

SMALL GRANTS

SUPPORTING LOCAL INITIATIVES FOR VILLAGE DEVELOPMENT

Mountain communities are facing a variety of problems in improving the living conditions of their inhabitants in order to reduce migration to urban areas. Generally there is a lack of means to finance small initiatives which would have the potential to contribute to livelihood improvement. Here the 'Small Grants Program' (SGP) tries to fill a gap by supporting local initiatives and by providing new knowledge and access to simple but innovative technologies. The regular grants provide financial support ranging from 300 to 3000 USD. Higher amounts may occasionally be disbursed.

- mobilize people to implement participatory actions in villages
- increase awareness about the potential and usefulness of small financial supports
- raise awareness about the effectiveness of participatory implementation
- disseminate information and promote dialogue and partnerships between stakeholders at all levels
- help raising funds through the 'Mountain Villages Partnership and Development Foundation' (MVPDF)

Goal and objectives

The goal of the SGP is to further initiatives of NGOs and local communities in implementing concrete actions through small grants.

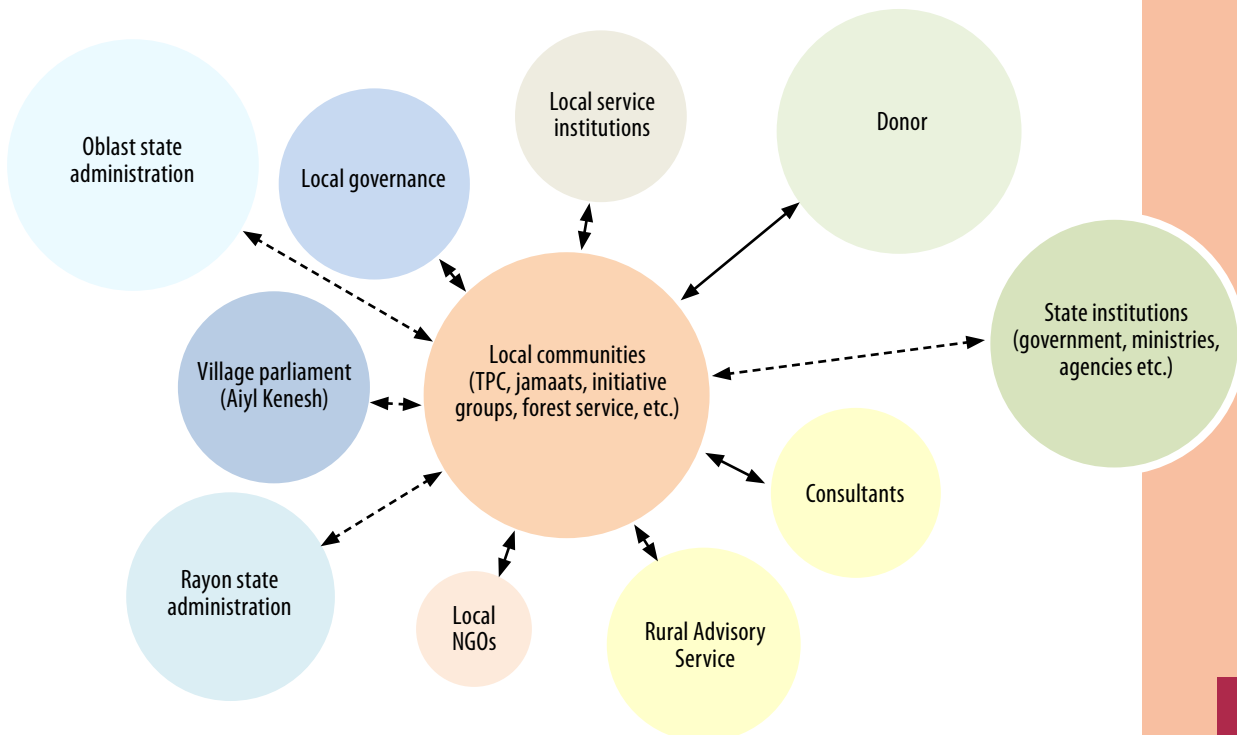
The concrete objectives are to:

- support the implementation of concrete actions through grants, consultation, and training

Project Examples

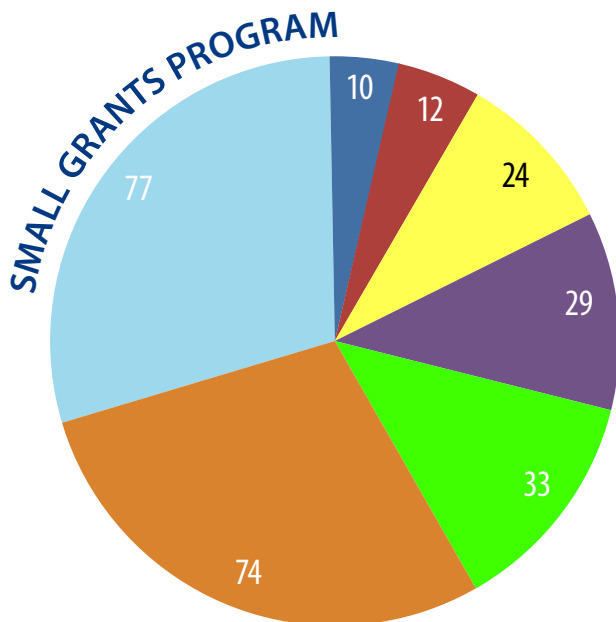
a) Reconstruction of mountain bridges

The SGP helps communities to reconstruct damaged bridges to reopen access to pastures and forests and improve communication w. This allows people to generate new income sources such as honey making, collection of herbs, berries, mushrooms etc. So far, thirty-two bridges have been repaired in the Issyk-Kul region, and a further six in the Uzgen forest service

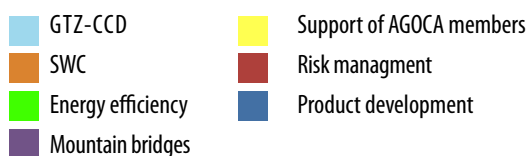


Main partners of local communities (the sizes of circle represent relative current importance for and the distances current relationship to local communities)





Number of small grants according to domains of interventions 2002-2007



(Osh region). The local contribution in Issyk-Kul consisted of providing trees as construction materials while in Uzgen labour was provided. The support of the community was about half of the entire project budget. The program is financed through private contributions of the NGO 'Pamir Bridges'.

b) Contribution to implementing the UNCCD

The SGP supports initiatives of mountain communities in implementing the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) based on village development plans. From 2002 until 2007 seventy-seven small projects have already been implemented by local communities. Among them two projects were initiated and led by Aiyl Okmotus, eight by Initiative Groups, twenty-eight by Territorial Public Councils (TPCs) and thirty-nine by other NGOs. Projects are financed by the GTZ-CCD Program.

c) Mitigating natural disasters

The increasing frequency and severity of natural hazards forces the affected communities to find innovative, small-scale solutions to mitigate further damaging events. For this, consultations from external natural hazard specialists often play a crucial role. The integrated local risk management strategies applied include changes and innovations in land use such as the promotion of more appropriate crops to help reduce

future risks or more appropriate irrigation practices. The SGP supports the 'Disaster Risk Management' Project financed by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) which builds upon the UNDP Program addressing risk management issues. The projects thus avoid duplication of efforts while generating synergies.

PRINCIPLES OF SGP

- demand oriented
- participatory
- transparent
- flexible and integrated
- benefiting groups
- requesting own contributions from beneficiaries
- complementary to other donors' programs
- embedded in local development plans and legislation

GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR PROJECT SELECTION

The selection of projects is based on a range of questions such as:

- Who is the initiator/owner of the project?
- What is the relevance of the problem addressed?
- Is the proposed project set-up logic convincing and realistic?
- What is the innovative idea of the proposed project?



Planting of fruit trees helps securing income for future generations

- How are the rural population and target groups involved in all stages of project implementation?
- Will the requested / foreseen resources be used effectively?
- Will the project and its results be sustainable?
- Does the project allow for further dissemination?

LESSONS LEARNT BY VILLAGERS

- Women are more responsible than men.
- Cooperation with subcontractors is necessary and beneficial.
- Involving local specialists is crucial for implementation.
- The volume of the foreseen activities is often underestimated.
- Technical aspects are often neglected or forgotten.

rather low (about 20%).

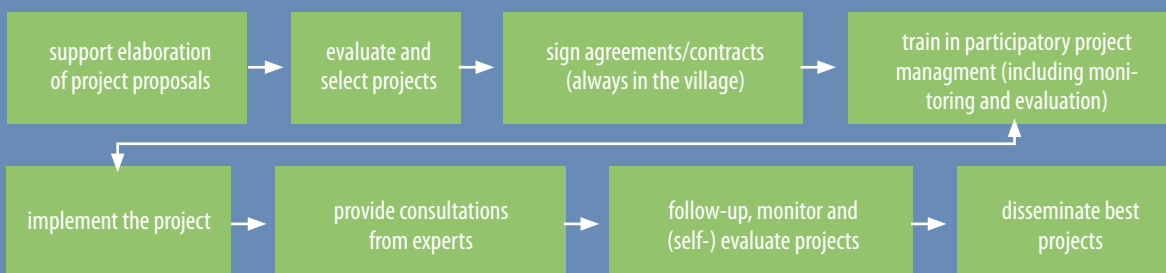
- Weather conditions often hinder the timely implementation of projects.

Achievements (examples)

Social

- Creation of new institutions such as NGOs or Village Committees (e.g. on natural resource management)
- Capacity building in participatory management and implementation skills
- Creation of trust among donors through transparent communication, effective use of grants and high visibility (good project documentation)
- Creation of MVPDF as bridge between villagers and donors based on SGP management experience

Small grant can help in processing own raw material to create added value and income



CAMP project cycle of SGP implementation

- The contribution of the local population is often misunderstood by the community.
- Opportunities for cooperation with other projects in the village are often not seized.
- The machinery used is sometimes in bad conditions which creates new problems and delays.
- Finding/buying of the necessary materials (e.g. good quality seeds) is often difficult.
- Prices of planned necessary goods to be purchased often increase before the project is implemented causing financial problems.
- The planned project duration is often too short.
- The acceptance rate of projects is

Economic

- Improvement of cattle breeding through artificial insemination
- Increase of household income through innovations (crop rotation, processing of wool, establishment of village felt centre, fruit drying)
- Cost saving of family budgets through more efficient stoves / utilisation of biogas
- Attraction of new donors such as the SDC and the 'Alpine Alliance'

Ecological

- Preservation of biodiversity (management of seabuckthorn and rehabilitation of natural bush forests in Issykkul State Reserve)
- Improvement of natural resource conditions (establishment of nurseries and orchards, protection activities of coasts and channels, rehabilitation of drainage system)

- Use of alternative energy sources (introduction of biogas facilities, construction of energy effective stoves and solar fruit driers)
- Emergence of new types of organic fertilizer by using residues of biogas production

Conclusions and recommendations

- Mountain communities need to realise and learn how to estimate their potential for self-help in overcoming existing difficulties at local level.
- SGP measures can successfully promote village development provided the implementation is based on transparent participation and gives responsibility to the rural community.
- Sustainable funding should be based on cost sharing among local, state and international sources.
- The institutional and legal framework at the village level needs to provide mechanisms for implementing the planned measures.
- Besides grants there is a need for loans to help support the implementation of (private) local initiatives.
- The long term involvement of donors also depends on how information is shared and presented (quality, transparency).
- Fundraising efforts should be extended from regular donor organizations to private persons, companies etc.
- SGP projects should be administrated through the MVPDF in future.



Small grants for the rehabilitation of bridges giving access to remote summer pastures are benefitting entire communities



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