

# UNDERSTANDING DEVELOPMENT AS A HOLISTIC PROCESS

## CAMP INTEGRATED APPROACH FOR LIVELIHOOD IMPROVEMENT

The countries of Central Asia are facing an unprecedented challenge to find ways to cope with the new political and economic conditions including globalization. The dynamic processes associated with this adaptation call for an integrated understanding and approach in order to avoid narrow thinking and action often visible in sectorial planning.

The claim for a sustainable development similarly requires equal attention for natural, economic and social aspects taking into consideration contextual specificities of different geographical areas. Focussing on water or pastures from a biodiversity conservation perspective without integrating market issues, institutional or socio-cultural aspects will fail to be effective perceiving problems and opportunities from different angles is thus important. Moreover mountain regions in general are fragile and thus very vulnerable from nature to socio-culture while being crucial for the centres of political and economic power mostly located in lowland areas. Finding pathways for a fruitful

coexistence and regional collaboration of highlands and lowlands is an important prerequisite for Central Asia's future.

**Integration: understanding livelihoods as a complex whole**

The comprehensive baseline of the CAMP-CDE integrated approach for Central Asia links conceptual, methodological, topical, geographical, practical and eventually psychological aspects. This attitude reflects the complexity and reality of people's livelihoods which is at the heart of all efforts. However, many projects and programs tend to have a narrow focus and to neglect important aspects such as more emotional rationals of people's behaviour. This explains why many development efforts reveal to be unsustainable. In order to be more effective, development and research efforts, practice and theory are blended and understood by CAMP as cyclic processes.



## Goal and objectives

CAMP promotes sustainable mountain development by supporting efforts aiming at improving people's livelihood conditions in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Kazakhstan through balanced economical, ecological and social development processes leading to the strengthening of civil society. According to the four main fields of intervention, the objectives are as follows:

- Promote the sustainable and multifunctional use of natural resources by improving management practices and land use techniques
- Increase income by promoting the production, processing and marketing of traditional and innovative local products
- Support community efforts to elaborate village development strategies and the creation of corresponding institutions
- Foster multi-level multi stakeholder communication, negotiation and networking to empower local communities in finding the necessary consensus and joint solutions

## Approaches and principles

The diversity of the CAMP agencies based in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan provide the ground for a regional and multidisciplinary approach making best use of complementary competences. By collaborating with partner organisations, additional experiences and know- and do-how can be made available and capacity building supported. The strategic and practical partnerships allow optimal exploitation of niche competences and complementary funding. This strongly fosters innovation, quality, and mutual learning. In implementation a multi-level multi-stakeholder approach is favoured to increase the relevance and later applicability of the results and achievements. Efforts are concentrated on pilot villages where new ideas and capacities are developed, tested and refined before being handed over to organisations specialised in upscaling.

### a) Regionality

Regional cooperation is needed to support, enhance and accelerate the development effort to implement a common strategy of mountain development. Coordination is essential in order to strengthen longterm regional stability. This regionality is revealed through:

- joint implementation of a project in more than one country
- transfer and exchange of experiences from one country to the other ones e.g. through training activities
- developing new tools by involving all three countries in the sense of 'participatory technology development' (PTD) where each side contributes with ideas from a different perspective

This 'out-of-the-country-box' thinking is the base for upscaling and allows the future implementation of transboundary projects.

### b) Multi-level multi-stakeholder

The problems to solve and opportunities to seize require a better participation of the different stakeholder categories at all levels of interaction from the local community level to the regional and even international level. In order to support such a multi-level multi-stakeholder approach, CAMP supports all kinds of planning, policy development, negotiations, and conflict transformation activities using different mechanisms such as multilevel working groups or round table discussions.

### c) Empowerment & competence development

The transformation process in the former Soviet republics calls for a more active role of society at large. This requires special efforts to empower people and communities and to enhance their competences for self-governance. The CAMP agencies strive to increase their own competence as well as to increase local knowledge and experience for sustainable development activities. This is mainly achieved through specific practical trainings and the provision of targeted expertise.

### d) Innovation & partnerships

The CAMP agencies try to identify innovative and/or cost-effective ideas helping to improve people's livelihood. They support the identification, collection, description and dissemination of such ideas. Furthermore through 'participatory product development' (PTD) workshops, innovative ideas are developed jointly with the local population.

### e) Multi-disciplinarity

Village development requires a variety of know- and do-how from different fields such as e.g. economy, sociology, medicine or ecology. This calls for inter- and multi-disciplinary teams working together to address complex

issues. The CAMP agencies therefore try to invite representatives of various disciplines to collaborate with different stakeholders. This allows combining scientific knowledge and approaches with local experience and traditional knowledge.

## CAMP's four entry points and fields of intervention

As a consequence of integrated thinking, CAMP operates through four entry points acting also as primary fields of intervention.

### Field 1: Natural resource management

Influenced by the recent history under Soviet ruling and forced by difficult current socio-economic circumstances, the natural resources of Central Asian mountain regions are frequently used in an unsustainable and 'mono-functional' way. The former collective, and largely industrialised and mechanised way of resource use has left as heritage a high degree of specialisation among former Kolkhoz, Sovkhoz and Lezkhoz employees and a passive, topdown and technocratic understanding of problem-solving. The land reform and privatisation process led to the creation of a multitude of small farms. This now calls for new approaches to natural resource management. Herein CAMP promotes a multi-functional sustainable use of natural resources by:

- providing specific information to farmers (e.g. on how to conserve soil and water)
- helping in identifying new marketable products including the necessary training for product development (e.g. marketing of felt products or yak meat)
- promoting diversification and developing corresponding household strategies
- identifying innovative ways to improve the efficient use of energy (e.g. through insulation of houses or construction of stoves using local materials)
- training consultants working in the rural advisory service sector
- improving the access to remote mountain areas (e.g. summer pastures) to better balance the pressure on natural resources (e.g. near village pastures)

### Field 2: Product development and marketing

The widespread high level of poverty in rural mountain areas calls for innovative solutions to improve people's livelihoods. Herein, the development of marketable products helping to generate additional income plays a crucial role. The lack of production know-how and the lack of experience how to operate in a market-oriented environment hamper the establishment of effective and sustainable income-generating activities. The CAMP agencies work to improve the present situation by:

- providing regular trainings on felting, willow weaving, fruit, yak meat and milk processing as well as the gathering of medicinal and colorant herbs
- establishing permanent training, production and marketing centres to process felt, willow, and food products
- conducting regular promotional weeks and maintaining permanent sales centres
- establishing and supporting producers' networks
- elaborating and promoting labels for mountain products and introducing quality control mechanisms

### Field 3: Village development

At present the mountain communities in Central Asia lack proper institutional support and knowledge on how to jointly plan and implement village development and corresponding projects. Given the limited financial resources, mountain communities are forced to rely on their own potential to overcome their difficulties. They have to learn how to help themselves. This is why the CAMP agencies try to:

- provide interested villages with workshops on the elaboration of village development strategies or hazard management plans
- promote the creation and functioning of local self-governance structures at village level and corresponding implementation structures for development plans and projects
- support the implementation of development projects within the framework of village development plans
- advocate the cause of the 'Alliance of Central Asian Mountain Communities' AGOCA as an innovative vehicle to strengthen sustainable mountain development through self-help at community and village level

- create independent mountain village development funds able to finance concrete projects within the village development plans of the members of the Alliance

#### Field 4: Actors' dialogue and networking

The CAMP agencies' endeavours to promoting an integrated approach also calls for more inclusive forms of dialogue and innovative ways of creating networks. The goal of 'open dialogue' is to give all relevant stakeholders a voice in order to express their different points of view in a specific matter. The process helps in clarifying different positions, opinions and interests and improving mutual understanding. Ultimately this helps building up mutual respect and trust, a prerequisite for joint decision making based on accepted compromises. In this sense the CAMP agencies strive to:

- create, organise, conduct and facilitate formal and informal round table discussions or platforms for interaction
- give mountain communities a voice to express opinions and be heard
- document the discussions and provide national responsible bodies with concrete inputs for policy and strategy development
- support the creation of informal and formal networks

#### CAMP's main tools

**L4S training modules:** 'Learning for sustainability' (L4S) is a tool for workshops at village or community level developed by the Centre for Development and Environment (CDE) of the University of Bern (Switzerland) and applied by the CAMP agencies. It provides thematic guidelines for moderators regarding different topics or issues such as soil and water conservation, integrated local risk management or village development planning process (see Activity Sheet 2). L4S workshops thrive to promote learning processes and to strengthen

individual and community capacities.

**Best practices:** CAMP searches, selects, develops, describes and publishes the best practices on implementation of rural initiatives, water and soil conservation, pasture improvement, energy saving, mitigation of natural hazards and income generation measures. Such examples provide the population with good ideas in problem solving.

**Multi-level working groups:** In order to gain practical experience the CAMP agencies create multi-level working groups which address issues related to sustainable rural development mostly at village or community level. These adhoc groups work under the guidance of the CAMP agencies which capitalize on the experiences by developing new tools or elaborating recommendations for policy makers.

**Practical trainings:** Depending upon concrete demands and opportunities the CAMP agencies develop and offer practical trainings jointly with experienced partners. Concrete examples are vocational trainings for stove makers and for house insulation at village level. The trained craftsmen are further supported through a backstopping after completion of the course and invited to events where they can exchange their experiences and learn from each other.

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