

Central Asia: Acting locally – cooperating regionally

Regional Programme for Sustainable and Climate Sensitive Land Use for Economic Development in Central Asia

Context

Central Asia is suffering significantly from the consequences of climate change. Eighty percent of the territory of Central Asia is arid land. Continued expansion of deserts and arid areas are predicted, along with above-average increases in temperature and water shortages.

Also, the region is affected by a lack of awareness and inability to apply strategies for the sustainable use of renewable natural resources. Consequently, resources are becoming degraded in the short and medium-term, and biodiversity is being lost. This, in turn, serves to aggravate poverty in rural areas. The governments have now understood the dangers, but they often lack the capacities and resources to tackle the problems.

Our objectives

Together with our partners, we aim at supporting different groups of land users, governmental agencies and the private sector in Central Asia to adopt integrated, economically and ecologically sustainable forms of land use, incorporating climate change considerations.

Our measures

The current phase of the Regional Programme for Sustainable and Climate Sensitive Land Use for Economic Development in Central Asia has started in December 2017 and builds on the activities of its predecessor Programme on Sustainable Use of Natural Resources in Central Asia. However, the focus has shifted to the integration of different forms of land use, such as pasture and forest management, and their economic valuation. GIZ's multi-level approach proved to be successful in tackling forest and pasture degradation,

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Commissioned by	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Project region	Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan
Lead executing agency	Line ministries, nongovernmental organizations
Duration	2017 - 2020

conservation of mountain ungulates and halting the loss of wildlife habitats. Now, after more than ten years of engagement in the land-use sector of Central Asia, ranging from community-level forestry management to processes of policy development and mainstreaming on the national level, the evolution of the multi-level approach into a more holistic and integrative approach to land-use management was an inevitable progress.

The real challenge of sustainable land-use management cannot be solved with technical solutions only. Socio-economic, institutional, financial and environmental issues that differ across regions must be considered. Integrative land management approaches are based upon understanding landscapes as ecosystems comprised of environmental, human, cultural, technological and institutional dimensions, among others. Potentially harmful effects of land use changes are the result of complex interactions between these different dimensions. As addressing only one dimension does not ensure sustained landscape management, GIZ has developed the Integrative Land Use Management Approach (ILUMA) as a conceptual framework, as well as knowledge management and dissemination tool to address all dimensions, their interactions and interconnectedness.



Stakeholder meeting of the regional programme in Almaty, Kazakhstan.

Local forest user on the training on grafting techniques of pistachio trees, Surkhandarya region, Uzbekistan.



Irrigation water running for the afforestation of 12 ha, Sought oblast, Tajikistan.

Harvest of fruit trees on rocky ground of piloting territory in Issyk Kul oblast, Kyrgyzstan.

We work in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan utilizing a multilevel approach. In communities, we work directly with the local population and respective administrations. Together we are developing new, locally adapted measures and methods of integrative land use management, that are climate-sensitive, locally adapted, and economically viable. Equally, we aim at halting land degradation and loss of natural resources, as well as at improving the livelihoods of rural communities. We analyze, discuss and document the local experience and share it with the ministries of the five countries of the region. Lessons learned are input to reforms and policies that will enable application of new methods for the protection and use of natural resources across the countries. Through linking local expertise and best practice with country-level reform processes, we ensure the scaling of innovative solutions for integrative land management.

All activities are implemented in close cooperation with other projects related to the use of natural resources in the respective bilateral and regional portfolio of GIZ. Among them are the project on Community-Based Walnut Forest and Pasture Management in the South of Kyrgyzstan, regional programme on Ecosystem-Based Adaptation to Climate Change in High Mountainous Regions of Central Asia, global project on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services in Agrarian Landscapes, and regional project on Technology Based-Adaptation to Climate Change in Rural Areas of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Furthermore, in each country the Programme collaborates with the bilateral projects on the promotion of sustainable economic development.

Kyrgyzstan In the forestry sector we support piloting of the sector reform lead by the State Agency for Environment Protection and Forestry (SAEPF) and steered by the Consultative and Coordination Council consisting of a wide range of stakeholders. In the first period of the piloting (2015 - 2017), the process focused on testing of innovative and adapted mechanisms of decentralized and participatory forest management approaches in six pilot leskhozoes.¹ Thereby reflecting different social, economic and ecological conditions, which was followed by a comprehensive analysis of strengths and weaknesses of the approaches. Key elements of the reform are decentralization and partnership between public sector, private sector and local communities. As a result, participatory

approaches to forest management were tested through Joint Forest Management councils, integrated management planning and PPP mechanism, and then integrated into the forestry legislation. The lessons learned served for the development of the SAEPP's USD16 m. initiative on institutional reform of the forestry sector. In the subsequent period after 2017, we focused on supporting SAEPP to accomplish more specific tasks to further improve forestry legislation and to institutionalize innovative management approaches developed based on the piloting experience. These include forest land lease regulation, performance-based remuneration of forestry staff, and results-oriented budgeting of leskhozoes.

In the pasture sector we have been supporting efforts of the Ministry of Agriculture to strengthen institutional capacities and enhance legislative base to halt and reverse processes of agricultural land degradation. To this effect we provide expertise to analyze climate data flow processes in the agricultural sector, study innovative efficient beef production alternatives, determine national norms and standards for calculation of pasture stocking rates, and introduce amendments to the current land legislation to entitle the reclamation of approximately 500 thousand ha of unproductive lands through perennial plantations. To promote integrative approach to pasture management we have also facilitated an inter-sectoral policy dialogue between forestry and agricultural administrations to enable elaboration of coordinated and agreed policy on sustainable pasture management.

In **Tajikistan** GIZ has been supporting the Joint Forest Management (JFM) approach. JFM is a participatory forest management approach that allows the local population – either individuals or groups – to get involved in forest management and support the rehabilitation of degraded natural forests over the long term. These individuals sign a contract for the land use rights with leskhozoes for a period of 20 years, with the possibility for prolongation. This encourages the tenants to sustainably manage and rehabilitate their forest plot of around 1-2 hectares in size. In addition to the contract, management and annual plans serve as tools for forest management planning and for the monitoring of activities and results. They are developed jointly by the leskhozoes and the respective tenant for each individual plot. Typical tasks specified in the annual plan are measures to protect the plot from livestock grazing, planting of trees, harvesting and pruning. Further, the annual plan specifies the harvest shares of the leskhozoes and the forest tenant according to a fair sharing principle defined in the contract. The management plan developed for a 5-year period, specifies long-term goals, such as

the installation of an irrigation channel or the diversification of the forest plot.

Since the introduction of the JFM approach in GBAO by the predecessor GIZ project in 2007, the approach has been further outscaled into different regions of Tajikistan by the support of GIZ and other international organizations. The JFM approach is reflected in the Forest Code. Currently, we are aiming at including JFM into the official monitoring and reporting system. Furthermore, to improve forest monitoring in the country, our GIS expert has developed forest cover maps, applying a methodology to assess forest cover over time. Forest monitoring activities are intended to transition from paper-based monitoring to a digital and participative monitoring system in the near future.

In **Kazakhstan**, with our support, the Forestry and Wildlife Committee of the Ministry of Ecology, Geology and Natural Resources is developing mechanisms for private afforestation in the country. Within a small pilot project, initiated in 2016, important technical data and information is being accumulated on six experimental forest plots, which forms a basis for the development of tools and a detailed legal and regulatory system for government support for private afforestation initiatives.

In two pilot areas of leskhozoes in Samarkand and Kashkadarya regions of **Uzbekistan**, the plantation of sea buckthorn and rosehip combination was established with the aim to test effective land use approaches for further demonstration of the joint forest management methods to local communities. These plantations will enable local communities to earn extra income from the integrated land use. Several pistachio demonstration plots were established in Surkhandarya region, where innovative approaches and sustainable forest management techniques have been tested and long-term land lease agreement opportunity for the State Forest Fund was promoted.

With regards to the conservation and management of pasture lands in **Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan**, together with our national and international partners we are looking for solutions to help Pasture Users Associations in developing Pasture Management Plans. Such plans include the rotation of livestock distribution on pastures in different seasons, monitoring of pastures, and improvement of infrastructure.

In **Tajikistan**, we have contributed to the establishment and operation of the Tajik Pasture Management Networking Platform. The Platform brings together more than 50 governmental, international and non-governmental organizations, as well as scientists and researchers, which meet on a regular basis.

An analysis of the legislation of **Turkmenistan** in the field of ownership and disposition of pastures was performed with our support to identify existing conditions of users' access to pastures. Based on the results of this study and international experience, recommendations to the new edition of the Law "On Pastures" were developed and the Law was approved by the Parliament in 2015.

Elaboration of the mechanisms for the implementation of the Law have also been supported, and four draft bylaws were transferred for consideration and further action to the national partner, the Ministry of Agriculture and Environment Protection.

To support decision makers in inter-sectoral dialogues with other ministries, trainings on approaches to the economic valuation of ecosystem services were conducted. The Economics of Land Degradation (ELD) is an approach that enables policy decision makers to opt for economically and ecologically sustainable forms of land use. Interactive television programs, which help children and adolescents to form a sense of responsibility for the proper use of natural resources and their conservation, are developed for the younger generation.

Regional cooperation and exchange of experiences in the field of sustainable land management, green economy and adaptation to climate change are essential for all countries of Central Asia. In this regard, we contributed to several regional processes including supporting the activities of the Interstate Commission on Sustainable Development (ICSD) and helping to improve its organizational capacity.

By creating a new online tool, K-Link, for the exchange of successful land-use management experience and knowledge in the region. This is a search engine that automatically combines information and documents from different platforms. Users of K-Link get quick and easy access to the knowledge in all Central Asian countries.

Our results to date

In **Kazakhstan**, six pilot plots were afforested with various tree species such as: poplar, aspen, pine, fruit trees with consideration of climate peculiarities of nature zones and ecosystems of the regions, where plots were established. Over the piloting period since 2016 experimental technical data including: growth conditions, yield, seedlings growth potential in given climate zones, financial expenditures, terms of the plantations' establishment have been accumulated and analyzed. The collected data will be used by the Committee for Forestry and Wildlife for the elaboration of a government subsidy programme for private afforestation in Kazakhstan.

In **Kyrgyzstan**, after 2017 we focused our support to SAEPP on the enhancement of forestry legislation. The "Regulation on the Procedure of Leasing and Use of State Forest Fund Land-Plots" was entirely revised to adequately address the identified needs. As a result, a new "Order of Use and Management of State Forest Fund" now provides a framework for integrative management of livestock grazing in forestry lands, stipulates conditions for local stakeholders' participation in forest management. A methodology of forestry staff performance-based incentive mechanism has been elaborated and approved by SAEPP. This has been developed back-to-back with a methodology of programme-based budgeting of leskhozoes' activities approved by the Government and directed for introduction throughout the entire forest sector. One of the piloting objectives

¹ State Forest Enterprises



Participants of a Leadership Programme in Berlin, Germany.

Seminar for journalist in Ashgabat, Turkeminstan.

aiming separation of regulatory-control functions of leskhoz from the economic ones, and transfer of the latter to private sector based on PPP principles, have been implemented through the elaboration of the “Rules for Sale of Standing Timber, Stampage Fee Rates for Standing Timber and Standards for Evaluation of Forest-Covered Area” and the “Bidding Rules for Extraction of Merchantable Wood in the State Forest Fund of the Kyrgyz Republic”.

In **Tajikistan**, more than 1200 JFM contracts with households had been signed by 2019. With the development of local bylaws, the legal basis for JFM is now fully in place and documented so that it can be rolled out in additional areas. Training events on integrative forest management focusing on climate change impacts on forest and competitive land use types, such as livestock management, have been organized in the pilot communities and two Training of Trainer sessions for partners have taken place in Dushanbe and on-site. The Forestry Agency, leskhoz and forest users have gained a comprehensive understanding of the JFM and are now able to share this approach more widely within and beyond the target areas. The National Pasture Management Networking Platform actively works here, supporting a national dialogue and exchange of knowledge in order to facilitate the recovery of pasture ecosystems through sustainable management.

In **Turkmenistan**, the new draft Law “On Pastures”, developed through our support, was submitted to the Parliament and was approved in August 2015. Development of the most important normative documents was agreed and jointly implemented with the national partner, various stakeholders and international consultants in 2019. Improvement of the legislative base of the forest sector is also in process. Adoption and application of bylaws in both sectors are being coordinated by the Ministry of Agriculture and Environment Protection.

In **Uzbekistan**, the development of a model of joint forestry management through the establishment of plantations of sea buckthorn, rosehip and pistachio has commenced on the territory of the State Forest Fund. Plantations with combination of different crops/species, such as pistachio, Ferula, sea buckthorn and rosehip not only create an additional source of income for local population, but they also contribute to sustainable forest management of the State Forest Fund’s land and improve forest sector in Uzbekistan.

On a **regional level**, ICSD elaborated and approved a Regional Environmental Program for Sustainable Development in Central Asia (REP4SD) that was supported by GIZ and coordinated with other donor activities in Central Asia. In parallel to the support of the regional institutions, the establishment of the regional environmental expert network GREEN CA by individuals and regionally active civil society organizations was supported.

Within the frame of the Economics of Land Degradation (ELD) Initiative and in close collaboration with national research institutions in the five countries of Central Asia, a technical training and seminar were conducted to strengthen capacities in the field of ELD in Central Asia. Prior to this, analyses of the impact of land degradation have been conducted, demonstrating that sustainable land management provides substantial benefits for the economy and the livelihood of the population in the region.

An active regional exchange of experience and knowledge between the countries of Central Asia through the innovative tool, K-Link, promotes the effective application of successful technologies on the sustainable management of pastures and forests and conservation of biodiversity.

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Registered offices Bonn and Eschborn, Germany
Programme for Sustainable and Climate Sensitive Land Use for Economic Development in Central Asia
Erkindik Blvd.22
720040 Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic
Klaus Schmidt-Corsitto, Programme manager
klaus.schmidt-corsitto@giz.de
T +996 312 90-93-40
www.giz.de, www.landuse-ca.org

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