



**Sergei Vorsin**  
**Monitoring and evaluation officer**  
**Youth Ecological Centre**  
**Republic of Tajikistan**

“Economists in the environmental sphere should develop a clear methodology to assess social and environmental costs as well as benefits.”

Sergei Vorsin’s expertise lies in climate change reduction and disaster response. In 2007, he was one of the researchers who helped finalize a research report entitled *Report on public perspectives of climate change in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan* .

Hired to evaluate a Red Crescent disaster reduction program in Tajikistan, which was sponsored by the European Union, Vorsin and his teammates used a participatory

method: rapid environmental impact assessment. He says that he saw the positive results of his work first hand, both in terms of project outcomes and reflected by the community members who were proud of their work and involvement in the project.

As a part of his work, Vorsin helped community members conduct pre- and post-project evaluations to assess knowledge, technology training, and capacity-building efforts. Vorsin and his team collected over 2000 questionnaires and spoke with local government officials, community leaders, and other important figures. After the data were collected, however, Vorsin and his team faced several challenges, all of which, he says, are common in disaster management. For example, they had far too little time. They were required to cover 40 regions in less than a month, with only one additional month to analyze and report on their findings. He and his partner also found that the questionnaire they had designed was too technically challenging, which slowed their analysis.

Vorsin recommends simple, straightforward evaluation methods. He proposes that all disaster and risk-reduction projects, as well as all development projects, integrate measures to address climate change, although he recognizes the difficulty in identifying the “right” or “best” approach to identifying and evaluating the effects of climate change. Evaluations in the social and environmental sectors specifically are highly complicated, because of the high levels of uncertainty and general lack of quantitative data in these fields. However, he believes that during the process of project design, including the

design of monitoring and evaluation systems, these sectors should be targeted to ensure that social and environmental rights are achieved.

Vorsin says development projects should place social and environmental objectives before profits or monetary concerns. He believes that, only after the social and environmental issues are addressed and the criteria developed during the design stage have been met, should international development agencies or development banks discuss monetary costs and benefits. Moreover, Vorsin calls for additional techniques to assess natural resources and ecological systems, although he admits that the costs of doing so are high. He feels that economists in the environmental sphere should develop a clear method for assessing the social and environmental costs of climate change projects as well as the social and environmental benefits.

According to Vorsin, this method could be used in conjunction with rapid environmental impact assessment. He points out that natural disasters are occurring with greater frequency in his home country of Tajikistan, as well as in the rest of the world.

“Last winter brought with it many negative environmental, social and economic impacts in Tajikistan,” he recalls. “And even now we do not know the total losses we face.”

What he does know is that disasters usually bring huge losses, especially for mitigation and adaptation projects. “We need to be able to better determine those possible losses to ensure that decision-makers can alleviate the possible risks.”

Vorsin stresses that, “Only if we can show the social, economic, and environmental benefits of evaluation can we ensure better development in the future and sustainability in development projects throughout the many regions of the world.”