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MAPPING REGISTERED EXTREME POVERTY IN RURAL TAJIKISTAN

ANALYTICAL BRIEF

1 NO POVERTY



April, 2017

IN recent years Tajikistan has seen considerable progress in reducing poverty levels in the country*. At the same time, poverty remains a challenge for Tajikistan as is the case for many other countries in the world. The global nature of this challenge is reflected in the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development. The very first goal in this agenda, which was endorsed by the Republic of Tajikistan at the United Nations Summit in 2015, reads: "End poverty in all its forms everywhere."

As is implicit in this statement, to achieve the goal one should know where poverty is

located. This analytical brief contributes to the geographic mapping of poverty in Tajikistan by utilizing one recently constructed dataset – the Jamoat Basic Indicators (JAMBI) dataset.

Data was assembled by the United National Development Programme (UNDP) in cooperation with the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade (MEDT). The dataset includes a large number of indicators, information on which was primarily collected on a local level. Among these indicators there are several that refer to the number of poor people at the jamoat (municipality) level.

BOX PLOT

SDG target 1.1 "By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than \$1.25 a day." Progress toward achieving this target is intended to be measured through the following indicator:

Indicator 1.1.1: Proportion of population below the international poverty line, by sex, age, employment status and geographical location (urban/rural)

SDG target 1.2 "By 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions"

Indicator 1.2.1: Proportion of population living below the national poverty line, by sex and age

Indicator 1.2.2: Proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions

* Official figures indicate that the poverty rate dropped from 81% in 2000 to 30.3% in 2016. Source: "Dynamics of poverty reduction in Tajikistan," Statistical Agency under President of the Republic of Tajikistan. The extreme poverty rate (measured by food poverty line at 2,250 Kcal per person a day) dropped from 20% in 2012 to 16.8% in 2014, available at <http://www.stat.tj/ru/news/307/>

The discussion below is based on an analysis of poverty information for the 427 rural and township jamoats where around 79% of the country's population lives**. It focuses on what could be labeled “extreme poverty”. Although extreme poverty is much less of a problem now when Tajikistan graduated into the category of middle income countries, the “No One Left Behind” principle is central for the global agenda on Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and requires concerted efforts on the part of governments, civil society actors, and development partners.

The analysis and findings presented below provide a number of insights into the character and geographic distribution of extreme poverty and challenge some common assumptions and perceptions about this type of poverty in Tajikistan. Whether some of these findings, which appear to be counter-intuitive, point to socio-economic dynamics that has been largely ignored or simply reveal problems with underlying data needs to be further explored. Hopefully, the proposed analysis will stimulate thinking about the geographic prioritization of poverty reduction efforts, the effectiveness of policies that embody these efforts, and ways to improve rural poverty measurements.



** As it is reported in Table 1 below, 6,734,840 individuals resided in these jamoats in 2015. The World Bank's estimate of the total population of Tajikistan for 2015 was 8,481,855.

Rural poor: data and measurement issues

Poverty data currently collected by jamoats is based on the criteria defined by a resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers*. The resolution defines the poor with a specific purpose in mind – to target them for the purposes of providing social assistance in the form of monetary compensation for the use of electricity and natural gas. The number of poor is recorded on an annual basis in jamoat household books. The analysis below is based on the data entered in the books as of 1 January 2015.

The rules specified in the attachment to the resolution define families (individuals) as poor if the average monthly income of each family member (individual) is equal or less than 50% of the monthly minimum wage. The minimum monthly wage as of 1 January 2015 was 250 Somoni, which translates into a Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) of \$120**. The threshold for registering a family (individual) in the jamoat list

of poor people thus was 125 Somoni (PPP \$60). Given that this monetary threshold is very similar to the PPP \$1.90/day that is widely used by the international community as a measure of extreme poverty***, we label families/individuals registered in jamoat books using the resolution's rule as extremely poor.

Using this income-related criteria as an extreme poverty measure is a rather restrictive and limited way to talk about poverty. There have been a number of efforts to develop multidimensional measure of global poverty****. The available municipal-level income poverty data provides, nevertheless, an opportunity to look at systematically collected information at a very disaggregated level and analyze differences in the rates of registered extreme poverty across different areas of the country.



* "About strengthening social assistance to poor families and individuals," Resolution of Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Tajikistan, N.306, 28.05.2009. The resolution has attached to it "Rules for identifying poor families, determining and paying compensation for the use of electricity and natural gas".

** The implied PPP Conversion Rate for Tajikistan in year 2015 was 2.077. Accessible at http://www.economywatch.com/economic-statistics/Tajikistan/Implied_PPP_Conversion_Rate/

*** For recent updates of PPP rates see materials of the International Comparison Program, available at http://siteresources.worldbank.org/ICPEXT/Resources/ICP_2011.html

**** See, for example, the Multidimensional poverty index (MPI) that is calculated and reported yearly by the United Nations Development Programme and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative. Available at <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/multidimensional-poverty-index-mpi>

Extreme poor: regional dimension

The numbers of registered poor in rural and township jamoats across the country are summarized in Table 1 below. The data has been aggregated to the regional and national

levels and provides a detailed snapshot on the situation with extreme poverty in rural areas of the country.

Table 1. Registered extreme poor in rural and township jamoats (municipalities), as of 1st January 2015

Region	Population	Poor	Female Poor	Poor households	Female-led poor households
Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region (Badakh)	192,136	4,364	1,722	803	257
Districts of Republican Jurisdiction (Center)	1,842,253	45,758	18,505	8,668	3,076
Khatlon	2,723,180	65,354	25,395	11,796	4,315
Sughd	1,977,271	48,141	19,352	9,137	3,365
Total	6,734,840	163,617	64,974	30,404	11,013

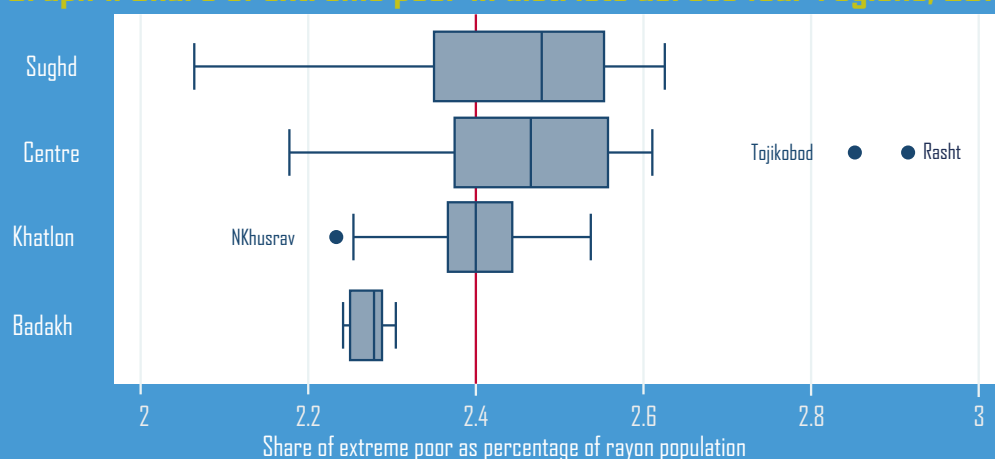
Source: JAMBI dataset, based on records of jamoat social assistance commissions

The total number of extreme poor registered by jamoats was 163,617*. Women accounted for 40% of this figure. The table also provides details on the total number of households to which extreme poor belong. The final column has information on how many out of these households were led by women. As the table suggests, the variation in number of extreme poor across the country's

regions generally reflects differences in the regions' population size.

Graph 1 provides some details on how regions differ in terms of extreme poverty. The measure used in the graph is a percentage share of the extreme poor relative to the general population. The graph is based on jamoat level information

Graph 1. Share of extreme poor in districts across four regions, 2015



Source: JAMBI dataset, aggregation by rayons based on records of jamoat social assistance commissions

aggregated to the rayon level and presented in a box plot format. The red line in the graph indicates the median value of the extreme poverty share for the sixty districts included in the analysis – it stands at 2.4 percents. The median value of extreme poverty share for districts in each specific region is represented by a line subdividing the box.

* Data in this table and subsequent graphs does not include information on cities, which are currently not part of the JAMBI dataset: Dushanbe, Vahdat, Tursunzoda, Rogun, Istiqlol, Buston, Istaravshan, Isfara, Konibodom, Panjakent, Kulgantube.

The graph indicates that the median values for Sughd and Centre districts were somewhat higher than the national median (this finding also holds when means are compared instead of medians). Centre also has two districts with the highest share of extreme poor nationwide – Tojikobod and Rasht. The length of the boxes (that capture the interquartile range – IQR – which accounts for the middle fifty percent of observations) and lines (which are drawn to span all data points within 1.5 IQR of the nearer quartile) point to the fact that individual districts vary much more in terms of extreme poverty share in the case of these two regions in comparison to Khatlon and Gorno-Badakhshan (Badakh). The median value for Khatlon was almost identical to the national median. Gorno-Badakhshan region was the only one with a somewhat lower median value. It is also a region where individual districts were most similar in terms of extreme poverty rates. Overall, district-level differences among regions in terms of the share of extreme poverty were not very considerable – the value of extreme poverty share varied in the range between two and three percent. The differences become more pronounced when the data is disaggregated to the jamoat level, the jamoat-level analysis is presented in one of the subsequent sections of this brief.

These regional differences in registered extreme poverty rates, nevertheless, raise some questions about conventional perceptions of the geographic distribution of poverty in Tajikistan. The findings are at odds with available data and wide-spread beliefs that extreme poverty is more of a problem in Khatlon and Gorno-Badakhshan. Sughd and Centre regions – where the major cities of Khujand and Dushanbe are located – are not immediately associated with concerns about poverty (with the exception of the Rasht valley region). Several recent survey- and census-based studies on the regional distribution of poverty in Tajikistan identify Khatlon and Gorno-Badakhshan as regions with the highest poverty levels*.

A more detailed comparison of findings of the above-mentioned studies and surveys used for calculating the country's official poverty rates and the registered poor data reported here would be beneficial. Exploring whether variance in the registered extreme poverty rates can be attributed to the existence of systematic differences in how regions register and collect information about the poor could be another important line for further inquiry, although such differences appear very unlikely in view of a high degree of uniformity in how the country's regions follow and execute the central government's instructions.

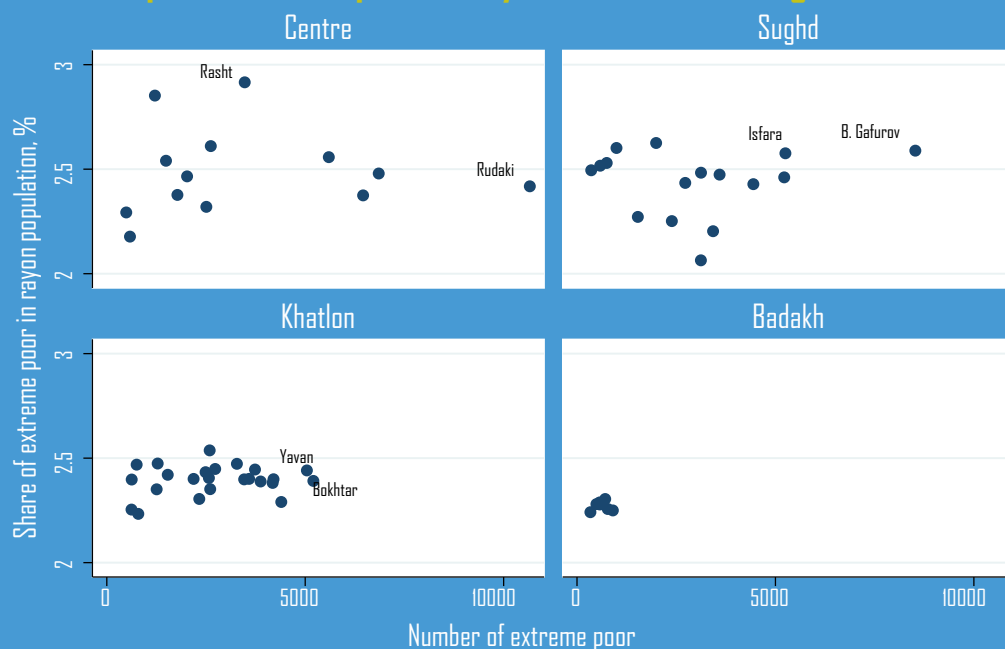


* Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI). OPHI Country Briefing 2017: Tajikistan. Available at www.ophi.org.uk/multidimensional-poverty-index/mpi-country-briefings/. World Bank. Poverty Mapping in Tajikistan: Methods and Key Findings, Report No.104003 – TJ, April 25, 2016.

Graph 2 gives more district-level details on the registered extreme poor across the country's regions. The graph combines data on the share

of extreme poor in a district's population with information on the absolute number of such individuals in individual districts.

Graph 2. Extreme poor in rayons across four regions, 2015



Source: JAMBI dataset, based on records of jamoat social assistance commissions

The y-axis line in the graph illustrates the earlier reported finding – Districts of Republican Jurisdictions (Centre) vary most in terms of extreme poverty share and the highest values of this indicator are found in this region. The x-axis indicates how districts vary in terms of the absolute number of extreme poor. The size of the extremely poor

population is highly correlated with the districts' general population size: the largest number of extreme poor is in districts with the largest population size: Rudaki, Bobojan Gafurov, Vakhdat, and Gissor. As the graph indicates, each of these four districts had more than 6,000 extreme poor persons.

* Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI). OPHI Country Briefing 2017: Tajikistan. Available at www.ophi.org.uk/multidimensional-poverty-index/mpi-country-briefings/. World Bank. Poverty Mapping in Tajikistan: Methods and Key Findings, Report No.104003 – TJ, April 25, 2016.

Extreme poor: gender dimension



The data collected by jamoats allows for an exploration of gender differences in terms of extreme poverty. As the numbers reported in Table 1 indicate, there were 64,974 women, or 39.7% of all extreme poor registered in rural and township jamoats in 2015. Of the 30,404 extremely poor households listed in the same table, 11,013 were led by women, which translates into a 36.2 % share of women-led households among all extreme poor households.

The reported figures on the number and percentage of women among all extreme poor – 64,974 or 39.7% – raises questions about the interpretation/applicability of the “feminization of poverty” thesis in the context of Tajikistan. The fact that the majority of registered poor are men – this finding holds across all districts of the country – requires further exploration and analysis. A number of previous country specific studies suggest that extreme poverty is either similar or more prevalent among women than men. Factors that contribute to the income poverty of rural women have been extensively examined in a number of reports. One possible line for further investigation is whether general societal norms, everyday practices (e.g., dealing with government bureaucracy is primarily the responsibility of men), or characteristics of registration procedures make women less likely to register than men at the jamoat level.

Since jamoat data contains information on the numbers of all women-led households, it is useful to contrast and examine how prevalent extreme poverty is in women-led and men-led households.



* The percentage share of women among all extreme poor varied between 33% and 45% across the country's districts. The list of districts with the lowest share of extreme poor women included: Khuroson (33%), Rogun (34%), Yavan (35%), Ishkoshim (36%), Nurek (36%), Kulyab (36%).

** See, for example, Elena Mezentseva, Gender analysis of social protection system, UN Women, 2012.

*** UN Women and PANORAMA Public Fund, Situational Analysis Report: The Impact of Labour Migration on the Socio-Economic Vulnerability of Rural Women in Tajikistan, 2014; ООН Женщины, Законодательство и политика Республики Таджикистан в сфере социальной защиты населения: гендерный анализ, 2012; Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), National Gender Profile of Agricultural and Rural Livelihoods – Tajikistan, 2016. The last of the listed reports, for example, discusses in some details the situation with women's average wages in 2014. These wages (across all sectors of the economy) were equivalent to 60% of men's wages. The wage gap is partially explained by the predominance of women in low paid sectors of the economy (for example, education and health care) and also the fact that women are more likely than men to have part-time work and to leave the job market for periods of time due to child care responsibilities.

Extreme poverty shares presented in Graph 3 are based on ratios of extremely poor household to all households led by a person of

the same gender (women or man) in a given district. Similarly to previous graphs, jamoat statistics here are aggregated to a district level.

Graph 3. Extreme Poverty Shares for Female-Led and Male-Led Households, 2015



Source: JAMBI dataset, based on records of jamoat social assistance commission

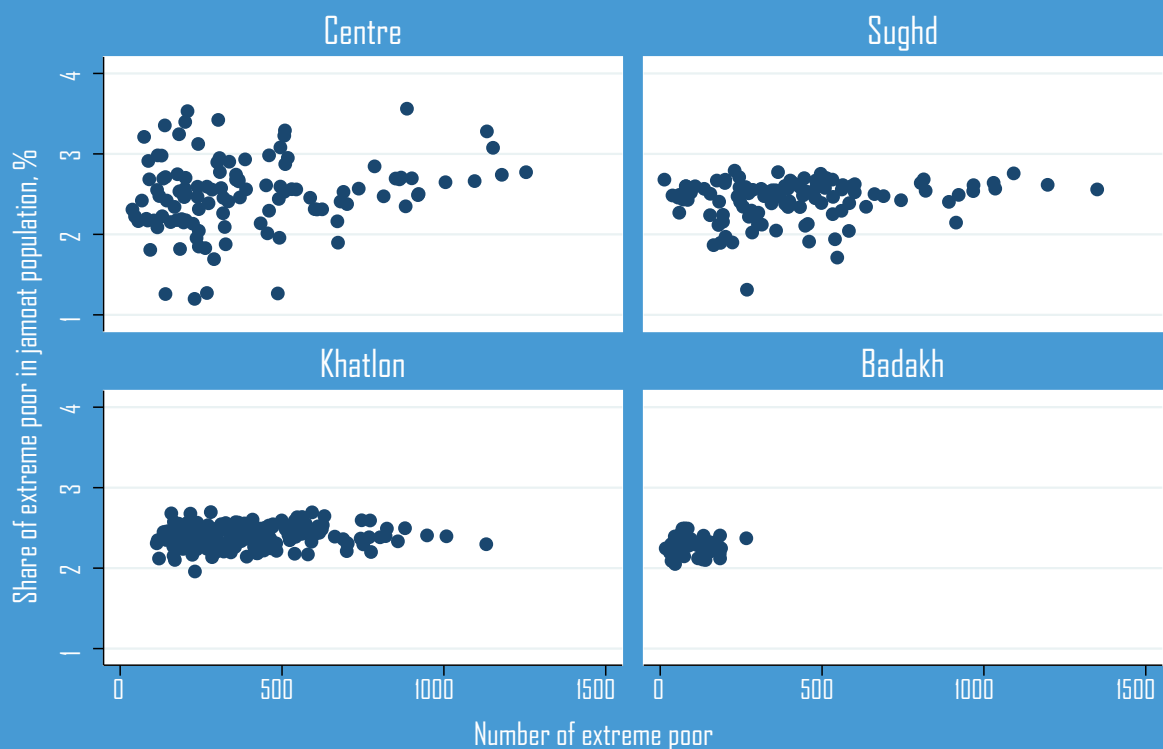
As could be expected, extreme poverty is much more prevalent in women-led households as compared to men-led households – the average share of extreme poor for the former category of households was 11.6% while for the latter the value of the same indicator was 2.2%. The extent of this prevalence, however, differed quite considerably across districts. For the convenience of presentation, Graph 3 combines districts from two regions in each sub-graph. As the graph indicates, the levels of

extreme poverty have been consistently higher for women-led as compared to men-led households across all districts. In the districts of Vanj and Nurek, almost 40 % of all women-led households were reported as extremely poor, which were the highest values of this indicator for the country. Among Districts of Republican Jurisdiction, Tojikobod was the one with the highest share of extremely poor women-led households. Isfara had the same problematic distinction in Sughd region.

Local differences in extreme poverty

Jamoat-level differences in extreme poverty share and the absolute number of extreme poor individuals across the country's regions are summarized in Graph 4 below. Individual jamoats are mapped on these two dimensions in each region's sub-graph.

Graph 4.
Extreme poor in jamoats
across four regions, 2015



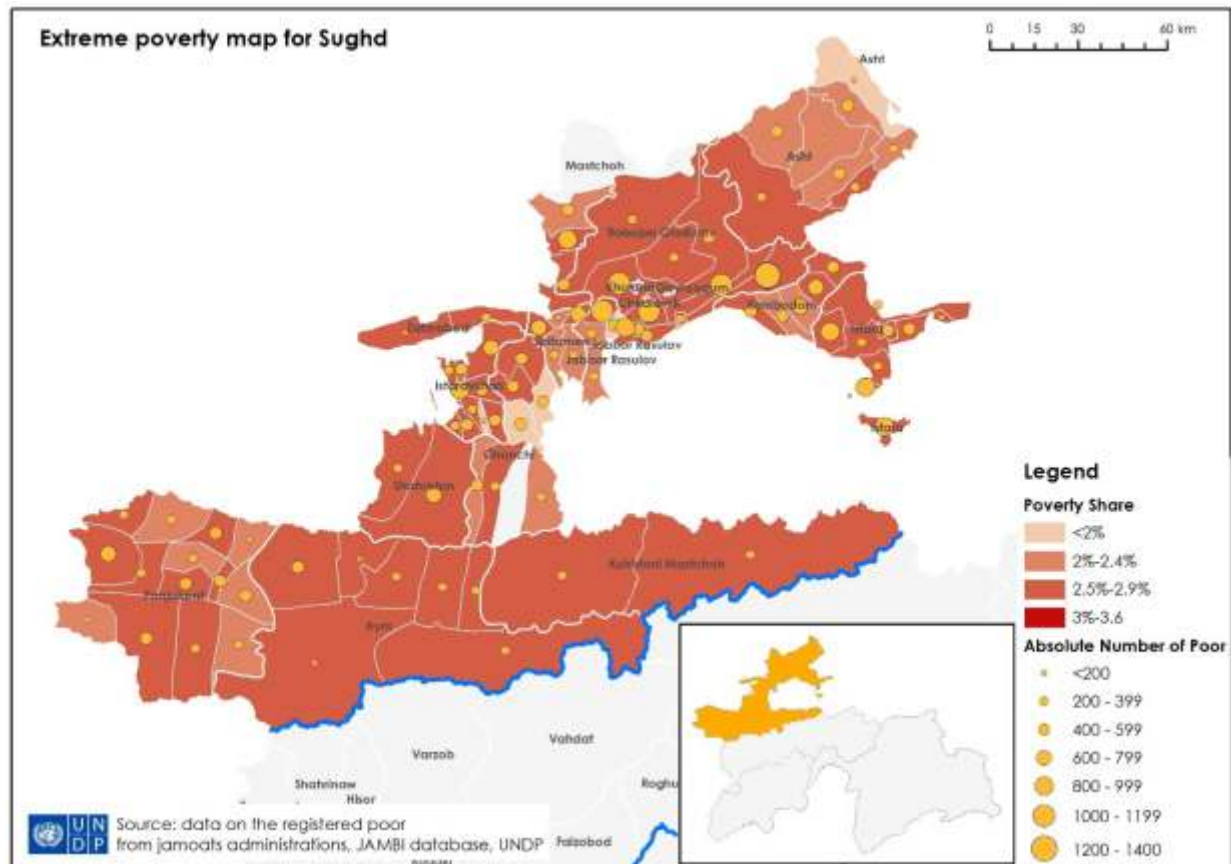
Source: JAMBI dataset, based on records of jamoat social assistance commissions

As the graph indicates, the share of extreme poor at the jamoat level ranged from 1% to 4%. As was already highlighted in the discussion of districts' figures, the highest variation in extreme poverty share is in Districts of Republican Jurisdiction (Centre). This region is a home to jamoats with very low rates (close to 1%) as well as to those with high rates (>3%). There was also a considerable variation in extreme poverty rates in Sughd region, where a

number of jamoats had lower than average values for this indicator. In the other two regions extreme poverty rates varied in much more narrower corridor of between 2%-3%. The graph also shows the range of values for the absolute number of extreme poor for the 427 rural and township jamoats analyzed here. This range is from less than 100 until 1,350 individuals and the average number of extreme poor for all jamoats was 383.

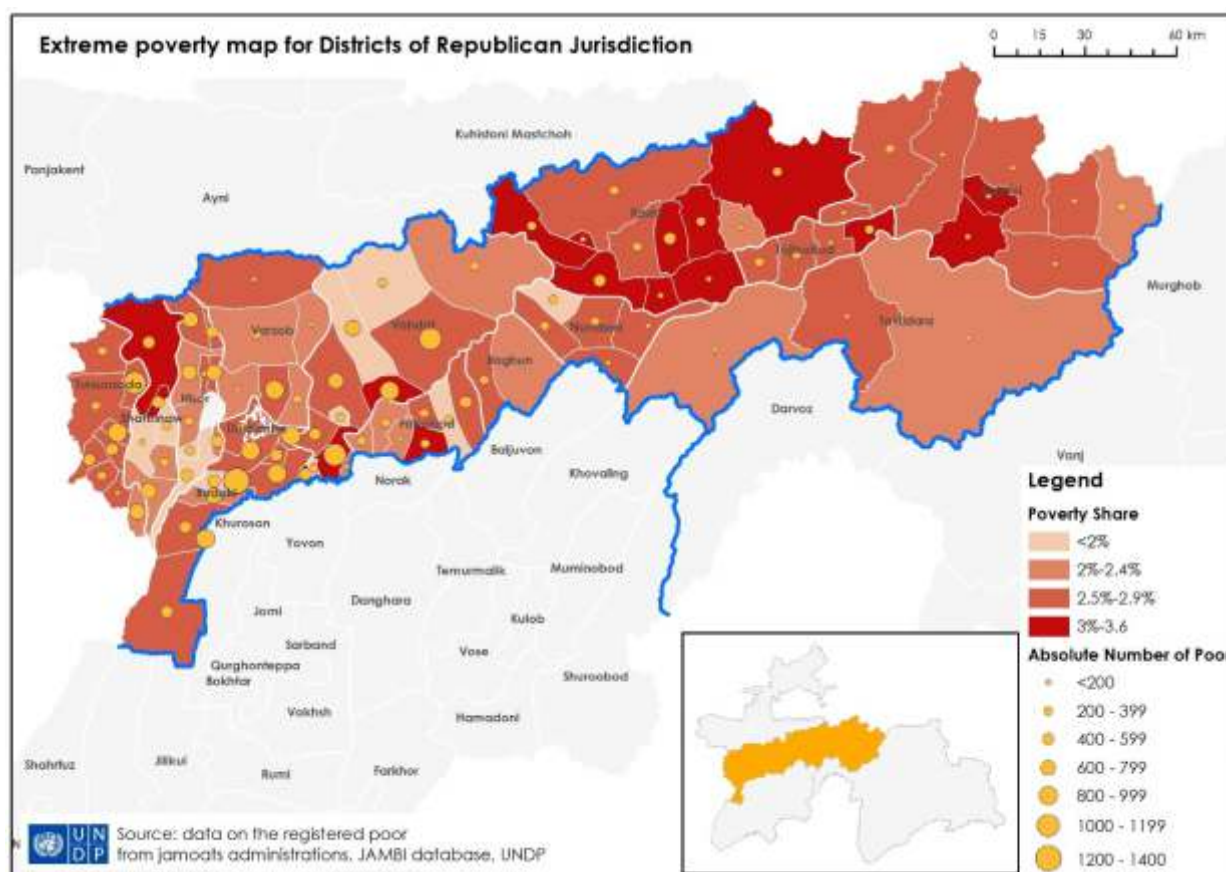
The geographic distribution of extreme poverty for each region is provided in the regional maps presented below.

The maps combine the information on extreme poverty rates and absolute number of poor.



In Sughd region, the vast majority of jamoats fall in the 2%-3% range in terms of extreme poverty share. A small number of jamoats were reported to have a value of this indicator of below 2%. Jamoats with the largest absolute number of extreme poor were concentrated in Bobojan Gafurov and Jabor Rasulov districts. Four out of the top five jamoats in terms of the number of extreme poor were in Bobojan Gafurov: Histevarz (1,350 individuals), Unzhi (1,197), Isfisor (1,092), Yova (1,035). The last in the top five was jamoat Gulakandoz of Jabor Rasulov (1,030).

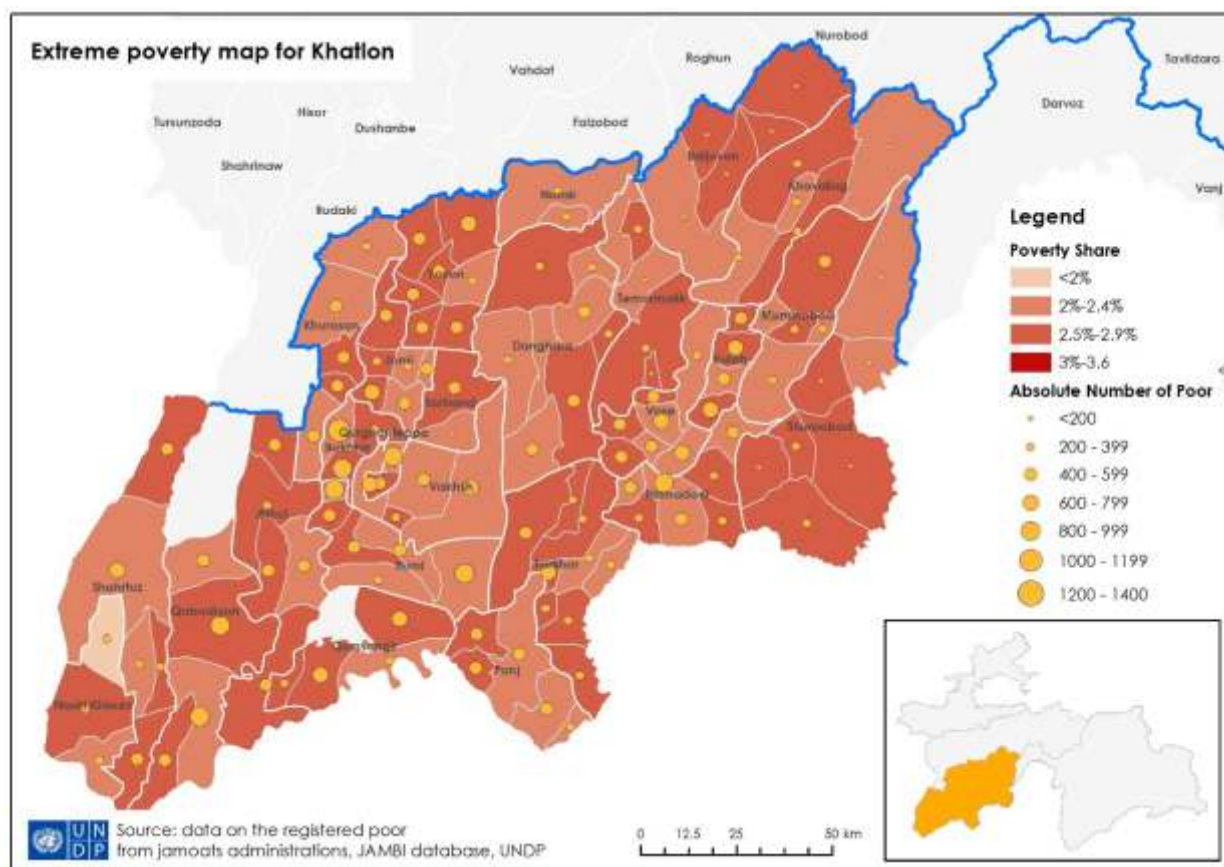
In terms of number of female-led households that were extremely poor, the top five list looked somewhat different. Besides the most populous jamoats of Bobojan Gafurov district, it included jamoats from Isfara district, which was reported earlier in the brief to have the largest proportion of female-led households in conditions of extreme poverty. The list included: Histervarz (101 households), Unzhi (89), Yova (81), Navgilem of Isfara district (76), Chorku of Isfara district (75).



Jamoats in the Districts of Republican Jurisdiction differed considerably more in terms of extreme poverty share than jamoats in other regions of the country. Significant number of municipalities had a value for this indicator of above 3% and below 2%. Jamoats with the highest shares of extreme poverty were concentrated in the Rasht valley, although there were several jamoats with above 3% rate in the western part of this region – Burunov of Vahtat district (3.6%), Buston of Faizobod (3.4%), Istiklol of ShakhriNAV district (3.3%), Karim Ismoilov of Vahdat district (3.3%), Sultonobod of Rudaki district (3.1%).

Jamoats with the largest absolute number of extremely poor were concentrated in the two most populous districts – Rudaki and Vahtat. Five jamoats with the largest number of extreme poor were Chimteppa of Rudaki district (1,254 individuals), Abdulvosiev of Vahtat district (1,179), Guliston of Vahtat district (1,152), Karim Ismoilov of Vahtat district (1,133), and Guliston of Rudaki district (1,095).

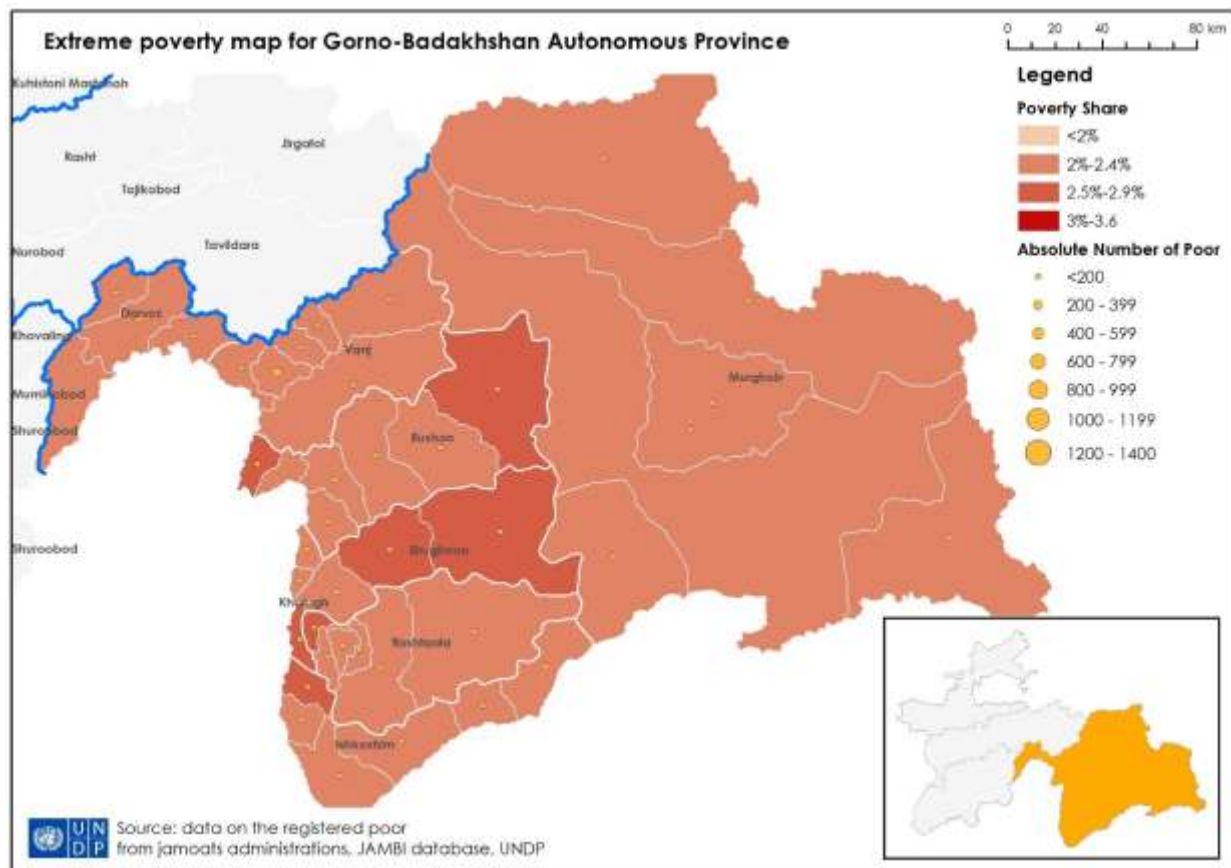
The list of five jamoats with the largest number of extreme poor female-led households looked very similar. It included: Chimteppa of Rudaki districts (91 households), Karim Ismoilov of Vahtat district (88); Guliston of Vahtat district (87); Burunov of Vahtat district (81), Guliston of Rudaki district (81).



In Khatlon region, all jamoats fall in the 2%-3% range in terms of extreme poverty share. The only exception was Firuza jamoat of N. Khusrav district that had a value of this indicator slightly below this range – 1.96%. The mean extreme poverty share for the region's jamoats was 2.4% which is the closest to the national mean (2.43%).

The five jamoats with the largest absolute number of extreme poor were Zargar of Bokhtar district (1,131 individuals), Bokhtariyon of Bokhtar district (1,008), Kirov of Vakhsh district (948), N.Khusrav of Qubodiyon district (880), and Takhti Sangin of Qubodiyon district (858).

The same jamoats led the list of administrative-territorial unites with the largest number of extreme poor female-led households: Zargar of Bokhtar district (75 households), Bokhtariyon of Bokhtar district (73), Mehnatobod of Bokhtar district (66), N.Khustrav of Qubodiyon district (63), Takhti Sangin of Qubodiyon district (61), and Sarvati Istiklol of Bokhtar district (61).



As the above map demonstrates, the vast majority of jamoats in Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Province had very similar values of the extreme poverty share – between 2%-2.4%. Only a handful of jamoats had slightly higher values on this indicator. As was already highlighted earlier, jamoats in this region were the most similar in terms of the extreme poverty share. The mean value of this indicator for the region's jamoats was 2.3%.

Given how less populous this region is in comparison to other regions of the country, absolute numbers of extreme poverty for Badakhshan's jamoats are of a different magnitude. Jamoats with the largest absolute

number of extreme poor were M. Abdulloev of Vanj district (266 individuals), Kalai Khumb of Darvoz district (188), K. Gadoliev of Roshtqala district (185), Porshynev of Shughnon district (185), and Suchan of Shughnon district (184).

The largest number of extreme poor female-headed households were in M. Abdulloev of Vanj district (19 households), Kalai Khumb of Darvoz district (16), and Porshynev of Shughnon district (13). Seven jamoats from different districts of the region reported 10-11 extreme poor female-headed households.

Conclusion

It is important that no one is left behind while Tajikistan focuses on consolidating development gains and pursuing more ambitious energy production and economic growth agendas, as emphasized in strategic national development documents. The analysis presented in this brief utilized one type of data that is systematically collected on the local level – jamoats' statistics on registered poor – to explore patterns in extreme poverty and map it across the country's regions.

Some of the brief's findings – especially related to regional differences in extreme poverty rates, gender dimensions of poverty, and “pockets” of very low poverty shares – might require further examination and comparison with other relevant sources of data on poverty. Extreme poverty rates were found to be somewhat higher in regions that are traditionally viewed as being better-off. Women were found to constitute a minority, albeit sizeable minority, among those registered as extreme poor. Some jamoats were found to have very low extreme poverty rates that could not be immediately attributed to any locality-specific characteristics.

The brief also calls attention to the importance of poverty measurement and data collection issues. Since it is not possible to exclude the possibility that some of the most counter-intuitive findings could be a product of flawed data collection procedures, it is important to galvanize expert discussions about the principles and procedures for collecting data at the local level. Publication and circulation of the available statistics, even the flawed ones, can stimulate discussions about changes required to improve data quality and can increase the awareness and accountability of local authorities about the numbers they

report. A commitment to regular publication of updated information can help identify trends and monitor the effects of policy interventions. Jamoat administrative statistics books contain a great deal of information treasures but they also need major revisions with regards to what data and in which manner it is collected.

A somewhat distinct, yet very important concern in relation to poverty, is underreporting. Both “demand” and “supply” side factors leading to underreporting might be important in the case of jamoat statistics on the extreme poor. Since registering someone as poor imposes financial obligations on authorities, there might be a general tendency to limit the number of individuals registered as poor, which might explain both the narrow range of variation in extreme poverty rates and the extremely high correlation between population size and absolute numbers of extreme poor. “Demand-side” factors might include onerous reporting burdens or stigmas associated with registration. As was highlighted in the brief, underreporting by women could require a thorough analysis on its own.

Finally, the brief is a call for targeted programming to address the needs of the extreme poor. While extreme poverty rates calculated on the basis of jamoat statistics suggest that this type of poverty – both at the national and local levels – concerns a very small minority of the population (2.4% of the rural and township population nationwide), this is an important constituency for humanitarian and developmental work aimed at increasing the resilience of the most vulnerable and excluded segments of society.



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