

TYPE OF PROJECTS

General Trends

In Central Asia, donors and international organisations have put "conflict prevention / peace promotion" on the agenda of their development cooperation programs only recently. SDC is probably one of the pioneers in this perspective since discussions on conflict prevention and the Ferghana Valley started as early as 1997 and concrete projects were already funded in 1999. In general, those donors with a specific "conflict prevention/ resolution" agenda dedicate limited resources to this type of initiative. Complementary to this situation is the fact that a very small proportion of those projects and programmes with a specific focus on conflict prevention / resolution has been so far evaluated.

If at the beginning, donors tended to fund "early warning systems" (see below 4.7) specially focused on the Ferghana region, funds for more operational initiatives have been allocated only at a second stage. This has possibly led to a certain "self fulfilling prophecy" effect. The energy and the discussions at international level dedicated to the "Ferghana Val-

ley as the hot spot of Central Asia" have probably produced a distortion of the perception of the Valley. On the other hand, Central Asia is faced with a number of issues and problems that are conflicting and the fact that international organisations do recognize that their programmes have impact on such issues should be seen as a positive development.

In terms of bilateral donors, the US, Switzerland, Canada⁶ and to a lesser extent the UK, are those who have developed concrete programmes in Central Asia with a conflict prevention focus. It is interesting to note

that the Nordic countries do not consider Central Asia as a priority region⁷. As for the multi-lateral organisations, the European Union does not have programmes that are specifically dedicated to the prevention or resolution of conflicts in Central Asia⁸. So far, in agreement with the EU policies that do make a link between peace building and conflict prevention, the avoidance of violent conflict seems to be considered as a by-product of general development⁹. The United Nations and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe are the key actors with a conflict prevention / resolution agenda.

The United Nations

First of all the United Nations is engaged in post-conflict peace-building in Tajikistan. These activities are co-ordinated by the United Nations Tajikistan Office of Peace Building (UNTOP) whose operations are authorized until June 2002. UNTOP is the follow-up mission of the United Nations Missions of Observers to Tajikistan (UNMOT), present in the country from January 1993 to March

⁶ Canada, through CIDA, is supporting mostly initiatives in Afghanistan / Pakistan. As for post-Soviet Central Asia, CIDA is focusing on Tajikistan (IOM funds, assessing possibilities with UNTOP) and the Ferghana (water-management projects). In the aftermath of September 11, CIDA has approved a one million Can \$ line for Afghanistan and surrounding countries. New funds were expected to be approved in December 2001.

⁷ They may however fund limited initiatives mostly through multi-lateral organisations. For example, Finland has supported an initiative of the UN University of Peace (see 4.7), while SIDA has funded a small project with the Institute for Further Education of Journalists in Sweden called, "Journalism and Democracy".

⁸ An exception is probably the support given to the reintegration of former combatants in Tajikistan (DG External Relations funding to UNDP/UNOPS and AKF/MSDSP, see 4.6).

⁹ In the recent "Overview of EU action in response to the events of the 11 September and assessment of their likely economic impact" (17.10.2001), one can read that: "Development and poverty reduction. Any political or military response to the events of 11 September must go hand in hand with action to address the economic and social impact that they will have. A coalition against terrorism must be complemented by a coalition for development. This linkage is already a component of EU policies for peace building and conflict prevention. Development co-operation is helping to reduce ethnic, social and regional tensions".

2000, and one of the key actors in the success of the peace process in Tajikistan. Through the creation of UNTOP, the UN recognizes the fact that in order to ensure the sustainability of the peace process, the international community needs to support countries like Tajikistan for a period that exceeds the one regulated by the formal peace agreement (originally 18 months).

Based on the recognition that the root causes of the Tajik conflict have not yet been tackled, UNTOP's main task is to consolidate the peace process in Tajikistan by addressing "institutional, social and economic development in an integrated manner"¹⁰.

In order to carry out this ambitious mandate UNTOP is staffed by eight internationals, under the leadership of a Representative of the Secretary General. In terms of activities, UNTOP's role is to bring the UN organisations present in the country under a common framework. Together with the UN programmes and agencies, as well as a few NGOs, UNTOP prepared in March 2001¹¹ a strategy document for peace building in the country, which also contained several specific programmes. The document was submitted to the donors at the Consultative Group Meeting in Tokyo in May 2001. Its main focus was the reintegration of former combatants (see below 4.6) and the continuation of political dialogue with government and opposition forces in the country.

This document had been prepared mainly to provide UNTOP and the UN system in Tajikistan with funds for post-conflict / peace-building operations. UNTOP itself does not have funds in its core budget to carry out programmes, which is rather problematic for a mission with a one-year mandate and especially in sectors where no other UN agency is working (for example human rights¹²).

Some of the projects presented in Tokyo are currently being implemented. Meanwhile, the UN is revising its strategy with the help of external experts and is preparing a strategic document¹³ that should serve as the main guideline for the UN response to the challenges of peace building in Tajikistan.

In this draft document, the UN analyses the situation in Tajikistan in the following manner: "the main socio-political transformation during the war was the strengthening of traditional solidarity networks, which took over significant parts of originally state and societal functions. They turned into power networks with significant responsibility for security in the country. Today, they seem to be the main possible transmitters of instability and violence – inside the country as well as from outside. The

proposal therefore is to focus during peace building on the devolution of those power networks with the purpose of "emptying their portfolios" and bringing the respective functions back to official state and societal institutions"¹⁴.

The new strategic document proposed by UNTOP is of far better quality than the one presented for the donor conference in Tokyo. However two main factors may have a negative influence on the proposed UN framework for programming: the capacity of the UN to carry out such a programme and the focus of bilateral donors and main development players, such as the Asian Development Band (ADB) and the World Bank (WB), to operate within this frame.

The UN is also developing a regional frame for its national activities and programmes. This stems from the recognition that regional stability and security have a fundamental regional dimension and that the UN needs to strengthen its capacities to manage regional crises¹⁵. The UN is currently formulating a comprehensive strategy for conflict prevention in Central Asia. This effort is meant to integrate the joint analysis of security threats in Central Asia and specific action points to be carried out by participating programmes, agencies and departments of the UN, in political, developmental, humanitarian, human rights, drug control and crime prevention areas. Currently, DPA,

¹⁰ From the SG report to the UN SC, 5 May 2000

¹¹ Almost a year after the activation of the mission

¹² A Human Rights Officer completes the staff of the UNTOP. However, this person had to spend much of her energy not only in understanding the situation but also in fund raising for UNTOP's activities in the field of human rights.

¹³ A draft dated September 01 has been shared with the PD IV

¹⁴ Response of the UN (International) System and main intervention points, Draft Document, UNTOP Dushanbe, September 2001.

¹⁵ In 1999, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) incursion in Southern Kyrgyzstan pointed out the weaknesses of the UN at regional level.

UNDP, OCHA, OHCHR, ODCCP and the World Bank are participating in this joint undertaking. The draft strategy¹⁶ is aimed first of all at prevention of crisis development in the Ferghana Valley.

The UN is not the only organisation following the main trend of developing multi-dimensional, multi-country programmes normally focusing on the Ferghana Valley. Several organisations such as SDC, USAID, the Soros Foundation and ACTED have done the same (below chapter 4.6). From 1999 onwards, these organisations have developed programmes that are very similar in design. The UNDP with the aborted Ferghana Valley Development Program and SDC with the Cross-Border Peace Promotion Programme have been the pioneers of this type of initiative. Instead of creating and agreeing on a joint programming frame, donors and organisations seemed to have chosen to develop several similar and parallel programmes, which, in a relatively small region such as the Ferghana Valley, creates several problems in terms of coherence, co-ordination, and competition for resources and local partners.

The third large UN project in the area of conflict prevention is the joint initiative to launch a preventive development programme in Kazakhstan, by UNDP, DPA and the Government of Kazakhstan. This programme is in the process of formulation and will be launched five or six months from

now. It will also be a multi-faceted programme with several projects addressing the current threats to peace and security in Kazakhstan. This would be the second UN programme targeting prevention development in the region, the other being the UNDP programme for Southern Kyrgyzstan¹⁷. While it is certainly positive that the UN should focus on the conflict potential in South Kazakhstan, on the other hand it is still unclear how the UN system and the Kazak government want to fill such a general category as "preventive development".

The Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe

The OSCE is present in all the countries in Central Asia and also has field offices in Kujand (Tajikistan) and Osh (Kyrgyzstan). Even though Tajikistan clearly remains the main centre of attention and resources for the OSCE, the organisation has also recognised the importance of the Ferghana Valley and of the regional dimension of security. In the coming months, the OSCE is apparently planning to reallocate resources from the operations in the Balkans to those in Central Asia.

Unfortunately, despite this network of offices in the region, the OSCE has developed so far very limited visible activities targeting conflict prevention / resolution issues. It seems that there isn't yet a regional approach

or a real strategy for peace promotion / conflict prevention.

At the operational level, the initiative is often left to the single field officers to develop small projects with such a focus. Bigger, policy-oriented initiatives such as the one led by the UK for the water sector, have been based on a doubtful assessment of the chances of success and have thus failed to reach any results. Closer to the interests of the governments of the region is the OSCE and ODCCP initiative aimed at strengthening regional co-operation in combating drug trafficking and terrorism. After a meeting in Tashkent in 2000, a conference dedicated to terrorism will be held in Bishkek on December 13-14. At this occasion the OSCE will seek the support of the participating states for a Plan of Action that in addition to a package of specific measures against terrorism, it also foresees provisions on small arms trafficking, strengthening of rule of law, protection of human rights and the media, tolerance education and conflict prevention. Past experience shows that the governments of the region tend to concentrate more on the first set of measures than on the second.

To an external observer, it seems that the different OSCE institutions active in Central Asia, the Secretariat, the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), the High Commissioner on National Minorities and the Representative on Freedom

¹⁶ This document has not yet been approved and at this stage is internal and confidential

¹⁷ Which is what remains from the UNDP Ferghana Valley Development Programme developed in 1999 but never fully implemented due to the boycott of the Uzbek government.

of Media, operate independently of each other without a common frame for programming.

Even though the International Finance Institutions¹⁸ are the main ac-

tors in terms of funding provided for development initiatives, the commitment of these institutions to conflict resolution / prevention is more of general nature (based on the overall

assumption that "economic development is an instrument of conflict reduction"). So far, the IFI don't seem to have adopted a conflict sensitive approach to their programmes.

Moment of the Intervention

International co-operation programmes aimed at promoting peace and /or transforming, preventing conflict have been developed as a response to two main situations:

Pre-Conflict Phase: in this case programs are focusing mainly on the Ferghana Valley, and recently on South Kazakhstan. The objective is to avoid violent conflict and / or

transform conflict situation using non-violent means.

The case of the programs developing in Batken (Kyrgyzstan) and Sukahandarya (Uzbekistan), theatre of military incursions by the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan in 1999 and 2000, can probably be still considered under the category of pre-conflict interventions.

Post – Conflict Phase: in this case programmes have been developed in Tajikistan in the aftermath of the civil conflict and they mainly target reintegration of specific population groups and / or the stabilisation of specific regions considered as "dangerous".

Prejudice Reduction

The main aim of this type of project is to modify the perception that one or more given population groups have of "the others". The usual vectors of such initiatives are the education system and the media.

By using these institutions, projects try to work on the formation of stereotypes (tolerance education), provide the instruments to better understand "the other" (bilingual education, some media projects) or increase the access to (less biased) information.

The most important projects in this category are:

- FTI Tolerance Education in Kyrgyzstan. A project initiated by UNHCR and then supported by SDC and now supported also by the OSCE (PO 1)
- AKDN Humanities Project (regional) (PO 2)
- Media: SDC Regional Media Development Programme (CIMERA implemented), IWPR (PO 3), USAID (Internews), UNICEF Sa-laam Radio in Batken, South Kyrgyzstan (PO 4 and 26), OSCE media projects in Tajikistan (newspapers and radio)
- UNESCO Soap Opera Project (regional)
- CIMERA Bilingual Education Project in Kyrgyzstan (PO 5)

¹⁸ Relevant for the region are the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and the International Monetary Fund

- Centre for Conflict Management in Almaty Kazakstan (PO 28)

The fact that several donors have supported media programmes in the region as a way to improve access to information and thus reducing tensions and conflicts is symptomatic of a Western perspective: the main assumption is that there is a public opinion and this can be influenced by the media. I am not sure that this assumption can work yet in Central Asia. Media control by the state is still very high, especially in countries like Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan and on the other hand the professional level of local media is often poor and centred on what happens in the capitals. Often, the main reference media remains the Russian TV. Little information exists on media in general¹⁹ in Central Asia and of the role of media in the conflicts in the region. The SDC-supported Central Asia Media Development Project seems to be one of the only

sources of information on media in Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and has a forthcoming study on the role of media during the Tajik conflict.

Donors and organisations have usually realised that media development programmes need a long-term engagement and investment in order to produce information of a better quality and thus attract a public. Some other approaches, such as the one of the UNESCO Radio Soap Project, which uses scripts adapted to local cultures to present key issues of daily life may prove a more adjusted instrument if one tries to deal with conflict related issues. The approach of the OSCE, which provides financial support to local newspapers and to one local radio in the South of Tajikistan, is still too much influenced by the needs of the election campaign phase (getting media time for all candidates) and less by a strategic reflection of what media

could look like in a country like Tajikistan.

Education is certainly the key to the future generations of the region. Tools provided to students will have an impact on the future of Central Asia. The experience of tolerance education training in the schools is generally positive, but tolerance is only one element when working with conflict issues. Projects that provide pupils with tools to better understand the other cultures and to deal constructively with conflict will have an impact, unfortunately (from the donor's perspective) in the next ten years.

The education sector often demands an even longer engagement than media programs and shows results after many years (which is not very good for donor organisations that need to justify their investments with visible and if possible quick, results).

Mediation, Facilitation and Dialogue

The main aim of these projects is to use dialogue as a means of non-violent conflict resolution. They provide a forum for dialogue, facilitate the dialogue between parties or even mediate between conflict parties. Fundamental for these projects are the existence of "peace constituencies" and thus the willingness of the

parties to enter into a dialogue. If the other types of projects are usually more development co-operation oriented, mediation, facilitation and dialogue projects are often those supported by the political wings of the different ministries of foreign affairs.

These projects can be categorised by the level of their intervention: grassroots, mid-level professionals, and key decision-makers.

Example of an intervention providing mediation at community level is the SDC supported conflict prevention project in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan (PO 25 for a similar project

¹⁹ IWPR, Internews, CIMERA and partly Eurasia Net are currently the main sources of information.

newly funded by USAID), implemented by local NGO 'FTI' and 'Ittifok'. Whereas the complementary project, Ambassadors of Goodwill Network (supported by the Swiss Political Division IV) is a track 2 type intervention that foresees the creation of a network of influential and well accepted individuals able to mediate at district, region (Oblast) or even national level. So far, only in Tajikistan have the UN and the OSCE been able to carry out successful mediation interventions at high level.

If currently at grass-roots level there is a group of relatively good trainers, there is no local regional institution able to train mid-level professional in conflict resolution issues. Interventions are carried out directly by international projects with little capacities built locally.

The Inter-Tajik Dialogue Civic Initiative (PO 6) (supported by the Kettering Foundation) is an outgrowth of the Inter-Tajik Dialogue established in 1993 as the first unofficial dialogue between the government of Tajikistan and the opposition²⁰.

In 1999, Tajikistani members of the Inter-Tajik Dialogue formed their own NGO called the Public Committee for the Promotion of Democratic Processes and charted a four-track programme to be conducted inside Tajikistan:

- Develop a university course in conflict resolution and peace-building and train university professors in this field (in collaboration with the Ministry of Education in Tajikistan)

- Promote local economic development initiatives at the Jamoat level.
- The Tajikistan regional dialogues: Building on their experience with dialogue processes within the framework of the Inter-Tajik dialogue, the Public Committee have now launched a series of regional dialogues in Dushanbe, Khojend, Khorogh, Garm, Panjikent, Kulyab, and Kurgan-Tyuppe. These dialogues involve mid-level regional, local, and civic leaders and are aim at promoting the habits and practice of dialogue within the different political and regional forces in the country. The first round of dialogues targeted the issue of relationship(s) between state, religion and society.
- The Tajikistani Issues Forums: The purpose of this track is to promote public, deliberative discussions of issues of concern to citizens in different parts of Tajikistan. These discussions are structured following a well-tested model of citizen participation. Each forum focuses on a single topic. The first round of forums will focus on three topics: poverty, drugs and high school education.

This four-track programme is probably one of the most interesting initiatives currently carried out in Tajikistan. Even though the Public Committee has a great deal of experience in conducting discussion forums it does not have the capacities and resources to really promote

local economic development and / or efficiently link with those organisations that do have the resources. Given the expectations that such activities raise among the concerned population, a failure in this component may undermine the credibility of the whole initiative. On the other hand, those international organisations dealing with economic development often have difficulties dealing with a local NGO that promotes a more participatory approach to economic development programmes.

Other programmes such as the SOROS supported Ferghana Co-operation Programme or some initiatives supported by the OSCE also foresee the creation of forums for discussion, which unfortunately are often a one-off event with a weak or no follow-up at all.

The UN Tajikistan Office for Peace Building (UNTOP) and the OSCE mission to Tajikistan have started regular discussions among political party leaders and other relevant actors in the form of a political club. The aim is to foster the dialogue on specific issues of concern. This initiative is one of the activities proposed by UNTOP within its strategy for peace building in post-conflict Tajikistan (above 4.1).

The Centre for OSCE-Research (CORE; PO 7) at the Institute of Peace Research and Security Policy in Hamburg has developed a new programme called "German-Tajik Dialogue on Cooperation and Co-existence of Cultures and Civilizations in the OSCE-Region. Lessons from the Secular-Islamist Compromise

²⁰ For an overview of the Inter-Tajik Dialogue see Accord 10: "Politics of Compromise: the Tajikistan Peace Process"

Process in Tajikistan". This project will focus on the establishment of a dialogue between the moderate Islamic wing and the secular forces. There is hope that violent or aggressive strategies will be abandoned in the whole region and that simultaneously the process of peace consolidation in Tajikistan proper will

develop. By the beginning of December, the Tajik and German side will have elaborated the common principles and rules that will lead the dialogue. The OSCE-Research Centre has indicated its interest in enlarging the partners in the dialogue and would favour the inclusion of countries such as Switzerland.

Both the activities of the Intertajik Dialogue and the OSCE Research Centre, are dealing with issues such as the relations between centre and region and / or the one between Islam and secular forces, which will be of central importance not only for Tajikistan but also for the whole Central Asia.

Topic-Focused (Cross Border) Co-operation

These type of projects are targeting specific issues that have been considered as sources of tensions or conflict and / or specific groups / institutions that are considered to be important for reducing tensions in the region. They are mostly regional projects, and more specifically targeting cross – border communities. They can also be specific components that are part of larger co-operation programmes.

Economic Development

Besides issues such as access to land, water/energy management and border management, international organisations have identified economic depression as a factor of instability. If poverty in itself can't be considered as a source of conflict, resentment and unrest is likely to be induced by drastically unbalanced or inequitable economic development²¹. Central Asia is unfortunately also a region where "there is a sharply growing disparity between the narrow elite, which benefits appreciably from privatisation and other market economic

reforms, and the larger part of the population, which is being driven toward economic desperation"²².

In the Ferghana valley, the issue of economic development is not only influenced by factors common to other CIS countries (such as an economic infrastructure developed for the rationalities of the very specific Soviet market, an non-existent financial infrastructure - especially in rural areas -, a cumbersome and highly complex tax system, a general lack of implementation of the existing legislation etc.), but it is also linked to a number of politically sensible factors such as access to natural resources (land and water) by different social and ethnic groups and a repressive border management.

International organisations have supported small and micro-business through training and micro-lending programmes. These were funded by

USAID and implemented by MCI, Eurasia Foundation (PO 22) or within the frame of larger programmes such as the UNDP (in Kyrgyzstan through the Preventive Development and Poverty Alleviation Programs PO 9), and ACTED (a French NGO using EU DG Development and ACT funding; PO 10). Joint cross-border economic activities and trade are similarly considered as factors positively influencing the situation in the Ferghana. ACTED at a grass-roots level, the EU (through TACIS), the Asian Development Bank, USAID and the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO), at a regional level have supported such an approach (support of trade, transport networks, customs co-operation).

Grass-root projects are certainly vital to alleviate the hardship caused by the current social and economic crisis, the impact of such projects is re-dimensioned by the fact that:

- Each state of the Ferghana has different economic development interests, policies and regulations

²¹ "Preventing Deadly Conflict", Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, New York, 1997

²² "Incubators of Conflict: Central Asia's Localised Poverty and Social Unrest", ICG Central Asia Project, Osh/ Bruxelles, 8 June 2001.

- The post-independence phase has increased the fragmentation tendencies of what was a more coherent and united social, economic and administrative space,
- Remote and / or “opposition” areas (Batken, Namangan, Karategin etc.) are not high on the investment agenda of national governments and major international financial organisations

Border Management

Cross-border co-operation and trade are also facing the problems caused by the reinforcement of the borders, especially in the Ferghana Valley. Regional border crises involving insurgencies, new visa regimes and mining of borders between Tajikistan and the neighbouring Central Asian Republics over the past five years, have highlighted the regional destabilizing effect of border mismanagement. It is also worth mentioning that there are currently a number of border disputes²³ among the three countries sharing the different parts of the Valley that need to be addressed within some form of multilateral or bilateral official mechanism.

Border management is an issue especially for the International Organisation for Migration²⁴ (IOM; PO 11) and the OSCE. The first organisation has so far shown better results at national levels (especially in Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan) and developed the first pilot cross-border activities. On the other hand, the OSCE has not been really active on this issue. This has probably to do with the difficulty of

developing a regional dimension to its programmes in Central Asia. The OSCE missions basically operate independently of each other, and issues appear not to be addressed at the regional level (with the exception of terrorism and drug trafficking).

Border management initiatives would be clearly relevant for a more cooperative atmosphere in the region but they must go through a lengthy process in order to obtain the commitment of the local authorities. Apart from having to deal with the security concerns of the different authorities, border management and customs projects are also aware of the danger of illegal revenues that officials at different levels obtain by “taxing” border – crossings.

Support to Specific Target Groups

International organisations (especially those that are US based) seem to consider local NGOs or other community based organisations - as well as women - as specific groups that should be strengthened in order to foster peaceful living in the region.

US grant-making organisations such as the Eurasia Foundation, Counterpart Consortium, Mercy Corps International and the Soros Foundation (PO 19) have been supporting (usually with USAID funds) local NGOs (especially women NGOs; PO 27) and NGO Development/ Resource Centres (PO 8). Similar support to these

types of institutions has been given by the OSCE (PO 20 and 21) or even the UNHCR.

The interest in local “NGOs” has been heavily influenced by a western perspective of how “civil society” should be. As mentioned by Olivier Roy, one definition of civil society “implies a society made up of free individuals, able and willing to build political ties voluntarily in order to create a State of Law”²⁵. In this sense, privatisation is a pre-requisite for democratisation and in Central Asia it has to be build from scratch. This vision of civil society has influenced heavily the approach used by international organisations in Central Asia. When they looked for their correspondent organisations in the region and did not find them, they supported their creation. In a first stage on international cooperation with Central Asia, international organisations have not recognized the fact that there was already a society in Central Asia, “with its culture, traditions, solidarity groups, patronage networks, etc.,” and that this society was not just a by-product of the Soviet system. It is a mistake to see Central Asian societies as deprived of any social fabric: there are sociological networks, even loosely established, based on extended families, clans, the mahalla (or neighbourhood) and on kolkhozes, which include a set of different *mahalla*”²⁶. Of course, this existing social fabric has an important role when dealing with tensions and conflict situations.

In former Soviet Central Asia, after some years of NGO support programmes, what is now called a local

²³ For example, there are close to 140 unresolved border disputes between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan.

²⁴ According to the Conference process of CIS States on Problems of Refugees, Displaced Persons, Migration and Asylum Issues that began in 1996, IOM is the mandated organization to assist in building capacity in migration management

²⁵ Olivier Roy, “Kolkhoz and Civil Society in Central Asia’s Independent States”, in Holt Ruffin M. and Waugh D., *Civil Society in Central Asia*, University of Washington Press, 1999

²⁶ *Ibid*, p. 110

“NGO”²⁷ is mostly an organisation, which is urban based, dependent on one or two influential individuals (that usually speak English) that are tightly linked to government structures. These persons, often women excluded from their previous positions after independence, have been able to develop their links with the international organisations and access funding, international networks and travel. Thanks to their preferential access to external funding, local NGOs have been able to substitute government structures in the provision of certain social services previously provided by the state.

As far as conflict resolution activities are concerned and despite the interest of international grant making organisations, only a few local NGOs²⁸ can show a relatively good track record. This makes these organisations a much sought after partner. However, experience has shown that these organisations are mostly overfunded and even with them work needs an important investment in terms of time, energy and resources for capacity building.

Only recently some attention has been given to community based organisations (farmers groups, parents – teachers committees, village health committees, women’s committees etc.) that are much less formalised than the NGOs²⁹. So far, if attention was given, it usually had more a development than a conflict prevention/ resolution perspective.

Lately there has been a discussion among international development operators about the use of neigh-

bourhood councils (so called mahalla) as vectors for development and conflict resolution activities. Already the Soviet ethnographers and Soviet planners had identified and used the mahalla as a social institution useful for social control, community mobilisation and local conflict resolution. Taking into consideration this instrumentalism by the Soviet administration, mahalla councils can have a role to play in grass-roots conflict resolution activities. However, one should be aware that this institution is often not very open to the interests of groups such as the women and young people.³⁰

More generally, international initiatives should be able to better understand the role played by identity and solidarity groups (be these patronage networks, extended families, awlad, kolkhozes etc.) when dealing with disputes and conflict. In local conflicts, notables and persons with social and moral authority (teachers, writers etc.) have been involved in “people-to-people” diplomacy and acted as mediators between conflicting parties³¹. To my knowledge, a comprehensive study on these local mechanisms of conflict management does not yet exist.

Since women are an important source of community stability and vitality they should have an important role in the decision-making and implementation processes. Post-independence development shows however an increased marginalisation of women from political life combined with an increased role as breadwinners for the whole family.

Similarly to the general trend, international organisations have supported, in a first phase, the creation of a number of so-called “women’s NGOs”. International operators are currently expanding their support to less formal women’s groups (less formal, but also less urban and less elite based. An example could be the PO 20 by the OSCE Tajikistan). A major difficulty for these activities is to move from issues linked to day-to-day survival to providing tools and support for activities dealing with networking, relations with authorities, advocacy etc. If the first is not ensured there are few chances that the group can dedicate time and energy to the second.

Access to Natural Resources

Fresh water is arguably Central Asia’s most critical resource, and it has often been the source of competition and friction between states. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan control the upstream of the region’s two main rivers, the Amu-Darya and the Syr-Darya. Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan control the downstream parts and possess vast energy deposits, which is a key element in the overall comprehension of water management in the basin. One important is-

²⁷ Some of the local NGOs come from the Soviet tradition of dissidents.

²⁸ The examples mentioned in chapter 4.4 illustrate this situation.

²⁹ This has probably to do with how international organisations work. Grant making organisations need formal organisations that can act as local implementing partner.

³⁰ The same problem has occurred in Kyrgyzstan, when the Kyrgyz government had decided to give local councils of elders (so called Aksakals) an official position within the local government structure. The Kyrgyz government had to go back on its decision because of the criticism raised by women and human rights groups that aksakal councils did not take into consideration the interests of women and youth.

³¹ One of the latest examples may be the one of a Tajik poetess and a Kyrgyz Member of Parliament mediating in the 1999 IMU incursion and hostage taking operation in South Kyrgyzstan.

sue is what the water-rich states should get in return for sharing their water. Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have hammered out agreements with Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to swap fossil fuels for water. While these swap deals and bilateral treaties have so far averted crises, they have not solved the issue in the longer term and only represent expedient political agreements.

Water and energy are considered to be one of the major issues at regional (inter-state) level. Millions of dollars have been spent by the international community (WB and EU in the first line) for the Aral Sea, often with questionable or no results.

International organisations have clearly understood that these issues are major challenges at the regional (inter-state) level as well as at the national and local level. Unfortunately, the drought that has affected the region for the last two years has been used by governments of the region to attract attention to the short-term humanitarian problems of the population, more as a chance to develop further co-operative approaches as well as to reform water management and agricultural policies. So far, inter-state level efforts have been confronted by the fact that Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan have opted for bilateral solutions in dealing with water management issues and have thus blocked the attempts by international organisations to mediate³². As a consequence of this stalled situation, international organisations have decided to deal with each river basin separately³³.

Another trend is the one outlined in a recent donors forum³⁴, where experienced international development operators have expressed their intention to move as much as possible from policy oriented, inter-state, programmes to small, concrete, demonstration projects that may be used as models for the different government and non-government institutions dealing with these issues.

At a national and local level, organisations have been supporting projects dealing with local water supply and drainage, capacity building for local organisations to manage water allocations and solving disputes. A very similar approach has been adopted by SDC USAID, NOVIB (a Dutch NGO, PO 30) and CIDA³⁵, which are working mostly in the same regions and often with the same partners (International Secretariat for Water a Canadian NGO, Foundation for Tolerance International a Kyrgyz NGO).

Some words should be spent on a Swiss programme in the water sector (PO 12), since SDC is a new actor in the water sector in Central Asia and one of the only organisations (with USAID), that is active at all levels (inter-state, with a hydro-meteorology project in co-operation with SECO, at national and local level with infrastructure and capacity building

projects). Probably due to the fact that the programme is new, the links between the different parts are still weak. On the other hand, Switzerland may have an opportunity³⁶ to attract attention on the fact that millions of dollars have been invested in the water sector, yet there is no forum for developing a co-ordinated approach and share experience among donors.

As for the land issue, all the countries of the region have different land regulations. Only Kyrgyzstan is introducing private property rights. This has been the main reason to develop a specific project in South Kyrgyzstan (implemented by Helvetas; PO 13), which provides legal support to citizens dealing with issues linked with land and agricultural products.

Access to Social Justice

The desire to live in a relatively just society is crucial to a healthy system of social organization. The absence of such a sentiment can be one of the key elements of the motivation to use violence as a mean to settle conflicts.

The post-independence phase has seen the privatisation by the elites in power of the majority of the economic resources formerly controlled by the state. This situation, combined with a deep economic and budgetary crisis of the newly created Central Asian states, has opened the door to deep-rooted corruption. This process of spoliation has been accompanied by a clear control by the elites in power over the judiciary system. With money or force, these groups have perpetuated the Soviet tradi-

³² One of the last failed attempts was the one led by the OSCE under the initiative of Great Britain.

³³ So far, Syr-darya and Amu-Darya. To my knowledge, no project exists for the Irtish river basin between China and Kazakhstan.

³⁴ Held in Budapest in March 2001 and supported by SDC and the Soros Foundation.

³⁵ CIDA is supporting the International Secretariat of Water for a community water management project in the Ferghana as well as the Canadian Society of Civil Engineers for a regional water management project.

³⁶ Particular attention should be given to the use of the hydro-meteorological data collected through the SDC and SECO projects. This data should be used both with national governments and international organisations.

tion of control of the judiciary by the executive. Basically, the inequalities in wealth have been translated into inequalities in front of the justice system. Thus the main problem in Central Asia with regard to justice is not the lack of legislation, or even the poor quality of the existing legislation, but the unwillingness to implement it.

Reforming the system as a whole and not only changing the legislation, is a long-term task that needs a clear commitment by both the governments and the supporting donors. So far, not many organisations and donors have been willing to deal with the functioning of the judiciary and law enforcement systems in Central Asia. USAID (through the American Bar Association), and SDC (in this sector active only in Tajikistan) seem to be the main actors dealing with reform of the judicial system. The majority of organisations active in this field have either provided technical assistance for redrafting the existing legislation, (often with scant co-ordination among each other) or

supported the Central Asian governments in their enforcement capacities on issues such as drug trafficking (UN ODCCP) and lately "terrorism" and "extremism".

Another factor related to access to social justice is the management of minorities in Central Asia and especially in the Ferghana Valley. The post-Soviet Central Asian states have inherited borders that have divided different ethnic groups into several political boundaries³⁷. What were mere administrative borders in Soviet times have become international borders between sovereign states, interfering in the ordinary flows of goods and people. Moreover, the boundaries are contributing to creating or at least reinforcing ethnic identities. Minorities' management is not only an issue of concern within the states but also between the states.

As an example, in Southern Kyrgyzstan access to land, to employment opportunities or positions in the administration are more and more perceived in an ethnic perspec-

tive. The Uzbek population, (the larger minority group in the region at 15%) express their feelings of being increasingly discriminated by the Kyrgyz authorities. On the Tajik – Kyrgyz border, resource-based conflicts are being expressed along ethnic lines³⁸ and reinforced by the policy of Kyrgyz authorities to move ethnic Kyrgyz on the border with Tajikistan in order to counter-balance the creeping migration of Tajiks towards the mountains of Southern Kyrgyzstan.

If several projects try to address the issues of community-based resource conflicts (below 4.6 *Pre-Conflict Projects*), much less is undertaken in order to develop a dialogue with the government on minorities' policy. It is clearly a sensitive subject in a region where the official position of the governments is that there is no ethnic problem³⁹. The OSCE through its Commissioner for National Minorities has initiated a monitoring project (see 4.7) whose impact is quite difficult to assess.

Local Development Approach for Target Communities

These projects target specific groups, communities or regions that are considered as (potentially) dangerous in terms of violent conflict. They have been developed based on the recognition of the fact that the communities have either suffered from a violent conflict or are confronted with a potentially violent conflict need, in

combination with more "software oriented" tools, concrete financial support to work on the causes of the conflict. Basically, the main aim is to stabilise the situation by avoiding either the return to violent conflict

or the transformation into violent conflict.

Post-Conflict Projects

Typical for the first situation are the projects in Tajikistan both in the Karategin valley (UNDP, IOM; WB, AKF) and in the South of the country (UNDP, UNHCR). These projects

³⁷ According to Randa Slim, in a still unpublished document, 700'000 ethnic Uzbeks live today in Southern Kyrgyzstan, 300'000 ethnic Kyrgyz reside in Uzbekistan and more than 1,4 million Uzbeks live in Tajikistan.

³⁸ R. Slim, Unpublished Document, p. 9

³⁹ Which is probably correct in historical terms but where post-independence problems are "ethnicizing" more and more the relations between groups.

target specific groups of population (IDPs / Refugees, "ex"-combatants) as well as the communities where these groups live. All these programmes have been confronted with a similar basic problem, re-start economic activities in regions and with populations involved in a violent conflict (one group as victims and the other participating in the violence).

- CARITAS Local Development Programme in Tajikistan (SDC sponsored; PO 24). This programme is interesting more from the point of view of its approach than from the targeted area (which is not considered as specifically conflict prone). The community based, participatory planning of local resources should provide useful lessons and experiences for actions in more sensitive areas and for topics such as decentralisation.
- UNDP Rehabilitation, Reconstruction and Development Programme (UNOPS implemented; SDC co-funded; PO 31) active in regions such as the Karategin valley but also the North Tajikistan- South Kyrgyzstan area.
- UNHCR Refugees Reintegration Program (SDC humanitarian aid co-funded until 1999). Since the majority of the Tajik refugees have returned to their villages, the UNHCR program can be considered as completed.
- AKF Rural Development Program in the Karategin Valley (PO 14)
- The World Bank Post-conflict Reconstruction Credit and technical assistance in the Karategin Valley (SDC co-funded). This project was

launched just after the signature of the peace agreement and did foresee a number of infrastructure projects (both at community and district level) in an opposition region where only very few international organisations were operating. The project was completed at the end of 2000.

- The IOM project in support of the demobilised combatants in Tajikistan (PO 15), with CIDA funds

In Tajikistan, demobilisation / Reintegration of "former" combatants has been a very problematic issue since 1997, both from the political and the operational point of view. Accessing the figures of UTO fighters would have revealed the real strength of UTO and this might have compromised the power-sharing agreement between the government and the UTO. At the same time in Tajikistan there were no large classical military units in barracks but only local militias loyal to a commander composed of fighters coming from and living in the regions of combats and a small core of what can be considered as professional fighters. This situation has posed important conceptual and operational problems to those few organisations (mostly within the UN system or associated to it) willing to deal with this issue. If everybody agreed on the potential for disruption created by military formations with their own agenda, the real challenge has been to develop ideas on how to tackle such a problem. So far the UN, through the UNOPS implemented RRDP, has provided "former fighters" with the opportunity to earn

a salary in labour intensive, short-term employment schemes. It is difficult to evaluate the impact of these projects but their efforts can be easily hampered if they are not complemented by longer-term economic activities. Moreover, such projects may be useful for providing an occupation to local fighters but they will probably be inappropriate with professional fighters.

Pre-conflict Projects

The Ferghana Valley can be considered as an example of the second situation. It is a region which not only experienced military incursions in 1999 and 2000 by militants of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan but was also confronted with the problems created by a collapsing overdeveloped and complex infrastructure built with the scale and according to the interest and rationality of the Soviet Union.

Projects working in this situation usually apply a participatory methodology for identification of causes of conflict and treatment of these causes. Most of them include funds for small infrastructure projects, which are also allocated through a participatory planning process.

SDC started such pilot projects in Batken Oblast and Sughd (formally Leninabad) Oblast in 1999 (PO 16). In 2000 UNDP followed with a similar project for the Batken Oblast 'Preventive Development', PO 9). ACTED started its programme in 2000. USAID has adopted a similar approach for its Central Asia Conflict Mitigation Initiative started in 2001, a program to be massively expanded

(PO 17, 18, 23; from 2.2 million \$ to 40 million \$) from 2002.

If from one side the fact that several organisations adopt a very similar approach is certainly positive, the

situation in the Ferghana Valley is becoming problematic since donors and organisations are already now competing for local implementing partners. Moreover, even though the

approach is similar, needs analysis and programming are not done jointly. Co-ordination becomes once more a key issue in order to avoid major problems.

Conflict Assessment and Analysis / Early Warning

From 1998 on, the Ferghana Valley has been "put on the map" by several agencies as a (potential) region of violent conflict. Several initiatives have been funded with the objective to develop early-warning capacities in and about the region, the most visible being the Central Asia Project of the International Crisis Group (ICG), and the Central Asia Early Warning Network (CASIANET), an undertaking of the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology/Russian Academy of Sciences and the Swiss Peace Foundation (FAST⁴⁰) and FEWER.

Other institutions or projects such as the OSCE High Commissioner of National Minorities (HCNM) and the UNDP Preventive Development Project and the SDC funded Cross-Border Peace Promotion Project, have developed monitoring capacities targeting specific issues: ethnic minorities for the HCNM and conflict issues at community level for the two others.

As one can see, already several similar initiatives exist in the region. Even though ICG has opened an office in Osh and CASIANET has a group of correspondents from the region, one of the issues of concern is the fact that these networks risk working with the same local information providers and thus to receive the same material used by the other networks.

The impact of such projects is difficult to assess. It's clear that they are confronted with the problem of limited means for "early action" within donor countries, moreover often the recommendations produced by the different reports are of too general a nature to be useful operationally.

Helvetas (PO 29) is preparing a study about the conflict situation in Southern Kyrgyzstan and is developing a Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment (PCIA) for the same region. So far, international organisations and especially the IFIs have rarely adopted such a perspective when

planning an intervention in the region. Things are currently changing at least among bilateral donors such as SDC and DFID.

A group of related projects are those analysing the experiences of resolution of conflict in Tajikistan. The former Political Division III of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs has supported the British organisation Conciliation Resources to prepare the report Accord 10: "Politics of Compromise: the Tajikistan Peace Process". The UN University of Peace is carrying out an analysis of the peace process in Tajikistan that will be than used to develop, in cooperation with Central Asian scholars and experts, a conflict resolution curricula that it is hoped to be relevant for the region as a whole.

⁴⁰ In 1998, the Swiss Peace Foundation launched a political early warning project called FAST (in German "Früh-Analyse von Spannungen und Tatsachenermittlung"). FAST is currently funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

Overview of Projects in Central Asia

Type of Projects	Pre-Conflict	Post-Conflict	Comments
Prejudice Reduction	FTI Tolerance Education (component of SDC Cross Border Peace Promotion) AKDN Humanities UNESCO Radio Soap Opera Cimera Bilingual Education SDC Regional Media Programme Unicef Salaam Radio IWPR, Internews	AKDN Humanities UNESCO Radio Soap Opera IWPR, Internews	
Mediation, Facilitation, Dialogue	SDC Cross-Border Peace Promotion Ambassadors of Goodwill	CORE German – Tajik Dialogue Inter-Tajik Dialogue Civic Initiative UNTOP Political Discussion Club	
Topic Focused (Cross-Border) Cooperation	SDC Water Management Programme CIDA funded water projects (ISW, CSCE) IOM Border Management Projects SOROS women initiatives	SDC Judicial Reform Project Tajikistan SDC Women Support Project Tajikistan ABA Projects in Central Asia (USAID funded) OSCE women support project	SDC, CIDA and NOVIB co-fund the ISW community water management project in KYR / UZB
Local Development for Target Communities	SDC Rehabilitation of Social Infrastructure UNDP Preventive Development Project ACTED Conflict Prevention Programme USAID Central Asia Conflict Mitigation Initiative started in 2001	UNDP Rehabilitation, Reconstruction and Development Program (UNOPS implemented) UNHCR Reintegration Program AKF Rural Development Program in the Karategin Valley World Bank Post-conflict Reconstruction Credit and technical assistance in the Karategin Valley IOM project in support of the demobilised combatants in Tajikistan	
Conflict Assessment / Early Warning	ICG; CASIANET; OSCE HCNM; UNDP Preventive Development; SDC Cross-Border Peace Promotion	ICG; CASIANET	

OFFICIAL CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

An inventory of conflict prevention / resolution and peace building initiatives would not be exhaustive without taking into consideration local mechanisms of conflict resolution. Local actors, both within the government and wider society, are not passive objects waiting for international involvement in conflict situations. Since in the chapter 4.4. and 4.5 I have tried to outline the issues concerning local NGOs and other civil society institutions, I will focus here on official conflict management mechanisms.

Following the breakdown of the Soviet Union, the governments of the region have been confronted with the massive challenge of creating an identity as a national state, with the consequence that the defence of national interest is the first reflex when dealing with regional issues such as water and energy management, transport and trade and the environment, but also when considering border and minority issues. Despite this situation and the tensions experienced during the last ten years, the Central Asian states have managed to avoid going to war with each other. This means that these states have found mechanisms ei-

ther at inter-state, national and local levels that are capable to regulate disputes.

At the economic level, all the states (with the main exception of Turkmenistan) have officially embraced economic reform policies. However, the implementation of such policies has varied in practice from one country to another, and within each country from one region to another. This has resulted in an increased fragmentation of an area formerly characterised by a one set of laws and regulations (the Soviet one). The same situation has occurred for issues such as land privatisation. On the other hand, during the last nine years, the integration process of the Central Asian states seems to have acquired a more tangible reality in the form of the Central Asia Economic Union (CAEU)⁴¹. Through this institutional frame the states of the region have begun to create an organizational instrument to coordinate their policies in differ-

ent areas (energy, water resources, migration...). However, impediments to regional cooperation and coordination exist and are well defined: legacies from the past, differences in development strategies and the impact of various external factors.

Due to the fact that the Amudarya and Syrdarya basins go through all six countries in the region (Afghanistan⁴², Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan), a multi-party process is essential as far as water management is concerned. Several inter-state bodies have been created since 1992 in order to regulate the use of water in Central Asia. As shown by a recent study⁴³ mandated by SDC, disputes over water allocations show that inter-state bodies are still not able to solve critical issues since they often lack the necessary political commitment from the highest spheres of the concerned governments.

For example, even though the Aral Sea Basin Program (ASBP) and the International Fund for the Aral Sea (IFAS) are administered by a council of deputy prime ministers, a solution that should assure a high level of political commitment, none of the

⁴¹ The CAEU was created in 1994 under the name of the Central Asian Economic Community or CAEC by Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. Tajikistan joined the organisation in 1998.

⁴² Until now, Afghanistan did not pose a problem when it comes to regional water management, whenever this country will find a more stable form of government that would allow a process of economic development to re-start, then Afghanistan would require larger quantities of water for agricultural and possibly industrial use. This would bring a new player to be accommodated when dealing with the management of the Amudarya basin.

⁴³ For a comprehensive overview of the question refer to, *Inventory of Inter-State Institutions, Regional Projects and National Bodies*, Swiss Coordination Office, Bishkek, 2001.