

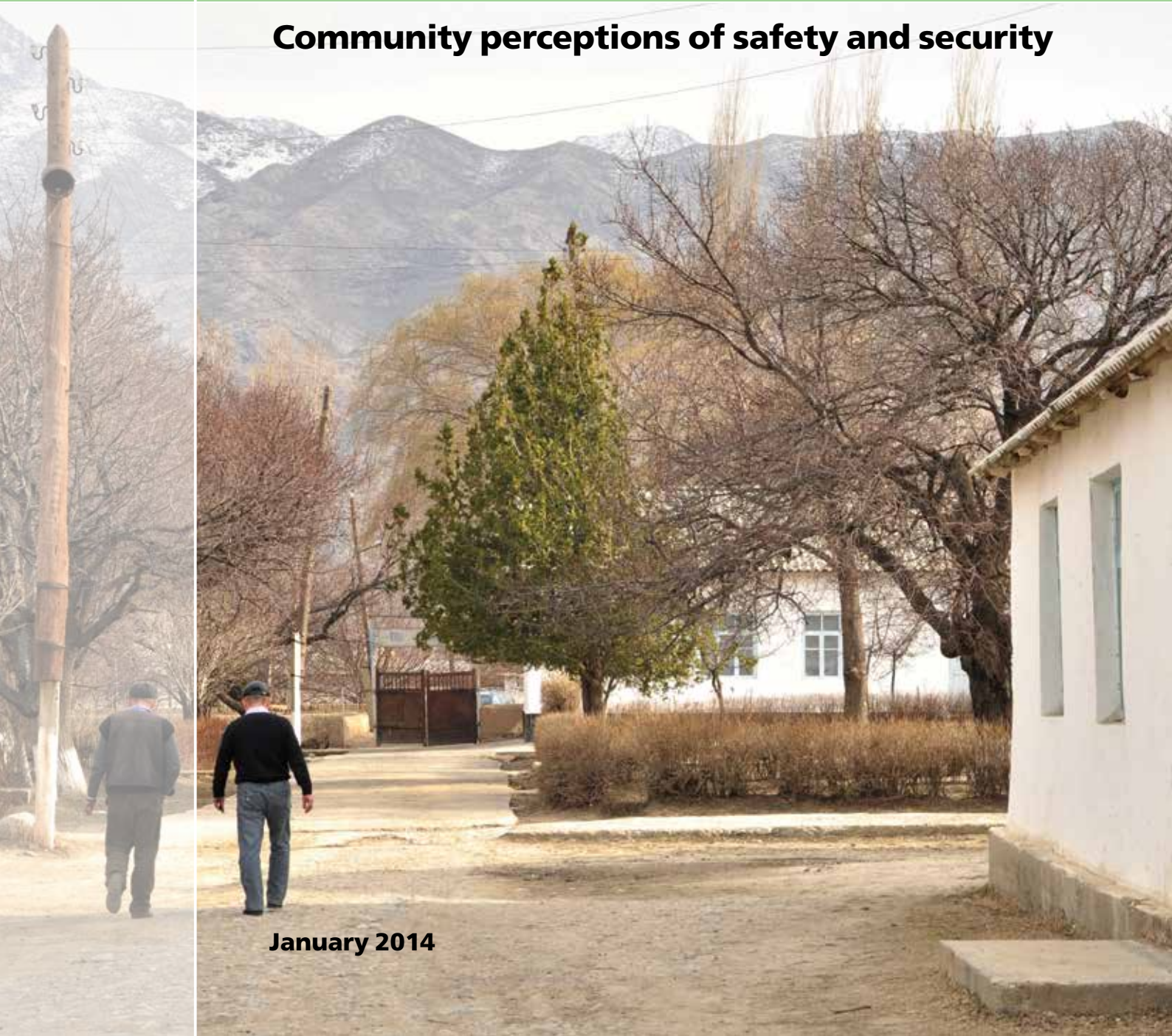


**SAFERWORLD**

PREVENTING VIOLENT CONFLICT. BUILDING SAFER LIVES

# Building confidence in the future: Opportunities and challenges in the Ferghana Valley

## **Community perceptions of safety and security**



January 2014



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## Acknowledgements

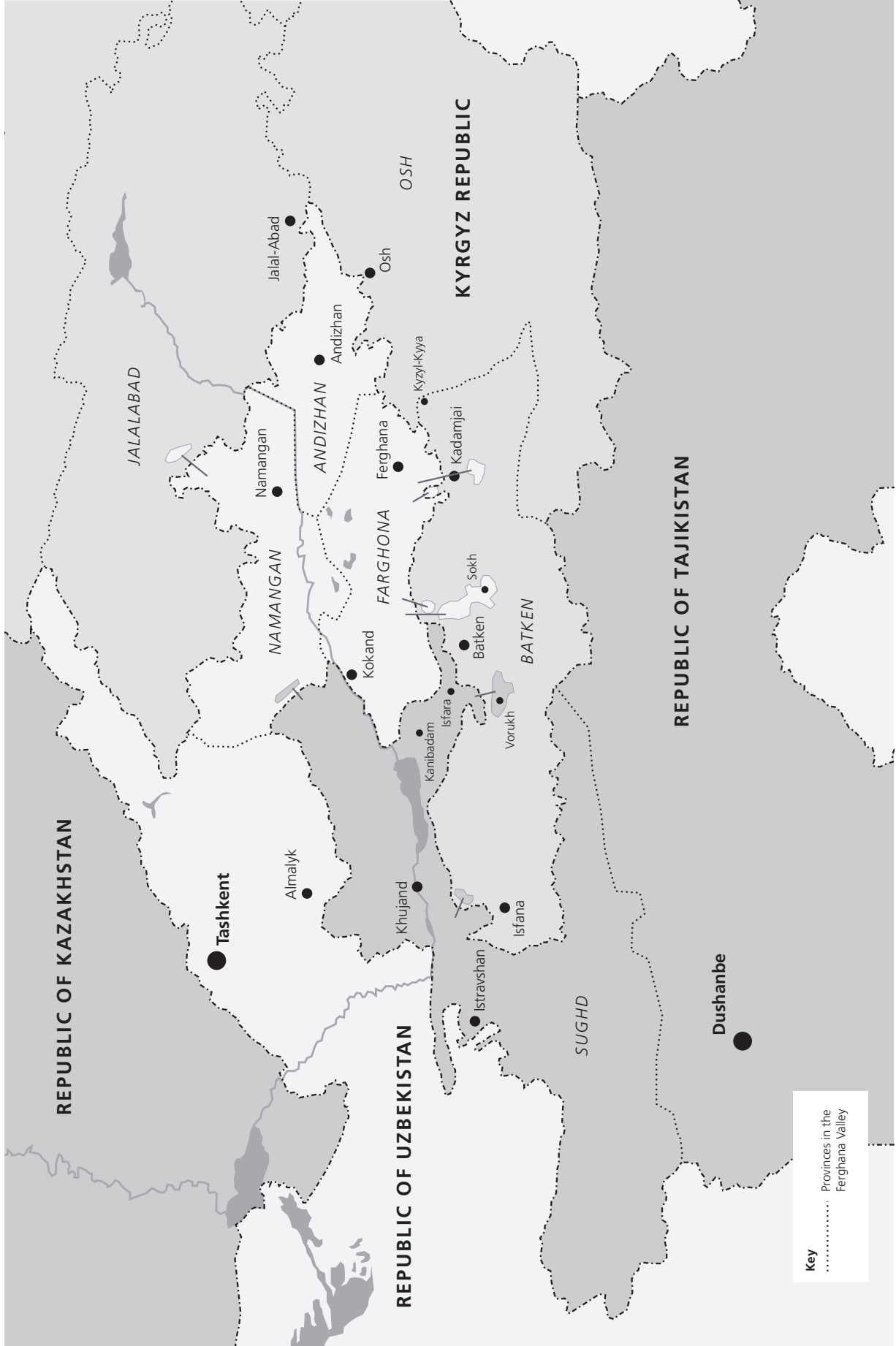
This report was written by Maija Paasiaro, Katya Quinn-Judge and Mirajidin Arynov and edited by Sonya Kleshik and Katie Morris. Qualitative research (including FGD and interviews) was conducted by Saferworld together with local partner civil society organisations, the Foundation for Tolerance International, the Association for Scientific and Technical Intelligentsia and Youth Initiatives for Development, while a broader quantitative household survey was conducted by the research company M-Vector, under the guidance and technical supervision of Giorgi Babunashvili of the Caucasus Research Resource Centre. Victoria Brereton and Alexey Kruk provided feedback and editorial input. This report is published with the technical assistance of the British Embassy to Kyrgyzstan. It does not necessarily reflect the official views of the Embassy.

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# Ferghana Valley



This map is intended for illustrative purposes only. Borders, names and other features are presented according to common practice in the region – Saferworld takes no position on whether this representation is legally or politically valid.

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# Executive summary and recommendations

**THIS IS THE FIRST SURVEY** of communities' perceptions of safety and security conducted by Saferworld and local partners, the Foundation for Tolerance International (FTI), the Association for Scientific and Technical Intelligentsia (ASTI) and Youth Initiatives for Development (MIR). Research was conducted in four oblasts (provinces) in the Ferghana Valley: Batken, Jalal-Abad and Osh in the Kyrgyz Republic and Soghd in Tajikistan and consisted of a household survey, FDGs (Focus Group Discussions) and interviews with experts and security providers. Researchers were interested in dynamics in communities recently affected by, or perceived as susceptible to, conflict: Osh and Jalal-Abad, where hundreds were killed in large-scale violence between ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in June 2010; and Batken and Soghd, the border areas between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, which experiences tensions, sometimes violent, between Kyrgyz and Tajik residents.

The research provides a snapshot of communities' situation and security needs; perceptions about security provision; the potential for increased tension and violence; and longer-term opportunities for peaceful development and stabilisation. Significant tensions remain, despite many people not facing immediate threats to their personal security. Access to basic infrastructure, poor economic opportunities and corruption are major concerns for communities. These are underscored by interethnic tensions and religious cleavages, even when outward conflict is not observed. Failure of the rule of law, official misconduct and general impotence to protect communities undermine public confidence, and many people are concerned about their long term future.

As both the Kyrgyz and Tajik governments work with international partners on police and security sector reform, this report provides information on communities' needs, which should inform reform processes and official security priorities. Both national and international actors must understand underlying tensions within society and ensure that security providers have the resources, capacity and, most importantly, trust of communities, in order to adequately respond to these issues and prevent tensions escalating into violence.

## **Perceptions of personal security**

The majority of people feel safe, rather than unsafe; although 10 per cent of people reported feeling unsafe at home. Generally, people in Batken and Soghd reported feeling safer than people in Osh and Jalal-Abad, suggesting that the tensions that led

to the events of 2010 and their aftermath continue to be felt. The situation in Osh, the epicentre of the 2010 violence, gives particular cause for concern, with just over a fifth (21 per cent) stating they do not feel safe in their home.

Among those feeling unsafe, poor road safety is considered the greatest threat to security, with respondents linking the frequency of traffic accidents to official corruption, and to the fact that having money and/or power may place some people above the law. Concerns about the crime situation take on additional potency in the light of fairly low assessments of the effectiveness of law enforcement actors, which may lead people to take the law into their own hands. The survey gave a mixed picture of relations with authorities; however, both ethnic majority and minority groups in Osh and Jalal-Abad identified authorities, or threats emanating from authorities as a threat to security, with the situation particularly acute in Jalal-Abad. Ethnic minorities were more likely to have experience of extortion or corruption by police or border guards and illegal detentions than majority groups. During FGDs, ethnic minority respondents suggested their ethnicity was a direct cause of harassment.

Approximately two fifths of ethnic minority respondents in Osh and Jalal-Abad reported feeling safer than six months previously; however, despite overall improvements in their security situation, the potential for interethnic violence, particularly among youth, remains a significant concern for ethnic minority communities. Few respondents reported knowledge of such incidents in the past six months, demonstrating that even in the absence of open violence, interethnic tensions persist. The study also points to religious cleavages within society which fuel fears of violent extremism, and may create tensions between moderate and more overtly religious believers.

Proximity to state borders is a source of insecurity for border communities, who identified neighbouring countries' border guards, police, and sometimes civilians, as a threat to safety, while perceiving their own authorities as unable to guarantee security in this environment. There is a risk that individuals try to take security into their own hands, creating an atmosphere rife for the escalation of skirmishes.

### **The role of security actors**

Results suggest that people experience security provision differently depending on their position in society, and pointing to deficiencies in security provision. Although 79 per cent of respondents said they felt protected by authorities in their country, less than half of respondents identified any security actors as very or moderately effective in dealing with their problems.

The majority of respondents (57 per cent) said they would definitely address authorities if faced with a crime; however, 19 per cent said they might and 16 per cent said they wouldn't or it was unlikely that they would do so, leaving a significant minority outside traditional security provision. Moreover, a quarter of respondents do not believe that authorities would help them irrespective of their status, while the most vulnerable respondents, that is, those who reported feeling 'unsafe', consistently identified security providers' actions or failure to guarantee security as a threat to their personal security. The relationship between authorities and ethnic Kyrgyz respondents in Jalal-Abad emerges as particularly problematic.

Respondents recorded higher trust levels for traditional institutions (the court of Aksakals), than for government institutions responsible for addressing local problems, including law enforcement organs. Just over half of respondents expressed trust in the police; however FGDs indicate a gulf in perceptions of neighbourhood police officers relative to perceptions of patrol and search units. Neighbourhood police officers emerged as generally more open to cooperation with the public, although hampered by inadequate resources, constituents' mistrust for the law, and, at times, their own lack of faith in the system, while search and patrol units were more consistently portrayed as an oppressive policing force. A lack of cooperation between neighbourhood

police officers and search and patrol units undermines the role each actor can play in delivering security.

In surveyed areas of Kyrgyzstan, both ethnic minority and ethnic majority groups suggested their ethnicity prevented them accessing security and justice, increasing the risk that police misconduct may exacerbate problems in interethnic relationships. Meanwhile, respondents in Batken and Soghd are the most satisfied by the performance of institutions and trust them more than counterparts in Osh and Jalal-Abad, with those in Soghd reporting the highest levels of trust for all branches of authority and feeling the most protected by authorities (87 per cent of respondents). At the same time, they were the least likely to feel free to express their grievances, which may be related to Tajikistan's civil war in the 1990s and a tendency to prioritise stability over the need to speak out.

### **Contact and trust between ethnic groups and future security**

As noted above, although interethnic relations in Osh and Jalal-Abad have improved since the 2010 violence, tensions persist. While attitudes of ethnic Kyrgyz to minorities were far from unanimous, with some respondents emphasising intercommunal friendship, responses from several ethnic Kyrgyz highlighted concerns that ethnic minorities pose a threat to their country's long-term wellbeing and stability. Relationships between ethnic groups in mixed communities in Kyrgyzstan tended to be more positive than in mono-ethnic communities, reinforcing the fact that rumours and stereotypes are a strong driver of interethnic tension.

Cross-border intercommunal relations between Kyrgyz and Tajiks are chronically strained. This is largely a result of the perceived harassment by neighbouring countries' border guards, as well as resource disputes stemming from poor infrastructure and ill-defined borders. This leads to low level violence between communities, increasing their alienation from one another and the potential for escalation of disagreements.

When asked how to improve interethnic tensions, respondents in all areas prioritised initiatives addressing the root causes of interethnic tensions, improving the economy, stronger human rights protections, and collaborative efforts between law enforcement and community members to prevent crime were the most commonly recommended strategies for improving interethnic tensions.

Most respondents across all regions and ethnicities anticipated feeling safer in the coming six months; however, considerably more feared long-term instability. National and international actors must ensure that improvements in communities' security situation are consolidated, while building long-term confidence in the security environment. This requires increasing trust in security actors and provision by ensuring greater responsiveness to community priorities and increasing the accountability of security actors, as well as addressing interethnic and religious cleavages in society, even when these are not immediately visible.

## **Recommendations**

### **To law enforcement agencies**

- Conduct an impartial study about the police in Jalal-Abad to determine why trust is so low and take measures to remedy the situation on the basis of the results.
- Ensure better coordination between neighbourhood police officers and patrol services and greater oversight of these actors. Members of patrol services should respect neighbourhood police officers' role as the primary law enforcers in communities, cooperate with them and inform them of any issues involving their constituents. Neighbourhood police posts should have a schedule containing the names of patrol service members and the hours they work and provide this information to the public. This will help minimise corruption and harassment by patrol services and build confidence between communities and security providers.



- Encourage closer relationships between neighbourhood police officers and communities: neighbourhood police officers should be in constant contact with members of communities to which they are assigned, and understand local dynamics. They should integrate themselves into the communities where they work, and inform citizens about regulations governing their work, including remit and limitations of their mandate. Higher authorities within law enforcement agencies should create favourable conditions for neighbourhood police officers to cooperate with civil society organisations working in the areas on conflict or/and crime prevention and peacebuilding. This will help earn constituents' trust, as well as increasing the efficiency of police officers' work.
- Increase dialogue between neighbourhood police officers and communities: police officers should provide comprehensive monthly reports on their work at village meetings. These reports should be made available to people who usually do not participate in village meetings and should detail challenges as well as successes. The public should be given a chance to respond with questions and feedback.
- Ensure that neighbourhood officers reflect the diversity of the communities they serve by encouraging people of different ethnic, social and religious backgrounds to enter the police force. Neighbourhood police officers should engage with people from all backgrounds and generations when consulting with communities and developing responses to problems.
- Conduct a review of neighbourhood police officers' working conditions (working hours, salaries, access to equipment), and ensure suitable working conditions, so that police officers are able to serve their communities. This should allow for incremental pay raises to support their work.

#### **To authorities**

- Ensure police reform is informed by and responds to the needs and concerns of communities.
- Establish an independent oversight body to investigate incidences of corruption and other misconduct by law enforcement officers, which undermine relationships between security providers and communities, as well as exacerbating ethnic tensions.
- Work with communities to counter the circulation of negative rumours, for example by organising campaigns and platforms to discuss rumours, their sources and negative short and long-term consequences. Engage representatives of different ethnic communities in joint discussions on why they are concerned about long-term security, in order to build a joint vision of a peaceful future. Particular attention should be paid to Osh, where communities expressed greater feelings of insecurity; it is also important to bring together communities living on the Kyrgyz–Tajik border. Involving aksakals is likely to increase the effectiveness of this work, given their relatively trusted status within society.
- Local authorities in border areas of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan should cooperate and exchange information on local security issues on a regular basis, and develop a joint mechanism, discussed and agreed by communities from both sides, to tackle security related issues.
- The governments of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan must bilaterally determine those sections of their common border that have yet to be demarcated, to quell disputes and facilitate the allocation of water and pasture. Local authorities on both sides must keep residents informed of all decisions related to the formal demarcation and address safety issues caused by the current confusion over the border's location.

- Central authorities must address the sense of neglect and isolation, and the ensuing ethnic nationalist and anti-establishment sentiments prominent in border communities, through more frequent visits to these areas, the provision of infrastructure and government services, and by ensuring that residents can access news through radio and television.
- Organise regular meetings, round tables, and trainings involving both border guards and civilians, in order to inform them about their rights and responsibilities regarding border safety.
- Ensure that every project undertaken by national and local authorities is preceded by a comprehensive conflict sensitivity analysis to ensure that the process of addressing an issue will not cause or exacerbate a conflict between two or more groups.
- Utilise constructive partnerships with civil society organisations, with experience of successfully using interactive and innovative methods to address conflicts in both Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, to make government programmes and initiatives on security provision more responsive and attractive.

#### **To international donors**

- Put policy commitments to conflict sensitivity into practice, by ensuring that activities do not have a negative effect on conflict dynamics, and where possible have a positive peacebuilding impact.
- While supporting national governments, encourage governments to cooperate with civil society and ordinary people and take their opinions into account during developing or implementing security-related policies.
- Ensure that tackling corruption is included as a condition for direct budget support to governments in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.
- Support projects aimed at improving governance and corruption in general, and regarding the security sector. This may include projects on democratisation, public financial management, grassroots monitoring and support for civil society, which can improve accountability and strengthen state–society relations.

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# Introduction

**THIS IS THE FIRST SURVEY** of communities' perceptions of safety and security conducted by Saferworld and local partner organisations, the Foundation for Tolerance International (FTI), the Association for Scientific and Technical Intelligentsia (ASTI) and Youth Initiatives for Development (MIR), in the Ferghana Valley sections of the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan. The report presents Ferghana Valley residents' assessments of their own security, examining how safe they feel.<sup>1</sup> It focuses on what residents see as their most pressing short and long-term security needs, and how they perceive and interact with representatives of their own community, other communities, and state institutions.

As the governments of the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan work with international partners to enact reforms and implement policies to improve security provision, this report provides information on citizens' priority security needs to indicate where improvements in security provision are most urgently required. It focuses on current dynamics in communities affected by the 2010 events in the Kyrgyz Republic (Osh and Jalal-Abad oblasts<sup>2</sup>) and cross-border relations in communities in Batken (Kyrgyz Republic) and Soghd (Tajikistan) oblasts, as well as perceptions of security providers and their abilities to address citizens' security concerns. These themes are examined to identify what roles security providers play in relation to conflict and insecurity and how they might work with citizens to address causes of insecurity together in the future.<sup>3</sup>

The analysis is based on the results of a household survey carried out in November 2012, as well as interviews and 15 FGDs conducted in January and February 2013. In total, 2250 households were surveyed from a representative sample including respondents from the three main ethnic groups (Kyrgyz, Tajik and Uzbek), as well as other minorities and a balance of men, women and different age groups. Sample sizes were developed to allow conclusions to be drawn across the research area as a whole, as well as independently for ethnic majority (Kyrgyz) and minority groups in Osh and Jalal-Abad, and for communities living along the borderline and in inner settlements in Batken and Soghd. Data were further disaggregated by oblast, gender and ethnic

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<sup>1</sup> Perceptions provide valuable indicators of actual security dynamics, even when based on misunderstandings or misinformation. For example, members of communities that are not sufficiently protected by authorities may construe other ethnic groups as an acute threat to their security, even when the threat posed by the latter is minor or non-existent. Secondly, public perceptions often shape security dynamics: when threatened, people tend to act on perceptions rather than taking the time to separate perception from fact.

<sup>2</sup> *Oblast* is the Russian word for province, used throughout the former Soviet Union.

<sup>3</sup> In this report, 'security issue' refers to any issue that negatively affects the safety of a community, or its members. This might include anything from crime, drugs, and road safety to community conflict, weapons proliferation and landmine contamination. To put it another way, 'community security' encompasses all 'quality of life' issues which undermine people's feelings of safety. This report uses 'security provider' as a general term to describe a range of formal authorities, including various law enforcement divisions, border guards and local authorities, who are collectively responsible for providing a safe and secure environment for all citizens. In this report 'community' refers to any collection of individuals linked by family, geographic, ethnic, or religious affiliation.

group. The methodology was developed in consultation with local partners, based on research conducted in the Ferghana Valley in 2010 and 2011 and similar research conducted by Saferworld in other parts of the world. For more information about the methodology, see Annex 1.

The report is structured in the following way:

- The first chapter explores the overall situation in the four surveyed oblasts, offering some brief background information and presenting what residents in these oblasts perceive as their most critical needs in general.
- The second chapter analyses how safe people feel, threats to their personal security and their interactions with security providers to respond to their security needs.
- The third chapter analyses levels of contact and trust between communities – between members of different ethnic communities in Osh and Jalal-Abad and between members of different nationalities in the border areas in Batken and Soghd; it also looks at perspectives for future stability.
- The final chapter summaries key findings and draws general conclusions.

# 1

## Communities and their needs

**THIS CHAPTER PROVIDES** some recent historical background and explores general living conditions in the Kyrgyz and Tajik sections of the Ferghana Valley, as well as outlining some distinguishing characteristics of the four oblasts. It also examines local perceptions on the key challenges facing communities, based on findings from the four oblasts included in the survey.

### Background information on the Ferghana Valley

The Ferghana Valley has long been home to different ethnic groups (primarily Kyrgyz, Tajiks, and Uzbeks) and various forms of livelihood (including rural semi-nomadism, settled agriculture, and urban commerce). In Soviet times, the valley was divided into three separate republics, rendering many residents members of ‘non-titular’ groups within the new state boundaries: eastern and southern sections of the valley, with large native populations of ethnic Uzbeks, ended up in the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan respectively; southern and western sections, with native Kyrgyz populations, became part of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan; while northern and western segments, with significant Tajik populations, were assigned to the Kyrgyz Republic and Uzbekistan. Ethnic differences were rarely an issue, and the valley shared a common energy and water grid, precluding significant resource disputes. However, when the Soviet Union collapsed and the valley was divided among three independent countries, the Soviets’ artificial borders became a political reality. Authorities and communities faced a series of challenges around resource sharing and managing the relationship between ethnic identity and citizenship, and the two decades since the collapse have seen chronic cross-border disputes, interstate tensions, and interethnic tensions – all of which are explored throughout this survey.

Most recently, June 2010 saw large-scale violence between ethnic Kyrgyz and ethnic Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan’s southern provinces, resulting in hundreds of deaths and causing residents profound panic and shaking many people’s trust for those outside their immediate circles. Repercussions were also felt in neighbouring countries, whose ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbek populations feared reprisals. While the situation in the south of Kyrgyzstan has since stabilised, the valley continues to suffer from small-scale but intense conflicts, including incidents between civilians and the border guards of neighbouring countries, disputes over the division of pasture and water, and demonstrations.

## Research areas

Research for this report was conducted in four oblasts: Osh, Jalal-Abad and Batken in the Kyrgyz Republic and Soghd in Tajikistan. All are linked geographically, culturally, politically, and through infrastructure by the Ferghana Valley and were chosen for study due to their deep mutual ties and interdependence. At the same time, differences among the oblasts exist. Relevant distinguishing characteristics are outlined below and are highlighted where appropriate throughout the report.

**Jalal-Abad** oblast borders Uzbekistan to the west, and Osh oblast to the south. Jalal-Abad's population of over one million is roughly 72 per cent ethnic Kyrgyz and 25 per cent ethnic Uzbek.<sup>4</sup> The oblast was the site of numerous high-profile demonstrations and interethnic incidents in the months leading up to the June 2010 violence. While it escaped the worst of the violence in June, several pockets saw intense skirmishes. There have been few high-profile security incidents there since 2010, but Jalal-Abad has been the focus of serious allegations of police and judicial misconduct, particularly in prisons.<sup>5</sup>

**Osh** oblast borders Jalal-Abad oblast to the north and Batken oblast to the west, Uzbekistan to the west, and Tajikistan to the south. Its population is roughly 1.25 million; approximately 69 per cent are ethnic Kyrgyz, 28 per cent are ethnic Uzbek, and 1 per cent is Uighur. Osh's economy is mostly agricultural, but also involves extensive urban commerce centring on the capital Osh, the second largest city in the Kyrgyz Republic. Osh city was the epicentre of the June 2010 violence, with most of the deaths and property damage occurring here. Consequently, the area has been slower to recover from the violence than Jalal-Abad and was considered less secure at the outset of the survey.

**Batken's** population of over 441,000 is roughly 76 per cent ethnic Kyrgyz, 15 per cent Uzbek, and 7 per cent Tajik. Batken contains the most complex borders of any Kyrgyz oblast – its northern sections border Uzbekistan to the west, while Tajikistan's Soghd oblast wraps around its southern strip, bordering it to the north, west, and south. It also contains four enclaves – the Uzbekistani enclaves of Sokh, whose population consists mainly of ethnic Tajiks, Chon Gora and Shahimardan, and the Tajikistani enclave of Vorukh. Batken's borders make cross-border disputes and shortages of water and electricity regular features of life here. Batken has seen several flare-ups since the 2010 violence: the village of Aksai was the site of a high-profile dispute between Kyrgyz and Tajik communities in April 2011<sup>6</sup>; while a mass brawl between Tajik and Kyrgyz youth over an alleged land grab in the village of Andarak became a regional scandal in January 2012.<sup>7</sup> Tensions rose again the following January when residents of Sokh took Kyrgyz citizens hostage after a border dispute. Batken's underdeveloped infrastructure and economy means heavy out-migration: 53 per cent of research participants from border areas of the province reported that their family income depended on labour remittances from abroad. This province was considered fairly insecure at the outset of the research.

**Soghd** is Tajikistan's northernmost oblast; it wraps around the tip of Batken and borders Uzbekistan to the north. It is the most populous province in this survey: with 2.25 million residents, it dwarfs neighbouring Batken. 69 per cent of its population are ethnic Tajik, 29 per cent are Uzbek and roughly 1 per cent is Russian. Kyrgyz and other ethnic groups comprise less than 1 per cent respectively.<sup>8</sup> There are many cultural, economic, and topographic similarities between Soghd and the other provinces

4 Population data on Jalal-Abad, Osh, and Batken based on 2009 census data from Kyrgyzstan's national statistical committee (according to ru.wikipedia.org).

5 See, for example, Human Rights Watch (2012) 'Kyrgyzstan: Investigate, Prosecute Police Abuse', available at [www.hrw.org/news/2012/11/14/kyrgyzstan-investigate-prosecute-police-abuse](http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/11/14/kyrgyzstan-investigate-prosecute-police-abuse); United States Department of State (2013) '2012 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices – Kyrgyz Republic', [www.refworld.org/docid/517e6e19f.html](http://www.refworld.org/docid/517e6e19f.html); Yevgeniy Pogrebnyak, Voice of Freedom Central Asia (2013) 'A tradition of impunity: prisoners in Jalal-Abad's temporary detention facilities continue to be beaten' ('Безнаказанная традиция: заключённых в ИВС джалалабада продолжают избивать') available at <http://vof.kg/?p=8623>

6 Alisher Khamidov, Eurasianet (2011) 'Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan: Clashes on Volatile Border Growing Vicious', [www.eurasianet.org/node/63336](http://www.eurasianet.org/node/63336)

7 David Trilling, Eurasianet (2012) 'Kyrgyzstan: New Ethno-Political Trouble in the Ferghana', [www.eurasianet.org/node/64941](http://www.eurasianet.org/node/64941)

8 As per 2010 census, according to ru.wikipedia.org

included in the survey, however there are marked political and historical differences: while the Kyrgyz Republic has a parliamentary system and significant political opposition, Tajikistan's more centralised presidential system is less open to dissent. Tajikistan experienced a bloody civil war in the 1990s, which many residents suffered from and still remember. The government also promotes its own war on religious extremism more aggressively. Poverty, weak infrastructure, inadequate water and pasture, and cross-border disputes with Batken have plagued the area chronically and Soghd residents reported the highest rates of poverty of any demographic surveyed.

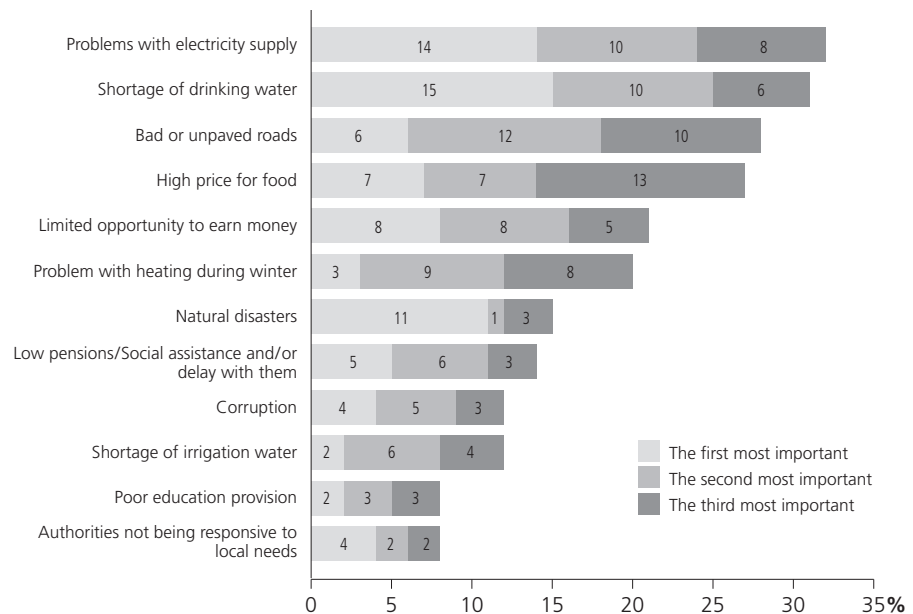
### Survey results: Critical needs facing communities

#### Infrastructural and socioeconomic issues

Electricity shortages are seen as the most pressing issues in the four surveyed oblasts, with 32 per cent of respondents identifying them as the first, second, or third most urgent issue facing their community. The closely associated issue of lack of heating during winter (electricity shortages are at their most acute during the harsh winter months) was identified by 20 per cent of respondents, underscoring the importance of the issue of poor electricity supplies. Drinking water shortages were identified as the second most urgent, cited by 31 per cent, while 28 per cent complained of bad or unpaved roads. The fourth and fifth most commonly cited issues both related to finances: 27 per cent complained of high food prices, and 21 per cent of a lack of opportunity to earn money.

**Figure 1: The most urgent issues facing communities<sup>9</sup>**

What are the three most urgent problems facing your community?



The relative importance of these issues differed by location (see figure 2).

Participants in the three Kyrgyz oblasts (Osh, Jalal-Abad, Batken) stressed issues related to unemployment and poverty. High prices for food were most commonly cited in Osh and Batken, with 34 per cent and 43 per cent of respondents respectively naming this as the first, second or third most urgent issue facing their community. 31 per cent of Jalal-Abad residents surveyed named high food prices as a pressing issue, but here it took second place to limited earning opportunities, mentioned by 40 per cent. Several participants noted a link between weak economic conditions and interethnic tensions, with 32 per cent of respondents citing improving the economy as having the potential to improve relations with people of different origins (explored in detail in chapter 3),

<sup>9</sup> This figure only displays the top 12 responses. Other proposed answers to this question received less than 8 per cent of respondents and are not included in this figure.

suggesting that failure to address economic concerns may exacerbate problems related to interethnic tensions in the region.

Tajikistan's Soghd oblast is the most severely affected by electricity shortages, with 57 per cent of research participants there citing this as a key issue. Similarly, Soghd suffers most from a lack of heat during the winter, with 28 per cent of its respondents naming this as a top issue. This result is unsurprising, given Tajikistan's well-documented struggles with energy shortages.<sup>10</sup> Drinking water shortages were also cited commonly in Soghd, with 33 per cent of respondents mentioning as a key issue. Soghd residents complained of financial struggles less than their Kyrgyz counterparts, despite reporting lower household incomes. Whether this fact indicates that Soghd residents are genuinely less concerned with economic issues – or whether it simply means they have more urgent problems to worry about – is unclear. Some residents of Soghd border communities did suggest they were better off than their fellow citizens further from the border:

*“The fact that we’re located on the border with Kyrgyzstan means we feel pretty good about our economic situation. For example, we have very cheap gasoline and building equipment, as it’s brought to us from Kyrgyzstan.”<sup>11</sup>*

Across the border in Batken oblast, residents were almost equally concerned with the shortage of drinking water, a problem cited by 32 per cent. They often alluded to the fact that this shortage was a question of infrastructure rather than natural supply: “although we live very close to the mountains, which are a source of pure water, we have problems with drinking water”.<sup>12</sup> Batken was the only oblast where a notable percentage of respondents (19 per cent) cited heating shortages during winter as a key issue. During FGDs, participants living on both sides of the border related their shortages to overuse by the other side: the relative deprivation of these border communities, and their similar needs, result in competition over resources, which aggravates tensions between them (discussed further in chapter three).<sup>13</sup>

### Corruption issues

Respondents in Kyrgyzstani oblasts were far more likely to identify corruption as a critical community problem than their counterparts in Tajikistan's Soghd oblast: 28 per cent of respondents in Batken identified this as the first, second or third most significant problem facing their community, 19 per cent in Osh and 17 per cent in Jalal-Abad, compared to just 5 per cent in Soghd. The issue of corruption is explored further in the next chapter; however, the relatively high responses registered in Batken point to particular problems in border areas of Kyrgyzstan.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, International Crisis Group (2011) ‘Central Asia: Decay and Decline’ [www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/central-asia/201per cent20Centralper cent20Asiaper cent20per cent20Decayper cent20andper cent20Decline.pdf](http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/central-asia/201per cent20Centralper cent20Asiaper cent20per cent20Decayper cent20andper cent20Decline.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> 27 year-old ethnic Tajik man from Vorukh, Soghd oblast, February 2013.

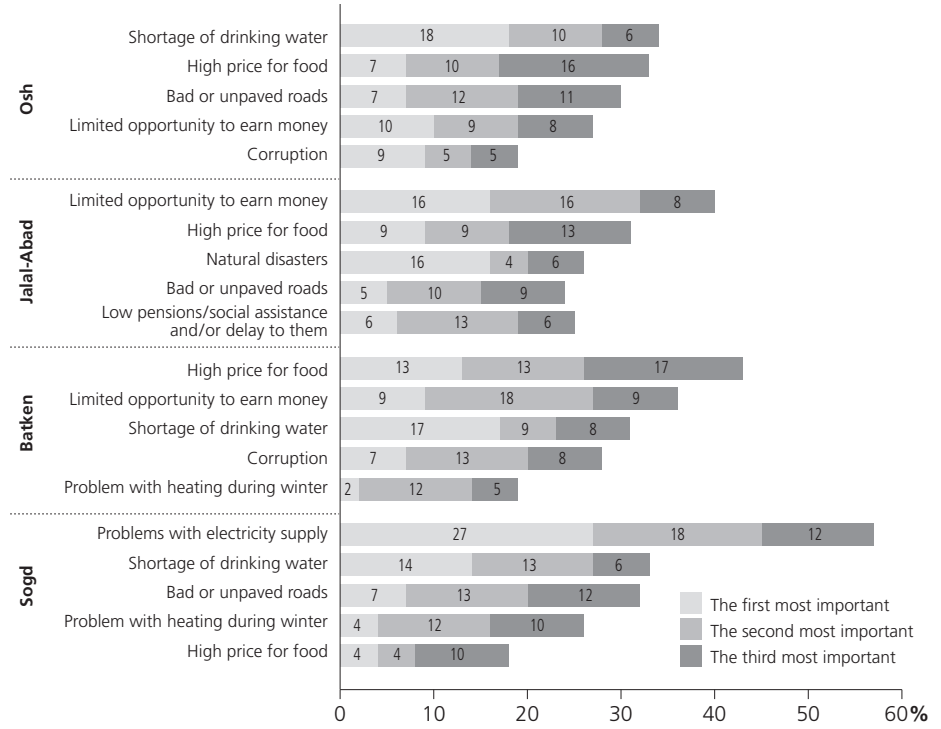
<sup>12</sup> 44 year-old ethnic Kyrgyz woman from Aksai, Batken oblast, January 2013.

<sup>13</sup> Given the frequency of Batken and Soghd residents' complaints about lack of water for pastures in the spring – and this problem's bearing on interethnic relations – the relatively low percentage of research participants who mentioned this as a pressing issue requires explanation: residents were asked about the most urgent issues facing their communities; as the survey was conducted in winter, problems affecting warmth were viewed as more urgent than problems affecting agriculture.



**Figure 2: The most urgent problems facing communities, by region<sup>14</sup>**

What are the three most urgent problems facing your community?



<sup>14</sup> This figure displays the five most mentioned problems only.

# 2

## Perceptions of personal security and the role of security providers

**RESPONDENTS WERE ASKED** about the security situation in general, including how safe they felt. Those who reported feeling ‘unsafe’ or ‘very unsafe’ were then asked to identify who or what posed a threat to their security. All respondents were asked about which security incidents had occurred in their community within the last six months and about their relationships with a range of security providers and the role of these actors in protecting them.

Overall people feel more safe than unsafe: across all research oblasts, 69 per cent of the respondents said they felt safe in their town or village, while 65 per cent said they felt safe in their district. As figure 3 illustrates, this sense of security is shared across the groups, and particularly noted in Soghd, and then Batken, where people feel safer than in Osh and Jalal-Abad. The majority (62 per cent) felt the security situation had not changed over the past six months and more respondents (21 per cent) felt the situation had improved, than had deteriorated (5 per cent). There was also some cautious optimism about future improvements, with almost a third (31 per cent) anticipating improvement within the next six months.

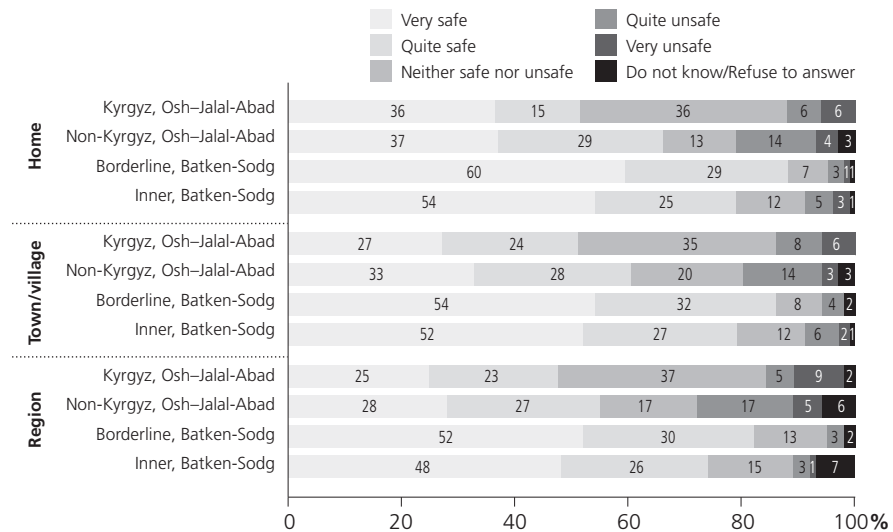
### How safe do people feel?

Nevertheless, 10 per cent of people reported feeling unsafe at home, with the situation in Osh, where just over a fifth (21 per cent) stated they do not feel safe in their home, giving particular cause for concern. As Osh was the epicentre of the 2010 violence, it is likely that the impact of the violence still affects how people view their security.

Moreover, the relatively high level of reported safety is somewhat undermined by the fact that almost as many respondents (67 per cent) were afraid of long-term instability; and 61 per cent said that they were afraid of violence or aggression around them. This suggests that even if people do not perceive general violence or aggression as an immediate personal threat, they are generally uneasy about safety and security dynamics in their area. Such discrepancies could also indicate that high evaluations of security are a function of selective self-censorship due to the sensitive nature of security issues in the region and a sense that problems cannot be resolved, rather than a true indicator of feelings of safety. As one respondent put it, “It’s better to live quietly, without

problems, without complaints. No one will solve them”<sup>15</sup> This may be particularly true in the case of ethnic minority respondents in the Kyrgyzstani provinces surveyed, and, to a lesser degree, residents of Soghd: while these demographics assessed their personal security and trust for authorities more positively than their ethnic Kyrgyz counterparts, they also reported much greater reluctance to air their grievances openly, suggesting they may have been reluctant about directly criticising their authorities or pointing to security threats.

**Figure 3: How safe do you feel in your home/town/region?**



There were similar differences in perceptions towards security providers: although a significant majority of respondents (79 per cent) said they felt protected by authorities in their country, a quarter of respondents do not believe that authorities would help them irrespective of their status (see figure 4). Indeed, the results suggest that people experience security differently depending on their position in society, with a significant minority of people feeling that they are excluded from accessing adequate security provision. As will be explored further below, of those describing their situation as unsafe, just under a third (31 per cent) identified authorities as posing a threat to their personal security, while opinions expressed during FGDs indicate that a significant number of respondents perceive the unsatisfactory work of security actors as a safety concern<sup>16</sup> and sometimes identified threats caused by security providers themselves.

## Threats to personal security

Respondents who reported feeling ‘unsafe’ or ‘very unsafe’ were asked what and who poses a threat to security in their village or neighbourhood; these issues were discussed extensively during FGDs in all four districts.

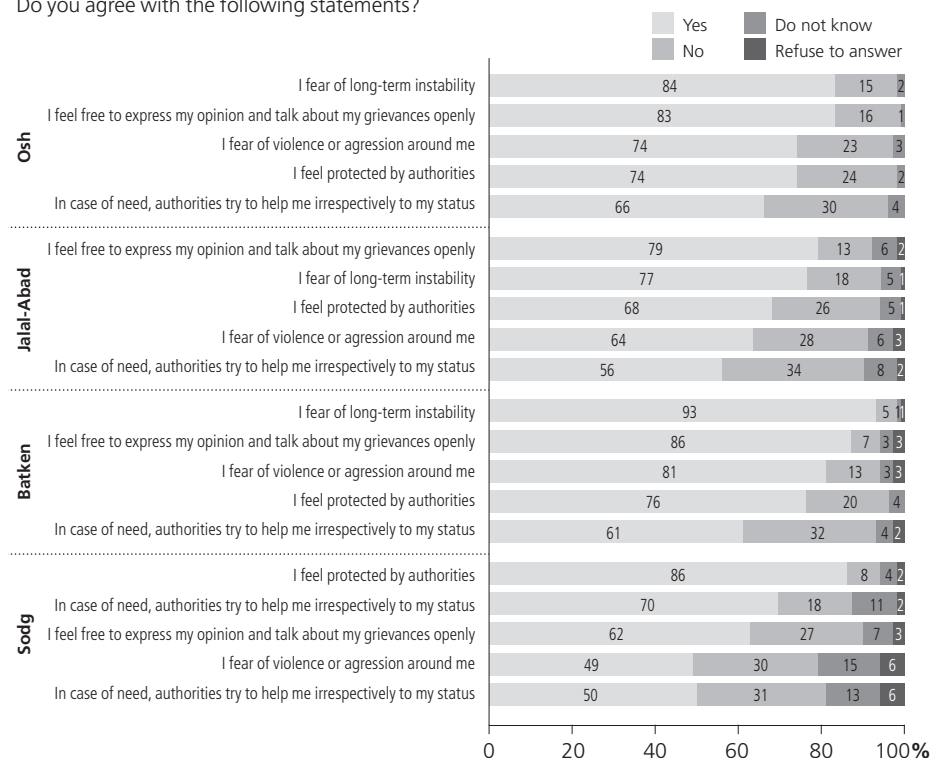
Traffic accidents are considered the greatest overall threat to safety, with 33 per cent of respondents describing their situation as ‘unsafe’ identifying this problem as a threat to safety in their community, and 41 per cent of all respondents reporting at least one accident in their community in the past six months. FGD participants in all four oblasts connected the lack of road safety to official corruption, and to the fact that having money and/or power may place some people above the law.

According to FGD participants, the practice of bribing officials in exchange for driving licences is one way in which corruption compromises road safety. A Soghd resident who cited driving as his main fear, due to the frequency of accidents, attributed the

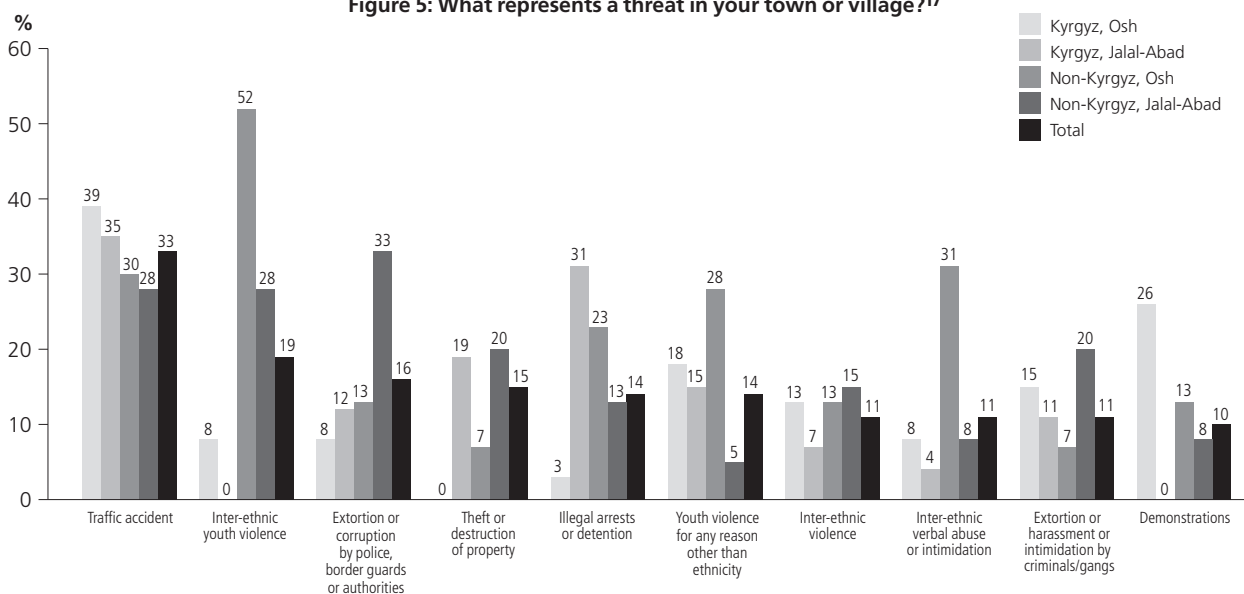
<sup>15</sup> 27 year-old female, ethnic Uzbek, cashier, Jalal-Abad city, January 2013.

<sup>16</sup> This report uses the term ‘security provider’ to describe the various official authorities – various branches of police, border guards, local authorities, and other parties who are collectively responsible for providing a safe and secure environment for citizens.

**Figure 4: Statements about security**  
Do you agree with the following statements?



**Figure 5: What represents a threat in your town or village?<sup>17</sup>**



danger to this practice: “A lot of young people don’t know the rules of driving, but they still get licenses”.<sup>18</sup> A Batken resident complained of the problem in greater detail:

*“Buying a driver’s licence is a piece of cake now. If you pay 100 bucks, you can get a licence in less than an hour. No one makes you take a test. A lot of traffic accidents are happening because of this. For this reason, almost everyone is afraid to send their children to school, or worried when they or their children walk down the street. For example, a twenty-year-old guy came back from [working as a migrant labourer in] Russia and bought a Mercedes. He didn’t know how to drive. When he backed up, he killed his two-year-old niece who was playing behind the car.”<sup>19</sup>*

<sup>17</sup> Top ten answers only, Osh and Jalal-Abad. This question was only answered by those who reported feeling ‘unsafe’ or ‘very unsafe’.

<sup>18</sup> 18–20 year-old male, ethnic Uzbek, Gafurov, Soghd oblast, February 2013.

<sup>19</sup> 54 year-old ethnic Kyrgyz male from Halmion village, Batken oblast, January 2013.

FG (Focus Group) participants suggested officials and their relatives were responsible for a large portion of fatal car accidents, for which they were never brought to justice. They mentioned the *korochka*<sup>20</sup> – the card that high-ranking law enforcement officers carry to show their official status. Residents alleged that the *korochka* gave officials license to drive while intoxicated and ignore traffic regulations as traffic police were reluctant to hold them to the law. The perception of corruption breaks down trust between communities and security actors, limiting opportunities for cooperation in responding to other security threats outlined in this report.

### Concerns about harassment from authorities

Among those who had described their situation as unsafe, almost a third of respondents in Osh and Jalal-Abad (31 per cent) identified authorities as a threat to their personal security. Most strikingly, within this group, 72 per cent of ethnic Kyrgyz respondents in Jalal-Abad identified their country's authorities as a security threat, followed by 45 per cent of non-Kyrgyz Jalal-Abad residents. This indicates that there are disparities in perceptions of authorities between Jalal-Abad and Osh, and that trust and security levels do not simply correspond to the titular population enjoying greater security and having closer ties to authorities

Among those describing themselves as unsafe, non-Kyrgyz respondents in both Osh and Jalal-Abad were more likely to identify extortion or corruption by police or border guards as a threat to security than ethnic Kyrgyz. Worryingly, a third of non-Kyrgyz respondents in Jalal-Abad and 13 per cent in Osh identified this as a personal threat (see figure 5). Moreover, across the whole sample (that is, not just those reporting feeling 'unsafe'), when asked how frequently these threats occurred in their community, 21 per cent of non-Kyrgyz in these areas reported that extortion or corruption had happened in their community within the last six months, compared to 13 per cent of Kyrgyz (see figure 6).<sup>21</sup>

Illegal arrests or detentions were identified as a threat to their safety by almost a third (31 per cent) of Jalal-Abad-based Kyrgyz respondents who reported feeling unsafe (compared to 14 per cent across all research areas and just 3 per cent of Kyrgyz respondents in Osh). Across the whole sample, when asked how frequently these threats occurred in their community, in Osh and Jalal-Abad, 13 per cent of non-Kyrgyz and 8 per cent of Kyrgyz respondents reported that this had happened at least once in the last six months; in inner settlements in Batken and Soghd, the result was 8 per cent, and along the borderline, 2 per cent. During FGDs, ethnic minority respondents suggested their ethnicity was a direct cause of official harassment: "We are treated this way because we are Uzbeks – that is the only reason"<sup>22</sup> Others cited the stereotype that Uzbeks are disproportionately wealthy as a contributing factor: "People think Uzbeks have millions of soms, and we suffer a lot from this perception."<sup>23</sup>

### Crime and violence

Frequent occurrences of crime and violence provide cause for concern, especially where authorities may be unable to respond to these. When asked which incidents have occurred in their town or village across in the last six months, respondents named a number of criminal and violent acts: theft or destruction of property (21 per cent); youth violence for any reason other than ethnicity (17 per cent); disappearance of people (9 per cent); and extortion, harassment or intimidation by criminals/gangs (8 per cent).

<sup>20</sup> The Russian for the official document which shows someone belonging to a government institution.

<sup>21</sup> As extortion and corruption were not among the five most frequently occurring security incidences identified by ethnic Kyrgyz in Osh and Jalal-Abad, the 13 per cent figure does not show on this graph; however, full data sets are available on request.

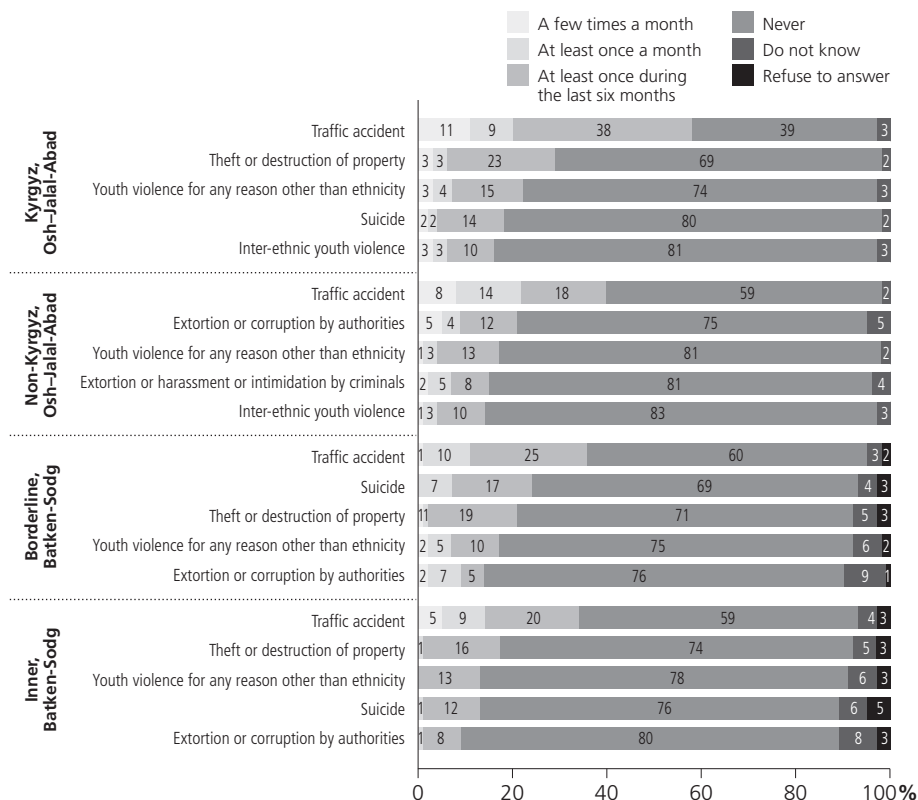
<sup>22</sup> 35 year-old female, ethnic Uzbek, Jalal-Abad city, February 2013.

<sup>23</sup> 60 year-old (approximately) male, ethnic Uzbek, Isfana, January 2013.

Perceptions of the effectiveness of authorities in dealing with these threats are addressed in detail below; however, it is worth noting that overall less than 50 per cent of respondents assessed any institution as high or moderately effective in responding to security concerns. FGDs indicate that when authorities are unable to address security in communities, the communities may try themselves to address the issues, risking exacerbating problems. As one young resident of Jalal-Abad city reported:

*“If somebody messes with you, your friends get together and work it out through crowd [tactics]. Every group has its own leader who can talk to a leader of another group. These groups have been created for security purposes. If a person is not a member of one of these groups, then no one is providing for his security.”<sup>24</sup>*

Figure 6: How often has the following happened in your town/village in the last six months?



**Interethnic relations**

The potential for interethnic violence remains a significant concern among ethnic minority communities in Osh and Jalal-Abad, despite some improvements in their security situation. 42 per cent and 38 per cent of ethnic minority respondents in Osh and Jalal-Abad respectively reported that they felt safer than they had six months previously – considerably higher than the 21 per cent average. In FGDs and interviews, many ethnic Uzbeks, who constituted the bulk of minority respondents, suggested their feelings of security had improved since the violence of June 2010: “I feel safer than I did last year”;<sup>25</sup> “I don’t feel afraid when I walk down the street”.<sup>26</sup> When asked why they felt safer, minority respondents largely suggested it was a simple question of the passage of time. “Time heals, the rumours are losing their strength”;<sup>27</sup> one FGD participant said, referring to the rumours of reprisals that were widespread directly after the June 2010 violence.

Nevertheless, among those who described themselves as unsafe, interethnic violence among youth, interethnic abuse or intimidation and interethnic violence were

<sup>24</sup> 24 year-old male, ethnic Kyrgyz, Jalal-Abad city, January 2013.  
<sup>25</sup> 19 year-old, ethnic Uzbek female from, Jalal-Abad oblast, January 2013.  
<sup>26</sup> 55 year-old, ethnic Uzbek female, Jalal-Abad city, February 2013.  
<sup>27</sup> 24 year-old Jalal-Abad oblast, January 2013.

identified as important concerns. Non-Kyrgyz communities, particularly in Osh, but also in Jalal-Abad, were far more likely to name these issues as threats: 52 per cent of non-Kyrgyz respondents in Osh and 28 per cent in Jalal-Abad mentioned interethnic youth violence as a threat; 31 per cent and 8 per cent, interethnic verbal abuse or intimidation; and 13 per cent and 15 per cent, interethnic violence (see figure 5).

In terms of frequency of such incidences, however, interethnic violence among youth was perceived as occurring relatively less frequently than other threats to safety. Across the whole sample, only 1 per cent of respondents said this happened more than once a month, 2 per cent once a month and 7 per cent at least once in the last six months, compared to 6 per cent, 10 per cent and 25 per cent for traffic accidents, and 1 per cent, 2 per cent and 18 per cent for theft and damage of property (the two most frequently occurring security incidences). Other manifestations of interethnic tensions were noted even less frequently.

The findings indicate that, despite some improvements, interethnic tensions remain a significant concern for ethnic minorities in Osh and Jalal-Abad. The fact that ethnically motivated intimidation, abuse, or violence were seen as significant threats for those describing their situation as 'unsafe', but occur relatively less frequently, suggests that tensions have taken a more latent character. Previous occurrences of interethnic violence, notably the 2010 events, demonstrated the risk that such violence poses, and people live in fear of a renewal of these events. This indicates an underlying problem in terms of interethnic relations, with ethnic minorities feeling particularly vulnerable.

### Perceptions of religion, religious extremism and terrorism

Less than 1 per cent of all respondents reported knowledge of terrorist activity in their communities within the six months prior to the survey, yet among those describing their situation as 'unsafe', 24 per cent cited 'terrorist or extremist' groups as a threat to their personal security, a category they suggested was synonymous with radical Islam, as threats to their security.

FGDs and interviews highlighted competing narratives about overt manifestations of the Islamic faith, indicating that religious differences could be a source of tension within society. One contingent viewed overtly religious people, identifiable by men with long beards and women wearing the hijab, with great suspicion and prejudice, stating that police do not have sufficient control over them and their potential affiliation with Islamist extremism:

*"Sometimes we approach the neighbourhood police officer and ask him to check the documents of suspicious individuals with long beards. ... When he checks their documents, it turns out everything is in order. Right now it's really easy to buy documents. There's no control over these people."*<sup>28</sup>

Meanwhile, those who adopt such traditional Islamic forms of dress report that they are being profiled by police on the basis of their appearance alone, putting them at greater risk and that anti-terrorism campaigns were a convenient excuse to harass and extort money from citizens:

*"If somebody has grown a beard, he is immediately detained by the SNB [National Security Agency] or the police, and then has to give money for his release. In other words, he pays to grow a beard. ... he is accused of being an extremist or terrorist."*<sup>29</sup>

Official anti-terrorism campaigns<sup>30</sup> may inflate fears about the prevalence of violent extremism and fuel suspicion of people with beards and women in hijabs, intensifying

<sup>28</sup> 25–55 year-old female, ethnic Kyrgyz, Osh city, January 2013.

<sup>29</sup> Islamic religious leader, ethnic Kyrgyz, Osh city, February 2013.

<sup>30</sup> For example, high profile anti-terror campaigns in Gorno-Badakhshan in July 2012 (see BBC Russian Service, 'Tadzhikistan: desyatki pogibshikh v boyakh u goroda Khorog', (2012) [www.bbc.co.uk/russian/international/2012/07/120723\\_tajic\\_khorog\\_assault.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/russian/international/2012/07/120723_tajic_khorog_assault.shtml)); and the Rasht Valley (see Ferghana News, 'Tadzhikistan: Spetsoperatsiya v Rashtskoi doline fakticheski zavershena', (2010) [www.ferghananews.com/news.php?id=15891&mode=snews](http://www.ferghananews.com/news.php?id=15891&mode=snews))

religious cleavages and mistrust within society. At the same time, if people feel indiscriminately targeted by officials conducting anti-terror campaigns, this may alienate them from official structures and push them towards other, potentially violent, forms of authority.

### Cross-border issues

Proximity to state borders is a cause of insecurity for communities. 49 per cent of survey respondents in communities in Batken, bordering Tajikistan, reported knowledge of at least one instance of residents being harassed by the authorities of neighbouring countries within the past six months. Harassment and physical abuse were also discussed extensively in FGDs, with respondents in Batken narrating incidences when, on their way back from the pastures, “Tajik[istani] soldiers take butter and *kurut*<sup>31</sup> off [Kyrgyz] shepherds. If the Kyrgyz shepherds don’t give it to them, the Tajik border guards beat them not only with their fists but also with the backs of weapons.”<sup>32</sup>

On the Tajikistani side of the border, particularly in Chorkuh, residents mirrored the fears of their Kyrgyzstani neighbours in Aksai. They implied that the border guards of the neighbouring state were excessive in number, heavily armed, and cavalier in their treatment of ordinary citizens:

*“Recently the Kyrgyz put up a few towers on the border territories, and soldiers with automatic weapons sit there constantly. That’s a threat to us. Our children are sometimes afraid just to go outside and play.”*<sup>33</sup>

The fact that the border is undemarcated means that people may unwittingly find themselves on the territory of the other country, which is problematic if it garners a negative response from the neighbouring country’s border guards. Speaking about this, a Tajikistani border patrol commander blamed border conflicts on the inconsistent staffing and methods of the Kyrgyzstani border patrol, and on their lack of coordination with his own side:

*“I’ve served as commander of the border patrol for four years, and during that time, the commander of the Kyrgyz[stani] Aksai patrol has changed three times. Each newly appointed commander enforces his own interpretation of which side owns which disputed territories, and determines routes for patrolling the border without our agreement. As a result, Tajik[istani] citizens often find themselves in a situation where they’ve been walking or keeping their livestock on a given territory, and now it turns out that they’re violating the national border of Kyrgyzstan.”*<sup>34</sup>

Both Kyrgyzstani and Tajikistani respondents in border areas suggested that their insecurity was amplified by the greater strength and/or superiority of the other countries’ security forces, relative to their own. Several Kyrgyz respondents referred to a build-up of Tajik troops along the border, while describing their own authorities as impotent to deal with security threats:

*“[Tajik law enforcement units] are much stronger than Kyrgyz ones. For example, there are two ROVDs [District Departments of Police] in Isfara district alone. Isfara has this special status because of its location on the border, where there are interethnic tensions.”*<sup>35</sup>

*“Sometimes [civilians] play the role of border guards. What else are they supposed to do, if our border guards don’t protect us?”*<sup>36</sup>

<sup>31</sup> A snack food made of fermented milk.

<sup>32</sup> 44 year-old female, ethnic Kyrgyz, Aksai, Batken oblast, January 2013.

<sup>33</sup> 41 year-old ethnic Tajik male, Chorkuh, Soghd, February 2013.

<sup>34</sup> Tajikistani border patrol commander, Vorukh, Soghd oblast, February 2013.

<sup>35</sup> In fact, the extra district office exists ostensibly to maintain the proper ratio of police to civilians in densely populated Isfara – not to protect Isfara from its Kyrgyz neighbours.

<sup>36</sup> 20 year-old ethnic Kyrgyz male, Halmion, Batken oblast, February 2013.



Meanwhile, in Tajikistan, an army commander suggested that his counterparts across the border had greater opportunity to use force: “As far as I know, even local government can order its border guards to use firearms, which is basically impossible in Tajikistan.”<sup>37</sup> Also some FG participants in Soghd perceived their Kyrgyzstani counterparts already to be heavily armed. “Among the Kyrgyz population, almost everyone has a weapon, but we don’t – that also plays a role [in our feelings of insecurity].”<sup>38</sup>

The perception that their own forces cannot guarantee their security increases the risk that individuals will try to take security into their own hands, creating a situation rife for the escalation of interethnic skirmishes along the border. Respondents in Batken implied that their security would be resolved not by encouraging Tajikistan’s border-area security providers to scale back or refrain from excessive force, but in attempting to one-up their neighbours:

*“We don’t know whether we have a neighbourhood police officer working here. I don’t think there is any need for one. Instead, it would be great to have more border guards.” ... “Tajiks are afraid of our border guards, because they have weapons.”*<sup>39</sup>

Some people wanted to take border security into their own hands, recommending that authorities “arm the local population” with weapons to be used during “interstate incidents.”<sup>40</sup> Interestingly, some Soghd residents suggested both sides might do better to scale back: “I don’t understand – in this region neither the Kyrgyz nor the Tajiks have any strategic objects, so what is the point of keeping such a large number of border guards here?”<sup>41</sup>

Respondents in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan were also concerned about their borders with Uzbekistan, which has at times taken aggressive steps to mark out its territory, including the highly controversial placement of landmines in disputed areas, causing resentment from its Kyrgyzstani neighbours.<sup>42</sup> Residents of Kyrgyzstani communities bordering Uzbekistan frequently contrasted their neighbour’s tight border regime with their own allegedly impotent security providers: “Uzbekistan’s border is very strictly guarded; Uzbek border guards patrol it frequently. We don’t see patrolling soldiers at Kyrgyzstan’s border. [Our] government should strengthen their protection of our border.”<sup>43</sup>

Some research participants reported that for members of Soghd’s sizable ethnic Uzbek population, a lack of clarity on laws governing cross-border movement to and from Uzbekistan was a main concern, and a sticking point in relations with their own authorities. Often, misunderstandings about border procedures deter Soghd’s Uzbeks from seeing family across the border, and in extreme cases, these misunderstandings can lead to the break-up of families: local ethnic Uzbek women frequently marry into communities on the Uzbekistani side of the border, and vice-versa; Uzbekistan’s authorities periodically deport these women for their alleged failure to register with official bodies. A county head of police described the impact of one such recent occurrence:

*“Some young women ... were deported with their kids, some of the kids were left with the husbands [in Uzbekistan]. This problem couldn’t be solved at the local level. ... Lots of families came to the county administration (jamoat) and made threats. We couldn’t interfere, or the situation would have escalated. If these sorts of incidents keep happening, it will be very hard for us to work with the population, as they won’t trust us.”*

Along with causing residents of border communities’ stress and insecurity, dissatisfaction with their own border patrol and fears of their neighbouring country’s counterparts

37 27 year-old male, ethnic Tajik, Vorukh, Soghd oblast, February 2013.

38 30 year-old male, ethnic Tajik, Chorkuh.

39 Ethnic Kyrgyz residents, Aksai, Batken oblast, January 2013.

40 *Ibid.*

41 54 year-old male, ethnic Tajik, Chorkuh, Soghd oblast, February 2013.

42 See ICG (2001) ‘Central Asia: Border Disputes and Conflict Potential’ [www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/central-asia/Centralper cent20Asiaper cent20Borderper cent20Disputesper cent20andper cent20Conflictper cent20Potential.pdf](http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/central-asia/Centralper cent20Asiaper cent20Borderper cent20Disputesper cent20andper cent20Conflictper cent20Potential.pdf)

43 52 year-old ethnic Uighur, Kashkar-Kyshtak, Osh oblast, January 2013.

have negative implications for interethnic relations and long-term stability. These implications will be discussed in chapter 3.

### Gender-based and sexual violence

Among those feeling unsafe, 5 per cent of quantitative survey respondents, almost all of them from Kyrgyzstan's Osh oblast, identified sexual violence as a threat to personal security, while across the whole sample, 6 per cent of all respondents, again mostly from Osh oblast, reported knowledge of an incident of sexual violence within the six months prior to the survey.

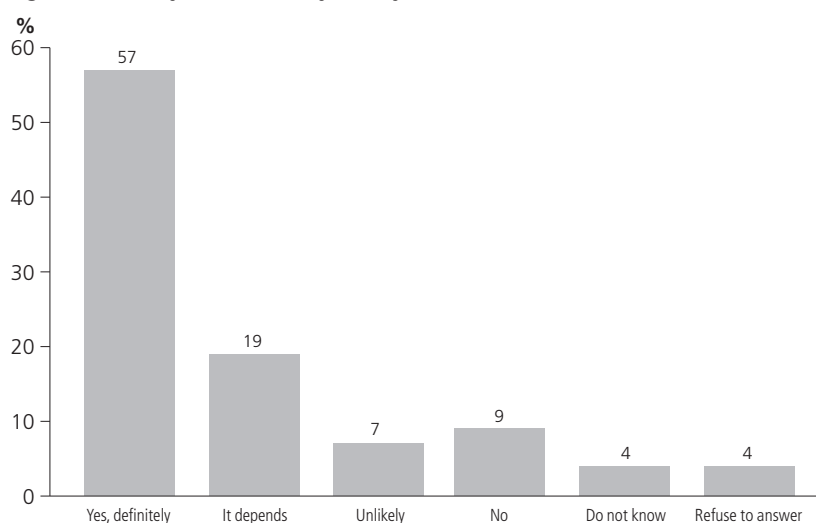
These low percentages might be connected to the social stigma and sensitivity around discussing these issues. Although FGDs on this issue were limited, those who did speak about it reflected that domestic violence is often viewed as a routine occurrence and not an acute threat: "There's a misconception that if your husband beats you, it's no big deal."<sup>44</sup> Even those who appreciate its gravity may be reluctant to speak of it, seeing it as a family matter not appropriate for public discussion: "Women prefer not to talk about it, because it 'disgraces' them first and foremost."<sup>45</sup> As explored below, while authorities, the aksakals or neighbourhood police officers, may sometimes attempt to address incidents of domestic violence, they may face resistance from the family involved, who view it as a private matter.

### Bride Kidnapping

Although only 5 per cent of respondents identified kidnapping as a threat, bride kidnapping is a widespread and much-discussed practice among Kyrgyzstan's ethnic majority, often resulting in forced marriage. The typical non-consensual kidnapping involves a man having the woman of his choice forcibly taken to his family home, where she is pressured to marry her captor, on the often-correct basis that if she does not, her own family will then refuse her. The leader of a women's committee in Halmion, Batken oblast, told interviewers that in her village, "Bride kidnapping is the most serious safety issue for young women." She said that here, as in other parts of the country,<sup>46</sup> "police do not interfere. Bride kidnapping is perceived by local people, including the police, as a tradition rather than a crime. So the police turn a blind eye. I've never heard of a boy who kidnapped a girl being detained by the police".<sup>47</sup>

## Perceptions of security providers

Figure 7: Would you address anyone if you were the victim of a crime?

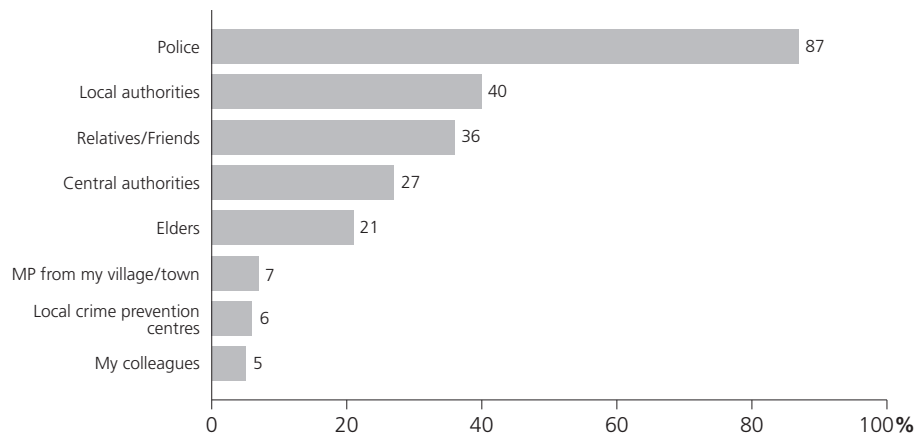


<sup>44</sup> 18–24 year-old female (exact ages of individual focus group participants were not recorded), ethnic Kyrgyz, Ishkavan, Osh oblast, January 2013.

<sup>45</sup> March 2013 interview, Khodjand, Soghd oblast.

<sup>46</sup> See, for example, 'Na odnoi iz ostanovok Bishkeka ukradena devushka', in which the prosecutor representative of Issyk Kul oblast is quoted as saying 'the prosecutor's office is interested in serious things' in response to journalists' inquiries about his office's failure to respond to a bride kidnapping. (kloop.kg 11.11.11, Diana Rakhmanova, Lyubov Shevchenko, available at <http://kloop.kg/blog/2011/11/11/na-odnoj-iz-ostanovok-bishkeka-ukradena-devushka/>)

<sup>47</sup> 35 year-old female, ethnic Kyrgyz, Halmion, Batken oblast, January 2013.

**Figure 8: Who would you address if you were a victim of a crime?**

### Most important security actors for communities

Respondents were asked if they would address anyone in case of need, and if so, who they would address for different types of crime; how much they trusted in various actors and institutions; and to assess these actors' effectiveness.

Respondents recorded higher trust levels for traditional institutions (the court of aksakals) than in government institutions responsible for addressing local problems, including law enforcement organs. Trust towards institutions is strongly related to their perceived effectiveness, with more successful institutions enjoying greater trust among the population. Nevertheless, trust levels for all institutions were generally higher than ratings of effectiveness, with less than 50 per cent of respondents assessing any institution as high or moderately effective, pointing to deficiencies in security provision (figure 9). Moreover, while the majority of respondents said they would address authorities if faced with a crime (57 per cent) and 19 per cent said they might, 16 per cent said they wouldn't, or it was unlikely they would do so, leaving a significant minority outside of traditional security provision (see figure 7). Reasons given for not addressing security providers included that potential security providers will extort money (31 per cent), will not respond (29 per cent), that the respondent can resolve the problem themselves (28 per cent), or that security providers lack resources (21 per cent). Of those who said they would address someone in case of a crime, 87 per cent said they would address the police; 40 per cent, the local authorities; 36 per cent, friends and relatives; 27 per cent, central authorities (figure 8).

### Court of aksakals

61 per cent of all respondents professed trust for courts of aksakals, traditional courts consisting of elder males from the community, making these the most trusted form of authority. The current functions of Kyrgyzstan's courts of aksakals are governed by a law passed in 2003, which states that while courts of aksakals are primarily responsible for reviewing cases presented to them by local courts and law enforcement bodies, they may also arbitrate disputes at the initiative of the conflicting parties. In Tajikistan, aksakals are integral members of *mahalla*<sup>48</sup> committees (local authorities, to be discussed separately below), which were given legal status and oversight by a law passed in 2012, and which will be discussed further below.

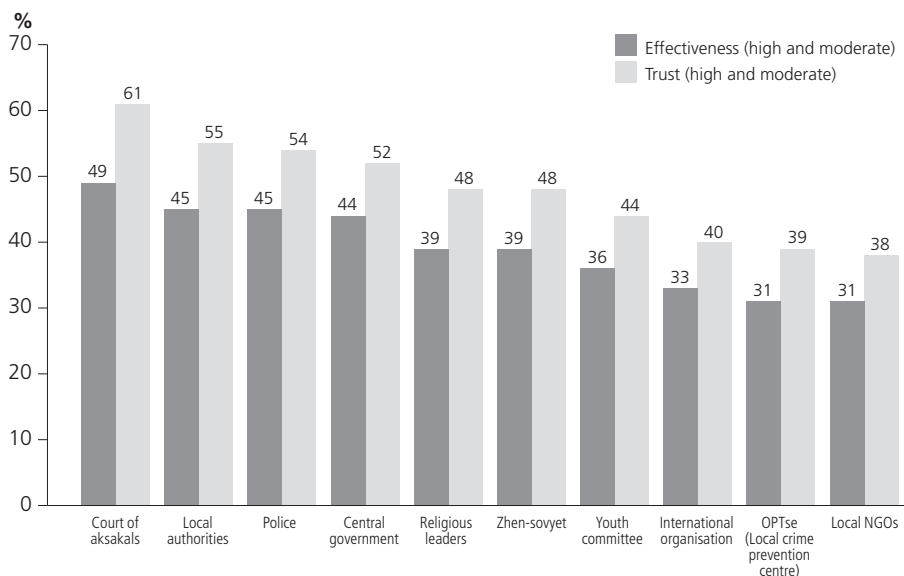
Several residents stressed aksakals' moral leadership in their communities: "At the mosques, aksakals read from the Koran about interpersonal, interconfessional, and interethnic harmony, they appeal to people to be careful in their words and deeds, and not provoke conflict. In a word, they say only good things."<sup>49</sup> In some cases, because of

<sup>48</sup> Neighbourhood.

<sup>49</sup> 19 year-old female, ethnic Uzbek, Jalal-Abad oblast, January 2013.

the authority aksakals have, they may perpetuate communities' distrust of police: "Our aksakals also tell us that it's better to keep quiet, instead of going back and forth with the police and having to give them money."<sup>50</sup>

**Figure 9: Effectiveness of institutions in responding to local problems and trust toward them**  
How much trust do you have towards the following organisations/institutions?  
How do you assess their performance in responding to local problems?



Ratings of the effectiveness of courts of aksakals were lower than ratings of trust, with 49 per cent of respondents rating them as quite or very effective. Alongside positive appraisals, some FGD participants suggested courts of aksakals were no more accessible, or effective, than other forms of authority: "We don't know what the court of aksakals does. Their office is in Uch-Korgon [a neighbouring town]. We've never seen them come to our village or do anything to help people feel safer."<sup>51</sup> This may be connected to relatively low levels of empowerment of the courts and a lack of resources. The first point was highlighted by one aksakal, who was unable to try and address alleged harassment of ethnic Uzbek children at a local school, as he had yet to receive a request from the inspector for the affairs of minors – which is overseen by the GOVD [City department of police].

### Local authorities/Mahalla

55 per cent of all respondents reported trust in local authorities; although this average is buoyed by the extremely high levels of trust reported by respondents in Soghd – 82 per cent. Ratings of effectiveness were about 10 percentage points lower overall (44 per cent); and again, respondents in Soghd were more likely to rate their local authorities as effective, 65 per cent.

While Tajikistani respondents (in Soghd) were more likely than their Kyrgyzstani counterparts to give positive ratings of trust and effectiveness of *all* security providers – perhaps due to self-censorship, referred to above – responses for local authorities are particularly high. This may reflect the specific structure of mahalla committees in Tajikistan, which represent a collaboration among various parties, including neighbourhood police officers, aksakals, and local administrators, perhaps allowing them to function more effectively. Their unique role was referred to in FGD:

*"Mahalla committees solve a lot of residents' problems. They also regulate problems and arguments that come up between people. Water for drinking and watering fields is an especially important issue in our village – the lack of water, as well as the issue of how to*

<sup>50</sup> 24 year-old, ethnic Uzbek, Jalal-Abad oblast, January 2013.

<sup>51</sup> 25–39 year-old male, Valakysh, Osh oblast, January 2013.

*distribute water among residents. All these issues can be solved only by the mahalla committee.”<sup>52</sup>*

In Kyrgyzstan, the picture regarding local authorities was more mixed. Ethnic Kyrgyz respondents tended to give more negative appraisals of security providers overall, and their ratings of the effectiveness of local authorities were no different: 25 per cent of respondents rated them as effective. However, it is worth noting the particularly low ratings of effectiveness that ethnic Kyrgyz in Jalal-Abad accorded to local authorities: just 9 per cent. This underlines the particularly difficult relationship between ethnic Kyrgyz and authorities in Jalal-Abad, building on the point noted in chapter two that 72 per cent identified their authorities as a threat.

Meanwhile, ethnic minorities took a more positive view, with 43 per cent of non-Kyrgyz in Osh and Jalal-Abad rating local authorities as effective. This may be connected to the role of local authorities in combating the more fundamental threats of official corruption and interethnic violence:

*“There was an incident recently where members of the patrol service took 180 soms [roughly US\$3.75] from a young man who had been going to use it to pay the cobbler. He went to the head of the county administration. They found the guilty service members and returned the money the following day.”<sup>53</sup>*

In a focus group in Isfana, residents suggested that local authorities had worked together effectively to lessen the threat of ethnically based skirmishes. “Since N. became mayor, [interethnic] relations have improved. There’s a neighbourhood police officer now. There’s also a policeman present at weddings. If there is a fight, he takes measures.”<sup>54</sup>

However, in some cases, residents suggested these authorities were just as helpless to combat fundamental threats to safety as they were themselves. At times, this perceived helplessness took the form of a lack of financial resources. When discussing their area’s susceptibility to mudslides, residents of a Jalal-Abad oblast village with aging infrastructure remarked, “The village administration can’t solve some of our problems, due to a lack of financial resources, but we understand.”<sup>55</sup>

## **Police**

Police were the third most trusted form of authority, with 54 per cent of all respondents voicing confidence in them. 45 per cent of respondents rated them as effective. Among those who said they would address security providers if faced with a crime, 87 per cent said they would address the police, making them the most important of any security provider for dealing with crime. FGD, however, indicate a gulf in perceptions of neighbourhood police officers relative to perceptions of patrol and search units: GOVDs and ROVDs. The neighbourhood police officers emerged as more approachable, hampered by inadequate resources, constituents’ mistrust for the law, and, at times, their own lack of faith in the system; while ROVD and GOVD units were more consistently seen as an oppressive policing force.

## **Neighbourhood police officers**

Some FG participants portrayed neighbourhood police officers in a positive light, suggesting they could bridge ethnic divides, through productive conflict-resolution sessions in schools,<sup>56</sup> and engagement with different ethnic groups. As one Uzbek respondent noted: “We have a Kyrgyz officer. He does good work. He comes around a

<sup>52</sup> 48–55 year-old female, ethnic Uzbek, Yangisaroy, Soghd oblast, February 2013.

<sup>53</sup> Male, ethnic Uighur, Kashkar-Kyshtak, Osh oblast, January 2013.

<sup>54</sup> Ethnic Uzbek, Isfana, Batken oblast, January 2013.

<sup>55</sup> 25–39 year-old male, ethnic Kyrgyz, Valakys, Batken oblast, January 2013.

<sup>56</sup> 18 year-old ethnic Uzbek, Gafurov, Soghd oblast, February 2013.

lot and inquires about our problems. We respect him.”<sup>57</sup> Meanwhile, other respondents were more critical of neighbourhood police officers’ performance: “Our police officer does nothing”;<sup>58</sup> “I’ve never seen our police officer.”<sup>59</sup> These comments may be related to a lack of resources available, which neighbourhood police officers in both Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan mentioned during interviews: “I can’t be at my post all the time, as I don’t have an office that’s equipped, and there’s nowhere for me to spend the night. ... I cannot fully provide for people’s security.”<sup>60</sup> A police officer in Jalal-Abad city described how his monthly work-related expenses amounted to roughly 75 per cent of his salary, leaving him with a take home pay of about 2500 soms [about US\$52.00] per month. With no designated vehicle, he made his rounds by foot, which he said meant he could only visit 8-10 houses per day, out of the roughly 400 in his territory. In his words, “I would need two months to visit every house in the village.”<sup>61</sup> His limited mobility, he said, gave constituents the false impression that he does not work.

Neighbourhood police officers also spoke of a lack of trust from their constituents, which hampered their work:

*“Local people usually won’t tell the police officer when a crime is committed in the village and they know who the criminals are. They try to punish them through their own methods – for example, they get money out of him or his relatives, or they beat him up. They think this is fairer than punishing that person within the purview of the law, with the help of the police.”*<sup>62</sup>

The officer explained that he works around locals’ mistrust through partnering with aksakals, who are more trusted as they live in each community, while he covers a larger area.

An incident witnessed by the researchers reinforced constituents’ resistance to police involvement in security incidents, while also revealing that the police officer himself partly shared their lack of faith in the criminal justice system. A visit to a victim of severe domestic violence ended in a shouting match with the perpetrator’s mother. She accused the officer of interfering in ‘family affairs’, while he maintained that domestic violence fell within his mandate. He then explained to researchers that he had a history of beating this particular domestic abuser:

*“Sometimes I punish these sorts of people beyond the scope of formal laws, in order to protect victims and establish justice. It is more important for me to protect victims than to follow ... illogical rules. Tomorrow I am going to give that man his final lesson.”*

His behaviour showed a selective usage of the law and his authority: just as there is little faith in the system on the side of ordinary citizens, so also is there a lack of faith in even those participating in it. He later hinted at a possible factor in his lack of faith in the justice system, suggesting he was often harassed by the prosecutor’s office, who extorted money from him. The fact that police may see violence as the best way of responding to problems is likely to reinforce circles of mistrust and of course obstruct future cooperation between people and police.

ROVD and GOVD

During FGDs, the patrol services (ROVD and GOVD units) were consistently negatively perceived: “We don’t have any objection to our neighbourhood police officers, but we are angry with the patrol service, who extort our people.”<sup>63</sup> Another respondent reflects:

<sup>57</sup> 20 year-old female, ethnic Uzbek, market vendor, Jalal-Abad city, January 2013.

<sup>58</sup> 17–24 year-old female, ethnic Kyrgyz, Ishkavan, Osh oblast, January 2013.

<sup>59</sup> 53 year-old male, ethnic Kyrgyz, Maasy, Jalal-Abad oblast, January 2013.

<sup>60</sup> 47 year-old male, ethnic Tajik, Yangisaroy, Soghd oblast, February 2013.

<sup>61</sup> Male, ethnic Kyrgyz, Taigarayeva, Jalal-Abad oblast, February 2013.

<sup>62</sup> Male, ethnic Uighur, Kashkar-Kyshtak, Osh oblast, January 2013.

<sup>63</sup> 45 year-old male, ethnic Uigur, Kashkar-Kyshtak, Osh oblast, January 2013.

*“Recently, a patrol car pulled up beside me on the road. It sent me into shock – I couldn’t have done anything wrong, or could I? My heart jumped into my throat. ... We don’t approach [the police] for help, even if something happens.”<sup>64</sup>*

Respondents further suggested that other branches of the police sometimes prevented their neighbourhood police officers from ensuring that detentions were carried out in adherence with the law:

*“Members of the patrol service should inform the neighbourhood police officer first thing when they detain a citizen – not take him to the district centre without informing anyone. The local officer will know the resident in question, and his address and parents, and will be able to inform them.”<sup>65</sup>*

This comment indicates that whatever trust the local officer in question might have with his constituents, this may be undermined by the actions of other security actors, particularly if he is perceived as failing to protect them from the actions of other branches of law enforcement.

### **Border guards**

Respondents were not asked about levels of trust or the effectiveness of border guards; however, 26 per cent of respondents living on the borderline in Batken stated that they would address border guards if they were the victim of a crime. Interestingly, only 3.3 per cent of their counterparts living along the borderline in Soghd provided this response. A young man from Chorkuh shed some possible light on this disparity:

*“Very unfortunately, our border squad very rarely meets with the population and doesn’t hold open discussions with them. Now, the Kyrgyz border patrol, on the other hand, they do what their people want.”<sup>66</sup>*

Despite this, during FGD, Kyrgyzstani respondents were critical of their border guards, perceiving them as weaker than their Tajikistani counterparts: “Tajik[istani] law enforcement agencies are tougher in the border region, whereas Kyrgyz[stani] law enforcement bodies pays less, if any attention to this area.”<sup>67</sup> In addition, one respondent said that the underequipped guards not only failed to protect the population, but “were a burden to the locals”<sup>68</sup> as they had to house and feed the guards. As previously explored, the perception that border guards and authorities are impotent in providing security has the potential to increase insecurity in border areas.

### **Obstacles to accessing adequate security and justice**

Both titular and non-titular ethnic groups in the surveyed areas in Kyrgyzstani perceive their ethnicity as an obstacle to accessing adequate security and justice. This was articulated during the FGDs (see below). But the results of the household survey point to a particularly worrying situation in Osh: the percentage of Osh minority respondents who said they would address authorities if confronted with a given crime was, on average, 21 percentage points lower than the next lowest reporting demographic.

Non-Kyrgyz respondents in all three Kyrgyzstani oblasts expressed distrust towards the police during FGD, suggesting that their ethnicity might affect their access to security provision:

*“Uzbeks and Tajiks never address the police, even if they are beaten or killed [sic], because they know that if they inform the police, they will get more trouble from the police than the person who committed the crime.”<sup>69</sup>*

<sup>64</sup> 24 year-old ethnic Uzbek housewife, Totiya village, Jalal-Abad oblast, January 2013.

<sup>65</sup> Male, ethnic Uighur, Kashkar-Kyshtak, Osh oblast, January 2013.

<sup>66</sup> Male, ethnic Uighur, Kashkar-Kyshtak, Osh oblast, January 2013.

<sup>67</sup> 50 year-old female, ethnic Kyrgyz, Aksai, Batken oblast, January 2013.

<sup>68</sup> Ethnic Kyrgyz residents, Halmion, Batken oblast, January 2013.

<sup>69</sup> 48 year-old ethnic Uzbek male, Isfana, Batken oblast, January 2013.

*“If a Kyrgyz and a Tajik or Uzbek get in a fight, we see that 90 per cent of the time Kyrgyz are to blame, but when the ROVD [district department of internal affairs] start dealing with it, the Tajik or the Uzbek comes out guilty.”<sup>70</sup>*

While some said the passage of time following the 2010 violence had brought improvements in security, others said it has merely taught people the futility of seeking justice. After telling the story of an acquaintance’s son who was falsely accused of participation in the June violence, beaten, and forced to come up with \$30,000, one participant stated that ‘there were a lot of those cases then. And I think it’s still happening now. Many prefer not to talk about it, because no one will protect them.’<sup>71</sup> Others insisted that while such incidents were in fact no longer widespread, the fear of them remained very real: “Detentions by the police, accompanied by accusations of participation in the violence have now stopped. But they had such an impact on people that they still expect the police to detain their sons or husbands.”<sup>72</sup>

As noted earlier, non-Kyrgyz respondents were more likely to have personal knowledge of incidents of official corruption or extortion than their Kyrgyz counterparts, which some minority respondents attributed to direct ethnic discrimination. Other respondents suggested that minorities’ vulnerability to corrupt officials was an indirect consequence of ethnic discrimination. The following participant suggested that the marginalisation of ethnic Uzbeks meant she lacked a key tool on which ethnic Kyrgyz could rely when faced with official harassment: family connections.

*“The Kyrgyz have the power. With one phone call, they can resolve their problems, because their dad or uncle works at the court or the prosecutor’s office, or is a deputy, etc. There are no Uzbeks in high positions; even if there were, they’ve been removed, or will be soon. If you have money you’re fine, if not, no one can help you. ... All that’s left for us ordinary people is to pray to God. It’s better to live quietly, without problems, without complaints. No one will solve them.”<sup>73</sup>*

Several ethnic Uzbek research participants suggested that their loss of faith in official institutions did not simply lead them to retreat into private prayer – it caused them to look to religious figures for moral support and the promise of future justice: “Religious missionaries appeal for peace and tolerance. I and many others don’t trust the police or prosecutors.” “[The 2010 violence] was all the doing of high-level people and politicians, who are trying to get their share of power and money. ... Real Muslims are not interested in power, money, or high positions. ... If we had an Islamic republic, I think that would solve a lot of our problems.” Such sentiments could explain more people adopting more Islamist views and appearances, which as discussed earlier is sometimes considered as a threat by others.

Meanwhile, despite their titular status and the almost exclusively ethnic Kyrgyz make-up of the police force,<sup>74</sup> ethnic Kyrgyz respondents provided the lowest assessments of police of any demographic surveyed: only 27 per cent of ethnic Kyrgyz respondents in Osh oblast, and 15 per cent in Jalal-Abad, reported trusting the police. However, ethnic Kyrgyz in Osh were much more likely to address security providers with a serious incident than their non-Kyrgyz counterparts. This demographic also reported feeling free to air their grievances in greater numbers, meaning that they may have been more prone to overstate their mistrust for security providers than other groups surveyed.

During FGD ethnic Kyrgyz research participants made serious allegations of wrong doing by the police, and while the tone of these allegations was sometimes speculative, they revealed a very real resentment: “Everybody knows that the police cover for [thieves]. In exchange, the thieves pay a certain percentage of what they steal to the police.”<sup>75</sup>

<sup>70</sup> 53 year-old male, ethnic Uzbek, Isfana, Batken oblast, January 2013.

<sup>71</sup> 33 year-old female, ethnic Uzbek, housewife, Jalal-Abad city, January 2013.

<sup>72</sup> Male, ethnic Uzbek, Kashkar-Kyshtak village, Osh oblast, January 2013.

<sup>73</sup> 27 year-old female, ethnic Uzbek, cashier, Jalal-Abad city, January 2013.

<sup>74</sup> Kyrgyzstan Inquiry Commission (2011) ‘Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry into the Events in Southern Kyrgyzstan in June 2010’, p 18.

<sup>75</sup> 39 year-old female, ethnic Kyrgyz, Valakysht village, Batken oblast, January 2013.



Like their fellow citizens who belong to ethnic minorities, ethnic Kyrgyz respondents also suggested that family or kinship links were key to protecting oneself from official corruption:

*“Recently, at a park in the centre, a young man was beaten by a couple of other guys. At that moment, we were sitting in the park talking. Then the police came and detained us and let those guys go. We were not guilty. The police took us and locked us up, said we had to pay a fine, took all the money we had, and beat us with truncheons. It’s a good thing my friend’s brother works for the police – he called him and they let us go. They didn’t give us the money back, they said ‘you should be happy we let you go, and just get out of here.’ [Later] we just barely managed to get them to return the money.”<sup>76</sup>*

Participants in several focus groups with members of Kyrgyzstan’s ethnic majority suggested that security providers are reluctant to arrest criminals from minority groups, and strive for political correctness at the expense of providing justice and security. Referring to the aforementioned incident in Nookan, the participant stated: “We think our law enforcement agencies don’t want to search for the killer among Uzbeks, to avoid interethnic conflict. . . . This is why they are now trying to find a Kyrgyz to frame for murder. For this reason, Kyrgyz are afraid of the police these days.”<sup>77</sup> This man’s assumption, on the basis of apparently no evidence, that a murdered Kyrgyz means an Uzbek murderer would be troubling in itself from the standpoint of interethnic relations; however, the way in which his mistrust for police, and his bleak view of interethnic relations, are compounding one another, is particularly worrying.

This relationship between perceptions of favouritism and corruption on the part of security providers, and resentment for members of other ethnicities, came up in other contexts as well: “[Uighurs from China] have a lot of money. They can give money to our law enforcement agencies if they are detained for committing a crime. They release them. Law enforcement agencies will make friends with the devil if he gives them money.”<sup>78</sup> It follows from these assessments that interethnic resentment and perceptions of official corruption feed off one another.

The competing narratives of ethnic majority and minority groups regarding their access to security and justice, whereby both groups perceive themselves to be underprivileged and victimised on the basis of their ethnicity, is likely to accentuate interethnic tensions. It is essential that authorities combat official misconduct in a balanced and effective manner, to address grievances of both groups and prevent these perceptions accentuating underlying ethnically based grievances.

Respondents in Batken and Soghd are the most satisfied by the performance of institutions and trust them more than counterparts in Osh and Jalal-Abad, with those in Soghd reporting the highest levels of trust for all branches of authority. In addition, residents of areas of Soghd farther removed from the border reported feeling protected by authorities in higher numbers than any other demographic surveyed: 87 per cent of respondents here said they felt protected by authorities. This was attributed to strong security provision, resulting in feelings of safety:

*“I have never once felt unsafe on the streets, or when I send my kids off to school. I send my kids to school without any worries. No one bothers anyone, we never feel a sense of fear. Even when we travel to other places, like the bazaar for example, we feel safe. . . . the police provide visible order.”<sup>79</sup>*

On the other hand, only 62 per cent of the sample here said they felt free to discuss their grievances openly, with those in inner Soghd less willing to express their grievances (55 per cent compared to 73 per cent in the border areas). This may be related to memories of Tajikistan’s bloody civil war in the 1990s, resulting in people

<sup>76</sup> 24 year-old male, commercial worker, Jalal-Abad city, February 2013.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> 54 year-old male, ethnic Kyrgyz, Halmion, Batken oblast, January 2013.

<sup>79</sup> 48–55 year-old female, ethnic Uzbek, Yangisaroy, Soghd oblast, February 2013.

feeling the need to strive for stability at any cost to avoid a repetition of those years: “The most important thing for us is not to have a war in our country. Our president provides calm conditions, we have police in our town who do their job. For example, we heard about the events in Kyrgyzstan, when they were just killing Uzbeks, and we were also afraid, but everything here was calm.”<sup>80</sup>

Despite respondents’ general reluctance to criticise their authorities, some suggested that serious challenges in building confidence between civilians and security providers remained:

*“Police should be closer to the people. When they become closer, people will tell them about problems themselves, and won’t hide the truth. Now, when some sort of violation of the law occurs, you sometimes think, they should be involved. But then you think about how they’ll start bothering you when they start asking you what happened, and call you in a hundred times, and you immediately go quiet.”<sup>81</sup>*

The head of a local non-governmental organisation (NGO) in the oblast capital of Khujand suggested this sentiment was a common one: “People approach the police with caution, seeing them as a punitive body. Many say it’s better not to have any contact with law enforcement bodies, as it’s a waste of time and money.”<sup>82</sup> Another local NGO researcher agreed that many residents were wary of the police, but attributed this wariness to the public’s poor understanding of the law: “Respect for the law is not the norm ... Accordingly, the population interprets the competent enforcement of the law on the part of the police as a threat to their security. If no law has been violated [by civilians], the police won’t take any unlawful actions against them – with rare exceptions.”<sup>83</sup>

<sup>80</sup> 18–20 year-old, Gaturov, Sogd oblast, February 2013.

<sup>81</sup> 54 year-old ethnic Tajik male, Chorkuh, Sogd oblast, February 2013.

<sup>82</sup> March 2013 interview.

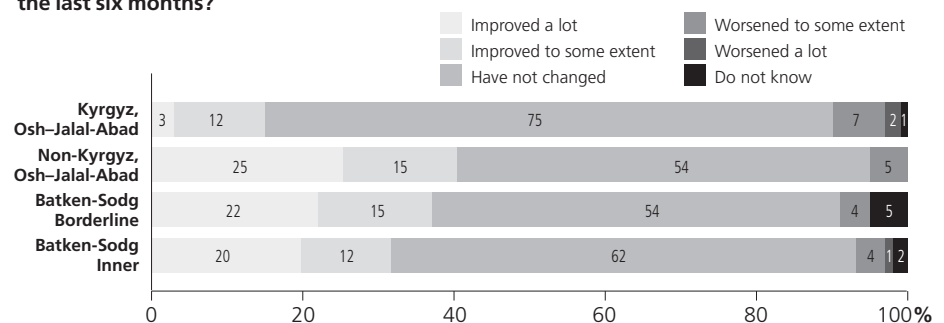
<sup>83</sup> March 2013 conversation.

# 3

## Contact and trust between ethnic groups and future security

**KYRGYZ, TAJIKS, AND UZBEKS** – as well as some smaller ethnic communities – have lived side by side in the Ferghana Valley for centuries, engaging extensively in trade, friendship, and intermarriage. This section looks at the current state of interethnic relations in the surveyed area, focusing on two key areas: dynamics between Kyrgyz and Uzbek communities in Osh and Jalal-Abad, and Kyrgyz–Tajik cross-border relations in border communities. It also examines the situation with regard to interethnic relations in integrated communities, as well as how the group as a whole sees the future of interethnic relations and prospects for improving relations among groups.

**Figure 10: How have your relationships with people of different nationalities changed over the last six months?**



### Interethnic relations in Osh and Jalal-Abad

Interethnic relations seem to be gradually improving in Osh and Jalal-Abad; however, significant problems persist. 27 per cent of all respondents in Osh and Jalal-Abad reported improved relations with members of other groups within the six months prior to the survey; 65 per cent of respondents reported no change in relations, and only 7 per cent reported worsening relations. When broken down by ethnicity, non-Kyrgyz respondents are more optimistic about improved relations, with 40 per cent stating that relations have improved, compared to 15 per cent of Kyrgyz respondents in these areas.

However, the survey also provided indicators of the fragile nature of these improvements. As noted in chapter two, a significant number of respondents in Osh and Jalal-Abad voiced concerns about continuing day-to-day discrimination, suggesting that modest improvements in relations should not be mistaken for the establishment of wholesale trust and equality. Some FG participants referred more explicitly to ethnically based discrimination or harassment, which continued to follow them in their daily lives, sometimes causing them to restrict their activities, or those of their children: “We worry about the safety of our children when they go to school, or to boxing practice. I think, just let him come back unharmed and in one piece... There was a time when some older Kyrgyz kids beat my son.”<sup>84</sup>

Members of other minority groups also spoke of censoring themselves in order to avoid conflict with members of the titular group: “We [Uigurs and Uzbeks] usually try to avoid conflicts with Kyrgyz. Even if they say something bad, we don’t respond. Otherwise, one response from one [member of an ethnic minority] will cause a big problem for many others.”<sup>85</sup> “If there is an interethnic conflict, I advise the victim to be tolerant. Otherwise other Tajiks might suffer from one person’s wrong move. ... I sometimes think the next ethnic group whom Kyrgyz attack will be local Tajiks. Nationalism is growing among the Kyrgyz day by day.”<sup>86</sup> This respondent noted that Tajiks in Kyrgyzstan were afraid of ethnic Uzbeks just as much as ethnic Kyrgyz, suggesting his community felt threatened from multiple sides.

Worryingly, some respondents implied they had lost trust for the majority group as a whole – not simply for some of its individual members:

*“I get the feeling that the Kyrgyz have come to a secret agreement. Everywhere in Kyrgyzstan, Kyrgyz discriminate against Uzbeks. This approach towards Uzbeks intensified after the violence in Osh and persists today. Before the violence, Kyrgyz said bad things about Uzbeks among themselves, and only in certain places. After the violence, they started humiliating Uzbeks openly and everywhere.”<sup>87</sup>*

Representatives of Kyrgyzstan’s ethnic majority were less likely to see improvements in interethnic relations, with FGDs providing a mixed picture of attitudes toward non-Kyrgyz. FGDs and interviews suggest that rather than seeing other groups as a threat to their immediate personal security, they are concerned about the longer term impact of other ethnic groups on the country. Whereas ethnic minority respondents provided numerous first-hand accounts of small incidents of interethnic violence and discrimination, members of the ethnic majority delivered second-hand and often speculative accounts of egregious, large-scale violence allegedly perpetrated by members of other groups – particularly local ethnic Uzbeks and Uighurs.

Some ethnic Kyrgyz respondents offered a positive view of interethnic relations: “The thought that the Uzbek person walking beside me might kill someone does not even enter my mind”<sup>88</sup>; “We have very good relations with Uzbeks”<sup>89</sup>; “We are happy with the state of interethnic relations.”<sup>90</sup> However, others were openly aggressive in describing attitudes to ethnic minorities. Young men in Jalal-Abad city suggested that they felt safe due to their titular status and potential to dominate others physically, rather than due to the presence of interethnic trust, or reliable security services, alluding to a desire to replicate the discrimination that they or their peers had experienced as migrant labourers: “We are young and full of energy and strength. How can we be afraid of anyone? ... If somebody threatens us here, we will teach them. ... In Russia, Russians are the landlords, and they’re not afraid of Kyrgyz or Chechens. It should be

<sup>84</sup> 24 year-old housewife, ethnic Uzbek, Totiya, Jalal-Abad oblast, January 2013.

<sup>85</sup> Male, ethnic Uighur, Kashkar-Kyshtak, Osh oblast, January 2013.

<sup>86</sup> Male, ethnic Tajik, community leader, Uch-Korgon, Batken oblast, January 2013.

<sup>87</sup> Male, ethnic Uzbek, Isfana, Batken oblast, January 2013.

<sup>88</sup> Male, ethnic Kyrgyz, Valakys, Batken oblast, January 2013.

<sup>89</sup> 53 year-old businessman, ethnic Kyrgyz, Maasy, Jalal-Abad oblast, January 2013.

<sup>90</sup> Female, ethnic Kyrgyz, Osh city, January 2013.

the same way here.”<sup>91</sup> In other cases, participants implied that some minority groups had already been ‘taught.’ “[The Uzbeks] could start something up, in order to be autonomous, but I don’t think they will. Our brothers love their wealth, and their houses burned down during the events, so now they’re afraid to try anything.”<sup>92</sup>

Some respondents reported that ethnic minorities presented a persistent threat to Kyrgyzstan’s survival, if not to them personally. Comments made during FGDs saw ethnic minorities as a threat to Kyrgyz culture and way of life, stating, “Uzbeks should speak Kyrgyz and wear the kalpak,”<sup>93</sup> and “We need to close Uzbek-language schools, and raise Uzbek children in the spirit of patriotism and love for Kyrgyzstan.”<sup>94</sup> Others suggest minorities might pose a physical threat, relaying the officially disseminated but unsubstantiated narrative of the June 2010 violence, according to which the conflict was the culmination of an Uzbek plot to establish an autonomous province. Some echoed a refrain common among ethnic Kyrgyz nationalist politicians – that residents of majority Uzbek communities were heavily armed. Others related new conspiracy theories targeting Uighurs – that the Chinese seek to annex Kyrgyzstan to be part of China, possibly by sending people with HIV/AIDS or other diseases to wipe out Kyrgyz.

### Interethnic tensions between border communities

FGDs and interviews carried out in border communities suggested cross-border intercommunal relations, which carry interstate as well as interethnic components, are chronically strained. This strain is largely a result of the perceived harassment by neighbouring countries’ border guards discussed in chapter 2, as well as resource disputes stemming from poor infrastructure and ill-defined borders. In Kyrgyzstani border communities, antipathy for neighbours across the border appeared heightened by a sense of being outnumbered, resulting in Batken respondents feeling particularly insecure about their future.

Residents of the Soghd border communities of Vorukh and Chorkuh reported fear and prejudice towards their Kyrgyzstani counterparts: “The citizens of Kyrgyzstan present a threat, as well as their authorities.”<sup>95</sup> Some residents suggested that the perceived inaction of the authorities increased their resentment of Kyrgyz citizens. Speaking of the death of a young child from his community caused by a Kyrgyzstani driver, whom he said Kyrgyzstan’s authorities never punished, one resident remarked that, “These sorts of actions make the situation tense and increase our feelings of grievance and hatred towards neighbouring citizens and their state.” Some considered villagers from Aksai particularly nationalistic and threatening.

Residents of Aksai similarly painted their Tajikistani counterparts as indiscriminately aggressive: “Tajiks frequently beat Kyrgyz – it doesn’t matter if they are men or women, young or old. ... They also throw stones into Kyrgyz people’s yards... Because of this, Kyrgyz are afraid of being beaten or even killed by Tajiks.” Some said residents’ feelings contributed to depopulation of the area: “Young people are leaving for Batken,<sup>96</sup> and for Bishkek, so that they feel safer.”<sup>97</sup> Still, Aksai residents’ fears were often accompanied by strong prejudices: “[Tajiks] are very cunning”; “[They] are all business, they feel superior – the parents probably aren’t bringing up their offspring to be kind and respectful towards others.”<sup>98</sup>

Residents on both sides of the Kyrgyzstan–Tajikistan border suggested that resource scarcity put an extra strain on relations. Due to their aforementioned electricity

<sup>91</sup> 22 year-old male, farmer, Jalal-Abad city, January 2013.

<sup>92</sup> 43 year-old male, Maasy, Jalal-Abad oblast, January 2013.

<sup>93</sup> High hat that symbolizes ethnic Kyrgyz affiliation, worn mostly by male elders.

<sup>94</sup> 43–53 year-old males, Maasy, Jalal-Abad oblast, January 2013.

<sup>95</sup> 41 year-old male, ethnic Tajik, Chorkuh, Soghd oblast, February 2013.

<sup>96</sup> Batken town, the oblast centre.

<sup>97</sup> Ethnic Kyrgyz, Aksai, Batken oblast, January 2013.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

shortages, residents of Soghd may try to heat their homes in winter by burning large amounts of firewood: “Our cherry orchards are disappearing, because the Tajiks are cutting them down for fuel.”<sup>99</sup> Complaints about water supply were particularly prominent: “Tajiks in Vorukh and Khojai Alo drink the Kyrgyz’s water, when Kyrgyz themselves don’t have enough drinking water.”<sup>100</sup> Meanwhile, Tajikistanis from village of Shurab resent Kyrgyz villages tapping illegally into Tajikistani water sources, thereby lessening their water supply.<sup>101</sup>

While research participants from Kyrgyzstani and Tajikistani border communities displayed mutual fear, prejudice, and resentment at the other sides’ perceived abuse of scarce resources, Aksai residents’ antipathy for their neighbours had an extra component: the fear of being outnumbered, and even wiped out as a people:

*“Tajiks are putting pressure on us to get out of here, but if we leave, who will protect our land? ... They want to force the Kyrgyz to move to inner parts of Kyrgyzstan, in order to conquer these places peacefully. Soghd oblast is densely populated. Tajiks don’t have enough land to build houses, so they are trying to take Aksai and other disputed areas away from the Kyrgyz.”<sup>102</sup>*

The same sense of insecurity with regard to the neighbouring country and its citizens was found in some Kyrgyzstani communities adjacent to Uzbekistan. In Halmion village, while residents did not cite any concrete examples of violence or harassment from Uzbekistani citizens, they still had fears about their larger neighbour’s military strength, which made them regard their citizens with suspicion; one FGD participant described how he had recently refused to respond to calls for help from two Uzbekistani women with whom he was acquainted, for fear they were planting mines.<sup>103</sup>

### Interethnic relations in integrated communities

Some respondents implied that living in ethnically integrated communities bred tolerance, making these communities safer than others. This view was prominent among ethnic Kyrgyz FGD respondents – “We feel safe in our community because it is multi-ethnic, and we all grew up together”<sup>104</sup> – as well as with members of ethnic minorities in Kyrgyzstan, “Uzbeks and Kyrgyz from Isfana have been living together for centuries, and are assimilated to one another. They understand our culture and language, and the same goes for us.”<sup>105</sup>

However, this mutual understanding typically referred to members of their own community, but not those living elsewhere. Often, respondents from both titular and non-titular groups blamed past conflict on the latter:

*“It wasn’t people from the city who started all the disorder during the June events. It was all outsiders, from Alai and other places. ... Our Kyrgyz neighbours protected us during the events. They stayed up all night guarding our house, telling the people who were burning houses that Kyrgyz people lived there, and not to go in.”<sup>106</sup>*

Similarly, rural Kyrgyz were inclined to characterise fellow villagers from ethnic minorities as trustworthy, and label minority compatriots living elsewhere as disingenuous or foreign: “Part of the reason we don’t have conflict here is that our Tajiks and Turks really love Kyrgyzstan, unlike the Uzbeks in Osh, who pretend to love Kyrgyzstan, but actually hate it.”<sup>107</sup>

<sup>99</sup> Ethnic Kyrgyz male, Maasy, Jalal-Abad oblast, February 2013.

<sup>100</sup> Ethnic Kyrgyz residents, Halmion, Batken oblast, January 2013.

<sup>101</sup> 27 year-old male, ethnic Tajik, uchastkoviy inspector, Chorkuh, Soghd oblast, February 2013.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> Male, ethnic Kyrgyz, Halmion, Batken oblast, January 2013.

<sup>104</sup> 17–24 year-old female, ethnic Kyrgyz, Ishkavan, Osh oblast, January 2013.

<sup>105</sup> Ethnic Uzbek, Isfana, Batken oblast, January 2013.

<sup>106</sup> 27 year-old female, ethnic Uzbek, Jalal-Abad city, January 2013.

<sup>107</sup> Male, ethnic Kyrgyz, Valakysh, Batken oblast, January 2013.

Rumour and stereotypes seem to play an important role: those with experience of other ethnic groups are less afraid of them, but even where there are no open manifestations of discrimination or violence, fear of the unknown impacts on perceptions of security. For example, a number of ethnic minority FG participants in the Kyrgyzstani provinces expressed feeling less safe in unfamiliar territory, but without naming any explicit threat:

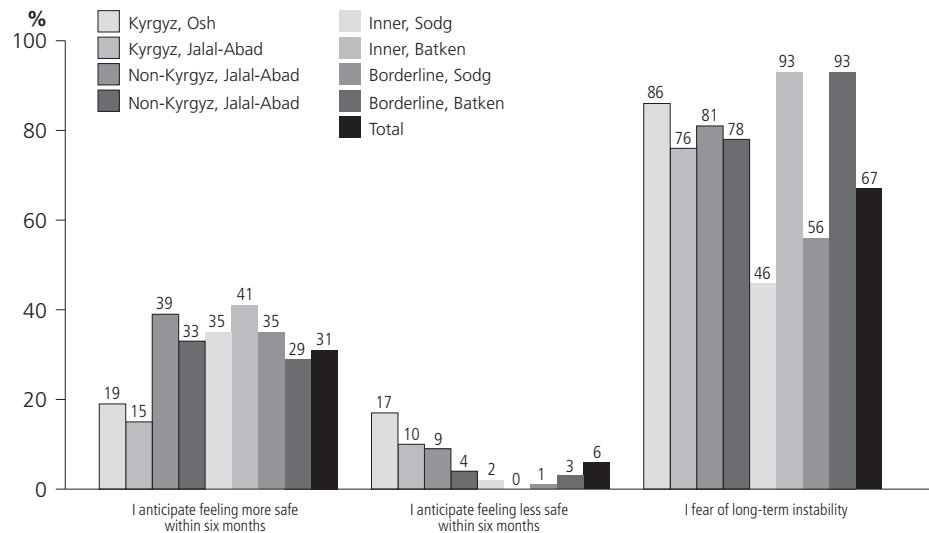
*“In our village, we feel safe – we’re in our Kyrgyzstan, our village, we know everyone, they’re all friends and relatives... When we go to other places, we don’t know anyone, we don’t know how they’re going to act towards us. So we try not to leave the village very much.”<sup>108</sup>*

*“When I’m in [my home village], I feel safe, I can walk the streets calmly, because I know people there won’t do anything bad. ... But in Jalal-Abad city it’s the opposite, since there are a lot of people there and they are different sorts. You don’t know what’s waiting for you around the corner.”<sup>109</sup>*

### Future security and interethnic confidence building

Respondents were asked about their expectations for the future. While nearly all groups across region and ethnicity, to varying degrees, stated that they anticipated feeling safer in the coming six months, considerably more feared long-term instability. Among Kyrgyzstani respondents, the range was from 88 per cent to 93 per cent and among Soghd respondents, 45 per cent to 56 per cent (figure 11). This underscores the need, particularly in Kyrgyzstan, for building communities’ confidence in a secure future, at the same time as maintaining and consolidating immediate improvements in the security situation.

**Figure 11: Expectations for the future**



When asked what kinds of initiatives could bring about increased trust and cooperation among different ethnic groups, respondents largely recommended addressing the root causes of interethnic tensions – rather than the symptoms.

Improving the economy was the most commonly cited means to improve relations, indicating public awareness of how economic inequality, or perceptions of inequality, and competition for resources contribute to ethnic tensions: “Kyrgyz, Tajiks and Turks in our village are at the same [economic] level. That is why we don’t fight with each other.”<sup>110</sup>

<sup>108</sup> 19 year-old ethnic Turk from Aktash village, Osh oblast, January 2013.

<sup>109</sup> 24 year-old housewife, ethnic Uzbek woman from Suzak village, Jalal-Abad oblast, January 2013.

<sup>110</sup> 28 year-old male, ethnic Kyrgyz, Valaksyh, Batken oblast, January 2013.

Stronger human rights protection and greater collaborative efforts between law enforcement actors and community members to prevent crime were the next most commonly recommended strategies, suggesting that security and justice actors may need to work indiscriminately with communities to improve interethnic relations.

Residents were divided on the effectiveness of more traditional peacebuilding initiatives, such as joint recreational activities, and activities that provide a forum for intercommunal dialogue. Numerous respondents made reference to them, without being able to specify whether they achieved their goals. Others credited these activities for significant improvements in relations: “We border a lot of mono-ethnic villages ... We conduct a lot of sociocultural activities with students of various schools in the county. We can say that relationships among youth have improved [dramatically].”<sup>111</sup> A respondent from Aksai reported that “NGOs and international organisations have been playing a significant role in improving the situation. They’ve organized a lot of round table discussions between Tajiks and Kyrgyz, as well as cultural activities. ... If these organisations hadn’t worked here, there wouldn’t have been any contact between Kyrgyz and Tajiks. Relations would have been worse.”<sup>112</sup> Others were less positive: “There are isolated projects to bring youth from border communities together and to improve their relations, which are realised by NGOs from various sides [of the border]; in the majority of cases, these reach a small number of youth, and are not sustainable once the projects finish.”<sup>113</sup>

A number of respondents stressed that peace, intercommunal contact and cooperation could be achieved by promoting interethnic marriages,<sup>114</sup> increasing opportunities for economic exchange and trade, and having a more ethnically balanced public workforce. They underscored how increased contact would foster mutual understanding and interdependence.

111 Ethnic Uzbek male, Kashkar-Kyshtak, Osh oblast, January 2013.

112 34 year-old male, ex ayil-okmotu, Aksai, Batken oblast, January 2013.

113 36 year-old female, ethnic Tajik, community leader, Vorukh, Soghd oblast, February 2013.

114 43 year-old male, ethnic Uighur, Kashkar-Kyshtak, Osh oblast, January 2013.



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# Summary and conclusions

## **Communities and their needs**

- Socioeconomic issues, including electricity shortages, lack of heating, poor roads, high food prices and inability to earn a living are the most critical problems facing communities. If unaddressed, these problems are likely to increase alienation between people and authorities and create an environment in which tensions are more prone to escalation.
- Respondents linked socioeconomic issues to interethnic tensions, suggesting that the failure to address these problems may aggravate interethnic relations. Similarly, acute electricity and water shortages in border areas between Batken and Soghd, which respondents attributed to overuse by the other side, place additional strain on relations between communities in these areas.
- Corruption was identified as a problem in the Kyrgyzstani oblasts, with the situation in Batken giving particular cause for concern.

## **Perceptions of personal security**

- The majority of people feel safe; however, approximately 10 per cent feel unsafe. Generally, people in Batken and Soghd reported feeling safer than people in Osh and Jalal-Abad, suggesting that the tensions that led to the events of 2010 and their aftermath continue to be felt. The situation in Osh, the epicentre of the 2010 violence, gives particular cause for concern, with just over a fifth stating they do not feel safe in their home.
- In Soghd, people reported feeling safer and expressed more positive views of security providers; however, they were also less likely to feel free to express their grievances, suggesting that experience of the civil war in the 1990s may mean that people prioritise stability over the need to speak out, and may be less prepared to speak openly about security provision. Ethnic minorities in Kyrgyzstan are also less likely to feel free to express grievances than their ethnic majority compatriots.
- Traffic safety was identified as the number one threat to personal security; this was linked to concerns about official corruption.

- Crime, including theft and violence, were also identified as threats to security. Fairly low ratings of security actors' effectiveness increase the potential that people feel unprotected and/or seek redress by taking the law into their own hands.
- Although there are some signs that the security situation for ethnic minorities in Kyrgyzstan is improving, interethnic tensions, particularly among youth, remain a concern, especially for minority groups. Few respondents reported knowledge of interethnic violence in the past six months, demonstrating that even in the absence of open violence, interethnic tensions persist.
- The study also points to religious cleavages within society, which may create tensions between moderate and more overtly religious believers, and those who support a secular state and those supporting a state based on Islamic law. Among those feeling unsafe, both ethnic majority and minority groups in Osh and Jalal-Abad identified authorities, or threats emanating from authorities, as a threat to security, with the situation particularly acute in Jalal-Abad. Ethnic minorities were more likely to have experience of extortion or corruption by police or border guards and illegal detentions than majority groups.
- Proximity to state borders is a source of insecurity for border communities, who identified neighbouring countries' border guards, police, and sometimes civilians, as a threat to safety, while perceiving their own authorities as unable to guarantee security in this environment. There is a risk that individuals try to take security into their own hands, creating an atmosphere rife for the escalation of skirmishes.

#### **The role of security providers**

- Results suggest that people experience security differently depending on their position in society and points to deficiencies in security provision. Although 79 per cent of respondents said they felt protected by authorities in their country, less than half of respondents identified any security actors as very or moderately effective in dealing with their problems.
- Although the majority of respondents said they would definitely address authorities if faced with a crime, 16 per cent said they would not, or it was unlikely, they would do so. Moreover, a quarter of respondents do not believe that authorities would help them irrespective of their status, while the most vulnerable respondents consistently identified security providers' actions or failure to guarantee security as a threat to their personal security. The relationship between authorities and ethnic Kyrgyz respondents in Jalal-Abad emerges as particularly problematic, with less than one tenth of these respondents identifying the police as effective.
- Respondents recorded higher trust levels for traditional institutions (the court of aksakals) than for government institutions responsible for addressing local problems, including law enforcement organs. FGD participants stressed aksakals moral leadership, suggesting they may play an important role in forming opinions.
- Police were identified as the primary actor for addressing crime, and just over half of respondents expressed trust in them. FGDs suggest neighbourhood police officers are more trusted than patrol and search units (GOVDs and ROVDs). The work of neighbourhood police officers is hampered by inadequate resources, constituents' mistrust for the law, weak cooperation with, and support from, other police structures and, at times, their own lack of faith in the system.
- During FGDs in Kyrgyzstan, representatives of both ethnic majority and minority respondents suggested their ethnicity prevented them accessing security and justice and suggested people of other ethnicities received preferential treatment, increasing the risk that police actions may exacerbate problems in interethnic relationships.

### Interethnic relations and future security

- Interethnic relations seem to be gradually improving in Osh and Jalal-Abad, with ethnic minority respondents in particular noting an improvement in their situation within the last six months.
- Nevertheless, a significant number of respondents in Osh and Jalal-Abad voiced concerns about continuing day-to-day discrimination, suggesting that modest improvements in relations should not be mistaken for the establishment of wholesale trust and equality.
- While attitudes of ethnic Kyrgyz to minorities were far from unanimous, with some expressing positive views about interethnic relations, responses from several ethnic Kyrgyz indicate a perception that ethnic minorities pose a threat to their country's long-term wellbeing and stability. Comments made during FGDs point to worrying levels of aggressive nationalism among some sections of society.
- Cross-border intercommunal relations are chronically strained. This strain is largely a result of the perceived harassment by neighbouring countries' border guards, as well as resource disputes stemming from poor infrastructure and ill-defined borders. This leads to low-level violence between communities, increasing their alienation from one another and the potential for escalation of disagreements.
- Relationships between ethnic groups in mixed communities in Kyrgyzstan tended to be more positive than relationships between mono-ethnic communities, reinforcing the fact that rumours and stereotypes are a strong driver of interethnic tension.
- Respondents tended to prioritise initiatives addressing the root causes of interethnic tensions, rather than the symptoms, when asked how to improve interethnic tensions. Improving the economy, stronger human rights protections, and collaborative efforts between law enforcement and community members to prevent crime were the most commonly recommended strategies for improving interethnic tensions.
- When asked about their expectations for the future, although nearly all groups across region and ethnicity stated that they anticipated feeling safer in the coming six months, considerably more feared long-term instability.

Significant tensions remain in the Ferghana Valley sections of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, despite many people not facing immediate threats to their personal security. Access to basic infrastructure and economic opportunities are major concerns for communities, and create an environment in which people, feeling neglected, are more prone to external shocks and the escalation of tensions. Uneasy ethnic relations, both within Kyrgyzstan and along the Kyrgyz–Tajik border, persist, even when outward conflict is not observed. Religious differences are a further fault line along which vulnerable communities divide. Failure of the consistent rule of law, official misconduct and general impotence to protect communities undermine public confidence and may exacerbate strains within society, particularly if communities perceive that the only means for addressing grievances is through vigilantism.

As such, national and international actors working to ensure lasting peace and security in the Ferghana Valley face substantial challenges. This report sought to identify some of these, as well as suggesting ways of mitigating them; detailed recommendations are included at the beginning of this report. It is important to address communities' material needs; however, this must be accompanied by efforts to improve state–society relations and address tensions between different groups within society. Governance and security sector reform processes must prioritise strengthening relations between communities and security actors, because communities who trust local authorities and police are more likely to cooperate with official structures to both prevent problems escalating and effectively respond to issues as they emerge. Steps must also be taken

to understand how religious and interethnic problems emerge and are sustained, and programmes addressing root causes and low trust developed.

Despite the challenges present in the Ferghana Valley, there are a number of opportunities, offering entry points for building lasting security. First, relations between ethnic groups have improved since the 2010 violence and there is a degree of optimism regarding communities' immediate security. These improvements must be consolidated, and optimism utilised to engage communities in developing strategies that counter longer term concerns about stability. In addition, peaceful mixed-ethnicity communities offer an example of interethnic coexistence and cooperation, which can inform programmes aimed at reducing stereotypes and related tensions. Moreover, despite difficulties in relationships between authorities, police and communities, many people remain prepared to address a range of security actors. There are examples of constructive relationships between communities, traditional structures, local authorities and neighbourhood police officers, which can be reproduced and strengthened, providing scope to reform security provision and develop strategies for joint management of threats.

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## ANNEX 1: Methodology

This report is based on data collected through a quantitative household survey undertaken in November 2012, and interviews and focus group discussions conducted in January and February 2013. Research was conducted in southern Kyrgyzstan and northern Tajikistan and included mixed and mono-ethnic communities in the Osh and Jalal-Abad oblasts of Kyrgyzstan and communities living in Batken oblast in Kyrgyzstan and Soghd oblast in Tajikistan, both in borderline and inner settlements.

During the household survey, interviewers conducted face-to-face interviews with 2250 respondents. An initial questionnaire was developed by Saferworld on the basis of similar research conducted by Saferworld in other parts of the world as well as experience of conducting two smaller qualitative surveys carried out by Saferworld and local partner organisations in the Ferghana Valley in October 2010 and July 2011. Pilot interviews were conducted prior to the full household survey in order to minimise technical inaccuracies and ensure that questions were understood by, and relevant to, respondents and the questionnaire was refined accordingly. The final version of the questionnaire was translated into Tajik, Kyrgyz, Uzbek and Russian and respondents were free to choose in which language the survey was conducted.

Sample sizes were calculated to ensure representative samples of Kyrgyz and non-Kyrgyz populations in Osh and Jalal-Abad and borderline and inner settlements in Batken and Soghd, allowing conclusions to be drawn and comparisons made between these different groups.

The sample included three stages of random selection. The first stage of sampling was a random selection of clusters, where clusters were defined as whole settlements in relatively small towns and villages and as certain geographical areas in more densely populated areas (Osh, Khujand, Jalal-Abad and Kistakuz). Clusters were selected by systematic probability proportional to size, which ensures that small, medium and large settlements are fairly represented. Within each cluster 20 households were selected by random systematic walk method using a step size of seven.

All respondents were over 18 years old. In total, 49 per cent were male and 51 per cent were female. 34 per cent of respondents were Uzbek; 32 per cent, Kyrgyz; 32 per cent, Tajik; 1 per cent, Russian, and 1 per cent, 'other'.

After an initial analysis of the survey results, an accompanying set of FGDs was conducted in January and February 2013, in order to further explore issues arising during the household survey. 15 focus group discussions were conducted across all four districts, including a variety of mono and mixed ethnic communities and groups targeting men, women and youth individually.

In February 2013 a series of additional key informant interviews were conducted with a range of security providers, including border guards, neighbourhood police officers, aksakals, leaders of youth and women committees, and community leaders in order to clarify on certain issues. Results of these interviews are footnoted throughout the research.

Additional information about the methodology and full datasets are available on request.

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**COVER PHOTO:** Men walk past a school in Orto-Boz village, Batken Province, Kyrgyzstan.

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