

A Place to Trade and Socialise

Every Saturday, 8 o'clock in the morning, the Tem market in Khorog, Tajikistan, opens for traders, customers and visitors from both sides of the Panj River at the Afghan-Tajik border. Colourful clothes and regional food items, books and learning material, hygiene products as well as toys are amongst the variety of products that can be found on the market. Apart from engaging in economic activities, people also come to socialise and enjoy going to the teahouse.



'The market helps us to develop a common understanding and contributes to the stability in the border area.'

Afghanistan and Tajikistan share borders, languages, traditions and culture, but have been separated for several decades in recent history. Different political and economic systems and periods of armed conflicts have led to different developments in these neighbouring countries. Given these realities, cross-border programmes financed by the German government aim to foster regional cooperation between Afghan and Tajik communities by forging new market linkages, leveraging capacity and integrating existing resources. This shall contribute to the sustainable socio-economic development of border communities.

The Tem cross-border market was constructed in 2002 and is still in use. At the time of construction, the local government had extremely limited funds for the market and built only a simple central pavilion space to protect traders from rain and snow in winter and sun in summer. For instance, due to the lack of refrigeration facilities, many perishable food products thus spoiled quickly under the heat of the sun. The harsh climatic conditions of the area made trading almost impossible during a six-month period, which in turn, limited the opportunity for the community and its traders to earn an income during this time. Furthermore, the existing market had only 20 retail outlets. These retail outlets were not sufficient to meet the demand as the market has increased its customer base over the past ten years.

To improve trading conditions and enable increased activity at the Tem market, the pavilion area was renovated, an enclosed space surrounded by shaded areas constructed, and water and sanitation facilities installed. Every Saturday, over 3,000 Afghan and Tajik citizens visit the market, and the number of entrepreneurs using the market has increased to 90 and 50 respectively.

Sitora, 28 years old, is very satisfied: 'We are happy with the market. We have greater access to cheaper goods and food items, which means that we have more income for other things such as health and education.' Moreover, the new market serves as a place for cultural interaction for the communities that have been separated for a long time. 'The market is becoming a place for sport, cultural and other social events. By providing a

forum for cultural exchange, the market helps to develop a common understanding and contribute to the stability in the border area', says Farrukh. Additionally, the number of women sellers in Tem market has increased compared to other cross-border markets. The new market with its improved conditions and increased number of outlets will boost women's involvement in economic and social aspects of life.

Therefore, the market plays a significant role in enhancing cross-border trade and serve as a platform for dialogue. Another benefit of the market is that the Tajik authorities gain more experience in managing cross-border markets and will have additional reason to interact with the Afghan local authorities. These interactions help to build stronger relationships between the countries.

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