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The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

***Red Cross and Red Crescent actions to ensure better access of the most vulnerable people to safe, adequate and affordable water, sanitation and hygiene services***

In December 2016, the United Nations General Assembly unanimously adopted the resolution “International Decade (2018–2028) for Action – Water for Sustainable Development” to help put a *greater focus on water during ten years*.

In the water and sanitation sector, experience has shown that the effectiveness of water supply and sanitation projects depends not only on the choice of technology, “hardware”, but also on gender-responsive water and sanitation facilities, community management and behavioural change, the core elements of the “software” component.

Emphasizing that water is critical for sustainable development and the eradication of poverty and hunger, UN Member States expressed *deep concern over the lack of access to safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene and over water related disasters, scarcity and pollution being exacerbated by urbanization, population growth, desertification, drought and climate change*.

The RCRC National Societies worldwide are in a unique position to take global commitments down to local level leading to local action in water and sanitation programming and advocacy. Their position also as ‘auxiliaries to Government’ often mean they can influence and support Government action while partnering with a broad range of stakeholders.

The International Federation advocates for the integration of “hardware” and “software” for water, sanitation and hygiene promotion and this approach has been adopted by the International Federation under the Global Water and Sanitation Initiative (GWSI), establishing a set of criteria that should be met by all the Red Cross Red Crescent water and sanitation players.

The majority of RCRC NS’s already have ongoing water and sanitation programmes in over 80 countries worldwide having reached over 20 million people with WASH infrastructure in the last decade.

The Government of Tajikistan in cooperation with the UN and other partners is organizing a High-level International Conference on the International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development, 2018-2022” that aimed to mobilize efforts of the governments, UN institutions, international and non-governmental organizations, as well as other stakeholders at all levels for effective implementation of the water-related SDGs and the objectives of the International Water Decade.

IFRC support the main objectives of the Conference are to raise awareness about the effective implementation of the SDG6 and other water-related goals and to discuss the way forward with implementation of activities of the Water Decade Action Plan, 2018-2028, at the global, regional and country levels.

Tajikistan's – the main source of clean water in Central Asia. Very well - known rivers and lakes, such as the Amu Darya, Sir Darya, Panj the glaciers in Tajikistan's mountains, Sarez lake are the major source of runoff for the Aral Sea. There are over 900 rivers in Tajikistan longer than 10 kilometres. The Vakhsh and the Panj, with great hydropower potential. Tajikistan is home to the Nurek Dam, the highest dam in the world.

At the same time Tajikistan as, other Central Asia countries faces lack of access to drinking water due to seasonal disasters, such a massive flooding. According to World Bank assessment, due to infra-structural challenges, more than one third of the population of Central Asia have poor access to drinking water that not meet hygiene standards, significantly increase risk of water -born diseases as well and negative impact to health in mid and long- term perspective. (World Bank, report 2017)<sup>1</sup> The special necessity for the Central Asian countries is in improvement of healthcare via improvement of drinking water supply systems to ensure access to high quality drinking water for all with respect to safety, reliability, efficiency and financial sustainability. *However, most of drinking water supply systems are in poor condition and need to be rehabilitated or reconstructed and this is particularly relevant for rural areas*<sup>2</sup>.

Last 20 years IFRC and our sister National Societies provided permanent support to Red Crescent Society of Tajikistan in its wide range activities that allowed us to provide assistance few hundred thousand of people with drinking water, hygiene and sanitary facilities, as well as around 1 mln., people raised its awareness on community based health, personal hygiene and sanitation.

The grass roots network of RCRC local branches and volunteers add significant workforce capacities to efforts by other stakeholders while also mobilising community structures to be full partners in planning, developing and implementing programmes in water resource management and protection as well as increasing WASH coverage in alignment with SDG 6.

IFRC confirm its commitment to continue supporting efforts of Red Crescent of Tajikistan as auxiliary partner to the public authorities to improve quality of life of people.

We would call upon international and local actors and stakeholders to fully engage with us at all levels, global, regional, country and local to benefit from joint action, having common goals and partnership platforms that can be replicated and enlarged as the new decade progresses.

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<sup>1</sup> Glass Half Full: Drinking Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Conditions in Tajikistan  
<http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/tajikistan/publication/poverty-diagnostic-drinking-water-sanitation-and-hygiene-conditions-in-tajikistan>

<sup>2</sup> [http://ec-ifas.waterunites-ca.org/aral\\_basin/iuvr/water-quality/index.html](http://ec-ifas.waterunites-ca.org/aral_basin/iuvr/water-quality/index.html)