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TAJIKISTAN

SNAPSHOT

Self-Preservation with Preserves

USAID and Mercy Corps train volunteers in techniques for improved food security and household income generation



Photo: Mercy Corps/Clay Westrope

Rahmaddin and Zaron (far left) and their family show some of the food that they have preserved using improved techniques learned in the USAID and Mercy Corps trainings sessions.

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“I knew how to preserve food before,” says Zaron Hafizova, “but often much of the food I preserved spoiled and I was unable to preserve enough.” Zaron’s husband, Rahmaddin Shekhov, adds to the discussion, remarking about their greenhouse, “Many years ago we used greenhouses, but during the post-Soviet period we stopped using them and forgot about them.”

While both Zaron and Rahmaddin, 51 and 50 years of age respectively, are experienced farmers, they benefited greatly from the greenhouse and food preservation trainings conducted by the USAID and Mercy Corps Tajikistan Stability Enhancement Program. This program has provided training sessions aimed at improving the food security of households in target communities using an effective training-of-trainers method that has spread improved food preservation techniques throughout the region.

Zaron and Rahmaddin support a household of 12 in their mountainous village, and have children spanning 5-26 years of age. Before the use of these improved techniques they found it difficult to feed their family and benefit financially from the crops that they grew. Rahmaddin and Zaron have been able to sell over 200 pounds of produce from the greenhouse, worth the equivalent of \$80, and still have enough food to feed their family. Zaron has been able to preserve more than 100 jars of food for winter using the additional crops from the greenhouse – almost double last winter’s number of jars.

“The extra income has allowed me to make critical repairs to our house,” says Rahmaddin, with a smile on his face, pointing to the patched roof above him. “I was able to use 60 jars of preserved food to feed guests at my son’s wedding this winter. Without these, we would not have been able to celebrate this important occasion,” says Zaron, while recounting the wedding events.

Zaron and Rahmaddin have a lot to be happy about, and so do their neighbors. Many community members have benefited from the subsequent trainings by Zaron, Rahmaddin and a network of other volunteers who have passed on their improved preservation and growing techniques. “Our family feels better knowing that we have enough food. We hope to pass that on to other families,” Zaron says holding a jar of preserved vegetables.