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TAJIKISTAN

SNAPSHOT

Food Diversity Yields Dividends

USAID and Mercy Corps train community members on canning and greenhouse construction to improve household food security



Photo: Mercy Corps

Sabohat Hakimova, above right, stands with her oldest daughter above their greenhouse frame, with fruit trees and wheat in the background.

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Standing above her greenhouse, Sabohat Hakimova exudes pride as she shows off her onions, cilantro, and dill. In her family’s first greenhouse, she was able to plant these greens two months earlier than usual. Hakimova is a 36-year old mother of four and a canning and greenhouse trainee of the USAID and Mercy Corps Tajikistan Stability Enhancement Program.

Hakimova is the head of her household. Her husband is a labor migrant in Russia eight months out of each year, but remittances come only when requested. Her family of five lives on \$100 per month and grows their primary food sources: wheat, potatoes, beans, tomatoes, beets, and turnips. With a small orchard of fruit trees, the summer is bountiful in comparison to winter when food diversity is limited to non-perishable goods. Hakimova explains, “I don’t have the income to purchase preserved goods at the market. What we preserve in the summer and fall is what we eat during the winter. This year we had beets, turnips, apricots, and tomatoes.” In previous years, Hakimova only canned tomatoes. The Program teaches food preservation techniques in these rural areas to diversify household diets, which will improve nutrition and lower malnutrition rates. Thirty percent of children are stunted in Tajikistan, largely due to malnutrition.

After benefitting from diversified canning this winter, Hakimova intends to increase the variety of canned goods she preserves next winter by trading produce with her neighbors. “I want to increase the number and types of canned goods I have for my family next winter. I want to can apricots, cherries, onions, and jam, too.”

At the end of winter, Hakimova’s family worked together to construct a greenhouse with supplies provided by the Program. The design Hakimova learned during the trainings has worked well in the region’s windy conditions, and community members have expressed their intention to replicate it. “The trainings were very useful, my family’s quality of life has improved, and I am planning to build a second greenhouse next year,” said Hakimova. The Program’s impact on Hakimova’s life is visible daily. With her new skills, Hakimova is a model in her community, demonstrating that a little knowledge can go a long way toward improving peoples’ lives.