Training Tajik women-artisans on new designs and quality technologies to improve competitiveness of their wool, cashmere and mohair products at global market level

Field skill trainings were conducted by the Central Asian Crafts Support Association's Resource Centre in Tajikistan with the support of IFAD/FAO grant 1033 'Regional Capacity Building and Knowledge Management for Gender Equality' and IFAD/ICARDA grant 1107 "Improving Livelihoods of Small Farmers and Rural Women through Value-added Processing and Export of Cashmere, Wool and Mohair". About 91 beneficiaries" were trained

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Enabling poor rural people to overcome poverty

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Project Aim:
Innovative trainings on new designs and quality techniques to achieve international competitiveness of wool, cashmere and mohair products produced in rural areas of Tajikistan

Country/ Region:
Tajikistan, Central Asia

In the mountains of Tajikistan

Programme Activities:
Organize and conduct innnovative international trainings in Badakhshan and Sogdian Oblast area for 91 rural farmers on:

- new models' designs for high-quality and innovative wool, mohair and cashemere products;

- wool and mohair chemical and natural dyeing; and

- carpet weaving.

Other activities include:

- production of a training video on the sessions;
- practical handouts in local languages; and
- purchase of a loom for the Khudjand women-group.

Project dates:
August 17 –December 5 (2010)

Participants:

Participants of the project are 90 rural women and one man part of the pilot villages targeted by the IFAD/ICARDA Grant Project on "Improving Livelihoods of Small Farmers and Rural Women through Value-added Processing and Export of Cashmere, Wool and Mohair".

Participants are mainly rural women and young girls ranging from 14 to 60 years old, engaged in housekeeping, agriculture and wool/mohair processing. For many of them craftsmanship is a family business, therefore in more than one occasion 2 or 4 family-members participated in the various courses.

A *Pamir woman*

Identified group members live in Gorny Badakhshan, Andarob village, and Sogdian

Oblast, Khudjand and Taboshar sites and Oshoba village, Tajikistan.
Members received «CACSARC-kg» trainings on chemical and natural dyeing techniques and carpet weaving from October to November 2010.

Training tools and side benefits:

CACSARC-kg trainers:

- contributed to group formation and capacity-building;

- used visual aids and samples of ready made products;

- trained artisans to deliver dynamic and effective presentations of their produce.

Implementing partners:

Management and experts from IFAD ICARDA Project on "Improving Livelihoods of Small Farmers and Rural Women through Value-added Processing and Export of Cashmere, Wool and Mohair".

Namely: Dr Liba Brent, Project Principal Investigator, Dr. Matazim Kasimov, Site Coordinator and Mr. Nariman Nishanov, Professional Officer

Budget:

$ 25,000

Wool processing women from the Northern Tajikistan

Background information:

About 30/40% of rural women in the Asht region (North of Tajikistan) are presently engaged in production of mohair yarn and knitted products lacking basic knowledge on products' design, use of colour combination and experience in group functioning and team working.

Women participating in the IFAD/ICARDA Project have been supported in selecting high-quality kid mohair and preparing high quality yarns successfully tested in American markets. Nevertheless, they are not yet ready to respond to modern market-demand as they lack information on international fashion trends and appropriate skills.

Description of Activities:

Participatory trainings were identified based on:

- women groups needs;

- technical recommendations from IFAD/ICARDA Project expert; and

- designers' recommendations.

Following recommendations contained in updated progress reports prepared by Dr Liba Brent (IFAD/ICARDA technical expert) and Ms Docey Lewis (international marketing specialist), the CACSARC-kg team in cooperation with the IFAD/ICARDA team selected and purchased a weaving loom in USA and took care of its dismantling and delivery to Tajikistan. After solving several logistical and administrative problems, the loom arrived in Khudjand in December 2010 through DHL dismantled, in 8 boxes.

In the meantime, local expert Kenjekan Rasalieva, from Kyrgyzstan, prepared a potential list of trainings to be submitted to Tajik artisans. Trainings' programmes were then developed in close collaboration with Dr Liba Brent and Ms Svetlana Balalaeva and through

consultation with targeted women groups.

Trainers were selected from the available CACSARC-kg Central Asian team including experts from Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Afghanistan, relevant raw materials and instruments purchased, hand outs prepared.

Leclerc fanny II floor loom

In order to accommodate rural women requests the first trainings held were on dyeing techniques of wool and yarn. Women were shown the assortment of colours for dyed mohair: from mellow plain colours to bright ones. Coloured mohair is often used for hand-spinning yarns including the ones blended with silk or white wool whereas natural shades well match basic fibers.

Chemical Dyeing Training:
A chemical dyeing training was conducted in **Badakhshan (Southern Tajikistan)** from 3 to 6 October in Andarob village by Mr Kenjekan Toktosunova, Kyrgyz master in wool processing, awarded by UNESCO Seal of Excellence for Handicraft Products in Central Asia. Goal of the training was to show wool and yarn high-quality chemical dyeing techniques, how to create different colors of dyed wool by mixing several basic colors.

Nineteen women from Ishkata rayon area, Badakhshan, already involved in IFAD/ICARDA Grant activities, participated in the training (pls refer to Annex 1).

Training on wool dyeing

The participants expressed great interest throughout the training. Most women filling the questionnaires were at their first group training experience[1]. Trained artisans appreciated the programme, found it easy to follow and very useful in their daily work.

Trainees examine the dyed wool

Handouts distributed included colored printed sheets showing 2011-2012 new fashion trends. At the end of the training, each participant received a board of dyed fluff samples as well as instructions related to the different colours (pls refer to Annex 9).

[1] Women participating in the IFAD/ICARDA activities can work at home and do not need to be part of a group.

Women did not have experience in working in group but as a result of the CACSARC-Kg course they not only acquired new technical skills but also gained experience in communicating and working in teams.

Self-reliant experience

The Must-Have Color Trends for Fall 2011

Mohair Chemical and Natural Dyeing Trainings:
Two trainings were conducted on mohair dyeing in Northern Tajikistan.

The first course on mohair chemical dyeing was carried out in Taboshar town on 26-27 October 2010 for **fourteen women** artisans (pls refer to Annex 2).

Through this training beneficiaries learnt **how to color yarn used in carpet weaving** and apply new designs. Participants learned a variety of recipes and exercised in dying large quantities of yarns.

Theoretical part of the training

The second training on chemical and natural dyeing took place in Oshoba village, Olma area for women living in the Ash rayon, on 28-31 October 2010.

Ms Kenjekan Toktosunova led the chemical dyeing course whereas Ms Gulmira Kutueva, Kyrgyzstan, international designer, awarded by UNESCO Seal of Excellence for Handicraft Products in Central Asia, was in charge of natural dyeing prepared from natural raw materials.

The artisant from Taboshar town

Fifteen women without any experience on coloring methods participated in the training (pls refer to Annex 3) and learnt how to prepare dyes from roots, leaves and plants and a

new dyeing technique using dye cochineal, obtained from Mexican beetles.

Trainer Gulmira Kutueva conducting the training on natural dyein

As a result, participants produced wool dyed raw materials in twelve colors.

During the session devoted to chemical dyeing, participants analyzed dyed samples, assessed their physical properties (color saturation, eco-friendliness, etc.) and profitability considering time and labor involved in the processing of final products.

Dr. Liba Brent took part in the analysis. Beneficiaries highly appreciated the content and organization of the training. Each one of them received a board with samples (pls refer to Annex 12).

Dyeing Technique

Results of the training on dyeing in Oshoba village

During the training in Oshoba village a video on the natural dyeing course was realized by TV video-operator Mr Rustam Sadykov from Kyrgyzstan. The video is now available in Tajik, Russian and English.

Shooting of the video film in Oshoba village. Operator R. Sadykov

Training on Carpet Weaving Technique:

A course on carpet weaving was conducted on 14 - 20 November, 2010 in **Khudjand** for **twelve women-carpet makers** part of the IFAD-ICARDA "Improving Livelihoods of Smallholders and Rural Women through Value-Added Processing and Export of Cashmere, Wool and Mohair" (pls refer to Annex 4).

This very innovative component of the large IFAD/ICARDA Grant focuses on the development of modern products, such as carpets and blankets from adult goat

mohair and entails major efforts to improve know-how and develop successful designs.

Advanced carpet weaving technique through the use of high-quality yarn and increased number of knots per square/inch was identified as a priority need for the Khudjand group to improve the quality and thickness of carpets and become competitive at global level.

As a consequence a course on carpet weaving was organized and conducted by Mr. Abdul Sattar, knowledgeable master of Afghan origins who has long cooperating with CACSARC-kg.

Mr. Abdul Sattar at the training in Khudjand

Dr Farhod Kosimov was invited as a technical assistant and translator and two carpet weaving looms were rented. Due to the limited space and tools availability, **only 12 women were selected**, even though many other beneficiaries had expressed their interest. **Mr. Sattar showed Afghan tools unknown in this rural area of Tajikistan and taught the group the art of carpet makers from his country thus contributing to fertilization among Asian countries and south-south cooperation.**

Mr. Abdul Sattar at the training in Khudjand

Northern Tajikistan women have a long tradition in carpet weaving. Hand made traditional carpets are thin and made of wool but have gradually lost their market competitiveness.

High-quality carpets produced in neighboring countries such as Afghanistan, Iran and Turkmenistan fulfill the majority of regional demand at a better price. A recently built carpet factory based in Khudjand satisfies local demand for usual carpets and portrait carpet which has become very popular in the area.

Carpet portrait

Carpet makers working on request earn from 50 to 300$ per carpet-portrait and employ about 20/30 day. Orders are usually received from local or Russian customers.

Mastering of the new carpet weaving technique.

Trainer Abdul Sattar showed the refined carpet weaving technique used in neighboring countries: how to make thin knots and increase the carpets' thickness. This technique allows dense weaving, and the production of thin and light carpets whose decoration can be detected on the back side of the carpet.

Weavers during the work process

Carpet weaving is a long and labor consuming process; **production of a carpet of 2 m x 1,5 m requires the work of 2/3 carpet weavers during 1,5/2 months. The final price is estimated to be around $1000/2500 in western markets.** Mohair carpets are exclusive products as there is limited quantity of high quality mohair wool in the world. The successful development of mohair carpet production in the area would represent a very good income source for Tajik local artisans.

Mr. Abdul Sattar is showing the instruments

Training on carpet weaving: blending mohair with silk

Following Ms. Docey Lewis recommendations (made during the last IFAD supervision mission in August 2010) selling Tajik mohair carpets would represent a very good opportunity to create jobs, develop a new line of thicker and high-quality yarns (blending mohair with silk or merino), and export them to various international markets. [2]

Therefore CACSARC-kg developed a special programme on spinning mohair/silk yarns. Courses were carried out by Ms. Vinera Kalimullina, an Uzbek professional with 25 year of experience in spinning and knitting angora wool.

The training was conducted on 20–23 November 2010 in Oshoba village, Asht region.

Initially planned for 18 participants the **course was then extended to 31 women** (Annex 5). Women participated with their young daughters: the youngest trainee was a 14-year-old girl, the eldest over 50.

The first day of the training was dedicated to familiarize with participants' experience in yarn spinning technique and instruments utilized.

[2] Ms Lewis report on "Mohair Yarn Upgrading and US Market Research" is available on request

Trainer Vinera Kalimullina examining Tajik angora goat wool

Raw materials, natural and artificial silk threads were purchased for the training. Special attention was given to the preparation of raw material and washing techniques as the latter ones largely influence the quality of the final product**.**

The course included safety measures to be applied during the technological process, rational organization of the workplace, efficiency in producing high-quality blended yarn.

In the process of production it became clear that the local spindle "Chelyak" is not suitable for producing silk based yarn, due to:

- its weight (too heavy);
- incompleteness of its elements;
- its negative inertness.

Therefore 10 improved spindles were built.

Participants found the course very practical and useful for their future work with wool yarns.

While completing the questionnaires women evaluated the content of the training, its practical significance and expressed their wish to have further trainings in the following subjects:

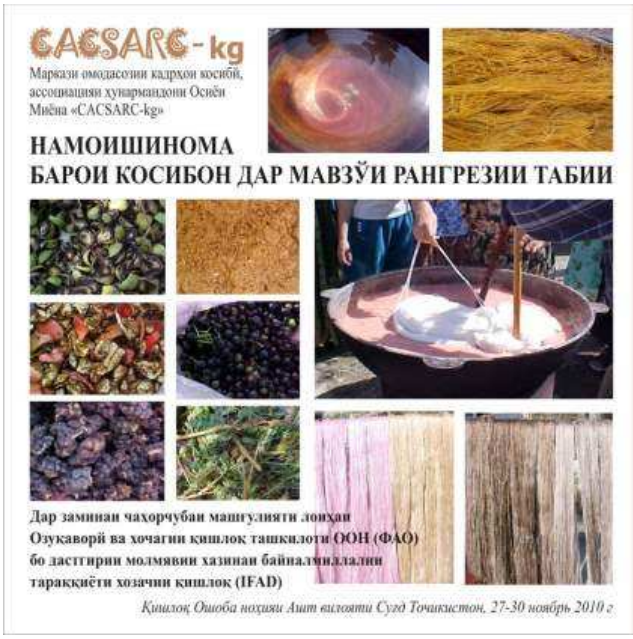
- knitting;
- crocheting;
- working with mechanical knitting machines.

An 8 hour video course for Tajik craftspeople based on shootings on trainings carried out in the Asht region on natural dyeing techniques was made.

In November the video was edited, finalized and translated into 3 languages, Tajik, Russian and English, with the support of a team of professionals. Ms Mukarrama Kayumova, a famous Tajik designer and expert in crafts contributed to the translation of the video course in Tajik and Russian.

The video is now lasting 50 minutes and clearly presents all the technical stages of natural dyeing process including examples of several natural dyes derived from stems and flowers, leaves, wild shrubbery, roots, fungus and cochineal insect. The most important recipes are repeated in the subtitles.

The video was reproduced in 50 copies in Russian and 50 copies in Tajik and shared among the rural beneficiaries of the IFAD/ICARDA project on "Improving Livelihoods of Smallholders and Rural Women through Value-Added Processing and Export of Cashmere, Wool and Mohair". IFAD HQs reproduced the English version for in-house distribution.



The video-course cover (inTajik)

Learning and outcomes:

Learning the dyeing techniques of wool and fluff using chemical and natural dyes **has dramatically increased the yarn colour-range** at women disposal and improved the **design and quality** of cashmere and mohair products. Targeted women groups are now refining their techniques and exercising to acquire the necessary experience that will ultimately allow them to improve their production and increase their competitiveness at regional and international level.

The training on blended mohair spinning (with silk)

In particular, the wool dyeing technique has enabled artisans **to increase wool variety** to be sold either as wool, fiber or **blended fiber (wool/cashmere and/or wool/mohair)** for the production of original products.

Through the wool spinning technique Tajik women are now producing a **high-quality 100% natural artefact** replacing acryl, nylon and synthetic threads with pure silk.

Mohair carpet production will represent a "first" in the country and could easily become a profitable source of revenue for poor households.

Based on the above information, CACSARC-kg believes that the project was successful: 90 women artisans and 1 man have now acquired new skills to be able to enter modern markets.

It is clear that to ensure the sustainability of the programme rural beneficiaries living in remote areas of Tajikistan will need more support and information.

IFAD and ICARDA programme on value-added products will continue to work with women artisans and rural farmers until 2014 trying to improve their livelihoods and ensure food security.

Gender Mainstreaming:

Trained women have now acquired a higher status within the household and the village.

Learning new techniques and participating, for the first time, in team work have enhanced their professional growth and developed their efficiency. Getting information about national, regional and international markets, being aware of new patterns and designs has had an enormous impact on their professional and personal life.

The development of craftsmanship based on processing of wool, cashmere and mohair also requires the involvement of farmers as goat breeders.

In the IFAD/ICARDA programme farmers are trained to select and manage goat in an efficient and innovative way in order to get high quality of goat wool and fluff.

Skilled farmers are contributing to the family business: husband and wife are now collaborating for a successful production and marketing of high-quality products, thus creating a new model of gender balanced programmes.

UN Delivery as One:

Following the UN Delivery as One approach, partnership between IFAD and FAO in Tajikistan is considered crucial for an efficient and gender-sensitive

development of rural farmers living in remote areas of the country.

Participants group

Evaluation results:

Questionnaires filled by trainings' participants in Southern and Northern Tajikistan show that:

- m**ore than 90 % of the participants were at their first experience** in craft technique course; they showed great interest and commitment;

- almost all of the participants found the **trainings convenient** to their work;

- 100**% participants expressed their wish to continue learning** on different craft techniques like weaving, spinning, carpet-weaving, knitting clothes etc.

The Future Challenge:

The group has expressed its willingness to be further involved in:

- knitting modern clothes from blended yarn;
- loom weaving of blankets and plaids;
- mohair carpet weaving based on traditional ornaments and modern patterns;
- accessing information on products design through publication of catalogues, teaching aids, and dissemination of specialized books and magazines, quality dyes and raw materials;
- getting the necessary equipment (carpet weaving looms, spindles for yarn spinning, carding machines etc.);
- developing marketing instruments such as participation in regional craft fairs and exhibitions.

Attachments available on request

Participants list:

Annex № 1 - Training on chemical dyeing in Andarob village, Badakhshan, 3 - 6 October 2010;

Annex № 2 - Training on chemical dyeing in Taboshar town, Sogdian Oblast, 26 - 27 October 2010;

Annex №3- Training on natural and chemical dyeing in Oshoba village, Sogdian Oblast, 28 - 31 October 2010;

Annex №4- Training on carpet weaving in Khudjand, 14-20 October 2010

Training on blended mohair spinning

Annex № 5 - Training on spinning mohair blended with silk in Oshoba village, Sogdian oblast, 20 - 23 November, 2010;

Annex № 6 - Video-course on natural dyeing training in Oshoba village;

Annex № 7- Tracking history for loom;

Annex № 8 –Training – plan processed by local expert;

Annex № 9 – Handout on chemical dyeing (table of mixed and obtained colors);

Annex № 10 – Handout on natural dyeing (samples of dyed wool using different dyes);

Annex № 11 – Photo from Training on chemical dyeing in Andarob village, Badakhshan, 3 - 6 October 2010;

Annex № 12 - Photo from Training on chemical dyeing in Taboshar town, Sogdian oblast, 26 - 27 October 2010;

Annex № 13 - Photo from Training on natural and chemical dyeing in Oshoba village, Sogdian oblast, 28 - 31 October 2010;

Annex № 14 – Photo from Training on carpet weaving in Khudjand, 14-20 November, 2010;

Annex № 15 - Photo from Training on spinning mohair blended with silk in Oshoba village, Sogdian oblast, 20 - 23 November, 2010.