Mohsafar Nurova, 18, is the oldest of seven children in the village of Khojaabdolon in Norak district. Her parents divorced two years ago, soon after her father’s migration to the Russian Federation. With no support from their father, the family’s life was difficult. To support the family, her mother found a job in a canteen 7 kilometers from the village, making barely $1-$2 (5-10 Somoni) a day.

Since her mother works, Nurova is in charge of household chores and the care of her little sisters and brothers, four of whom are school age and the other two under age 6.

“All my conscious life is associated with household errands, especially water delivery,” says Nurova.

She used to spend most of her day carrying water manually and with donkeys. Four to five times a day, Nurova had to travel to the village center located a kilometer away and carry 300-400 liters of water back to her home.

In August 2015, USAID, under its Local Governance Project in Tajikistan project, opened a new drinking water system in Khojaabdolon village of Norak district.

The project built a catchment basin near a local spring, laid 7,200 meters of pipe from the spring to the village, fenced the water intake facility in accordance with environmental safety requirements, built 11,600 meter-long distribution system, including 12 water distribution chambers and a chlorination device, and installed individual water spigots to bring water to 63 households.

In order to ensure sustainable operation and management of the water supply system, USAID assisted the village council to establish a communal utility service enterprise. The enterprise is responsible for the maintenance and operation of water facility, fee collection, and educating the community about water conservation. Establishment of the utility service enterprise is an integral component of the project, as it ensures the sustainability of the drinking water system.

The newly built system in Khojaabdolon provides 538 rural residents better access to drinking water with water spigots installed in 63 households. Because the volume of water exceeds the community’s need for drinking water, villagers can now garden and grow vegetables on their land plots.

As water now runs from the tap, Nurova, who recently finished secondary school, can provide better care for her sisters and brothers since she no longer needs to spend hours a day getting water for her family. “I never thought of the fact that just an improved access to water can have such effect on the life of people,” says Nurova.

Now that water is easily accessible, Nurova plans to cultivate vegetables and plant fruit trees on the family’s 0.18 hectare plot of land, which has never been cultivated due to lack of water and the dry climate. This plot can give the family access to otherwise expensive vegetables and fruits, save money that would be spent at the market, improve the family’s diet with diverse food, and potentially provide income from the sale of excess produce.

The USAID Local Governance Project in Tajikistan is a five-year project launched in 2012. The objective of the project is to enhance USAID assistance to the Government of Tajikistan in the implementation of the Law “On Local Self-Governance in Towns and Townships.” On a sub-national level, the project partners with 20 municipalities in 10 districts across all four regions of Tajikistan and aims at improving local governments’ capacity in delivering communal services to citizens particularly clean drinking water. To date, about 26,000 rural residents gained access to improved drinking water with the support of the USAID Local Governance Project in Tajikistan.