

# Water Project Helps Reduce Ethnic Conflict

## Challenge

Residents of Vorukh, Uzbekistan and Ravot, Tajikistan both have access to the Isfarinka River for most of the year. However, once the growing season begins, farmers from upstream Ravot irrigate their fields and unintentionally cut off water access to Vorukh. Though residents in Ravot feel they have a right to use the river water as they see fit, the downstream users in Vorukh view the upstream users' water practices as unfair and selfish. Heated arguments and strained relations have characterized the struggle over water resources since the Soviet-era pump that helped to parcel out water ceased working.



## Initiative

Through a USAID program implemented by Mercy Corps, residents of Vorukh were given an opportunity to address issues that served as sources of tension in their community – water naturally was first on their priority list. The three-year project, operating in the Ferghana Valley portions of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, aims to reduce inter-ethnic and trans-border conflict through a combination of social and infrastructure initiatives.

The Community Initiative Group – a council of active citizens from all walks of life – undertook the design and implementation of the project. The project required the repair and rehabilitation of three wells, in addition to the construction of a 3.5 kilometer water pipeline. The total cost of the project was approximately \$17,000, with roughly half coming from the community itself. More importantly, the Community Initiative Group stresses the long-term management of this project.

## Results

The implementation of the system itself was a reason for celebration among the residents. After eighteen months of joint cross-border social projects, improved contact, and now a technical solution to a shared problem, there are sincere well-wishes and goodwill that residents of Ravot brought to their neighbors in Vorukh. In the end, this project has not only benefited the 1,235 residents of Vorukh, as they gain improved access to drinking water, it has improved relations between two Ferghana Valley neighbors.

For more information, please visit [www.usaid.gov](http://www.usaid.gov).

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