. This means extra transport costs which not everyone can afford. In Khojaabad district many local residents have lost their jobs because transportation costs have increased. The most difficult situations were to be found in Takhtakupyr and Muynak (Karakalpakstan). Young people from Oqqurghon could benefit from the vicinity to Tashkent – they go to work as *aravakash* in the huge wholesale and retail markets. Typically, they spend a fortnight in Tashkent, then return home for 2-3 days rest and return to Tashkent.
2. Almost in every site the factor of education was noted, but the importance of education was particularly strongly emphasized in Ulughbek. They noted that only the hereditary intelligentsia (teachers, doctors, scholars) and the well-to-do educate are able to invest in their children's education. The poor do not have this opportunity because both studying in another town and the process of enrollment itself – the fact of bribe-taking for entrance into institutions of higher learning was everywhere noted – require resources that are not available to the ordinary *kolkhoz* worker. The importance of having received a good education and of being familiar with the constantly changing laws, one's personal rights and the principles of market economics was demonstrated in the conflict between the chairman of the *kolkhoz* and the *kolkhoz* workers in Oqqurghon district. Because their wages had not been paid them, the *kolkhoz* workers felt that they were being cheated. They knew that their interests were being encroached upon when the *kolkhoz* sowed rice on the pastures where they tended cattle, their last means of survival. While talking to the *kolkhoz* workers the chairman poured forth a veritable spout of sophisticated economic terms, dominating them psychologically. The deputy *hokim* also in attendance at the triangulation session complained that the *kolkhoz* workers could not properly formulate and justify their demands. A number of case studies revealed that large farming units were usually managed by former *kolkhoz* and *sovkhos* leaders who possessed a solid knowledge of business. Very typical of this problem of a lack of education is a story set in Soviet times. A practically illiterate woman (case study 6, Turtkul district), gave birth to triplets and was entitled by Soviet law to substantial economic aid including free nursing services, a car, and so on. The woman refused to sign a document that would have provided this opportunity for her because she was afraid of being cheated. Eventually, two of the triplets died of illnesses. Many cases of such practical illiteracy – the inability to assess the importance of a document because one lives on the outskirts of written culture – still exist.
3. In doing business, those who have connections are in a more advantageous situation in comparison to those who do not. Participants noted that rich people and entrepreneurs can get anything they want just by using their know-how and their connections. For example, Mustafo (case study 3, Ulughbek, Tashkent province), an entrepreneur, cleverly took advantage of his job at the Institute of Nuclear Physics and, using his connections in his home district where his father was a *kolkhoz* chairman, was able to market iron oxides used in fertilizers designed to be sold to agricultural producers. In another example (case study 5, Dangara, Ferghana province) a son of a traffic police chief easily entered the Police Academy owing to his father's connections. This fact was made clear from hints thrown by his father's friends. Gulya (case study 4, Ulughbek, Tashkent province), an entrepreneur, was able to establish friendly relations by herself and use them in her business. From time to time she and some of her acquaintances get together for a *gap* to socialize and relax. During such meetings she was able to ascertain each person's capabilities and the way in which they might be useful to her in the solution of her problems.
4. The participants placed the employees of government-funded organizations and pensioners at a higher social level than *kolkhoz* workers and other workers at certain non-government organizations and

enterprises. In a situation where financial stability is lacking and the reciprocal liability of enterprises which are no longer funded directly from the government budget has become widespread, teachers, doctors, managers and pensioners belong to that group of people who receive their salaries regularly. In general, industrial workers also receive their salaries on time or wage arrears do not exceed 2-3 months, although part or all of the salary is paid not in cash but in goods produced by that enterprise.

5. Many participants and case study informants admitted that today the only way to overcome poverty and achieve well-being is to engage in business. However, in order to do so the following prerequisites must be made available: (a) starting capital; (b) a knowledge of market economics and current laws; (c) a favorable legal and regulatory environment.
  - a. Starting capital. The most common type of business in recent years has been trade in the form of buying and reselling goods. The most accessible kind of trading business is the procurement of goods at one of the local wholesale markets and their resale in one's home district, settlement or village. For example, a woman from Takhtakupyr district regularly goes to the market in Khazarasp and brings various small items from there that enable her to have a fast trade turnover. People like her who travel specifically to engage in this sort of trade fill the entire coach that travels to Khazarasp. In order to obtain starting capital, this particular woman had to sell some of her cattle. In other cases people borrow money from relatives and friends. This type of loan was noted in case studies from Ulughbek settlement in Turtkul district. Almost no one suggested the possibility of obtaining loans from banks. Even a thriving farm in Turtkul district (case study 3) which had won a farming units contest in Karakalpakstan was unable, despite multiple applications, to obtain a loan for the machinery and other equipment necessary for processing dairy products. Bank loans were registered only in early 1990's when business was taking its first steps in Uzbekistan. The data obtained during the case study interviews suggests that the option of bank loans for farming and small-scale business is functioning poorly or not at all. It is clear, however, that its influence cannot be felt.
  - b. Awareness of the principles of a market economy. The material included in the case studies testifies to the fact that a knowledge of which should be purchased for further resale is very important. A woman-entrepreneur from Takhtakupyr district (case study 4) began buying home-made candy, but was unable to recover her costs. For some time her business was running at a loss. Then she began to buy other kinds of small articles, such as school supplies, chewing-gum, etc., and her business improved. The success of Mustafo (case study 3) was largely due to his knowledge. He was able to make money on iron oxides production technology using his knowledge as a physicist. In Karakalpakstan a case was reported where two trucks brought cabbage from Turtkul to Mangyshlak (Kazakhstan) and the cabbage quickly sold out. The inspired traders telephoned Turtkul and ordered two more trucks. The successful sale became known to other households which began to grow cabbage. Eventually, instead of two trucks, twenty showed up and naturally so much cabbage could not be sold.
  - c. Favorable legal environment. Over the last ten years the legal climate for business has been less than stable. In the era of the liberalization of the activity of cooperatives (i.e., before the disintegration of the USSR), a first wave of beneficiaries of the freedom to do business emerged and then quickly died out. The story of Mirkomol (case study 1, Dilqushod) depicts one such cooperative that was bringing in good revenue several years ago, but then went bankrupt. A change in the business environment was particularly strongly felt in the development of farms. The best years for farming was during the period of 1995-1996 when it was relatively easy to obtain land and cattle. Those whose response to the opportunities of that period was well-timed, now have their own farm. At that time they were able to get not only land and cattle, but they were also able to buy machinery at low prices and even get bank loans. People who took out loans at that time, actually paid back a smaller amount of money than they had borrowed because inflation devalued the sum of their loan. However, in 1997-1998 opportunities of for obtaining land for farming narrowed dramatically, and the process was reversed and a number of farms established only a few years hence were forced to close.

1. Bribes were a frequently mentioned topic in group discussions and interviews. Many people admitted that all doors would open before you if you were able to pay a bribe. However, they did not always use the word «bribe.» Folk jargon is very versatile in creating various euphemisms: in one situation it was referred to as a *shapka* (Rus.), «a cap» meaning that something must be given on top of what is legitimately due; in another it was called «oiling» in association with oil used to lubricate mechanisms for better operation; and in still another it was named a «briefcase,» because when one young man from Karakalpakstan was trying to enroll at an institute, he was told not to come without his «briefcase», that is, a briefcase filled with money. The phenomenon of bribe-taking was reported as occurring regularly in the following situations:
  - a. Enrolling at a vocational training school or at an institution of higher education. One of the young women in a site in Karakalpakstan said that she had flunked her entrance exams because she did not give a bribe. Now she is determined to give one. Even with a good knowledge of the exam topic one does not stand a chance. Many households allocate some part of their budget for their children's education, earmarking it for entrance bribes. «There's no way of entering without a bribe,» said Jumagul (case study 2, Turtkul district).
  - b. Getting a job. According to the participants, in Almalyk in order to obtain a job as a simple worker in the mining and metallurgic factory one needs to give a substantial bribe to the head of the workshop or to the foreman. In Karakalpakstan they said that a bribe has to be given even to obtain the job of a nurse or a housecleaner. A statement made in one of the groups in Dangar is of particular significance. Evidently, even the positions of *hokim* or *kolkhoz* chairman can and must be bought. Judging by the words of the informants, the system of bribe-taking permeates many spheres, from top to bottom.

«Mustafo regards the education of his children as a matter of great importance. For three years he has been paying English teachers to coach his children. But beyond knowledge, you have to give a bribe to secure a government grant for your children. His daughter studies at the Institute of International Economy and Diplomacy [the most prestigious school in the republic]. However, he will not allow his wife to develop her professional career despite the fact that she was offered a job as instructor at the District Office of Education. He thinks that family life is calmer that way.» (case study 3, Ulugbek, Tashkent)

1. For those who are not engaged in business, opportunities are connected with one's place of employment. Certain kinds of work give large opportunities for achieving well-being – that is, employment found in government-funded organizations. Participants named a few specific jobs, such as those found at customs offices, tax inspection offices, the police force, the traffic police force, and at hospitals. One 18 year old villager from Oqqurghon district hoped to become a traffic policeman, because he knows that they always have the opportunity of making to money besides that included in their salary. These occupations are highly lucrative due to the possibility of receiving bribes, gifts and other kinds of donations.
2. Relatively good opportunities are open to those households which are tied up in collective guarantee networks with their relatives, thus forming a kind of social network of mutual support and credit. Uzbek and Karakalpak groups offered numerous examples of reciprocal support given to relatives and friends. During one interview in Ulughnor a woman recounted how her relatives, using the method of *khashar*,<sup>1</sup> helped her family to build a house. In another interview a story was recounted about how a brother, assuming the responsibilities of the head of a large family, arranged weddings for his younger brothers and sisters. Stories were illustrated with a popular saying: «If one man is sitting on a throne, 40 men are on

<sup>1</sup> *khashar* – Uzb. Volunteered unpaid labor provided by relatives and friends. *Khashar* is widely practiced whenever relatives need to build a house. The house framework is erected by the method of *khashar*, and then professionals are paid to do the finishing work.

horseback.» In other words, opportunities open only when collective guarantee of a clan is set in action. This factor should be considered in combination with the factor of connections and acquaintances that was discussed earlier. Another kind of clan is formed not on the basis of kinship, but on the basis of friendly contacts, during the *gap* meetings mentioned in several interviews. *Gaplar* are usually made up of one gender: they can be either male or female, and often they unite people of the same age. Here mutual trust reaches its highest level, and therefore credit unions are formed on the basis of *gaplar* where monthly installments are used to subsidize one of its members free of charge. In other cases it was noted that close relations with a member of a *gap* may help one in solving many business problems. Cases when people of different nationalities have helped one another were also mentioned. For example, one Karakalpak man recounted how *tamyrlar* [the word *tamyr* literally translates as «root»; here: Uzbeks who share the same roots with Karakalpaks] showed him the technology of rice threshing, and after that he assembled the same machine at home and started to make a good income.

The issue of opportunities is connected with the problem of social mobility. As the participants declared, the rich of today are those who were also well-off yesterday and were «at the helm.» Only a few number of the rich are those who have risen from among the poor, able to get on in life due to their astuteness and enterprise. But even those who come from the families of senior executives, the intelligentsia, or the well-off also have to demonstrate a certain amount of resourcefulness in order to maintain their current level of well-being. Their upbringing often makes this task easier for them. It was noted in one of the groups in Khojaabad district that children in well-to-do and educated families grow up listening to discussions and appeals made at home which differ significantly from those heard in poor families. A businessman and a businesswoman from Ulughbek (case studies 3 and 4) hired private English teachers for their children so that they might be able to enter a prestigious university or even go abroad to study. At the same time, ordinary peasants (*dehqonlar*) are unable to lend their children the support they need in order to study in another town. Instead, they prepare their children for work on the land. This means that there is certain predetermination to the destiny of young people, one which is subject to the capabilities and dispositions of the parents. The mass media also contributes to this. One 16 year old schoolboy is confident that the poor are often doomed because of their poverty, because «whenever they show a thief on television, he is sure to be from among the poor.» His parents tell him the same thing.

Downward social mobility from well-being to poverty is quite common. This downward mobility is facilitated by the element of the traditional parental responsibilities for assuming the costs of the children's wedding. Many families save money for years, sacrificing even the smallest human joys for the sake of squandering it on *qalym*, dowry and wedding parties. As a result of such devastating expenditures, households quickly fall from the position of the middle class or the well-to-do to the category of the poor. And again they must begin to save money and possessions anew. However, some examples demonstrate that through enterprise some people manage to make their way out of poverty. A very illustrative example of this breakthrough is the life of Mirkomil and his fellow villagers from Dilqushod (case study 1). Mirkomil was able to cultivate wastelands in the mountains by pumping water there and growing an orchard and a garden. It was thus that he was able to achieve relative well-being.

### **3.4 Social Exclusion**

According to data obtained in the study, no ethnic or religious group is seen as being socially excluded, with the exception of indigenous Central Asian gypsies (*lulilar*). The majority of the groups noted the equality of all nationalities. In Khojaabad district Uzbek and Kyrgyz people emphasized that they have a lot in common and even gave evidence of exogamous marriages. In the strict sense, the category of the socially excluded comprised specific social groups, such as prostitutes (Oq Oltyn village). However, in a broad sense, the socially excluded could be conceived of as encompassing all those strata deprived of opportunity. In the first instance, this must include *kolkhoz* workers who have been elbowed out of the distribution of social wealth. According to the participants (in particular, see the materials of the Ulughnor site report), *kolkhoz* workers are the most humiliated and oppressed social stratum. Not only have they not received their wages for years, but they stick to the *kolkhoz* for two reasons only: people of an older generation wish to continue their work record until it is long enough for them to retire and

receive their pension; and only with the consent of the *kolkhoz* can one obtain a land plot for building a house or land for a household subsistence plot or a farming unit.

On the opposite pole of the socially excluded are the powers that be, such as managers, who according to the participants can turn everything they manage into their own property by privatizing state property for a token fee. For example, one pensioner who worked at a financially self-sufficient enterprise of the Institute of Nuclear Physics until retirement age recalls that when the manufacturing of radio-preparations for Soviet government quotas was transformed after independence into a self-sufficient enterprise, he received nothing when he retired. «My share remained there and all the equipment was privatized by a small camp of people who were closely associated with the management of the institute.» Feeling excluded from society by having been cheated by a ruling elite or by simple «tricksters» is an emotion shared by many.

People who lack education, knowledge and timely information about swiftly fleeting opportunities also find themselves socially excluded. During the period when private farming was given a green light a number of people were able to take advantage of their awareness of the opportunities available for obtaining land and buying machinery at cheap prices. Others, who in a year or two (1997-1998) also decided to obtain land plots for private farms, discovered that the short period favorable for farming was over and that the government again began to have a stake in the *kolkhozes*, this time calling them «shareholder societies», «*shirkat* associations» and other pseudonyms which have in no way changed the essence of the *kolkhoz* system. The attempts of this later group of people at private farming went virtually profitless as they became embroiled in the demands of the government for certain types of crops (cotton and grain) and their price scissoring practices.

### 3.5 Social Cohesion, Crime, Conflict

The presence or the absence of conflicts and social harmony were pointed out as important factors of well-being. It was perhaps no accident that the most important events named by the groups included the ethnic collisions which broke out between Uzbeks and Meskhet Turks in 1989 and between Uzbeks and Kyrgyz in 1990, and the bomb explosions in Tashkent in February, 1999. The absence of conflict was considered by many to be an essential condition for family and social well-being. According to the participants, life in their communities was generally peaceful with people always trying to help one another. This is particularly evident in stories concerning weddings, funerary services, and other community celebrations or rituals. In such cases it is not only family and kin who summon up their resources, but the entire community may do so as well. Thus, according to the stories told in the groups and interviews in Karakalpakstan and the Ferghana valley, the chairman of the *mahalla* committee, an *oqsoqol*, or the chairman of the housing committee (*domkom*, Rus.) convenes a meeting of the elders to assign responsibilities for the fete to each household. As a result, a family function turns into a community event. Many people mentioned how they celebrate *Navruz* (the Central Asian New Year, Prs.) together and how women get together to boil *sumalak* (a dish made from sprouted wheat, Uzb.) and take it round to every house, how joyous the out-of-doors parties were in the village.

At the same time, however, the participants noted an increase in crime rates and social conflict. For example, in the Ulughnor district of Andijan province an increased rate of cattle theft was reported. Formerly, people could let their cattle go with the community herd and it would come back home in the evening by itself. Now they must guard it to prevent it from being stolen. A woman from Oqqurghon district of Tashkent province recounted how six sheep were stolen from her family, three of which were later found. The loss of the sheep to this family coincided with a sharp decrease in their standard of living. In Takhtakupyr village (*aul*, Kpk.) residents resented the fact that the *sovkhos* had sown their pastures with rice. It was not enough that they had been deprived of their primary source of livelihood which was derived from their cattle, but the flooding of the rice fields resulted in an increased salinity of the soil of their household subsistence plots through the ground water. And it was here that the inhabitants of the village grew wheat, vegetables and fodder crops for their cattle. The same story was repeated in Oqqurghon district of Tashkent province.

Despite the assertions of both Kyrgyz and Uzbek local residents that there are no problems in their relations at all, the grounds for ethnic conflict remains in Khojaabad district, situated on the border with Kyrgyzstan. Many participants noted during the discussions and interviews that Uzbek men are unable to travel to the market in Osh, Kyrgyzstan, a traditional marketing center of agricultural products for *dehqons* from Andijan. Uzbek men are detained, humiliated and robbed by Kyrgyz policemen and customs officers. Thus, it is the Uzbek women who must travel there with the goods. Another example of continuing conflict was depicted in a story from Dilqushod in Andijan province. The *hokimiyat* built a school for Kyrgyz children in Ordai village where many Kyrgyz people lived, using construction materials that were originally meant for building a school for Uzbek children in Dilqushod (the school already had been under construction for a decade). Earlier, Kyrgyzstan offered to assist in the building of the Kyrgyz school, but the *hokimiyat* decided not to accept this aid and to build the Kyrgyz school with its own resources. However, in taking construction materials away from the Dilqushod project, it encroached upon the interests of the Dilqushod residents and it looked to many as though the *hokimiyat* had taken resources from the Uzbeks and had given them to the Kyrgyz. Although no one in Dilqushod accused the Kyrgyz people, many were resentful of the fact that the authorities had failed to fulfill their obligations in finishing the Uzbek school which had been begun so many years ago.

Certain barriers also exist between different regions of Uzbekistan, and these are manifested at a domestic level. Interviews taken in Ulughbek settlement near Tashkent city revealed that Uzbek people living in the settlement are clearly divided into native Tashkent inhabitants and those who came originally from the provinces. These two categories of Uzbeks have such significant cultural differences that families from the provinces prefer not to give their daughters in marriage to Tashkent families (case study 2). It is believed that Tashkent families mistreat their daughters-in-law. On the other hand, Tashkent residents (like Shahida in case study 2) admit that it is easier for them to communicate with Russians than with their own people from the provinces.

Some participants also noted an increase in the number of cases of domestic violence which they believe is brought on by economic hardships. Hardships associated with the transition period dictate the distribution to men and women of family and community responsibilities and roles.

«Cooking, laundering and cleaning should be done by a woman, but society is changing and the responsibilities of men and women are changing too. The reason for this is that all energy is invested in survival, because the children must be fed.» (Oq Oltyn *sovkoz*, Andijan province.) Put in text box

Some people believe that women now have more things to take care of. They are taking more responsibility for providing for their families, but they also do the same amount of household work as before. On the whole, this means that they have to work more than they used to. Because of increasing impoverishment, women have started to reproach men for not bringing home enough money. Men become easily angered, and sometimes this leads to violence against women. Other reasons mentioned were the increase of alcohol intake on the part of impoverished men. In comparison to household families with three generations, a higher rate of violence is recorded among young families. This can be explained by the fact that large families are more adaptable to hardships.

### 3.6 Coping Strategies

Tremendous social changes have taken place over the past decade. In essence, these changes can be expressed as the impoverishment of a huge percentage of the population – those who in the past were considered to be among the middle class – and the enrichment of a small percentage of the population. While the existence of a small number of poor people in the past was explained by the participants in terms of loss of a primary provider, illness, disability, or just plain laziness, nowadays, it was explained, people become paupers against their own volition. Despite the fact that many people work harder than ever before to make ends meet, going without holidays and weekends, taking two or even three jobs, the quality of their lives has deteriorated. The deterioration in quality of life was explained in terms of the following key phenomena:

- ◆ The high rate of inflation following independence has «eaten» away at their savings, and salaries cannot keep pace with it. In Takhtakupyr people said that salaries are increased by 20-30% annually, while prices

double. The result is that incomes do not suffice in satisfying the same necessities as before, such basic needs as sufficient nourishment, clothing, housing maintenance, education, and health care.

- ◆ Since government subsidies for social services such as gas, electrical power, water, kindergartens, and medical treatment were terminated following independence the charges for these services have increased dramatically, while income has remained at almost the same level. In fact, the actual value of income in relation to inflation and prices has been reduced. As a result, from one third to one half of the average salary is spent on public utility bills. If one of the household members falls sick, medical treatment may eat up the entire family income and savings if available. This has resulted in a decreased amount and quality of food intake for the majority of the population. Consumption of meat products has decrease, and people must often use second-grade wheat flour or make bread out of sorghum flour.
- ◆ Unemployment rates have soared due to the closing of many enterprises or their staff reduction. Often when jobs are available, they are located far from the place of residence. In Ferghana Valley many people once worked in the city where they traveled by public transport or by transport provided by their employer. Now transport fares have become so high, and the actual buying capacity of salaries is so small that the income simply cannot cover the costs of transportation. In this situation the most badly affected people are the residents of Khojaabad district of Andijan province, many of whom are industrial specialists.

The majority of *kolkhozes* and *sovkhozes* have become indebted to the state and to various suppliers due to the practice of «price scissoring.» Because of the fiscal policies of the center, limited cash emissions, and the need for the *kolkhoz* chairmen to recover expenses incurred in order to obtain his position, *kolkhoz* workers have not received their wages for several years, wages which are already negligible in and of themselves.

What are the coping strategies employed to solve these problems?

1. In order to provide one's household with food products, a household subsistence plot is utilized with maximum efficiency. Many villagers and even town dwellers keep cattle and grow vegetables, wheat and other crops on the land plots available to them. Surplus products are sold in the market. It is in this way that *kolkhoz* workers who have not received their wages for a long time are able to survive impoverishment. In some of the sites, however, people willing to grow their own products and keep cattle face a number of obstacles. For instance, in Takhtakupyr, Karakalpakstan it is impossible to grow vegetables due to the high salinity of the soil. One teacher there was able to resolve this problem by selling his cattle and using the proceeds to install a drain pipe to take salt-bearing ground waters away to a large drainage ditch. The chairman of the community complained about the other community residents who would not unite and install together the same drainage system. He felt that they were just waiting for the *kolkhoz* or the government to do it for them. There had been a precedent in that *kolkhoz* of combining efforts in order to solve the problem of gas supply. Village residents had pooled their money and hired a brigade that tapped into the trunk gas pipeline running some distance away from the village, thus providing every house with gas. Another problem in the same location was the use of pastures, which from time immemorial have been considered to be community lands, for *sovkhov* rice cultivation.

Some households in rural areas have managed to establish their own farming units. The most profitable ones have turned out to be livestock-breeding farms. Many of them are operating quite successfully, despite a number obstacles impeding their free development. Egamberdy from Turtkul district recounted numerous problems facing his farm. The *hokimiyat* compels him to sell most of his meat and dairy products to kindergartens and other government institutions at low prices. Regardless of the potential for extensive development, his farm is not given additional land, although in accordance with government regulations a farming unit is entitled to 0.5 hectares of land for each head of cattle. Egamberdy is not even able to obtain a loan to open a workshop for the commercial processing of his products. Another farm in Andijan province went bankrupt because it was unable to collect payments due from an enterprise to which it was selling its products following the directives of the *hokimiyat*.

« I am a *dehqon*. I have taught my children how to labor as a *dehqon* and I see only one way for us. I am against my children engaging in trade. Trade is connected with big risks, often deadly ones. First, you have to borrow money at big interest rates of 20-30%. And then you are afraid of not being able to return the debt. One can lose everything, not be able to sell your goods... It's better not to discuss it. I prefer to deal with cattle, but not in the shape of a human being, and to work on land». (Turtkul, Karakalpakstan)

At the moment possibilities of establishing a farming unit are almost exhausted, because unlike the situation in 1995-1996, no additional land is allocated for farming units. This command was given from «above» because the government has a stake in *kolkhoz* system through which the government can pump out from the rural area export resources and import substitutes such as cotton, grain, and silk cocoons.

2. Today many people try to use the opportunities opened up after independence with the liberalization of trade by engaging in commercial and entrepreneurial activities. Since the majority do not have a starting capital, they begin with small-scale operations. Low-income people buy goods from the nearest wholesale and retail markets and then resell it in the places of their residence. Others who have or can borrow 1-2 thousand US dollars undertake individual or group trips outside the republic: this kind of trading business is called «shuttle trade». Usually, they bring and sell goods in the same wholesale markets where smaller traders from districts and provinces buy goods for further reselling in their home villages. This kind of business has its own difficulties and problems besides the absence of starting capital or «whims» of the market.

One problem is the lack of space in the market or its expensiveness. Several years ago in Ulughbek settlement, after the ban on trading business has been lifted, a great number of booths was spawned. A son of one of our informants also purchased such booth and began to sell various small fry. But soon *hokimiyat* prohibited booth trade without a special permission or license. As a result, those who dedicated themselves to this method of earning money, lost their source of income. Eventually, booth trade became alive again, however, not in such a great swing as before: only those few ready to pay for permission were allowed to sell.

A woman, petty merchant from Takhtakupyr (case study 3) told how she and her «colleagues» leave at night time for Khazarasp where a big wholesale market is located, buy goods in the night to be able to arrive in the morning to their local district market. As they buy goods in the dark and in a rush, she and her fellow traders later discover that some of the goods are missing, some are defective; the result is the loss of money. Besides that, traders like her are heavily taxed: on top of the license fee of 1,320 *soum* per month and 130 *soum* for a place in the market, they charged her a road tax of 1,320 *soum*. She resented: she does not even have a car, then why must she pay for that also! She speaks of the tax inspectors with hatred: «Tax inspection, like a dog, is gnawing at my guts». After all these expenses, payment and losses, at the end of a month she is left with money just enough for the most essential things: food, clothes and support to her student children. Therefore, such kind of petty commerce can hardly help to raise capital for reinvestment, but it suffices to support the family. Another problem is that women are usually more successful in this kind of shuttle trade, which is the reason why men look askance at their wives, first of all, because of their financial independence, and because a woman, due to the nature of her business, communicates with the sort of people (police, tax inspectors, business partners, buyers) who make her turn into an absolutely different person – less obedient to her husband. Some of the participants considered this situation as one of the reasons for the breakup of families.

3. Thirdly, services rendered privately and unofficially have become a widespread practice. For example, men and women (the latter are much fewer) from rural areas come to big cities for seasonal and by-the-day work. They are usually called *mardikorlar*. The most common work that this unofficial market offers is construction. The services of *aravakash* also appeared (men hauling small carts inside the territory of the market) on the same wholesale and retail markets mentioned before. The biggest problem of these by-the-day workers is their relations with police, but the origin of this problem is the existing system of residence

permits inherited from the Soviet times. Police has been commanded from «above» (this requirement has become more stringent after the explosions in Tashkent in February, 1999) to restrict the sojourn of people without permanent or temporary residence permits in the capital. This badly affects *mardikorlar* most of whom come from provinces. This prohibition creates ground for humiliation and harassment of *mardikorlar* and *aravakashlar*. Police takes bribes from them (to return the passport which has been taken by the police itself), makes them work for free in the country houses of their bosses, and treats them brutally. One of these *aravakashlar* from Oitangaly (Oqqurghon province) confessed that if only he were able to earn in *kolkhoz* at least half of the money he makes in the wholesale market, nothing on earth would make him go back to Tashkent to do this work. The other man, Sadridin from Dangara (Ferghana province) who came to Tashkent to work on construction site, after he has been once humiliated by police, ceased going there at all.

«Our competitors are mainly those who work without dollies. They carry loads on their shoulders for retail traders. They ask less money for their work and steal small clients from the *aravakashlar*. Our main enemy is the police. After the bombings in Tashkent on February 16, they have been like animals. They arrested everyone and brought them to the police office. They released them only after demanding the payment of a fine of 500-600 *soum*. Everything was different before the bombing. Before, the policemen just asked us to give them vodka or cigarettes. Recently Umid and his friends were taken and locked up in the basement. The policemen not only humiliated them but they also took all their money. The policemen forbade us to spend nights here and will not permit us to live here. That is why after 7 PM they lock their flats and never open the door. When friends come they knock on the wall. Twice the local policemen came, knocked, shouted, and left. At the market the *aravakashlar* are not treated as human beings. People humiliate them and laugh at them. After loading up their cargo some businessmen lay atop their stuff and «drive» the *aravakash*. In such moments the *aravakashlar* become infuriated. If in his collective farm he could make at least half of the money he is making on the market he would never appear here. «Of course, problems did exist in the past, but they were few. Today there are good jobs too. I had finished courses for accounting with the highest marks, then went to several places looking for a job. A *shapka* (Rus «bribe») is required. I went both to the district center and to the *kolkhoz*. The *kolkhoz* gave me an assistant's job which I had for a month. They promised me a good position later. In a month I was driven out. Staff reduction was the excuse they offered. They banish strangers, and keep their own people. In the district they told me that there are vacancies, but one must wait a bit, and talk to people. Later a friend told me that in order to get a position, one must pay 25 thousand. I can't afford it, so I went back to pushing a cart in Tashkent.» (Oqqurghon district, Tashkent province).

In Karakalpakstan people told about cases of going for seasonal work and trade to Kazakhstan. Many residents of the republic [Kazakhs, in the first place] have relatives there, or children who are students of Kazakhstan schools. This fact makes it possible for people to travel there for seasonal work (accommodation is available, and there is someone who can give advice about jobs, customers, and etc.).

Besides *mardikorlar*, a lot of private taxis appeared recently. Many car owners worked as private drivers before, but private inter-city taxi service provided by private car owners or people who rented mini-vans, is a recent phenomenon. One of the cases study characters from Dangar rented a mini-van and gradually became able to buy it out, and now he is his own boss. After all expenses, such as taxes, spare parts, fuel, extortion taken by traffic police on the roads and so on, at the end of the month he is left with the amount equal to approximately 100 US dollars. There are also people for whom private transport services is not a full-time occupation. For instance, Dilqushod resident says that in summer time he is busy on his land plot and an orchard, and in winter, when land does not require much work, he becomes private carrier driving his own car. Although the income is not very big, as there are few people who can pay well, but at least it is enough for the car maintenance (spares and fuel).

4. Often, in order to overcome poverty, people take the path of illegal business. We have already mentioned the increased rate of cattle stealing. In Karakalpakstan they told about how people were stealing not cattle, as it was risky to sell it afterwards, but a rope to which it was tied. During one of the interviews the informant told how he was engaged in the «side» selling of wastes remained after making fruit juices at the cannery. Those waste were used as forage for cattle. Narrator named Shavkat worked in the night shift and all transactions were made during the night. He was caught only after he had had an argument and a fight with his client. After the quarrel the client complained to the management of the cannery and Shavkat was kicked out. Eventually he managed to get on in life and became a private taxi driver (about whom we have already spoke). Another story was told in Karakalpakstan: a group of young people tried to make money by selling bootleg alcohol which is very risky if one gets caught by police.
5. We have already spoke about how people manage to solve part of their problems by joining their efforts. They pool resources and efforts with relatives, neighbors and friends. Relatives often become useful in emergency situations (death of provider, illness), in the construction of a house, in organizing family events and rituals. Neighbors can usually offer small routine help in minor matters and help organize functions and events. Since the preparation of a wedding and the ceremony itself, as well as the other accompanying rites, are the most important part of life of Uzbek, Karakalpak and other Muslim nationalities of Uzbekistan, help coming from relatives and neighbors turns out to be quite important. As one man in Takhtakupyr said, a household covers only 60-70 percent of the total cost of these events, and the rest 30-40 percent come as succor from relatives and neighbors. But as it is getting increasingly difficult for relatives and friends to help each other, it menaces the tradition itself. This was a concern expressed by one elderly man from Muynak. He said that as there is no money to travel and make presents on occasion of a funeral, people cannot make qatnasu (that is, to communicate and visit each other, which used to be an essential attribute of traditional lifestyle of Uzbek, Karakalpak, Kazakh and other people in Central Asia).

People also cooperate with their neighbors when they need to solve problems of social sphere and infrastructure. People from Takhtakupyr pooled money to organize the supply of gas to their village. In Dilqushod two men joined their efforts and installed a pump to bring water to their orchards in the mountains. In 1990 men from the same village got together for vigilance, protecting their homes from the possible pogroms made by rioting groups of Kyrgyz youth. However, cases when people cooperated to resolve their daily socioeconomic problems are not numerous. No examples were given of how farmers and *dehqons* would unite for the purpose of marketing their products, defending their interests before the district and *sovkhos* authorities, for doing irrigation work. Many are still hoping to get help from the government or *sovkhos* or *kolkhos* which is encroaching upon their rights and interests.

There were also examples of loosing resources that could have helped to solve problems of poverty. In Takhtakupyr they told how tons of hide and wool that remained after slaughtering, were thrown away after they had been stored for a long time without making any use of them. Hide is treated with salt and stored for a year, after that its quality is getting worse, and that was exactly what happened in Takhtakupyr. [At the same time, according to our information, export of hides is allowed only with the availability of an export license. This proves the high value of this raw material and high demand for it on the part of foreign businessmen.]

## 4. Priorities of the Poor

All problems mentioned by the participants can be divided into the following classifications:

- ◆ Economic problems
- ◆ Problems of social and industrial infrastructure

Priority issues most frequently mentioned in the OEGDs were connected with economic problems. These include the absence or shortage of means of subsistence and the high prices of foodstuffs.<sup>1</sup> These problems were noted in every site and in every OEGD and it appears that the population in general is deeply concerned with these issues, regardless of region, gender or nationality. The well-to-do and the rich are the only exceptions. These economical problems were not so sharp in the past when prices were low and affordable. Many group participants compared the purchasing power of their past salaries of 10-15 years ago with that of their current salaries. They noted that at that time their salary had been enough to buy 5-6 sacks of flour, whereas now it can buy no more than one sack. Also at that the middle class, which constituted a definite majority of the population, had money for clothing, travel, rest and relaxation, and leisure activities. Because of the large government subsidies given to welfare and basic services, a very small amount of money was needed to pay for medical treatment, study, and basic utilities. Moreover, people were able to put away savings for the purchase of a car, for vacations, and in case of emergencies. Now all earnings made by the current middle class are spent on foodstuffs, medical treatment and utilities. As a result food portions per person are shrinking and a class of people who are permanently hungry has appeared. Participants noted that this phenomenon of a class of hungry and undernourished people literally did not exist before. Individual critical voices were, however, raised regarding past eras, creating a more nuanced picture. Older women in Takhtakupyr recalled that when a rationing system was introduced in the middle and late 1980s they had to stand in line for hours just to buy products authorized by the coupons they had received. Men in Ulughbek discussed the absurdity of consumer behavior at the time of the coupon system: people were buying everything authorized by the coupons, not only meat, rice, butter and flour – products that are consumed quickly by every household – but they would also stockpile matches, tea, vodka (even if they did not drink alcohol), cigarettes, soap, and detergent. Sometimes this behavior created panic on the market and made the existing shortage even worse. [However, later, when prices were liberalized, such stockpiles helped make ends meet. People consumed part of the goods themselves and the other part they sold at the market.]

Non-payment of salaries or long deferrals of salary payment is a frequently mentioned economic problem, especially in rural areas. It was the most critical problem for participants from the provinces of Andijan and Ferghana, and from the Oqqurghon district of Tashkent province. People have not received salaries there for several years now. In autumn, at the time of the cotton harvest, people are paid in cash for harvested cotton, but even this does not happen everywhere.<sup>2</sup> *Kolkhozchilar* (*kolkhoz* workers) do not receive cash for hoeing, sowing, weeding and field cultivation, or they receive very little money in cash payment. Exceptions to this are rare distributions (1-2 times per year) of quantities of foodstuffs or bank payments for utilities such as gas, water, and electricity.

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<sup>1</sup> Flour, butter, and sugar are meant here. In general they are imported by the republic, and therefore prices for these products are in line with global market prices, whereas salaries are calculated on the basis of the wholesale prices for cotton and grain, prices that are fixed by the government and are at least three times lower than global market prices for such types of products. Because of this, salaries are not enough to pay for the purchase of food stuffs in sufficient volume and assortment. In terms of meat, milk and eggs, many locals breed cows and hens and very often are forced to sell this cattle in order to obtain money for clothes, medicine, school supplies, and wedding parties.

<sup>2</sup> Because cotton is the main export product, it has strategic value. Every fall during cotton harvesting season the government provides separate, centrally controlled funds to pay for cotton picking wages on time, regardless of whether a *sovkhos* or *kolkhoz* is in debt or not. This is done to make sure that as much of the cotton crop as possible is harvested over a short period of time – usually two months – before the frosts, rains and snow set in. Payments from this account are made only for the provision of the harvest – for immediate cotton picking salaries, fuel, and repair of cotton harvesting equipment.

Moreover, after the main cotton harvest is over some *kolkhozchilar* are given *kolkhoz* lands for 2-3 months to cultivate as they wish. If the weather is favorable, *kolkhozchilar* sow such lands with quickly growing crops such as mung beans, and they collect small harvests for sale at the market. Sometimes, depending on the well-being of the *sovkhov* or *kolkhoz* and thanks to the good will of the chairman who, in accordance with *kolkhozchi* requests concerning assistance in cases of illness, death in the family, weddings, or the absence of food in a household, may give out a quantity of foodstuffs or a small amount of money. For example, in *sovkhov* Oq Oltyn of Ulughnor district (case study 5) a girl named Issitora was given 500 *sum* for the medical treatment of her mother, an amount which equals 11 kg of flour.

Problems with salary payment are also critical in Karakalpakstan. For example in Takhtakupyr they don't pay salaries for 2-3 months at a time, and when they are paid part of the salary comes to them in foodstuffs at purchase prices which are fixed higher than market prices, meaning that they receive less than they would were they to buy the foodstuffs at the market with cash. Under such conditions, most of the rural population and part of the urban population relies only on their household subsistence plots where they grow agricultural crops or breed cattle. However, the possibility of obtaining such household subsistence plots is limited by an absence of additional *sovkhov* lands.

Unemployment and the absence or shortage of jobs was named as another important economic problem, although the acuteness of the problems varies from region to region. Among the sites included in this study, employment problems were most critical in Khodjaabad district, Almalyk, Takhtakupyr, and Muynak. The primary cause of unemployment in these regions is the large number of workers and highly qualified specialists coupled with extensive reductions in jobs in the industrial sector. In Andijan province, as in all provinces of the Ferghana valley, transport infrastructure is quite well-developed and dwelling settlements are located close to one another. During the Soviet period the rural population had to work outside their dwelling settlements in neighboring cities and at times in cities located far away. Now travel to these places has become very expensive due to increases in transportation costs and to the fact that enterprises no longer provide transportation subsidies for their workers in the form of low-cost buses. As a result, an informal «employment agency» has emerged, and group participants and other informants said that one can obtain a job with this «employment agency» if one is willing to pay for it, anything from the job of cleaning woman to that of district *hokim*. To obtain such a job, one must give a bribe to the official who manages employment issues in that particular firm, organization or branch of government. For example, to find a job as an unskilled worker at the Almalyk mining and metallurgical combine, a bribe must be given to the workshop master or foreman, and for the position of *kolkhoz* chairman a bribe must be given to the district *hokim*.

However, the absence of jobs is not the primary problem in all provinces. It is curious that in Ulughnor district the special group of young unemployed men do not think that the absence of jobs is the main problem facing them today. Rather, they note that there are jobs in the *sovkhov* and much work to be done, and that the problem is in the non-payment of salaries: no one wants to work for nothing.

The «refusal to allocate land» was also mentioned as an important economic problem which has become more critical over the last two years since provisions for new *fermer* and *dehqon* farmland has been terminated, and in some places even lands for the construction of new houses. One of the participants in a group in Ulughnor district said, «The *sovkhov* gave out land plots for building houses, they gave the permission and then canceled it all at once, saying that they had received an order from the provincial *hokimiyat* because that land had been declared good for sowing [cotton and grain], and the target plan for the *sovkhov* had not been reduced. So they decided to put a hold on this process.» After some further investigation of the circumstances, it was revealed that the *sovkhov* had officially registered this land as an area for building houses, but in actuality was using it for growing crops. This was done in order to remove these lands from the category of farmlands, while at the same time artificially increasing the productivity rate on paper. They needed it solely to make their productivity report look better.

On the other hand, participants noted that it was possible to obtain one, two or more hectares of land from the *sovkhov* for the cultivation of crops included in government plans. In such cases, however, the participants were not speaking of the allocation of land for private use, but rather of strict stipulations on the sowing of planned crops,

largely cotton and grain, and their sale to the state at extremely low purchase prices. Moreover, very often salaries for such production are not paid in a timely fashion and sometimes not at all. As a result of such fraud many rural people do not eagerly go to work for a *sovkhos* or *kolkhoz*. For example, in Oitamghali village people leave the *kolkhoz* in order to find other sources of livelihood. In rare cases, for example, in Khodjaabad district of Andijan province, the *kolkhoz* allocates land for the sowing of other crops such as potatoes, melons and so forth. The tenant gives half of the harvest to the chairman of the *kolkhoz*, but does not know how the produce is used; do proceeds from its sale go into the pocket of the chairman or into the budget of the *kolkhoz*? What remains of the produce can be sold at the market by the tenant himself. *Kolkhoz* lands are often allocated with these stipulations not to *kolkhoz* workers, but to third persons, even though *kolkhoz* workers have the right to obtain it. This fact characterizes the influence (or lack thereof) workers have over their employer. [According to the *kolkhoz* and *sovkhos* charters, supreme power lies in the workers' assemblies, but as a rule workers do not assert such rights.]

Land problems connected with problems in housing were also mentioned as priority issues. [The rural population of Uzbekistan is growing at a rate of up to 3% per year. Each young family tries to obtain land for private housing and few people are moving to the cities where it is hard to find work and where there are problems with registration.<sup>1</sup> However, there has been a shortage in land resources for some time already, particularly in the over-populated area of the Ferghana Valley]. In Oq Oltyn *sovkhos* they have solved the workers' housing problem by distributing living quarters in former kindergarten buildings which have been closed due to lack of finance. Living conditions in these barrack-like rooms are devoid of any comfort: «We live in the barracks and cannot feel ourselves at home. We are always hiding from one another [from neighbors, particularly to conceal love-making at night]. We transport dirty bowls of water in front of our neighbors which is very embarrassing for us... We deliberately buy plastic bowls, because they don't make such a racket.»

In the majority of regions one of the most pressing problems connected with social infrastructure included the stagnation of the health care system and increases in the cost of medical services and medicines. There were many stories told of people who had been forced to spend their entire savings and to sell their cattle and property to pay for medical treatment. For instance, in Takhtakupyr two men were taken to the hospital and with diagnosed with life-threatening alcohol poisoning from having drunk bad vodka. Relatives were able to put up the money for the treatment of one of the men, but the second man had no family to pay for him. As a result the first man survived while the second died.

Groups differed in their emphases on one or another problem. Groups made up of women only were more concerned about problems connected with infrastructure and the scarcity of money for the purchase of foodstuffs. [This is not surprising in that women are more closely involved in running their households than are men: they fetch water, cook, and launder]. Men stressed money scarcity problems, wages arrears, and small salaries. [This is also not surprising in that traditionally Uzbek men are supposed to be bread winners, and they like to consider themselves as such. ] Young people tended to emphasize wages arrears and absence of good jobs, while the elderly stressed problems in health care. [These are not surprising in that young people are most concerned with the future of their careers and families while the elderly are more prone to illness.]

In comparison with past eras, a decrease in well-being was noted by the participants in relation to almost every criterion elaborated. These included sufficiency of earnings and means of subsistence (food, clothing, upkeep of the household), affordability of education and medical services, housing conditions, the availability of good jobs, resources for rest and relaxation, and diversified development. However, it came out in the discussions that such assessments depended upon what period of the past was being taken into account. Group participants and informants distinguished the following periods from the point of view what coping strategies were used to solve problems associated with well-being.

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<sup>1</sup> Registration of residence is recorded at OVIR, *Otdel Viz i Registratsii*, (Rus.), the Visa and Registration Department.

- ◆ World War II and the postwar years (1941 – approx.1953). These years were recalled by the elderly as a very difficult period characterized by permanent hunger, hard labor, and fear of punishment. It was forbidden to pick even a few ears of grain from *kolkhoz* fields, and such acts were punishable with severe consequences. No one even thought about demanding payment for the produce they collected because the entire harvest was sent to the front. Cattle was also confiscated for the war effort. When compared to this period, the current era shows up better on several counts. For example, people from Takhtakupyr noted that today their houses are supplied with gas, electricity, and running water. However, there are similarities between the period of the Great Patriotic War and the current era: *kolkhozchi* salaries go unpaid and many people go hungry due to the decrease in earnings, the non-payment of salaries, and the increase in unemployment. Elderly group participants from Takhtakupyr noted that nowadays not everyone can afford to buy flour of first or superior class quality, but instead use black flour of a lower quality made from *sorgo* (sorghum). They call bread made from sorghum flour *zoghora-nan* (Uzb., «maize-bread» or «bread made from cattle fodder»), because they ate such bread only during wartime. Characteristic of that time was the fact that difficulties were justified by recourse to the excuse that the country was at war and therefore sacrifices made by the citizenry were both unavoidable and proper. Because of this, people did not blame the government for their difficulties. Quite a similar situation has arisen today in which republican independence serves as a justification for the difficulties of the transitional period. One young man in Ulughbek village justified the current difficulties in the following way: «Many factories and plants are constructed and much money is spent on this. When everything is built salaries will increase.» But a certain amount of disillusionment has appeared among the inhabitants of Uzbekistan due to the continually worsening situation. Thus, the much-touted government theory about the temporary nature of current hardships due to construction of a newly independent state is beginning to wear thin and doubts are being voiced more and more often. Many groups noted that despite the importance of independence, the state affairs and economics have worsened ever since.
- ◆ Period of Nikita Khrushchev (1953 – 1965). Although better than the wartime period which preceded it, people lived with many hardships, especially in rural areas. Earnings were small and social infrastructure had not yet been well-developed. This period did not figure prominently in the discussions or interviews.
- ◆ Period of Leonid Brezhnev (1965 – 1982). This period was evaluated as the best in terms of well-being. Everyone had work, earnings were sufficient for the satisfaction of material and cultural needs, social infrastructure and services were developed significantly, and group participants even said that Brezhnev had «given food to the people.» There were problems, however, connected with shortages of certain products. Bureaucracy and red tape existed to the extent where one elderly man recalled that in order to solve one problem one needed to visit many official bodies. One of the informants from Ulughbek village noted that at that time very severe censorship existed and various human rights were depressed – religion, thought, migration and etc. In general, however, the majority of the participants evaluated this period as one where people were looking toward the future with confidence, not thinking of tomorrow. The powers that be would make your decisions for you.
- ◆ Period of Mikhail Gorbachev (1985 – 1991). The collective attitude toward this period is quite complex. Businessmen recalled that the activity of cooperative societies was permitted, and that they were more free then than today's businessmen are. However, at that time shortage problems were critical, the coupon system was introduced, queues appeared in the stores, and hoarding cleaned many products from off the shelves. Some male representatives of the intelligentsia looked positively upon the freedom of speech and «openness» that emerged at that time. But they were opposed by a woman who exclaimed, «Who needs this openness? What did it give you?» (mixed group, Ulughbek village). Gorbachev was also held responsible for the breakup of the USSR and representatives of Russian and Uzbek-speaking populations perceived the break-up differently: the Russian speakers described it with sorrow, using such verbs as «break up», «destroy», while the Uzbek speakers almost never used the verb «break up,» viewing it positively as one of the main achievements whose result was the attainment of independence by Uzbekistan (see materials from Ulughbek).

In comparison with the analysis of priority of problems it is important to define which period of the past is being compared with the present. When comparing current conditions with the Brezhnev period, the participants noted that many of the problems described as critical for today – things such as the non-payment of salary, the insufficiency of salary rates, high prices for foodstuffs, the scarcity of jobs in rural areas, the supply of drinking water and gas, the absence of conditions for rest and sport, expensive medical services, and paid education – either did not exist at that time or existed to a much smaller degree. When comparing current conditions with the conditions that dominated ten years ago the contrast was equally enormous. Several groups evaluated today's problems (wages, medical treatment and so forth) as the most critical, assigning them 100 points, while the same problems of ten years ago were given 0 points. Essentially, the participants suggested that in comparison with today, very few problems existed in the past.

Problems noted as being characteristic of situations in the past and the present:

The following problems existing today were critical in the past:

- ◆ Gas and water supply in villages
- ◆ Small land holdings and pastures
- ◆ Bureaucracy, corruption, bribery

Problems which no longer exist or which are not so critical:

- ◆ Product shortages
- ◆ Absence of religious freedom
- ◆ Infringements upon the rights of Uzbeks in comparison with Russians

Problems which are typical of today and which did not exist in the past :

- ◆ Unemployment, reduction in jobs
- ◆ Wage arrears
- ◆ High inflation rates in relation to slow growth of earnings
- ◆ Paid medical services (some bribe-taking existed in the past)
- ◆ Paid education (some bribe-taking existed in the past)

Change in problems priority started, according to group participants, from the beginning of 90-s. The situation in the past, before the 90s, was defined by notions of «economic stability» and «order». The following was said about a number of problems: «Such problems did not exist before at all, because there was economic stability». They used word «disorder» to define the present time (refer to materials about Ulughnor village).

Some problems specific to regions were mentioned. In Muynak located in the far north of Karakalpakstan a whole complex of problems could be defined by the word «dead end». This word was used by people to describe this dying city, and has a triple meaning. Firstly, in a geographical sense, «dead end» referred to the fact that Muynak is located far from railway links. The nearest railway station is situated in Kungrad. In terms of water resources, the Amy-Darya river, which for some time flowed into the Aral sea, practically does not reach here. Secondly, in a socio-economic sense, «dead end» expresses the fact that all productive activity which sustained live in this area has ceased. In the past Muynak main specialization was fisheries and the industrial processing of Aral sea fish.

However, due to the reduced inflows from the Amy-Darya and Syr-Darya rivers, and the consequent shrinking of the Aral sea, the shore has receded 200km from Muynak. The town has lost its economic reason for existence. The third meaning of «dead end» refers to the hopeless situation of Muynak's population who don't have work and the means to earn a livelihood.. Life here is mainly supported by state benefits, which are sometimes nominal, and by national and international funds and charity organizations. Assistance from these organizations and funds is a separate question which will be addressed below. Practically this assistance, judging from our research, does not play any role in the survival of these people in the current difficult conditions. The main source of living for the population is provided by pensions, allowances, stipends, salaries for small a number of working places, and hunting and fishing at the nearest lakes. Almost the only people who stay in the town are the while young people try to leave, some going to Kazakhstan, some going south to Nukus and other places. As a result of such despair, cases of suicide have increased. In some cases the names of people who decided to commit suicide were mentioned by participants. One unemployed man who committed suicide said, before he hanged himself, that he did not want to live on, because he did not want to know everything that was happening to him and his family.

## 5. Institutional Analysis

### 5.1 Institutions: Issues for Narrative

Prior to the arrival of the entire team at each site, an interview with representatives of the local authorities was held and the activity of related institutes at the research sites was clarified.

Allowances and assistance to poor families In Soviet times allowances mainly were received at work and only few allowances were received through social security bodies. . In the last 10 years substantial changes have taken place in social security provision. The aim of such changes has been to assist poor families and families with many children, women during pregnancy and maternity leave, invalids and the disabled. It also aims to provide other citizens with the opportunity to secure a means of livelihood for themselves by allocating land to the population, granting rights for entrepreneurial activities, and the privatization of state and collective enterprises and divisions. The main types of allowances mentioned by participants and informants were the following:

Allowance to poor families. The monthly amount of this allowance is equivalent to 0.5 –1.75 times the official minimum salary depending on the number of children in the family. Mahalla committees are delegated to take decisions about the allocation of such allowances. They create special commissions in order to ascertain the level of living of families that applied for allowances. However, they can only allocate allowances within quota limits set by the Ministry of social security through local authorities. Each family may receive an allowance for a 3 month period which can be renewed upon application to the mahalla committee. In practice in some places ( for example, in Andijan and Ferghana regions) due to the great number of applications, each family may receive an allowance for not longer than for 6 months.

Each district has its limits (quota) for allowances for poor families. Based on this limit and applications collected and approved by *selsoviets* ( rural gathering of citizens) <sup>1</sup> regional *hokimiyat*, *raisobes* ( district office of social security) distribute money for allowances. Such limits were increased by one and a half times in recent years in Andijan and Ferghana regions. But in some other regions, for example in Muynak, limits for allowances were decreased.

Because the number of allowances allocated is less than the number of those who would like to receive them, abuses can occur. In general such abuses are rare, because the chairmen of mahalla committees are elected by local citizens. Therefore the level of social control over the activity of mahalla committees is very high, and the ability of the population to influence such institutions is also high. But in some cases abuses did take place. For example, in the village of Ulughbek some group participants claimed that bribes had to be given in order to receive an allowance, and that allowances are mainly received by friends of those who distribute such assistance. In Oqqurghon region one woman said that the chairman of the *selsoviet* gave her an allowance only for only 2 months instead of amount 3, and took the amount for the 3rd month for herself.

Allowance to families with children the under age of 16. This allowance is only allocated to poor families. The distribution procedure is similar to that described above. It is prohibited to get two allowances at the same time.

Allowance for the care of children under the age of 2. Such allowances paid to women at the workplace or in *raisobes*.

Pension. Allocation and distribution of pensions are also made by *hokimiyat* and *raisobes*, but based not on the limits but on actual age, years of service, disability, and the absence of bread winner. Participants described the following types of pensions:

Pension for years of service. Men retire at the age of 60 years old and women at the age of 55, but on condition that they have completed a certain number of years of service. A resolution issued in 1997, which stated that retired

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<sup>1</sup> Each rural council usually combines 2-4 villages.

people who worked would receive only half of their pension, was very unpleasant for retired people. In practice it is enforced only when a pensioner works at an enterprise or organization and receives an official salary. If his earnings are not registered, for example if he works on his own farm and markets the surplus product, such work does not influence the size of his pension. It is not a coincidence that rural families where someone receives pension and has his own subsidiary small holding are considered as being well off. Other families of *kolkhozchi* without a pensioner among them sometimes don't receive cash at all due to the non payment of salary. No abuses were mentioned in connection with the payment of pensions for years of service, if we don't count necessity of queuing at the post office, where pensions are paid (refer to materials of research in Andijan region and Takhtakupyr region).

«I go several times to the post office to receive my own pension and the pensions of my daughters Gulshan and Sveta. They say, «There is no money.» I cry, make a scene and they give me the pensions the third time. I try to persuade the post office workers, tell them about my sick daughter Gulshan and that she needs to be cared for. And then they feel sorry for me and find the money.» (Turtkul, Karakalpakstan)

Pension due to the death of bread winner. It is allocated in case of death of the father. In our material we had information about such type of pension. Here no abuses were noted.

Pension for disability. 3 grades of disability exist, according to which different amount of pension is paid. Abuses take place in the allocation of such pensions. For example, doctors offered to give one invalid of grade 3, who receives about 2000 *sum* per month, a medical certificate of grade 1 in exchange for a bribe, thereby increasing his pension. Similar cases were noted in the villages of Ulughbek, Takhtakupyr and Muynak. Some people said : «disability is better than old age», meaning that pension for disability of grade 1 and 2 could be bigger than a pension for years of service.

Provision of employment. The regional labor exchange is in charge of this issue. The unemployed or those looking for work should register with this labor exchange where he should be offered a work within 2 weeks. If he does not accept such work he should be offered up to two more choices of jobs. After refusing all three jobs for justifiable reasons the person will be granted an allowance for unemployment. Such allowances are not big (equal to the minimum salary for one month). Therefore, due to the expensive of transportation (especially for those who live in rural areas and who need to commute to the regional center where the labor exchange is located), the difficulties of going through all necessary procedures and the small amount of the allowance, very few people register with the labor exchange. Research does not show that anyone takes this institute seriously.

Provision with Housing. After the break up of the Soviet Union, the state relinquished all responsibility for the provision of housing for its citizens. In the past there were three main types of housing funds: 1) state apartments, 2) cooperative apartments; 3) private houses owned by individuals. In the beginning of the 90s almost all state apartments were privatized and became the private property of citizens. Now provision of housing to urban inhabitants is done through various bank loans, housing cooperative societies, etc. In rural areas the housing problem is solved mainly by means of the allocation of land to families for the construction of houses, and the house itself is built by the family with its own means. Therefore, solving the housing problem in rural areas depends on the distribution of land. Rural gatherings of citizens allocates such land for the construction of houses, but in practice everything depends on the local *kolkhoz* (*sovkhov*), because main irrigated lands appropriate for such construction are managed by the *kolkhoz*.

So called 'budgetary' housing exists, which belongs and is registered on the balance sheets of ministries, enterprises and organizations. The management of such enterprises or organizations takes the decision as to whom and on which conditions to allocate such land for the construction of housing. For example, in one of the case studies a woman from the village of Ulughbek said that, upon her request, the director of the institute where she worked granted her an apartment in a building belonging to the institute. A contrasting case was related by a

woman in Ulughnor region. There, the *sovkhos* tried to evict the woman's family from a house which belonged to it. After a scandal (the woman threatened to burn the house) they were allocated three rooms in a former kindergarten. The quantity of such budgetary housing is now quite small because in the new economic conditions enterprises can not maintain and keep such housing in good condition. Therefore, the main part of this type of housing has been privatized.

Medical service. There has been a gradual transition to paid medical services in this area. According to the law medical services, except for dentist treatment and some other examinations, should be free of charge. However, due to the fact that the budget of health care service was substantially reduced during last few years, medical services became de facto for payment. Money is taken from people legally and illegally. Hospitals are officially allowed to take payment for bed linen and medicine, though medical treatment itself is nominally free of charge. In practice doctors and medical personnel take money for their services. Some of them require payment openly, others do not require it but take presents eagerly. One woman from Dangar said that she gave money to her doctor because «it should be done». Similar practices exist in the case of emergency medical help by calling an ambulance. Patients could only be given injections if they supplied their own syringe and medicine. In Ulughnor district a case was told of an ambulance which came to the patient's house and returned without rendering any help because the patient did not have his own medicine and money. That is why doctors and medical institutions were discussed with hostility. Few people say anything good about doctors. People expressed the attitude that medical institutions were necessary and indispensable, but God help you if you had to use them, as they could drain the household's resources and lead to debt.

«Last year my mother was hospitalized with bronchitis. Around midnight a doctor wrote a prescription, saying that getting a medicine was our problem and none of his concern at all. One of the medicines cost 8,000 *sum*. Somehow, we managed to borrow it. The next morning I brought the money, though it was not easy to find. Then, another doctor came and said that that was not the right medicine and we had to get another one. Twenty thousand *sum* was wasted. I got a taxi and took my mother home. In Buka a *tabib* (Uzb., traditional healer) cured her with the help of only three or four simple drugs.» (Oqqurghon district, Tashkent province)

The structure of medical service is as follows. In each village or group of villages there is one medical center (SVA), where no more than 10 people work. This is a primary health care center. In the district center (but not in all districts) a local district hospital and polyclinic are usually available. In regional centers and in the capital city certain medical institutions are located.

«You have to pay the lawyer, the judge and the prosecutor. I have gone through it myself. In 1973 I had to arrange a wedding for my younger son, but he suddenly disappeared together with his friend. Just before that, my son brought home money to buy a video system – 650 thousand. He said he had borrowed it from his friend. It turned out that his friend had stolen horses and that money was the proceeds he got from selling them. So my son found himself an accomplice because he had taken the money. Both of them were arrested. Since then I have read a huge pile of books and I have learned about my rights. In the courthouse one person asked me for money – one million *sum*! I had no choice and borrowed the money. When I brought it, the person was nowhere to be found. So I stood there, not knowing who to give it to. I returned. My son was sentenced for seven years. I went to several places giving bribes here and there and was able to have him released in three and a half years. His partner in crime had also been sentenced, then released, and then again imprisoned for 12 years. My son was released and I married him off. Now he has two children and his life is good. Any of your problems can be solved with money. But I knew my rights and went to complain to Jurabekov himself [Ismail Jurabekov, at that time First Deputy Prime-Minister]. I spoke to him like I am speaking with you now – face to face. He helped me to transfer my son from a penal colony in Russia to here. Everyone calls me a *zakonchi* [«a woman of the law»]. I am not afraid of anybody! If you know the law, you are secure! I went to the *hokimiyat* to complain that my money had not been given to me. I spoke to the *hokim*, Abdugani-aka, and they gave me my money, 10,000.» (Oq'qurghon)

Development of small business, farms and dehqon farms. A small business is defined as a productive enterprise where no more than 10 people work, no more than 5 people in services, up to 20 people in agriculture, and up to 40 people in construction businesses. Such types of business are managed by local branches of the Business-Fund, «Tadbirkorbank». Associations of farmers and *dehqons* which should support entrepreneurial activity, provide assistance and consultations. Allocation of land for farmers and *dehqons* is decided by the regional *hokim* based on presentation made by the *sovkhov* or *kolkhoz* out of whose funds this land is allocated. At the present moment allocation of land for farms has practically stopped because the Government has decided to try so called *shirkat* or associations of *shirkats* (meaning ‘cooperative’), which are forms of the same *kolkhoz*.

## 5.2 Ranking of different institutions

In general group participants trust such institutes as relatives, neighbors and friends more than formal institutions. The following institutions were mentioned more frequently as being important for the well-being of the household:

Enterprises and organizations which are the main employer in a given area. In rural area it is first of all the *sovkhov* and *kolkhoz* who control the main supply of irrigated land. In a formal juridical sense *sovkhov* does not exist. It was denationalized and transformed into various forms of farm – joint stock of closed type, associations of *shirkats* and others.. But it did not lose its meaning. They are still large farms under full control of the state, though no longer financed from the state budget. The Government sets quotas for the sowing of crops on irrigated land, the main part of which (65%) should be used for cotton and grain. Cotton is the main export product of the republic, but grain also has a strategic value, because until recent times the republic was fully dependent on its import. These quotas are distributed between all regions, districts and large farms and are obligatory. Planned targets are also set for all types of other crops and they are obligatory for all farms, irrespective the type of ownership. Farms should sell cotton and grain at prices which are set by higher authorities. Such prices are significantly lower than world market prices. However, farms have to pay for their supplies from monopoly organizations in prices which are close to world prices. As a result, many large farms are in debt to the state and other creditors. Moreover, *kolkhoz* and *sovkhov* are often obliged to bare such expenses, which decreases their production efficiency even more. In Khodjaabad district [as in other cotton producing districts of the country] the use of vinyl film is necessary for cotton sowing in order to protect it from unexpected bad weather. This represents a damaging expense for the *sovkhov* budget, and group participants mentioned it: «10 hectares of land requires 450 kg of film<sup>1</sup>, and 1 kg of film costs 2 dollars. We don’t need film, they’d better pay us a salary instead. If income is 250 thousand *som* and expenses are 300 thousand *som*, what’s the point?». Because of such non-productive expenses the *sovkhov* has no money to pay salaries. One participant said that the salary that was owed to her was equivalent to the cost of 10 cows, and at the same time she is grateful to director of their *sovkhov* because he gave her money, out of her salary, for surgery for her son.

The above constitute objective reasons for regular non payment of salaries to *kolkhozchi* [we also refer to workers of *sovkhov* and similar large farms as *kolkhozchi*]. Another reason is that *kolkhoz* chairmen of (*sovkhov* directors) use farm money for their own private interests. So, in Oitangali village, where *kolkhozchi* claimed they had not received any salary, participants said that their chairman lives in a beautiful house in the regional center and had recently bought a new «Volga» car. Many people from that and other districts suspect their leadership in using *kolkhoz* money and their own money too, for private business.

Why then do *kolkhozchi* continue to work for *kolkhoz* and *sovkhov*? Firstly, elder people are waiting for their turn for retirement in order to receive a pension, because this depends on registered years of service (25 years for men and 20 years for women). Secondly, the *kolkhoz* (*sovkhov*) is the main source of land for the construction of houses, private household plots or private farms. Thirdly, *kolkhozchi* in return for their work are granted some privileges by the *kolkhoz* (*sovkhov*). For example in some places they told that they work for the right to collect *guzapaya* (cotton stem) for fuel after the cotton harvest is over. In other cases workers are told that they will be paid in cash and on time for picking cotton during the harvest, and people work the whole year, actually free of charge in

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<sup>1</sup> Use of film for protection of seedlings is forced from above level of power.

order to have the chance to take part in this. Moreover, the *kolkhoz* pays part of their salaries in the form of direct payments for the utilities of gas, water and electricity. In some cases and not in all places, the *kolkhoz* (*sovkhos*) may provide material assistance if someone died in the family, or became ill, or money should be transferred for study. However such assistance is made from the private accumulated salary account of *kolkhozchi*. It is interesting that mainly women apply for assistance:» Men can not do it because thier does not allow them. This is not always the case, however.. A participant of one of the groups in Ulughnor district stated that:«Men mainly apply for large scaleassistance, in order to receive cattle, large amounts of money, land, and so on, while women apply for flour, noodles, butter, other foodstuffs, money for clothes etc.»

A *Sovkhos* increases its rating as an institute if there is no constant change of leadership in and if the position of chairman (director) is held by a smart person who loves his job. This was the case with Oq Oltyn *sovkhos* in Andijan district (here the director has worked without replacement for 2-3 years and, according to participants, the *sovkhos* has the trust of its people). In the *sovkhos* in Takhtakupyr district one man has been working as director for 22 years. Here not everyone who wants to can find a job. Although salaries are not paid here, twice a year several sacks of flour are distributed. In other case, the frequentreplacement of the director negatively affects their authority, as happened in Hadjaabad district in Andijan region.

Many rural inhabitants, especially young people, refuse to work for a *sovkhos* or *kolkhoz*, mainly due to the low level of salaries and its non payment. Participants of the group of unemployed young men in Ulughnor district noted exactly this reason to justify why they do not work at the *sovkhos*. In Oitamgali village of Oqqurghon district about 80 strong, young men between the ages of 20-30 have not worked at the *kolkhoz* for about 2 years and work as *aravakash* in the Tashkent hippodrome.

Framers were mentioned as employers in rural area too. In Oitamgali village participants talked about a rich farmer who provides work and pays salaries on time for 60 people. In Takhtakupyr, in order to receive a job from the rich farmer, a whole line was formed. In Khodjaabad district inhabitants hope that businessmen will create enterprises and jobs. However, as yet farmers and businessmen do not play the main role in the provision of a livelihood for poor people, and they mainly solve their own problems. Their social basis is not large yet.

In urban areas employers included the Institute of nuclear physics in Ulughbek village, Almalyk mining and metallurgical combine in Almalyk, and a fish preserving plant in Muynak. The Institute of nuclear physics for which Ulughbek village was built, lost its former importance for people if the village after it lost orders and finance from the military-industrial complex. Many people lost their jobs there. Therefore, no one places this Institute highest in therating of social institutions. Almost the same situation exists at Muynak fish preserving plant. Now it works only three months a year and processes fish caught in nearby lakes. On the contrary, Almalyk mining and metallurgical combine was given a high rating because it is one of the country's leading enterprises. Salaries there arehigh in local terms. However it cannot provide job for all people from the town who want it. According to some participants bribes need to be given to heads of workshops or other authorities in the enterprise, in order to find a job there.

*Mahalla committees* hold high positions in the rating of institutions (in Karakalpakstan a Mahalla is traditionally called *makanken*) These are territorial bodies of self-management of citizens. A Mahalla committee is formed on a territory where not less than 350-400 families live. In each Mahalla committee there are two paid positions, chairman and secretary. The chairman of a Mahalla committee is an elected position. He is elected by a rural council for a period of 2 years, but candidates can only be nominated by the local *hokimiyat*. Actually *hokimiyats* manage the work of Mahalla committees, therefore the status of the latter is both social and state: on the one hand the chairman is elected by the inhabitants of a given mahalla, and on the other, his and the secretary's salaries are paid from the state budget, through the *hokimiyat*. In rural areas, a rural councilrural council (former *selsoviet*) is an intermediate link between the mahalla committee and the *hokimiyat*, and it unites several *qishloqs* (*mahallas*, respectfully). The chairman of meeting is also an elected position. He, his secretary and one or two technical positions are salaried.

Above we mentioned that the mahalla committee takes decisions about the allocation of allowances to poor families and families with children under the age of 16. Starting from 1999 they will distribute allowances for the care for children under 2 years old, and allowances for single mothers. Moreover, from 1999 mahalla committees are authorized to collect taxes from citizens for utilities (in the past, the rural council/rural council only collected land tax). And they have the right to keep 25% of collected taxes for their own needs, for the payment of allowances and the development of their own material base.

In addition to distributing allowances, mahalla committees realize some social functions on a voluntary basis. First of all, they participate in solving family conflicts. In rural areas rural councils have the right to register new born children and deaths, marriages and divorces. However, as with Mahalla committees, rural councils of citizens try to prevent divorce happen and often they solve conflicts between spouses. In Ulughnor district one mahalla committee alone in a 30 day period managed to prevent three young families from divorcing. In Karakalpakstan some mahalla committees (it is right to say *makanken*es and «domkom»<sup>1</sup>) help to collect dowries and organize weddings by mobilizing support from the community. Therefore, mahalla committees preserve the institute of the family. Moreover, as was clarified from interviews with representatives of rural councils in Ulughnor district, mahalla committees in rural areas (at least in this district) regulate consumer prices. They make sure that local small traders, in general, owners of small stores and meat stores (*kasab*) do not increase prices very much. In such cases they can initiate something like moral punishment and boycotts of citizens of the *qishloq*. In some places (for example in Karakalpakstan) rural councils of citizens and mahalla committees were considered to be the most important formal institutions. This was explained by their distribution of assistance that did not have to be repaid, while *sovkhos* (*kolkhos*), even if they gave help, deducted this from the salary accounts of workers. In other places (Ulughnor district), while highly evaluating the mahalla committee, people said that the size of allocated allowances were not big and only a small number of families benefited.

Group participants and informants characterized the district gas supply service and taxation office negatively, in general. *Raigaz* (the regional office for gas distribution) was blamed for constant increases in the cost of gas, and taxation officers were accused of charging real and false taxes. For example, one woman trader, who does not own a car, has been made to pay road tax, and citizens of Takhtakupyr and Muynak are charged land tax, despite of the fact that nothing can grow there due to high salinity of the soil. One old man in Muynak said that recently the postman delivered his pension to his home and right after him a representative from *Raigaz* and a taxation officer followed in order to charge their payments (for gas and land tax), and after that only a small part of the pension was left.

Local power authorities – *hokimiyats* – were not often mentioned as institutions important for households well-being and with a substantially low evaluation. In some places people mentioned the unstable policy which the *hokimiyats* follow. For the last 10 years 8 *hokims* were replaced in Khodjaabad region and each *hokim* had his own policy line. The director of a *sovkhos* has to be appointed by the new *hokim*. The replacement of *hokims* and *sovkhos* directors is mainly on the grounds that they failed to achieve planned for sales of cotton, which is a common occurrence due to very high planned targets. Sometimes, as we were told was the case in Dangar, the position of local *hokim* and *sovkhos* director is for sale. A person who buys such a position tries to make as much money as he can in as short a time as possible in order to compensate himself and fill in his own pocket. By that time a new candidate for the position has appeared and the game is played once again. The highest ranking that the *hokimiyat* received was fourth place. This was given by the ethnic Kyrgyz group is explained by the fact that the *hokimiyat* built a school for Kyrgyz children. However, the school was built at the expense of Uzbeks from a neighboring Uzbek *qishloq* because construction materials were taken from the construction of a school in that village.

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<sup>1</sup> Leaders of local communities which have been unable to form a *mahalla* committee due to the small number of families in their settlement. These *makanken*es do not enjoy the paid position of chairman or secretary. They are also called *oqsoqollar* in Uzbek.

It is interesting that non-governmental organizations (NGO) were not mentioned anywhere as institutions. Muynak in Karakalpakstan is an exemption. Here national and international charity organizations were the institutions mentioned most often. It is interesting that the only organizations mentioned by name were the International Fund of Saving Aral and «Ecosan» Fund, which has its permanent representative in Muynak. Attitudes to these funds was dual. On the one hand, people agree that they give assistance. In Muynak the International Fund of Saving Aral gave 50-60 sheep and a few cows to local people in order to support small holdings. «Ecosan» distributed several invalid wheelchairs. In Muynak one of the mahalla committee said that they distributed some items as charity, for example mittens and resin shoes used for fishing. On the other hand, the majority of people interviewed said that they had never received such help. Moreover, representatives of mahalla committees claimed that they are sent things of Soviet origin, the validity of which had already expired and such clothes arrived half destroyed and of almost no use.<sup>1</sup>

Educational and medical organizations were mentioned as very important and indispensable institutes in the provision of well being. However, attitudes to these too were also dual. On the one hand, these institutes are very important in the lives of the population. On the other, people are very unhappy with paid services, and also bribes and presents without which it is impossible to be admitted to vocational or high schools, and also to receive medical service. Interestingly, women evaluated health care organizations and doctors higher than men did.

In general in all groups priority was given to informal institutions which are considered to be more reliable, but not always as efficient as formal ones. In some cases formal institutions were given a high ranking. For example, in one women's group in Ulughnor district the role of the *sovkhos* was evaluated higher than that of relatives.

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<sup>1</sup> It is not excluded that charitable organization use money, by acting as intermediators between international funds and population of Aral, by using monye of funds and buying from storages ( probably military) in sale prices written off obsolete clothes, which already turned to rubbish and they sent it to regions of ecological catastrophe. Probably in such way they save money for their own needs. Of course such hint needs to be checked out.

## 6. Gender Relations

Uzbek, Karakalpak, Kazakh nationalities were represented in the majority of discussion groups and interviews, and the most common opinion about the role of women and men was that the family was the area of women's work and socialization, the community of men's. . One elder man from Karakalpakstan stated: «The woman is inside the family, the man is outside of it». Another man in Andijan region said: «Men's business is to acquire, and women's is to spend efficiently» ( meaning that she should save what the man earned) In some cases women agreed with this attitude actively and in some cases passively. In any case, disagreement with such an order of affairs was not registered. However, gender roles have been put to the test in recent times.. Due to economic difficulties real earnings for the majority of the population have decreased, accompanied by increases in the cost of living, a shortage of jobs and an increase in unemployment. Women have had to perform the function of main bread winner in the family more and more.

I got married very early, around the age of 15. And when I was pregnant I was picking cotton and the whole time I was looking back at the portion of the cotton row I had already picked. I thought that the baby must have fallen out and was lying behind me in the cotton row. Just imagine, I did not know how a woman's body works. After I picked cotton I carried it to be weighed at the *hirman* (reception point) in 40 kg bales. I did all this till the labor started.» (case study, Turtkul district, Karakalpakstan).

In the current social and economic conditions one of the coping strategies is small trading activity, and in some cases this is easier for woman to do than for men. These activities involve the type of difficulties and obstacles that women cope with better. « Shuttle» business involves communication between traders in second hand goods and officials( police, customs, taxation officers) on the road and blackmailing. In such situations men give up, and women fight for their rights with anger and without compromise. Some of them say that their strength and bravery are the results of their responsibility for their children. As men delegate care for the family to women and no longer fulfill the role of bread winner, women have to step out of the traditional roles prescribed for them by men. Women's success in trading and business is based on their wish to take care of their children, a function which their husbands less and less able to accomplish nowadays. What is happening to husbands?

At the beginning our life was good, but someone put the evil eye on us and everything started to go wrong. My father-in-law even threatened me with an axe, saying that my husband was a weakling, and my husband beat me after that. Just like that, with no reason. Times was hard for me then. In the morning I was supposed to bring my father-in-law warm water for his *lavabo* – neither too hot, nor too cold, and exactly at the right time. But I also had five children. So, I adjusted their feeding times so that it wouldn't interfere with my father's-in-law schedule. The poor kids cried, waiting for me to feed them. But at five in the morning I was expected to bring the warm water to my father-in-law. The chairman of the *selsoviet* (rural citizen assembly) failed to understand my problem and did not support me. Now everything has quieted down because of the financial problems at home. It's me who is making money, and my husband cannot order me around.» (Oqqurghon district, Tashkent province).

In some cases the woman's contribution to providing a livelihood for the family is almost equal to the man's, though woman is not released from her duties to maintain the house, take care of the children and perform her traditional housekeeping duties. The bear a double load. [ This was also the case in Soviet times, when women had a job and simultaneously carried the whole load of housework]. Men admit that women have a double load : «Women have 40 souls», said one of them.

In cases where the man continues to be the main bread winner, no revision of family duties is made. This situation could be changed if the wife became the main bread winner. For example, in Khodjaabad district of Andijan region men are scared to carry their production to Osh market, because they became targets of humiliation, provocation and blackmail by Kyrgyz policemen and custom officers. Mainly women carry the goods. During the time of their

absence men perform duties of their wives very well: milking cows, taking care of children, and cooking meals. In some cases when a woman does very well in business, she becomes more independence and confident in herself. In Ulughnor district of Andijan region people have a nick name for such women – dame-trump. An example of such a woman is given in case study No.3 in Ulughbek village. Gulya is the subject of the interview, she is a successful businesswoman and her way of life is typical for businesswomen. She is absolutely economically independent and free in her morale. Such women are admired especially by young people and became examples to follow. The expression »dame-trump« itself has a nuance of admiration and envy.

Coming back to families with traditional conservative relationships, we would like to note that problems for women mainly took two forms, as they articulate it themselves, : 1) the husband no longer has a respectful attitude to his wife and starts to use his physical power; 2) relations are not good with the mother or father in law. In some cases the use of violence was mentioned. For example in one case study in Ulughnor village a husband humiliated his wife and children many times. The wife went to the police but they did not help. She decided to get divorced only when the children grow up. In Almalyk one woman killed her husband with an axe as result of his continuous violence, and now she is in prison while her children are raised by their uncle, her brother. The fact that such cases are rare is confirmed by the fact that group discussions mentioned them as extraordinary events. Ill treatment of daughters in law by the mother or father in law was also mentioned. In one case a father in law, when his son was out of house for seasonal work, did not give food to the daughter in law and children. saying that she had not completed his order to plough a field, even though the woman explained that she did not feel well at that time. In another case, a daughter in law had to wake up at 5 AM, in order to boil water for her father in law who washed prior to morning prayers. The father in law was very angry when she did not warm the water up to the right temperature. However, such cases of violence and humiliation of women are not frequent in research materials. In most cases women's rights are respected by men from the point of view of adat ( traditional codex of behavior). However, many participants said that the number of fights and quarrels has increased as a result of economic problems, when wives blame husbands for their inability to provide for the family, and in reply husbands became very angry. In most cases the problem is quickly solved peacefully. As one old man said in Karakalpakstan, when he became angry his wife goes to her mother for half a day in order not to be beaten, and when she is angry, he goes to the yard or cattle shed for one or two hours to wait while she calms down.

Main problem in gender relations is not only the degree of violation of women's rights but also on how both sides of the family understand these rights. In most cases Uzbek women accept the superiority of the man in the family, but they reserve the right to work and receive education for themselves. Men admit these rights. Only in some cases men insisted that women should stay at home and work nowhere else but at home. The right to work is admitted especially in the present period when women have become an important, and in some cases the only, source of earnings in the family. No one protests the right to receive education. Many parents do their best to give post school education to their daughters. They believe that education and training will provide their daughter with firstly, economic independence, and second, relatively high status and respect in her future husband's family. In some cases parents even try to give education to their daughters first and then to their sons. For example, in one Karakalpak family daughters received education and son stayed with parents in the village without any post school education. The rationale for this is that the son will stay with his parents and will support them in their old age.

Latofat's mother used to work as a nurse in the kindergarten that Latofat attended. When her mother and father got married, they lived in harmony for about a year. After their first child, a son, was born, his father started drinking, came home intoxicated and shouted. He swore at his wife and beat her. Then she took her son and left for her mother's who lived in a nearby village, and eventually filed for divorce. But the father came to take her back, apologized and promised to stop drinking. They made peace. This was the time when she was expecting Latofat. But soon everything started anew. Again, the pregnant mother and her son went to stay with her mother, and Latofat was born. After some time her parents reunited again and lived together for 17 years, though her father did not stop drinking, insulting his wife and beating her. During this time two more sons were born. The children grew up in an atmosphere of constant brawling and fear. The younger sons were afraid of their father, and Latofat had to intercede between her rioting father and mother. Battles were caused by minor matters, such as when her father did not like the dinner her mother cooked and he began to scold and beat her in front of the children. She complained to the police, a divisional inspector came, wrote something, took the father with him. But he came home in a few hours. Sometimes her mother took the children to their grandmother's for a couple of days, and then either the father took them home, or they came by themselves. The experience of those years taught Latofat that a good life means peace and harmony in the family. Latofat often shared her misfortunes with her school friend who, in an attempt to comfort her, used to say that the same thing happened in her family, too, with the only difference being that her father seldom beat her mother (Case study 5, Ulugbek urban village, Tashkent city).

Another problem occurs at the moment of creation of a new family. In Uzbekistan the practice of arranged marriages is common, and very often parents, not young people choose the partner. In groups and interviews many examples were given where parents chose a bride or groom for their children. Although no one is forced into a marriage, sons and daughters in Uzbek families are very disciplined and obedient and in most cases they do not argue with their parents' choice, thinking that parents know better how they should act. As a result some marriages are successful and some are not. It is difficult, however, to compare happiness of such families with those where young people marry because of love.

This problem is interesting in Karakalpakstan. Here the practice of *qalym*, or payment for the bride, has recently been revived. Very often the size of the *qalym* and other related expenses (for wedding, presents etc.) is so big that it severely affects the well being of the groom's parents' family. As a result, the traditional practice of bride stealing has been revived. Very often such stealing has a quite formal nature. For example, the groom and bride having met each other and liked each other, elope in order to escape unneeded expenses, sometimes even with the silent consent of the bride's parents. This is an incentive for both sides to reduce the size of the *qalym*. In some interviews examples were given of real kidnapping of girls. In case study No.5, a young woman related how she had been stolen by a man whom she did not even know. At his home his parents and relatives persuaded her to confirm to her parents that it was done with her consent. As a result, this marriage was not successful and the girl did not get on well with her mother in law. In such cases, the girl is totally unprotected. If she will refuse to marry, the fact that she stayed at the groom's house will spoil her reputation in community. She has already become spoiled, and it reduces her chances of getting married successfully.

It must be noted that in Karakalpakstan opinions were expressed that denounced the practice of bride stealing. Some parents said that they did not require *qalym* for their daughters. Without doubt that few voices could support such a depraved practice. Some participants said that a special Presidential Decree should be issued to prohibit such practices.

No wide discussions occurred regarding women's participation in the life of society and the community. The role of women councils was not specially mentioned, they formally exist in every mahalla committee and rural council/rural council. However, it is interesting that only two rural councils have women chairmen (*sovkhos* Oq Oltyn and Oitamghali village), and they, by the way, were recruited as research participants. [Woman in such positions are exceptions today] We would like to add that women have to deal with power authorities very often in order to protect their rights and families. For example, in Oitamghali village women *kolkhozchi* tried to demand

payment of salary from the *sovhoz* director, but he refused to talk to them and said that they should convey their requests through their husbands or foremen. Another mother from Dangar visited a minister in order to help her son, who studied on a contract basis (for fees) in high school, to receive a stipend. In such cases women prove to be more persistent and uncompromising than men, and society takes this for granted.



## Glossary

*a'lo darajada yashaidiganlar* – Uzb., pl. The very well-off. literally, «living at an elevated status.»

*aravakashlar* – Uzb., pl. Workers who carry cargo on small two or three-wheeled dollies in large markets.

*chelnok* – Rus. A sort of «carpetbagger merchant» or literally «shuttle». Petty private entrepreneurs engaged in the trade of various consumer goods such as apparel, footwear, audio equipment, tele- (???television, telephone?? say which one or say both) equipment and so forth. These goods come from neighboring countries such as China, Turkey, India and Malaysia. The key difference between them and regular merchants is that they deliver all goods themselves. «Chelnok» business started booming in the early 1990s. Very often women are engaged in this kind of business.

*batrak* – Rus.

*bomzh* – Rus.

*buzuq khotinlar* – Uzb., pl. Literally, «corrupted women» or «broken women.» Immoral women, prostitutes.

*boilar* – Uzb., pl. The rich.

*dehqonlar* – Uzb., pl. Agricultural farmers. This is an old Uzbek term for peasants which in the distant past denoted rich peasants. However, over the last one hundred years it has come to denote the poorest section of that portion of rural workers who work in agriculture. At present, the meaning of this term is akin to that of *kolkhozchi* or *fermer*, with the added qualification that the person is engaged in agricultural farming, not livestock breeding. This term may also denote private agricultural farmers, because it signifies the type of rural economy – agricultural cultivation of the soil.

*dehqonchilik* – Uzb. Agricultural farming.

*dehqon-fermer khojaligi* – Uzb. Formerly (two or three years ago) the legal term for a private farm, now no longer in use in legal documents. Participants used this term to refer to private agricultural farms and private agricultural economies. In relation to this term, «private» denotes the acquisition of the right to open a bank account for the farm and juridical status as an economic entity. However, the lands acquired are not legally paid for (although *de facto* they are paid for by a bribe to the *hokim* responsible for allocating the land), they are not granted in perpetuity (they are «leased» from among the lands of the *sovkhov* for a certain amount of time legally more than ten years but in reality often less), nor are farmers free to dispose of the land as they wish (they are obligated to sow the majority of the land in cotton or grains in order to fulfill district quotas, with a small percentage left over for the farmer's discretion, usually fruits and vegetables). Private agricultural farmers (private *dehqonlar*) are thus compelled to grow certain kinds of crops, primarily cotton and grain, for which *sovkhoves*, *kolkhoves* and other analogous agricultural enterprises<sup>1</sup> are required to fulfill a government-set plan. Approximately half of the cotton or grain crop grown by these private farmers is given to the *sovkhov* as a kind of payment for the lease of the land, while the rest must be sold to the *sovkhov* at low prices. Other crops such as fruits and vegetables can be directly sold, when grown, at markets or to private buyers. Private farmers receive payment for their produce from the *sovkhov* at the end of the year, remitted to their private bank accounts. Access to this money can be limited, however, due to various causes such as cash release limits placed by the central bank on the provincial banks, and the «rotation» of this money by *sovkhov* bosses for their own personal gain.

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<sup>1</sup> These new enterprises have various official names such as, but because they are in actuality *sovkhoves* and *kolkhoves* in sheep's clothing, the participants refer to them simply by their former names – *sovkhov* and *kolkhov*.

**domkom** – Rus., abr. for *Dom.... Komitet*.

**fermer khojaligi** – Uzb. Current legal term, recently put into use, for private farms. The participants did not use this term.

**fermer** – Uzb. Ranchers, livestock breeders. In current legal language this term denotes private farmers. However, in the everyday usage of the participants it is generally used in reference to those farmers, either private or working on a *kolkhoz* or *sovkhos*, who are involved in livestock breeding (*chorvachilik*, Uzb.). This term serves to distinguish livestock breeders from farmers specializing in agricultural cultivation of the soil, referred to as *dehqonlar* by the group participants. As a rule, livestock breeding is a more lucrative business, as it is not subject to the same kinds of stringent government regulation that cotton or grain growing is and as it provides an opportunity for the receipt of immediate revenue in cash via direct sales at an open meat or dairy market.

**gap** – Uzb. Informal groups formed on the basis of some affinity among the members. These groups are, as a rule, formed on the basis of peer groups, or just groups of friends. There are both male and female *gaplar* (Uzb., pl.). Under the term *gap* is understood both the actual group and the regular meetings organized by the group. At these meetings, food and drink is offered to the members, while the members exchange conversation. The conversation can take the form of just «chats», or can be more serious discussion of various problems. These group meetings not only provide a forum for conversation and discussion, but can also have a financial element. Male and female *gaplar* establish a sort of «emergency fund», a custom which dates back to the Soviet times. Each of the *gap* members makes contributions to the fund on either a monthly basis or at an interval decided by the group. Every so often one of the members can take a certain amount of the money for their own personal use.

**hokimiyat** – Uzb. An organ of executive power in Uzbekistan which exists at each level of state administrative division – provincial, city, and district. The *hokim*, the highest authority in the *hokimiyat*, is appointed by the senior executive branch and approved by the relevant body of representative power. Provincial leaders and the mayor of the national capital of Tashkent city (both termed *hokim*) are appointed by the president of the republic and approved by the *Oliy Majlis*, the Supreme Parliament, the senior legislative authority.

**khashar** – Uzb. Volunteered unpaid labor provided by relatives and friends. *Khashar* is widely practiced whenever relatives need to build a house. The house framework is erected by the method of *khashar*, and then professionals are paid to do the finishing work.

**kolkhozchi** – Uzb. Literally, a collective farm (*kolkhoz*) worker. However, this term is also used to denote the workers of a *sovkhos* or of an association of *shirkats*. This term has its origins in the Soviet social system which distinguished between social groups such as industrial workers, collective farm workers, the intelligentsia, etc. Collective farm workers were understood to be peasant workers engaged in agricultural activity, the majority of which worked on collective farms. Today this term sounds an even more disparaging note than in Soviet times, particularly against the backdrop of newly enriched farmers and other types of private proprietors. Under current circumstances, this term denotes the most impoverished section of the rural populace. In this case, the term *kolkhozchi* is synonymous with poverty, because as a rule these people are not paid their wages (see below).

**lulilar** – Uzb., pl. Gypsies indigenous to Central Asia. *Lulilar* usually live in separate communities and engage very often in begging, singing, and circus work. (???what else???) While other Central Asian ethnic groups tend to view them with derision, the *lulilar* themselves sometimes renounce their ethnonym and attempt to fit in with Central Asian society.

**mahalla** – Uzb. Neighborhood. A self-administered neighborhood community in Uzbekistan. In rural areas the *mahalla* is an entire settlement or village. In urban areas it can encompass several adjacent multi-storied buildings and/or single-story houses. The *mahalla* committee is the administrative body of the *mahalla*.

***mahalla komiteti*** – Uzb. Literally, neighborhood committee. The *mahalla* committee is the basic organ of neighborhood local self-governance in Uzbekistan. Because the *mahalla* committee is the administrative body of the *mahalla* (neighborhood), the chairman of the committee is as a rule one of the most respected members in the *mahalla*. Legislation permits the establishment of this entity if there are 350-400 households, but in rural areas the *mahalla* is considered to be identical with the entire dwelling settlement. The local *hokimiyat* provides for two staff positions for the *mahalla* committee – a chairman elected by the citizens and their representatives, although following the recommendation of the *hokimiyat*, and his secretary. Among its many activities in the community, the committee distributes and makes decisions on subsidies for low-income households and on family allocations for children. It also decides along with *selsoviet* and *sovkhos* leadership on the allocation of housing plots and provides legal advice and settles family disputes. Sometimes the committee is also able to provide material aid outside of government subsidies.

***mardikorlar*** – Uzb., pl. Itinerant hired workers who work on a daily basis.

***Navruz*** – Persian. Literally, «new day.» *Navruz* is a Central Asian New Year holiday pre-dating the advent of Islam, celebrated at the spring solstice. Although it is in no way connected with Islam, many Central Asians associate *Navruz* with Islam due to the fact that it was banned during the Soviet period alongside all Islamic holidays.

***nochorlar*** – Uzb., pl. Literally, «those without recourse,» «the hopeless.» The destitute.

***oqsoqol*** – Uzb. An elder, sometimes a *mahalla* committee chairman, who is held in high esteem within the community. Literally «white beards.»

***qalym*** – Kpk. «Bride-price». Wealth or money given to the bride's family by the groom.

***qambaghallar*** – Uzb., pl. The poor; poor people.

***qashoq*** – Uzb. Beggar.

***raisobes*** – Rus., abr. for *Raiyonii Otdel' Sotsialnogo Obespecheniya*. Literally, District Department of Social Security. These offices report to both local authorities and the Ministry of Social Security and are responsible for various subsidies, among them pensions and monies given to distribute to low-income families. These are distributed through the *selsoviets*, which decide allocation along with the *mahalla* committees.

***selsoviet*** – Rus., abr. for *Selskii Soviet*. Literally, Rural Council. This is the former Soviet term for the institution which is now called *Fuqarolar Yig'ini* (Uzb.), or Rural Citizen's Assembly. However, participants usually referred to this by its former name. The *selsoviet* is one of the organs of self-government of the local population, and one of its most important functions is to distribute social welfare subsidies to low-income households. The Rural Citizen's Assembly formally helps in deciding on the allocation of lands, but in fact the lands are under the control of the *sovkhos* management. The *selsoviet* is an entity whose position in the hierarchy lies somewhere between the *mahalla* committee and the *hokimiyat*.

***sharoitlar oghir*** – Uzb., pl. Literally, «those whose situation is difficult.» The needy.

***shirkat*** – Uzb. cooperative society.

***shirkat uyushmasi*** – Uzb. Literally, «cooperative society association.» *Sovkhozes* and *kolkhozes* in Uzbekistan have formally been renamed «associations of *shirkats*.» Former work brigades (basic *sovkhos* units) are now called *shirkats*, with the word «*shirkat*» referring in Uzbek to «a cooperative society.» However, the gloss of a new name

has changed the organization of the *sovkhov* very little: the *shirkat uyushmasi* is still an enterprise fully controlled by the government and is obliged to fulfill plans and goals dictated from «above.»

**soum** – Uzb. The national currency of Uzbekistan.

**sovkhov** – Rus. An abbreviation of *Sovietskoye khozyaistvo*, a state farm. The term is still in use in Uzbekistan, although *sovkhoves* have formally been renamed «associations of *shirkats*» (*shirkatlar uyushmasi*, Uzb.). Former work brigades (basic *sovkhov* units) are now called *shirkats*, with the word «*shirkat*» referring in Uzbek to «a cooperative society.» However, the gloss of a new name has changed the organization of the *sovkhov* very little: it is still an enterprise fully controlled by the government and is obliged to fulfill plans and goals dictated from «above.» Because the *sovkhov* chairman is appointed by the *hokimiyat*, he is bound to comply with the chain of command which put him in office. The *sovkhov* leadership is also influential in the *de facto* allocation of land plots for housing, household subsistence plots (*tamarka*) and private farm plots.

**sumalak** – Uzb.

**tamarka** – Uzb., household subsistence plot. This is an extra plot no more than 0.35 hectares in size for given for household subsistence purposes. The plot is given for a specified amount of time and may be attached to the house plot or not. The *tamarka* must be distinguished from the garden plot which surrounds the house and which was part of the plot of land given in perpetuity to a household specifically for housing purposes. Food grown (agricultural crops or livestock) on both these plots of land is used for household consumption and for selling at the local bazaar.

**uilab-joilab bulgan** – Uzb. Literally, «having married and set up in a house.» This refers to the Uzbek traditional obligation of parents to arrange for the marriage of their children and to provide the new family with a house.

**urta hollar** – Uzb., pl. Literally, «those who have a middling (or average) social status.» The middle class.

**urta miyona** – Uzb. Literally, «middling» or «average.» The middle class.

**urta yashaidiganlar** – Uzb., pl. Literally, «those who live moderately.» The middle class.

**uta boilar** – Uzb., pl. The very rich.

**uzicha tuqlar** – Uzb., pl. Literally, «people who are satisfied.» The well-to-do.

**yakhsi yashaidiganlar** – Uzb., pl. Literally, «those who are living well.» The well-to-do.

**yakhsi ta'minlanganlar** – Uzb. pl. Literally, «those who are well provided for.» The well-off. tax, d due to the peculiarities of the banking system of the country.

**zoghora-nan** – Uzb. Bread made from sorghum flour. Literally, «maize-bread» or «bread made from cattle fodder.» Nowadays not everyone can afford to buy flour of first or superior class quality, but instead use black flour of a lower quality made from *sorgo* (sorghum). They call bread made from sorghum flour *zoghora-nan*, because they ate such bread only during WWII.