

Listening2Tajikistan



WORLD BANK GROUP
Poverty & Equity

Project Description

Overview

As the poorest country in Central Asia, Tajikistan is particularly vulnerable to shocks. From the current economic downturn in the Russian Federation, to seasonal electricity, water (Figure 1), and heating shortages, the country faces substantial risks to livelihoods and wellbeing.

Some of these risks could potentially derail the extensive improvements seen for the poor and vulnerable over the past decade. Strong economic growth in Tajikistan has helped to lower the poverty rate from 37.4 percent in 2012 to 31.6 percent in the 1st quarter of 2015, but sustaining gains and ensuring further progress will be increasingly difficult in the current environment. According to the latest [Tajikistan Economic Update by the World Bank](#), growth is expected to decline to 4.2 percent in 2015 from 6.7 percent in 2014, affected by the spillover effect of the Russian recession, falling remittances, and low prices of Tajikistan's key export commodities (Figure 2).

In May 2015 the World Bank Poverty team rolled out the “Listening To Tajikistan” survey (L2TJK) to monitor the impact of emerging trends throughout the country at high frequency. The survey rapidly clarifies the severity of the economic downturn, the evolution of vulnerabilities, and household responses to risk and deprivation over time. The survey enables a focus on poorer and more vulnerable households, and generates evidence for targeted policy-making.

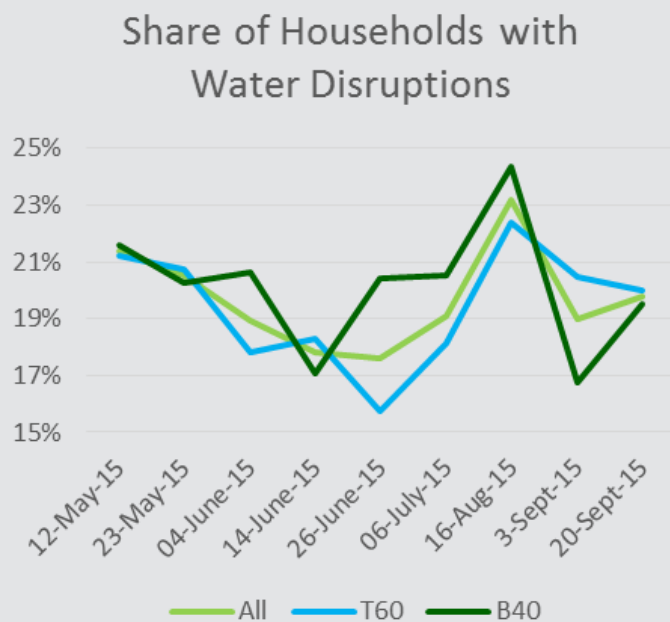


Figure 1: L2TJK estimates 1

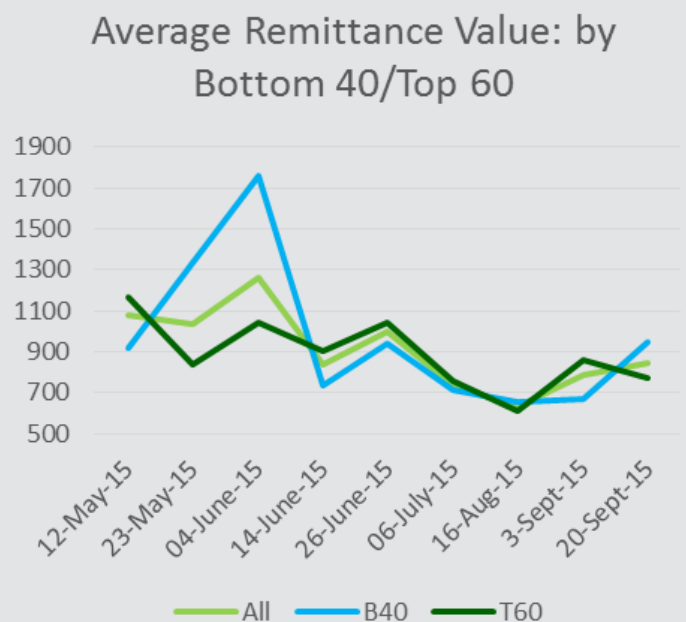


Figure 2: L2TJK estimates 2

1 Including Households not connected to municipal water system

2 Individuals in the bottom 40% (B40) of the consumption distribution, vs. individuals in the top 60% (T60)

Approach

The fieldwork for L2TJK that commenced in May 2015, is currently ongoing, and funded through June 2016. The responses are collected over the phone in a panel design. The 800-household sample was drawn from a nationally representative face-to-face survey of 3000 households conducted in the spring of 2015. This approach dramatically reduced the cost of initial data collection, and provided a full consumption module for all participating households. The survey draws from all regions of Tajikistan, but is representative at the national level only.

Interviews use CATI (Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviews) technology to facilitate the quality control and expedite survey results. The respondents were initially interviewed in 10-day intervals, but to lengthen the coverage period, the interviews moved to two-week intervals following the sixth wave of data collection, and as of December 2015 interviews are monthly. Responses are weighted for national representativeness and attrition. The survey also has a sample-refreshment component: households that refuse to participate (or otherwise drop out) are replaced with another household that was interviewed in the face-to-face survey and is located in the same primary sampling unit as the household being replaced. Each interview takes approximately 10-15 minutes, and participants are compensated with \$1 phone credit for each interview. Attrition in each round has been low, at about 3% on average. For more details on the methods used in the study, please see Azevedo and Seitz, 2015.

Results

The survey is designed around high-frequency monitoring of four themes: 1) migration and remittances, 2) income and employment, 3) deprivations and subjective wellbeing, and 4) electricity and water services. Some highlights of the findings include:

- The value of an average remittance fell 21 percent between May 12th and September 20th, while the share of households receiving remittances (over the preceding 10 day period) increased from 9.7 percent to 13.2 percent.
- As the agricultural season progressed, the share of household heads doing any work over the preceding seven days increased from 34 percent in May to 60 percent in September. This helped to increase total per capita income between May and September by about 6.4 percent.
- Between 38 percent and 58 percent of households experience electricity outages in any given round of the survey (though many households are not connected to the grid at all). Those households that experience outages typically lack electricity on between 60 to 80 percent of the days covered in the survey. Outages were consistently more common in rural areas than in urban areas between May 12th and September 20th.
- The share of households that report having trouble paying for food has increased. In May, about 67 percent of households stated that they were able to purchase enough food. By the 20th of September, the share had fallen to about 60 percent. Other indicators of wellbeing have improved over the same period however. Between May 12th and September 20th, fewer households reported reducing healthcare expenses, reducing food expenses, or selling assets to pay for other basic needs.