



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

TAJIKISTAN

SUCCESS STORY

Visit to the U.S. Alters Man's Worldview

USAID study tour alum returns to Tajikistan with a new view on his country and his future



Photo: Malika Bahovadinova

Jamshed Bafaev

“We need to work and make Tajikistan a better place,” said Jamshed Bafaev, USAID study tour alum.

Today, Jamshed Bafaev sees his future in helping his country. “We need to work and make Tajikistan a better place,” he said. His outlook changed dramatically during a USAID-sponsored internship in the United States, where he was inspired to stay in his native Tajikistan and work to better it.

Only a year ago Bafaev was ready to give up on Tajikistan and planned to move to Germany, where he'd been invited to work for a car-servicing company. Bafaev saw no future in Tajikistan for himself or his family.

As he was weighing the invitation to move to Germany, Bafaev applied for a business internship in the United States that the USAID Community Connections program offered for small and medium-sized business owners. Because he owned an auto-repair shop, Bafaev was selected to participate in the program and spend several weeks studying practical business approaches in Kalamazoo, Michigan.

While he learned a great deal about the American auto industry during the trip, his most transformative experience came from the home stay with an American family – a standard practice this USAID program uses to familiarize visitors with the American culture.

“It was amazing to see how American people appreciate their country, heritage, friends, and neighbors. They work hard and try hard to improve America,” said Bafaev. The experience changed his attitude toward Tajikistan, and he decided to stay and work in Tajikistan. “My roots are here. Maybe in four years we won't have the problems of electricity cuts ... but for now we just need to commit our time and efforts to this country,” says Bafaev.

After his return to Tajikistan, Bafaev purchased new equipment and opened a new unit for American cars in his auto-shop. He has marketed his new line of services to owners of American cars, such as U.S. Embassy personnel, and many of them now use his shop for car repairs.

“My business is growing,” Bafaev notes, “and the Community Connections program contributed to this growth. However, the biggest contribution of the program is the new friends in Tajikistan who I meet with and do business with, and friends in the United States.”