

## *Executive Summary*

The report reviews the regional program “Natural Disaster Preparedness and Risk Reduction for Communities in high-risk districts in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan”, 2006-2007 (*further on occasionally referred to as the “regional Disaster Risk Management program”*). Findings and recommendations are based on interviews and site visits conducted by an international consultant in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan from June 18 – to July 4th 2007. In addition the consultant undertook a comprehensive review of program documentation and researched further information on the web.

The mid-term-review was conducted with a view to identify successful practices and highlight areas that require improvement. However as most of the program activities have already been completed<sup>1</sup> the consultant has not so much focused upon suggesting corrective actions for the implementation of the project in the remaining four months but makes proposals for future directions based upon the main original objectives of the initiative.

The regional program results from consultations in Central Asia on environment and security issues in 2003 - 2005 that emphasized the importance of natural disasters as part of an environmental security agenda. It was therefore decided to add disaster risk management as a component to the environment and security program that focuses upon the Ferghana Valley as a regional “hot spot”.

In the course of planning the more ambitious overall goals of the program which aimed to reduce disaster risk as a potential conflict generating factor in the valley were effectively reduced to two largely local and independent project proposals submitted by UNDP Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. The third country bordering upon the Ferghana Valley, Uzbekistan did not join the program.

It has therefore become rather difficult to distinguish the connection between the regional objective of the program and country-level activities. While the narrative of the original proposal emphasizes the trans-boundary nature of and inter-connectedness of environmental and disaster risk issues in the Ferghana Valley, results /resource frameworks and actual work-plans do not tackle these common issues coherently.

Naturally a “regional” program does not necessarily need to pursue concrete “trans-boundary” activities to fulfill a regional function. Joint lesson learning and innovation in areas of common interest can provide a meaningful overarching framework. The regional program does identify information exchange, lesson learning and public awareness as important activities. The program is however vague with regard to what kinds of lessons these may be (other than referring to preparedness and risk reduction in general) and how these could be used by the partners involved.

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<sup>1</sup> “Mid-term-review” is therefore a bit of a misnomer.

The program also has not phased its interventions: while many activities bear a “pilot” character no approach for replication has been identified and an exit strategy has not been defined. Overall the regional program document leaves too much room for interpretation and lacks a clear strategy, clearly defined goals, outcomes, related outputs and indicators.

The ambiguity of the project proposal has led to different interpretations of the objectives. Kyrgyzstan integrated the program fully into its country-level disaster risk management program with national objectives over-riding regional aims. Tajikistan has stayed rather truthful to the regional dimension of the project and has selected only sub-districts that are effectively on the border to Kyrgyzstan: however this has not been matched by correlating activities on the other side.

The weakness of the program is at the level of outcome management which is partly related to the weaknesses of the program document discussed above, partly to the way the Regional Center perceived its role. The Regional Center mainly acted as an administrator and convener of the initiative yet lacked the technical capacity to identify and promote synergies between the two sub-projects. Both country offices would have welcomed such support.

Having said that **useful work has been done under the national sub-projects** and opportunities and limitations of working at the community level have been identified. The report argues that in order to turn lessons learnt into more sustainable practice even more emphasis needs to be directed towards the capacity-building of local authorities and Ministries/ Committees of Emergencies. This will also ensure that UNDP does not find itself in “competition” with NGOs who are engaged in similar activities at the community level.

Bratislava’s role as main implementing partner required passing all administrative and financial documentation through the regional center. It seems to be commonly agreed that this has led to some delays and increased the work-load of everybody. Despite this arguably complicated arrangement the day-to-day management of outputs of the program has been quite satisfactory with relatively timely delivery.

Overall the project resulted in some valuable learning processes in local disaster risk management (see section 7.2) regarding participation, ownership and sustainability that require further experimentation, streamlining and systematization. However, two years are simply too short to achieve sustainable results.

Looking at a possible future of the program the report suggests **four programming scenarios for a continuation of the initiative, however only if a strengthened “regional” agenda can be agreed upon.** A stock-taking exercise with all concerned parties should be organized before the end of the year that discusses the achievements so far, the conclusions and recommendations of this report and the feasibility to work in a more ambitious “regional” mode. The discussion of the various scenarios should go hand in hand with the upcoming **overall review of the Environmental Security Program** and this report should be fed into the evaluation process.

The following four scenarios are the available and imaginable options for a strengthened “regional” initiative:

The **first programming scenario** is to facilitate concrete cooperation of countries on acute trans-boundary risks and environmental issues. This requires the full participation of all three countries and a rather high degree of commitment as detailed assessments have to be jointly conducted, joint plans have to be elaborated and implementation modalities have to be agreed upon. It also requires considerable capacity in the regional implementing partner and convening agency (i.e. Bratislava) and in UNDP Country offices. Given the current state of regional cooperation in general and Uzbekistan’s current lack of active involvement in particular this scenario seems to be the least likely.

The **second scenario** would foresee more limited joint activities for instance on localized trans-boundary risks (such as mud-flows) that affect only two countries. It would seek to involve national levels but most of the work-load and day-to-day responsibilities would involve provincial and local authorities and their partners. A broader assessment would identify a few hotspots from which participating countries could select one or two pilot locations where more detailed assessments would be conducted. Activities would be run with the strategic aim to produce results and successes that could induce relevant actors to broaden bi- or even promote tri-lateral cooperation. However, this scenario currently only makes sense if a considerable degree of vulnerability/ risk can be asserted for trans-boundary (sub-) districts of Tajikistan (Soghd) and Kyrgyzstan (Batken).

The **third scenario** would refrain from concrete cooperation across borders and focus upon the strengthening of local and national capacities as the main priority. In order to add value to already ongoing national activities and programs in both countries it would propose and test innovative linkages between the environment and disaster risk management spheres (for instance on water and land resource management). Based upon consultations and discussions between all stakeholders and participating countries in particular it would identify common interest in and requirements for specific lesson learning and formulate concrete expectations and objectives.

A **fourth scenario** could be created by mixing the third policy-oriented with the second “hands-on” approach. All approaches would require technical capacity in the regional implementing partner agency to be able to provide some steering to the overall process. There is also need to establish conceptual and – if possible - practical linkages to the priorities in the **Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015** endorsed by 168 countries as the global agenda for disaster risk management.

If agreement about a continuation of the program cannot be reached the program should be wrapped up in 2007. The remaining funds should – after plans and proposals have been agreed upon – be transferred to country offices with final reports to be submitted to Bratislava at the end of the year.

## ***1. Introduction***

### **1.1 History and programming context of the initiative**

In 2002 the OSCE, UNDP and UNEP launched a joint “Environment and Security” program that intends to strengthen good governance and reduce tensions between and within countries in South East Europe and Central Asia by mobilizing cooperation around shared environmental concerns. The program places itself within the human security framework and seeks to address environmental sources of stress that have the potential to undermine social and economic stability and may contribute to the outbreak of conflict.

The first consultative meeting of the program in Central Asia took place in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan in January 2003. It involved government and Civil Society representatives of all five Central Asian countries. During this meeting, participants added natural disasters as a major concern to the list of key environmental issues and hot spots which they discussed further in consecutive national workshops. A follow-up regional workshop in Osh, Kyrgyz Republic in December 2004 focused upon the Fergana-Osh-Khujand area and endorsed the results from an in-depth environmental assessment led by UNEP. Participants from Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan reiterated their interest in addressing natural disasters within the framework of the regional Environment and Security program. They also discussed a draft program document “Natural Disaster Preparedness and Risk Reduction for Communities in high-risk districts in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan” prepared by UNDP/BCPR’s Disaster Reduction Unit in Geneva with inputs from Country Offices and the Regional Centre for Europe and the CIS in Bratislava.

In 2005 Country Offices further fine-tuned their proposals on the basis of a total funding commitment of 450,000 USD by UNDP/BCPR (250.000 TRAC 1.3), UNDP’s Regional Centre in Bratislava (100.000 TRAC funding) and CIDA (100.000 through the OSCE). The start of the project was initially planned for mid 2005, however due to administrative delays TRAC 1.3 funds could only be secured in late 2005. As the designated main implementing partner the Regional Centre in Bratislava held its Local Program Appraisal Committee (LPAC) meeting in early January of 2006. A regional meeting in Bishkek in February 2006 reached final agreement on the regional disaster risk management program and its national sub-components and adopted work-plans after which the implementation process was initiated.

The intended duration of the project is from January 2006 until December 2007. By mid 2006 it became clear that Uzbekistan would not fully (or appropriately) participate in the Environment and Security program. A second regional meeting in Bishkek in June 2007 developed proposals for the use and distribution of the remaining disaster risk management funds between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan.

### **1.2 Objectives of the mid-term review, outputs and key issues**

The overall purpose of the review is to assess the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of project activities in relation to the stated objective so far.

The evaluation serves as an agent of change and plays a critical role in supporting accountability. Its main objectives are:

- (i) To strengthen the regional project management and monitoring functions of the project;
- (ii) To ensure accountability for the achievement of the project objective;
- (iii) To enhance organizational and development learning by all project players;
- (iv) To enable informed decision-making on the future interventions in this area;
- (v) To assess progress and achievements against project targets

The evaluation places particular emphasis on the following issues:

- a) Relevance of program activities with regard to overarching objectives
- b) Linkages with other components of the Environmental Security Program
- c) Ownership of program and sustainability
- d) Effectiveness of partnership strategies
- e) Efficiency of implementation modalities and program management
- f) Regional programs: more than the sum of (national) parts?

The review report/ main narrative documents identifies successful practices, captures lessons learnt and highlights areas that require improvement in the initiative. The review thus provides a basis for learning and accountability.

Given the short time left until the official end of the project (December 2007) and the fact that most activities have been implemented the evaluation suggests possible scenarios for future directions of the program beyond 2007.

### **1.3 Methodology of the review**

The review was conducted using a combination of processes including a desk study, site visits (Bishkek, various localities in Southern Kyrgyzstan; Dushanbe, various localities in Northern Tajikistan/ Soghd province) and individual as well as group interviews with multiple stakeholders.

Methods included:

- Documentation review from home and in UNDP offices (please see Annex I for details)
- Web Research on selected issues
- Interviews (both semi-structured and open-ended) with a wide range of local, provincial, national and international stakeholders (please see list in Annex II).
- Field visits to communities (please see agenda of the review in Annex III)
- Transect walks and visual inspections at community level

- Focus group discussions (mostly with rescue team members and local administrations)

#### **1.4 Challenges encountered**

The short time-span between the identification of the consultant, travel dates and the actual start of the mission left all parties with limited time for a detailed preparation of the mission. The contract of the consultant was issued and signed after her arrival in Bishkek and the Terms of Reference remained a draft until after the completion of the mission. This led to a certain lack of clarity on the objectives of the mission particularly with regard to an additional request from UNDP Kyrgyzstan to review their country disaster risk management component in addition to the regional program (which to this date is not reflected in the ToR, see Annex IV). While the consultant has done her best to proactively identify and satisfy the expectations of all main stakeholders the described gaps in planning led to several complications, which most importantly resulted in a comparatively short stay in Kyrgyzstan. That said UNDP staff in Central Asia dealt with the situation admirably, provided their full support and did their best to successfully facilitate the mission including long hours spent on the phone, in travel agencies and embassies.

## ***2. The Program and its development context***

### **2.1 The development context**

The three countries bordering on the Ferghana Valley continue to grapple with issues that are related to their status as relatively young and poor nation-states who have had to go through a radical political and economic transformation while adapting to a competitive global economic system and to the unprecedented economic rise of their neighbors China and (more recently) Russia. In addition to these challenges Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have been affected by conflict in the wider region as well as by civil strife and clashes within their own borders which have occasionally spilled over into each others' territories. Regional cooperation is still in an early stage and the complex border issues between the Central Asian countries (a legacy of the Soviet Union) are still to be resolved resulting in economic and social hardship for people living in border areas, particularly those living in enclaves.

As predominantly agricultural economies the countries are vulnerable to climatic variability and depend on the availability of arable land and adequate amounts of water for irrigation. In the Ferghana Valley these resources are under considerable strain. The Environmental Assessment led by UNEP in 2004/05<sup>2</sup> identified the following three major issues relevant to environmental security in the area:

- Access to and quality of natural resources i.e. water, land and forest in particular
- Industrial pollution from industrial facilities including hazardous and radioactive waste sites

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<sup>2</sup> See UNEP, UNDP, OSCE, NATO, Environment and Security, 2005

- “Cross-cutting” issues i.e. natural disasters, climate change, public health etc.

The risk from natural hazards such as floods and land-, and mudslides is compounded by processes of climate change and environmental degradation. The relatively wide-spread unsustainable use of land and natural resources contributes to environmental degradation. Critical infrastructure such as irrigation and drainage channels, bridges and roads tends to be in a dilapidated state increasing the vulnerability of an already impoverished rural population. Given the limited support of the central level for local development concerns a significant percentage of the male able-bodied population engages in seasonal labor migration to neighboring countries. The exploitation of marginal lands (over-grazing, uncontrolled logging etc.) adds to processes of erosion and slope instability and further increase risks from natural hazards. Unclear land rights over pastures (particularly in border areas) add to such unsustainable practices which reportedly also occur across borders<sup>3</sup>.

Knowledge of sound environmental management practices and disaster risk management is limited in local and provincial government agencies as well as amongst the local population. Tajikistan is governed in a centralized manner which limits the potential for local solutions since many relevant policies and practices (compare for instance norms for cotton production) are centrally prescribed. Kyrgyzstan has moved relatively rapidly to the decentralization of considerable authority to local governments. Resources at the local government level are extremely limited in both Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan though it remains to be seen how the recent fiscal reform in Kyrgyzstan is going to affect the resource basis at the sub-district or “Ayil Okmotu” level.

## **2.2 Development and immediate objectives of the project**

The regional program aims to contribute to social stability in the border regions in the Ferghana Valley by a) strengthening national and local capacities in natural disaster risk management (DRM) and b) by fostering community work and cooperation to reduce future natural disaster risk as a potential conflict-generating factor. The goal of the project and its outcomes and outputs assume the generation of disaster risk management processes that will be embraced by communities and prevail beyond completion of the project itself.<sup>4</sup> This includes the intention to mobilize and further international and national support for action on linkages between environmental security and natural disasters (with TRAC money serving as “seed funding”).

At the outcome level the program seeks to achieve “improved response and mitigation mechanisms and equitable access to information and awareness raising tools on preparedness for natural disasters among poor and vulnerable communities in border regions.”<sup>5</sup> Intending to provide a flexible umbrella framework for country programs the program suggested the following main four outputs which were based upon country level plans and suggestions.

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<sup>3</sup> See UNEP et al. 2005, page 18.

<sup>4</sup> Please compare Annex IV, Terms of Reference, page 1

<sup>5</sup> See 2005 program document, signature page 1.

Expected Output(s)/Indicator(s):

Output 1. Comprehensive natural disaster risk mapping undertaken and the adopted mapping materials to local needs

Output 2. Conducted studies and research on vulnerability to natural disasters and capacity assessment in terms of self-help and self-organisation in high-risk communities

Output 3. Implemented small scale community level pilot projects on risk identification, disaster preparedness and response

Output 4. Increased local awareness and understanding of how to prepare for and reduce the future risk of disasters

While UNDP Tajikistan kept these outputs throughout the program UNDP Kyrgyzstan has further refined both outcome and outputs in accordance with its own country programming needs. Please see Annex V with a comparative overview of outcomes, outputs and indicators between the regional and national levels.

### **2.3 Main stakeholders and implementation modalities**

Main stakeholders of the program are partner agencies UNEP, UNDP and OSCE, NATO's Partnership for Peace program, the Ministries and Committees of Emergencies, Environment and Security Focal Points in Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Ministries of Environment, academic and research institutions, provincial and local government agencies, Civil Society organizations such as CBOs and NGOs, the private sector and last but not least local communities in high risk areas.

UNDP's Regional Center Bratislava assumes the role of implementing agency under Direct Execution (DEX) mode. Country Offices in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan effectively implement the initiative entering into further sub-contracting arrangements with private sector and civil society partners.

### **2.4 Status of implementation**

In June 2007 the implementation of project-related activities was practically completed in Kyrgyzstan and well advanced in Tajikistan. Further programming (and implementation) needs result from the funds "left over" because of Uzbekistan's lack of active participation in program implementation which will be distributed between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. The exact amount was not yet known in July 2007 but is likely to be around USD 50,000.

## ***Key Findings***

In the following the report will review the program against two levels: a) the program “as is” i.e. its focus upon local level disaster activities and b) the broader regional ambitions voiced in its early stages/ in the main, “regional” narrative of the program document.

### ***3. Management and Operations***

#### **3.1. Assessment and Planning at Regional level**

The environment and security program in Central Asia/ the Ferghana Valley has been developed in a rather thorough process of consultation and assessments facilitated largely by the UNDP Regional Center in Bratislava. It was during one of these consultations with Central Asian countries in 2003<sup>6</sup> that national counterparts added the natural disaster risk component to the list of important environmental concerns. The environmental assessment conducted in 2004 and 2005 consequently devoted one section to risks from natural hazards, describing the trans-boundary nature of certain threats such as floods and mudflows<sup>7</sup> and describing the lack of coordinated preventive measures. However the presented information is rather generic and was not followed up by more in-depth assessments of shared risks in the valley leaving planners with limited data to base their proposals on.

In addition there tends to be generic tension between regional and country level programming, whatever the institutional context. Regional ambitions have to be curtailed to the expectations and capacities of national level partners (including in this case UNDP COs and Ministries of Emergencies). National partners in turn have to define and agree upon the contributions they are making to regional level objectives which requires “neutral” brokerage from an outside actor. Time and capacity constraints did not allow the Regional Center in Bratislava (nor UNDP’s Disaster Reduction Unit) to become deeply involved in the regional facilitation of the disaster risk management component (particularly given its rather modest financial dimension). In addition the Regional Center’s neutrality was offset by its status as the main implementing agency of the initiative. As a consequence country offices of UNDP developed proposals that are by and large national/ local in character and do not touch upon a “regional” dimension. In particular no effective criteria for the selection of project sites were developed. The “regional” component of the program which is managed by Bratislava has been largely reduced to information exchange and the generation of lessons learnt<sup>8</sup>. The expected outcome and purpose of this lessons learning process remains vague in program documentation.

As a result of the process described above the program document is characterized by a considerable degree of ambiguity: the narrative stresses broader regional security- and

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<sup>6</sup> See section 1.1

<sup>7</sup> Exacerbated by the polluting potential of hazardous industries and waste sites in the area

<sup>8</sup> See output 4 of the results and resources framework, and in work-plans, pp. 11 -17 in the program document

environmental needs and objectives whereas the national sub-projects focus upon local level disaster risk management activities in the Osh-Khujand-Ferghana triangle. Effectively the project therefore may be geographically situated in the area of the wider Ferghana Valley yet it does not specify complementary activities to effectively reduce trans-border risks from natural hazards to social security in the area or to work on policy-related or methodological issues of local risk management with clearly defined objectives for common lesson learning. In other words local level initiatives in the two countries do not necessarily add up to a more comprehensive “regional” program. This is not necessarily a problem for a pilot initiative that builds the basis for more comprehensive regional cooperation later on. However the program document does not define a pilot phase of the initiative (nor does it define an exit strategy). Overall the regional program document leaves too much room for interpretation and lacks a clear strategy, clearly defined goals, outcomes, related outputs and indicators.<sup>9</sup>

### **3. 2 National level project plans**

National sub-projects appear more targeted and better structured even though each of them follows different formats. In the case of **UNDP Kyrgyzstan** the national sub-project has been fully absorbed into the country office’s disaster risk management component. In its project results and resource framework Kyrgyzstan reduced the number of outputs to two and has rephrased them in the course of implementation which reflects a learning process and increasing conceptual clarity on the overall direction of the initiative (by making the important distinction between capacity raising of communities and local self governments, see Annex V). UNDP Kyrgyzstan makes it very clear in its project document that the main objective of the project is local and there is no reference to sub-regional or regional objectives. Provinces and districts were selected using the criterion of vulnerability to natural hazards. In communication with the Regional Centre in Bratislava UNDP Kyrgyzstan remarked: “It will be difficult for the Country Offices to cover the most vulnerable to the natural hazards locations and at the same time to make sure that they are transboundary.”<sup>10</sup> Effectively none of the chosen sub-districts in Kyrgyzstan are trans-boundary.

**UNDP Tajikistan’s** project document is overall more eloquent than the Kyrgyz document. It contains a logical framework matrix that replaces the results and resources framework in the Kyrgyz proposal. However there is no evidence that the matrix has been used in the management of the project. Tajikistan has kept the four outputs from the regional project document and taken practically no liberty in modifying the project during its life-span. It has thus stayed more truthful to initial intentions of the project and actually works in border rural sub-districts - “jamoats” (however this is not matched by activities on the other side of the border). The Tajik sub-project seems less stringently integrated into the country disaster risk management project. Both sub-projects reflect the regional program’s absence of clear intervention phases and pilot or exit strategies.

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<sup>9</sup> Two respondents (members of UNDP project teams) reported they had the impression varying interpretations of the purpose of the initiative existed at various levels in UNDP. Compare also cover page of the results and resources framework that “staples” outcomes from four different actors.

<sup>10</sup> Quoted by Ainura Alymbekova from previous e-mail communication with BRC (e-mail/

### **3.3 Financial Planning**

From the review of financial documentation it seems that the financial planning for the initiative has been quite accurate and realistic, even though five revisions (however of relatively minor financial significance) have been made since the first budget in January 2006 originating from needs at the country level. The Regional Center has been rather responsive to requests from COs to reassign funds between activities or move small funds from 2006 to 2007. The Regional Center however was less effective in dealing with the re-assignment of funds that had been allocated to Uzbekistan (see section 3.5.1). Communication through several layers of project management (regional, national, local) may have contributed to periods of uncertainty on the side of local project managers as to how much funding was actually available (for further discussion of management set-up see next section).

### **3.4 Operations Management: Division of Roles and Responsibilities**

Overall management of the initiative was assumed by the Regional Center in Bratislava as the main implementing partner (Bratislava was also one of the three main funding agencies of the disaster risk management components, see section 1.1). Bratislava interpreted the management of the initiative as providing a “regional umbrella” for similar national initiatives of the same scope, from which “lessons learnt” can be extracted and disseminated, requiring the facilitation of information exchange between the participating countries. The Regional Center assigned a regional Desk Officer and a Project Manager to the task. Country Offices effectively became “subcontractors” of Bratislava and opted for different management models of either hiring specific project coordinators (Tajikistan with the exception of finance/ admin role and local engineer) or adding project-related responsibilities to staff with wider responsibilities (Kyrgyzstan).

There is no evidence that Bratislava interfered with the substance of projects or provided technical inputs. One of the main functions of Bratislava was to assist with the coordinated development of work-plans and to oversee the timeliness of project implementation. This has been done successfully. As the main implementing partner Bratislava also assumed overall financial and administrative management of the initiative. Practically all procurements and contracts (plus supportive documentation) had to go through the Regional Center. This has led to mutual frustration and to a certain number of temporary delays in the transfer of funds (including staff salaries) and project implementation. It would be irrelevant to identify “individual” responsibilities within field offices, COs and the Regional Center for these delays. However it seems unnecessarily cumbersome to assign the financial administration and management of a regional (yet in practice local) level initiative to an entity that is situated thousands of kilometers from the action and local context. This means that two additional administrative layers (even three counting the regional Desk Officer located in Kazakhstan) are added to local project management on such trivial matters as buying a computer.

When funds are not managed by country offices it usually lowers the incentive for full engagement of country offices and makes it potentially difficult for individual staff to justify time spent on an “external” program. Kyrgyzstan dealt with this issue by

integrating the project into its country level disaster risk management program. In Tajikistan linkages with the national level were more loose and individual staff members reported difficulties in devoting efforts to the initiative and receiving adequate credit. Interviews conducted with the program manager and assistant from Bratislava demonstrated that the Regional Center is aware of these difficulties and willing to change management arrangements in a possible future phase.

### **3.5 Operations Management: Coordination and Integration**

The Regional Center (with operational support from COs) assumed a lead role in implementing regional activities of information exchange, lesson learning and the identification of policy-relevant best practice in an “action reflection note”. Two regional one-day-meetings provided a platform for information exchange: the first took place in February 2006 (Bishkek) but mainly covered the fine-tuning of national sub-project proposals and work-plans. The second meeting was recently held (again in Bishkek) and provided the opportunity for a more substantial exchange on disaster risk management applications identified in the two projects/ countries (local risk assessments; mitigation projects etc.). Unfortunately invitations were issued shortly before the event, which contributed to the inability of the Tajik Committee of Emergencies to participate.

As stressed in the section on assessment and planning links with the environmental projects of the Environment and Security program are weak. One of the reasons is that the water and land resource management of the program (the most relevant for building strategic and operational links with disaster risk management) did not attract funding (an application to the Global Environmental Fund/ GEF fell through). There may however be chances in the future to activate this important component.

At a national level **Kyrgystan’s** full integration of the national sub-project into its country disaster risk management component means that resources (staff, office premises etc.) are used at a good level of efficiency. In addition the disaster risk management program is well integrated into UNDP’s country program which further facilitates the efficient sharing of resources across various program areas. **Tajikistan’s** sub-project has so far been run more as a parallel initiative (to the country disaster risk management program) though some minor adjustments have been made recently. The Khujand project office is entirely dependent upon the regional environmental security program and all activities will come to a halt once funding comes to an end.

### **3.6 Operations Management: Monitoring and evaluation**

Monitoring and evaluation depend to a large degree upon the identification of meaningful and realistic (i.e. lending themselves to data collection) indicators which is notoriously difficult particularly at the outcome level. The relatively superficial base-line data collected before the initiation of national sub-projects has made it difficult to clearly identify changes and attribute them to project interventions. The Tajik project document lists indicators of project activities (such as the planning or implementation of mitigation projects) not of genuine outputs or outcomes<sup>11</sup>. UNDP Kyrgyzstan has made a more

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<sup>11</sup> The local project manager voiced her concerns about the absence of a clear monitoring format and procedure.

elaborate attempt to identify indicators and to follow up on them; however some indicators are also questionable.<sup>12</sup> As for the “regional” outputs under 4, these are measured by the “number of on- and off-line information materials accessible to communities” an indicator that would provide no intelligence on the progress of the regional lesson learning and identification of policy-relevant “best practice”. In other words COs and the Regional Center were struggling to identify meaningful indicators, which has impeded upon the effectiveness of M and E.

To follow up on progress Bratislava was depended upon reports provided by COs. As already elaborated the two national sub-project documents follow different formats. The same is true for the reports which were prepared on a quarterly basis and then condensed into an annual report. Kyrgyzstan has opted for a tabular format restricting itself to the transmission of achievements, identifying critical factors that have impeded upon achieving certain results and suggesting corrective action. It is a good tool for local and national project management but more difficult to appreciate for outsiders (such as the Regional Center in Bratislava). Tajikistan has a narrative reporting style that gives a detailed and easily accessible account of activities yet it lacks in highlighting issues in implementation and possible solutions. What Kyrgyzstan is lacking in elaborating upon context Tajikistan is therefore lacking in analysis. On the basis of these reports it would be very difficult for the implementing partner agency i.e. Bratislava to identify critical issues that threaten overall progress of the initiative let alone distill “lessons learnt”. Since the only external “donor” SIDA through OSCE did not request financial reports no consolidated reports were prepared.

### **3.6.1 Identification and management of risks**

The program design preceded the introduction of the latest Prince II methodology for project life cycle management. A risk/ issue log could have helped the Regional Center to track the participation of Uzbekistan more carefully and to initiate a timely revision of the program once it became clear that Uzbekistan would not become an implementing partner. This must have been obvious by mid 2006 however discussions of how to use left-over funds have only been initiated in mid 2007 when the Tajik project office in Khujand was about to phase out. Having to restart assessment, technical planning, tendering and contracting processes (which in June 2007 had been completed in both countries) is an inefficient solution for the expected modest funding per country (according to estimates 50.000 USD).

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<sup>12</sup> Particularly at an outcome level: without a base-line on the situation with regard to (other) community-based disaster risk management projects before (and during) the intervention quantitative indicators are fairly meaningless. Qualitative indicators are not sufficiently defined (“more knowledgeable”).

## ***Key Findings continued***

### ***4. Program Performance***

#### **4.1 Regional aspects**

As obvious from the discussion of the planning process, results and the tension between regional program and national/ local sub-project objectives and realities (see section 3.1) the performance of the program as a regional initiative to increase social stability in the Ferghana Valley is modest. This is related to the fact that the program is a combination of two fairly independent local level initiatives in the wider border areas of Northern Tajikistan and South Kyrgyzstan and the lack of Uzbek participation.

A discussion with the Minister in Kyrgyzstan revealed the strong influence Russia exerts over Ministries and Committees of Emergencies in Central Asia. The same is true for Tajikistan. Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan are members of two regional political organizations that are relevant to environmental security: the Shanghai Organization for Cooperation and the CIS Council of Emergencies of which all Central Asian countries (except Turkmenistan) are members. These organizations may be two avenues worth pursuing to investigate opportunities for and limitations of regional cooperation.

It is a little early to judge the success of the program to act as a catalyst for further international and national support to environmental security and more specifically disaster risk management in the region. Surprisingly the program has not yet established a clear connection between its objectives and the United Nation's "Hyogo Framework of Action" (2005-2015). This is the widely agreed global plan for disaster risk reduction efforts, which has become an increasingly important point of reference for the formulation of relevant strategies of national governments, regional organizations and multi-/ bi-lateral donor agencies.

The regional activities of "lesson learning" and the identification of "best practice" have so far made limited progress mainly because the parameters and feasibility of "lessons" that would be of benefit to both countries (and maybe even to Uzbekistan) have not yet been identified nor is there a clear process in place to identify such "best practice".

**That said the following sections will review the program "as is" concentrating on the two national sub-projects in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan.** Both have – if reviewed against their mostly local objectives – achieved interesting preliminary results (see overview in Annex VI) and the difference in approaches and processes deserves further analysis (see flow-charts of respective processes in Annexes VI and VII). This discussion will finally (in section 6) also analyze what the regional significance of these initiatives might be, whether this significance can be captured and translated into a more coherent regional approach in the future and what UNDP's role could be in this process.

## **4.2 Implementation approach**

Projects have mainly been implemented at the sub-district level (“Aiyil Okmotu” in Kyrgyzstan respectively “Jamoat” in Tajikistan). Both Country Offices have opted for slightly different implementation approaches with a more top-down approach (though complemented by participatory learning events) in Tajikistan and an initially similar approach in Kyrgyzstan that however switched to a far more participatory mode in the later stages of implementation. Annexes VII and VIII contain flowcharts of respective processes from initial assessments to mitigation projects in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

The difference in approaches reflects to some degree governance realities in both countries: Kyrgyzstan is far more advanced in decentralizing authority to the sub-district or Aiyil Okmotu level whereas Tajikistan remains a heavily centralized country with limited authority at the district and sub-district level i.e. the Jamoat. This does raise the question whether the Jamoat is actually the right level of intervention for Tajikistan. The answer is “yes” and “no” at the same time and similar reservations apply to Kyrgyzstan’s Aiyil Okmotu. The sub-district level is an appropriate level to pilot practical disaster risk management interventions, however given the inter-connectedness of hazards across administrative boundaries, the fact that funding at the local level is extremely limited in both countries and the continuing quest to identify appropriate overall disaster risk management strategies and policies in both countries there need to be strong linkages with district, provincial and national levels.

Overall the Tajik project has been output oriented following the approach that “structural mitigation plus public awareness” translate into safer communities.<sup>13</sup> It has been more quality-conscious with regard to mitigation projects and employed its own engineer to steer and supervise the implementation of these projects. The Kyrgyz project has been more strategic and has put more emphasis on identifying appropriate processes (rather than products) for disaster risk management at the local level. This included distinguishing between capacity building of communities and – complementary – efforts to strengthen disaster risk management capacities of local governments. The Kyrgyz project has been more successful in identifying policy-relevant “lessons” and taking action upon these lessons. This is related to the fact that the Kyrgyz project is linked with other UNDP projects in the field of local level risk management, which are all overseen by the same program advisor leading towards a critical mass of experience that allows distilling sound conclusions.<sup>14</sup>

## **4.3 Participation of stakeholders, country ownership and prospects of sustainability**

Both projects have involved local communities, local administrations (particularly at the sub-district level), CBOs and NGOs, the private sector, provincial or “oblast” authorities and the national level (Ministry/ Committee of Emergencies and scientific institutions/ consultants). In Kyrgyzstan linkages to a wider set of stakeholders has been attempted by

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<sup>13</sup> See page 41 of program document. This ignores the institutional dimensions of risk management i.e. the systematic involvement of multiple players and layers of administration/ government.

<sup>14</sup> Examples of such conclusions include the need to define the legal status of village level rescue teams and the need to systematize the disaster planning process at various levels.

setting up a competitive process between village structural mitigation project proposals. A “selection commission” composed of representatives from UNDP and various line-ministries and organization such as the Ministry of Agriculture, the Construction Department, Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare and community representatives evaluated proposals against a defined set of criteria. This not only increased the transparency of the selection process but also gave multiple relevant stakeholders a possibility to participate. Such an approach is particularly crucial where future maintenance of structures (embankments, channels, bridges etc.) falls into the responsibility of “external” actors (not to mention issues of liability in the planning and implementation of these relatively technical projects). In Tajikistan the project attempts to retro-actively “hand over” mitigation projects to appropriate organizations (such as Ministry of Water Resources etc.). The success of this approach remains to be seen. Tajikistan undertook efforts to involve the Tajik scientific institutions (Department of Geology, Seismological Institute, and the Tajik Geodetic Agency) in the project; particularly in the risk assessment process.

Community participation in mitigation projects has been observed in both Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The sustainability of these mitigation projects is a different question that as specified above does not only depend upon communities. At the end these small-scale interventions have a limited impact on risk reduction because the spatial extent of hazards, their severity and frequency requires far more comprehensive solutions (and bigger investment). Limited riverbank protection through a few hundred meters of gabions does not resolve these complex issues which are related to overall development policies and planning. UNDP Kyrgyzstan has come to the conclusion that the value of these small scale mitigation projects lies in raising the awareness of local communities and their leaders (and possibly of responsible organizations at higher administrative levels) and in strengthening “social capital” between different stakeholders.

The local ownership of initiatives is overall bigger in Kyrgyzstan because of a more participatory process in the analysis of risks and in the subsequent development of mitigation proposals (including the tendering/ selection of contractors). Through the establishment of “village rescue teams” and the piloting of a format and process for disaster planning at the village level there was also some attempt to improve the organizational and institutional foundation for risk management. The sustainability of these efforts is another question and experience from other countries (including in neighboring Tajikistan) suggests that such teams require continuous support or disappear quite quickly. UNDP Kyrgyzstan recognizes this challenge and is following up.

National ownership of development projects is usually the result of many years of joint work and it is therefore a little early to make respective comments. Both initiatives have involved provincial and national counterparts, however these efforts seem to have been more fruitful in Kyrgyzstan where awareness of the initiative has even spread to the Minister, mainly because local rescue teams proved very effective in recent mudslides and made national head-lines that attracted political attention. In Tajikistan knowledge of the project is confined to a small number of specialists and scientists (and – naturally – the involved communities). This difference may also be capacity-related reflecting the

differences between the Ministry in Kyrgyzstan that has a broader human and financial basis than its Tajik counterpart and continues to undertake structural changes that favor an orientation towards local risk management issues.

Overall both projects made successful efforts to involve various stakeholders with Kyrgyzstan being a bit more innovative in its approaches and castings it's net significantly wider (while encountering certain challenges along the way). Not surprisingly (given the short duration of the project) there is a question-mark regarding the sustainability in both Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, however Kyrgyzstan has taken more action to further investigate and address this issue.

#### **4.4 Links with other UNDP projects**

As already mentioned UNDP Kyrgyzstan's national sub-project is well integrated into its overall disaster risk management program, which in turn occupies a prominent place within UNDP's country program. Being situated within the "flagship" democratic governance area further facilitates cooperation with other projects. In the field disaster risk management project staff share offices with local governance, poverty alleviation, conflict prevention and environment projects which gradually starts to bear fruits in terms of joint lesson learning and the planning of joint initiatives.<sup>15</sup> As a key result disaster risk management aspects have been integrated into selected village development plans facilitated by the democratic governance project.

In Tajikistan the project shares office with UNDP's local area development project, however there is as of yet limited coordination and no joint activities with other projects even though projects work partly in the same localities<sup>16</sup>. The project is also somewhat run in parallel to the country level disaster risk management program. Both issues are currently being addressed in the design of a new phase for the disaster risk management program. The difference between integrated approaches in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to program planning has translated into different degrees of cost-effectiveness and sharing of resources (see also 3.5).

In sum the Kyrgyz program has identified appropriate linkages with other project areas, in particular with democratic governance. While joint planning requires time and examples of concrete cooperation are still few this approach already puts a lid on duplication and promotes cost-efficient solutions. In Tajikistan integration needs yet to be turned into a reality which is not only a challenge for the sub-national project but for the entire country-level disaster risk management program.

#### **4.5 UNDP's Comparative Advantage and Partnership Strategies**

In both countries UNDP is not the only organization working on local level risk management issues. There are various other organizations (mostly funded through the

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<sup>15</sup> In Jalalabad disaster risk management and environment initiatives funded by GEF are seeking for joint approaches to combat soil deterioration.

<sup>16</sup> For instance, the Tajik sub-project has taken steps to hire part-time local disaster risk management "monitors" when in fact the Conflict Prevention program has its own well developed net of monitors in Soghd Province.

regional DIPECHO program or by the Swiss Development Cooperation Agency) that implement relatively similar initiatives. These include the Tajik and Kyrgyz Red Crescent Societies (supported by European Red Cross Societies and DIPECHO), Mercy Corps, German Agro Action, ACTED, CAMP and a number of others. From experience in both Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan it seems that UNDP has often worked in the more remote areas that tend to be overlooked by other organizations.

A possible measure of success for local level risk management initiatives implemented by UNDP could be the degree to which the implementation of local level risk management initiatives attracted other actors to invest in the same location. This has effectively happened in Kyrgyzstan and at a lesser scale also in Tajikistan, yet it was not “planned” or clearly spelled out in project documents. In hindsight it is difficult to clearly attribute these “follow up” investments to UNDP’s interventions though anecdotal evidence points towards such a “pioneering” and “brokering” role. For instance in Kyrgyzstan the fact that UNDP worked with CAMP on community based risk management training exposed CAMP to these localities and has in a few instances led to follow-up activities by CAMP in the same villages deepening the impact of UNDP’s initiatives. UNDP Kyrgyzstan also involved the local Red Crescent Society in training village rescue teams.

However these instances of cooperation are not yet linked to a well-defined partnership strategy, particularly a strategy that would define relationships with agencies that do similar work at the community level. There seems to be an important gap in the coordination of these initiatives with regard to joint lesson-learning, dissemination of best practice and the definition of minimum standards for the undertaking of local risk management components such as training, awareness-raising and mitigation projects. In both Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan local and regional Committees/ Ministries of Emergencies are not fully aware of who is doing what and how. This gap has as of yet to be tackled. In Tajikistan the REACT group may be able to fill such a role in the future. It aims at the coordination of disaster response and disaster reduction activities, consists of international and national agencies and is convened by the Committee for Emergency Situations at both national and provincial levels (with assistance from UNDP).

Overall UNDP’s comparative advantage is its privileged relationship with government requiring the systematic involvement and a clear focus on strengthening government capacity in local level risk management. UNDP Kyrgyzstan has done more to address the capacity building needs of local governments.

#### **4.6 Results and sustainability** *(please compare detailed discussion of outcomes under Annex IX)*

The fact that the regional level development objectives (see 2.1) have not been translated into outcomes and outputs that would provide cohesion for the two sub-national projects has already been discussed. The stated overall outcome “improved response and mitigation mechanisms and equitable access to information and awareness raising tools on preparedness for natural disasters among poor and vulnerable communities in border regions” has allowed two country offices to pursue local level risk management processes independently of each other. While “improved mechanisms” for response and mitigation

are not yet in place some critical ingredients for local risk management have been experimented with such as community mobilization and the generation of local self-help capacity. The success of these measures however varies from location to location and capacity building processes would require more time and resources and the backup from local and national authorities to eventually evolve into sustainable change. Information and awareness - raising has mainly involved the most active community members and “leaders”. It is not clear how widely and deeply the information on risks and coping mechanisms has been spread within communities. Community representatives themselves stated that “many more training events” are necessary.

Overall the value of the sub-projects under the regional umbrella provided by Bratislava lies in providing a “space for learning” i.e. in the identification of processes and challenges that require further analysis. In both countries the hands-on approach to local risk management has provided UNDP with useful lessons learnt on which to base relations and cooperation with government and partners in the future. These lessons can be used for the development of future intervention strategies and the identification of a proper UNDP role in local disaster risk management (please see following section). Results are therefore preliminary (not sustainable) and would require further follow-up.

## ***5. Lessons learnt***

The following section distinguishes a) generic lessons for regional programming and b) preliminary lessons that can be deduced from the experience of local risk management sub-projects in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

### **5.1 Lessons at the regional level**

#### **A. Defining regional outcomes**

In a regional program the added value of implementing a program in a regional “mode” rather than through country-level mechanisms needs to be reflected in clear regional outcomes and expected results that could not be achieved otherwise.

#### **B. Regional implementation and facilitation**

One of the added values a regional actor has vis-à-vis country-level actors can be a certain degree of “neutrality” which is an important pre-condition for playing a facilitation and “brokering”-function (of joint planning, lesson learning etc.). An implementing role of the regional actor can upset this “neutrality”.

#### **C. Importance of revisions of planning documents**

There is no doubt that programming a new initiative always involves uncertainties and imperfections. It is therefore important to review programming frameworks and planning documents when important planning assumptions do not materialize (such as the participation of a country) and adapt them to circumstances.

#### **D. Regional Lesson Learning**

With growing political and economic differences between the Central Asian countries common “lesson learning” becomes more difficult. The feasibility of such common lessons therefore needs to be scrutinized and the areas and purpose of lesson learning need to be properly defined and agreed upon to lead to concrete results. Identifying and agreeing upon such areas can be part of a piloting phase.

#### **E. Technical capacity**

Facilitating a regional disaster risk management program requires technical capacity to pro-actively identify synergies and opportunities for “regional” lesson learning and cooperation. Country offices also voiced demand for technical support on selected issues.

#### **F. Linking up with the Hyogo Framework for Action**

The Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015 provides the most important global strategy document for disaster risk management that touches upon all key areas. It has been agreed upon by 168 governments who together with regional organizations, the UN system and IFIs carry the responsibility for follow-up and implementation. Several important donors actively support the implementation of the framework. A regional disaster risk management program – particularly if aiming to raise international and

national support for disaster risk management - needs to establish conceptual and – if possible - practical linkages to the priorities for action in the Hyogo Framework.

## **5.2 Key Lessons at the national/ local level**

### **A. Programmatic approach to local level risk management**

Local level risk management (particularly in countries with a strong tradition of centralization) cannot be sustainable without working on the policy, institutional and legal framework which in most cases requires engagement at the national level. The challenge is to combine local and national levels of engagement and coordinate the objectives and sequence of relevant activities. This requires a programmatic approach where all components of a country disaster risk management program act in unison and a clear orientation towards the management of outcomes, not to single outputs.

### **B. UNDP's role at the local level**

While the ultimate purpose of disaster risk management is to strengthen communities and reduce their vulnerability this cannot be achieved without the involvement of government authorities. With an increasing number of NGOs active in community based disaster risk management UNDP needs to take care to work with these partners strategically and add value to what they are doing. NGOs perceive UNDP as enjoying a privileged relationship with government. Some have therefore voiced expectations that UNDP needs to take up the broader issues emanating from community level work with authorities.

In Tajikistan the REAKT mechanism i.e. the coordination body for not only national, but also provincial level disaster risk management (see 4.5) is currently looking to increasingly focus upon the identification and dissemination of best practice in (local) mitigation and prevention. While thus supporting a learning forum for various actors at the local level UNDP can play a critical role to identify and disseminate best practice and feed it into an up-stream policy process to the national level.

### **C. Involving a variety of stakeholders**

Taking into account that disaster risk management is a process that requires the contributions from various stakeholders it is important to identify instruments for a broader involvement of relevant actors. These can be assessments (which can - as in the case of Tajikistan - bring national and local actors together) or committees (such as the grant selection committees in Kyrgyzstan that represented multiple interested departments).

### **D. Matching “scientific” hazard and risk assessments and community perceptions**

Various lessons have been learnt while experimenting with both detailed hazard/ risk assessments conducted by technical specialists and relatively quick hazard and risk mapping exercises conducted during community based training events. The latter have usually been more effective in raising the interest of communities whereas the former were crucial in giving the whole process credibility in the eyes of local (and national) authorities. Care needs to be taken that the investment in detailed investigations of hazards/ risks correlates with the practical output of these studies and that reports and

maps can actually be used by relevant (local) authorities. This is particularly important with regard to the resolution of maps which has often been too low to provide useful inputs for local officials. Furthermore more can be done to combine participatory community assessments with technical studies of hazards and risks in order to not only identify physical vulnerability but also social and economic factors that are related to vulnerability. The understanding of these dimensions of vulnerability and risk is slowly evolving in Central Asia.

#### **E. Identifying meaningful indicators of risk and indicators of risk reduction**

Indicators of vulnerability and risk are highly contextual and may differ from area to area, however they are critical to plan, implement and monitor risk management initiatives. As the experience from this project suggests time may have to be allocated to identify and agree upon (with local stakeholders, national counterparts) such indicators while using risk assessment processes to gather base-line information. Indicators selected for monitoring the progress of risk management initiatives may need to be simplified so they can be used by counterparts and project-staff.

#### **F. Local structural mitigation has clear limitations**

Local structural mitigation projects have been found effective to raise the awareness and commitment of communities and their leaders to disaster risk management but have rarely succeeded to reduce risk. The geographical extent of hazards, their severity and frequency exceeds local possibilities and the maintenance even of rather modest installations already poses a challenge<sup>17</sup>. Mitigation projects have therefore tended to address symptoms but not causes of risk and vulnerability. These can only be influenced via a more holistic and preventive approach that seeks to influence the way development is planned and managed in order to - at least - ensure that future investments do not increase risk. In heavily centralized countries such as in Tajikistan such work may need to involve national authorities. UNDP Kyrgyzstan has started to include disaster risk management in sub-district development plans and further lessons will be learnt from this process in the future (this is funded by another project).

#### **G. Public awareness**

Public awareness is often treated as an end in itself that involves the printing of documents, the dissemination of brochures and the transmission of radio or TV programs without identifying clear target groups and objectives. The production and dissemination of such materials needs at least to be synchronized with other activities of a program so that it contributes to a broader output or outcome. The design of public awareness campaigns requires expertise and this expertise may sometimes have to be brought in from the outside.

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<sup>17</sup> Particularly in Kyrgyzstan that relied heavily on contractors and did not employ its own engineering expert.

## 6. Conclusions/ Scenarios

It is against the conceptual background of linkages between an unsustainable use of natural resources, the resulting increase of disaster risk and potential of environmentally induced conflicts in the Ferghana Valley that a disaster risk management component has been added to the environmental security program<sup>18</sup>. However program planning documents (in particular results and resource frameworks and individual work-plans) do not reflect these connections adequately and linkages between the environment and disaster risk management sectors have only occasionally been established.<sup>19</sup> The nature of regional cooperation that the program has facilitated has mainly taken the form of information exchange. Concrete cooperation across borders on shared hazards and risks or clearly defined and phased lesson learning on issues of common interest has not taken place: one important reason being the reluctance of Uzbekistan to fully join the program and actively participate in its implementation. Given the trans-boundary nature of hazards and vulnerabilities in the Ferghana Valley this puts a question-mark behind the broader development goal of the program i.e. to contribute to social stability in the Valley.

These two key issues **are not meant to discredit the achievements** of the program at the national and - more clearly - at the local level. Both country offices have demonstrated commitment to the national sub-projects and work-plans and project teams have worked hard and mostly successfully to achieve the agreed outputs. Specifically in the case of **Kyrgyzstan** the project has played a catalyst role to attract further support for local level risk management projects and (re-) establish UNDP as a player in disaster risk management (this was not necessary in **Tajikistan** where UNDP has played and continues to play a lead role, especially at the national level).

In both countries the project that resulted in valuable learning processes in local disaster risk management (see section 7.2) regarding participation, ownership and sustainability that require further experimentation, streamlining and systematization. However, two years are simply too short to achieve sustainable results. The project as a whole has not yet identified how lessons in the two countries could be consolidated and fed into policy processes. This would look less critical if a clear piloting phase and process had been defined from the outset that would have specified relevant achievable results. For instance, the first year could have been defined as a “pilot phase” to identify common critical issues in local risk management that are of concern to both countries and the second year could have taken a more in-depth look at these issues (such as feasible methodologies for local risk assessments).

The program was designed within the framework of a regional environment and security program. Therefore questions regarding regional cooperation, impact and linkages with the environment sector need to be asked to develop sensible recommendations for the future of the program. If we assume that there is an important causal relationship between

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<sup>18</sup> See also notes on Working Meeting in Aarhus, December 2004, page 2, last bullet point, which specifies the need for linkages between environment and disaster risk management components to increase the impact of the program.

<sup>19</sup> The same is true for linkages with UNDP’s conflict prevention programs in both countries.

the accumulation of disaster risk, environmental management and the potential for conflict in the Ferghana Valley there are basically **four programming scenarios** for UN/UNDP interventions which are presented below in broad brushes for further discussion and refinement.

The **first programming scenario** is to facilitate concrete cooperation of countries on acute trans-boundary risks and environmental issues. This requires the full participation of all three countries and a rather high degree of commitment as detailed assessments have to be jointly conducted, joint plans have to be elaborated and implementation modalities have to be agreed upon. It also requires considerable capacity in the regional implementing partner convening agency (i.e. Bratislava) and in UNDP Country offices. Given the current state of regional cooperation in general and Uzbekistan's current lack of active involvement in particular this scenario seems to be the least likely.

The **second scenario** would foresee more limited joint activities for instance on localized trans-boundary risks (such as mud-flows) that affect only two countries. It would seek to involve national levels but most of the work-load and day-to-day responsibilities would involve provincial and local authorities and their partners. A broader assessment would identify a few hotspots from which participating countries could select one or two pilot locations where more detailed assessments would be conducted. Activities would be run with the strategic aim to produce results and successes that could induce relevant actors to broaden bi- or even tri-lateral cooperation. However, this option currently only makes sense if a considerable degree of vulnerability/ risk can be asserted for trans-boundary (sub-) districts of Tajikistan (Soghd) and Kyrgyzstan (Batken).

The **third scenario** would refrain from concrete cooperation across borders and focus upon the strengthening of local and national capacities as the main priority. In order to add value to already ongoing national activities and programs in both countries it would propose and test innovative linkages between the environment and disaster risk management spheres. Based upon consultations and discussions between all stakeholders and participating countries in particular it would identify common interest in and requirements for specific lesson learning and formulate concrete expectations and objectives.

A **fourth scenario** could be created by mixing the third policy-oriented with the second "hands-on" approach. All approaches would require technical capacity in the regional implementing partner agency to be able to provide some steering to the overall process.

The discussion of the various scenarios should go hand in hand with the upcoming **overall review of the Environment and Security Program** and this report should be fed into the evaluation process. It seems of particular importance to consider a possible merging of the disaster risk management with a water and land resource management component that may be initiated in the next phase<sup>20</sup>. The critical issue of the linkages between water and land management practices and disaster risk has so far only occasionally been tackled in Central Asia and a regional program – if equipped with the

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<sup>20</sup> According to the interview with the regional program assistant from Bratislava

required technical expertise - could provide a forum for much needed action research and debate. There is also need to needs to establish conceptual and – if possible - practical linkages to the priorities in **the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015** endorsed by 168 countries as the global agenda for disaster risk management

The participation of Uzbekistan remains a critical issue. A discussion with the Minister in Kyrgyzstan revealed the strong influence Russia exerts over Ministries and Committees of Emergencies in Central Asia. The same is true for Tajikistan. Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan are members of two regional political organizations that are relevant to environmental security: the Shanghai Organization for Cooperation and the CIS Council of Emergencies of which all Central Asian countries (except Turkmenistan) are members. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization occasionally organizes conferences that bring together heads of environment and disaster management agencies. The next session of the Council will be held 2008 in Tajikistan. It may be of value to study the successes and progress of both the CIS council and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in convening the countries of the region around a common agenda in order to inform future strategies. The Russian Ministry of Emergencies may also be an important partner to consult.

If indeed partners agree to continue beyond 2007 and are ready to commit themselves to a clearly defined regional objective a stock-taking exercise with all concerned parties before the end of the year should be organized that discusses the achievements so far, the feasibility to work in a more ambitious “regional” mode and the way ahead.

If such agreement cannot be reached the program should be wrapped up in 2007. The remaining funds should – after plans and proposals have been agreed upon – be transferred to country offices with final reports to be submitted to Bratislava at the end of the year.