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Abbreviations

ACTED	Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development
AED	Academy for Educational Development
CAIP	Community Action Investment Program
CAMFA	Central Asia Microfinance Association
CBO	Community-Based Organization
CIC	Community Improvement Council
CTO	Cognizant Technical Officer
DED	Deutsche Entwicklungs Dienst (German Development Service)
FSU	Former Soviet Union
INGO	International non-governmental organization
IR	Intermediate Result
IREX	International Research and Exchanges Board
JA	Junior Achievement
LG	Local Government
LNGO	Local Non-Governmental Organization
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MFI	Microfinance Institution
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NIS	Newly independent States
PAD	Partnership for Academic Development
PACE	Participatory Action for Community Enhancement
PMP	Performance Monitoring Plan
POC	Program Operations Center
PRS [®]	Program Reporting System
PSI	Population Services International
RFA	Request for Applications
ROSCA	Rotating Savings and Credit Association
SIA	Social Inventory Assessment
SO	Strategic Objective
SOS	Social Outreach Strategy
SOW	Scope of Work
START	Strategic Technical Assistance for Results with Training
TOT	Training of Trainers
USAID/CAR	United States Agency for International Development/Central Asian Republics

Definitions

Aksakals: Literally: white-beard; elderly men in the community who often hold leadership positions and are frequently consulted for important community decisions.

Kengash: Uzbek term for community improvement council (CIC).

Khokim: The appointed leader of a *rayon*, an administrative unit the size of a county in the United States.

Khokimyat: Term which refers to the local government administered by the *khokim*.

Mahalla: The lowest level of local governance in Uzbekistan, the equivalent of a neighborhood (in a city) or small village.

Militsia: Term used for the police or military police in Uzbekistan.

Rayon: Government administrative unit equivalent of a county in the United States.

Resource Center: Local NGOs identified as key CAIP training providers through a competitive process in year one of the program. In Surkhandarya NGO Bunyod (or before that the Business Women's Association) and in Kashkadarya NGO Avlod.

Executive Summary

In May 2002, CHF International (CHF), together with its partner Counterpart International (CI), began implementation of the USAID-funded Community Action Investment Program (CAIP) for Uzbekistan. This three-year program combined CHF's proven Participatory Action for Community Enhancement (PACE) methodology with CI's expertise in training and capacity building to deliver concrete improvements to community infrastructure in 75 communities in the Kashkadarya and Surkhandarya regions, while increasing the capacity of communities to address their own needs, improving relations between communities and local government, and mitigating potential sources of tension at the community level. The CAIP program worked in support of USAID's cross-cutting goal, "*preventing conflict and reducing tension within target communities.*" In support of this goal, CAIP's three overall objectives were:

- (1) *Participatory and democratic processes strengthened at the community level*
- (2) *Improved community social services through improved infrastructure*
- (3) *Creation of sustainable and short term jobs*

From May 2002 to June 2005, **245 community infrastructure projects and 18 cluster projects were implemented, benefiting over 725,000 people.** Projects were identified and implemented through a **fully participatory and transparent process**, ensuring that communities had a sense of ownership and increased ability to implement projects independent of donor support. In addition, **over 2,000 people received short-term employment through CAIP activities, and over 580 long-term jobs were created.**

Surveys of CAIP participants showed that the CHF/CI approach was successful not only in delivering infrastructure improvements and economic benefits, but also in strengthening democratic processes and reducing conflict. In the final evaluation, **95% of respondents reported reduced tension within their community** – both among neighbors and between residents and local authorities and citizens. In addition, among members of CAIP Community Improvement Councils, **more than 90% reported "good" relations with the local administration (*khokimiyat*)**, a drastic turnaround from the high mistrust of government cited as the greatest cause of tension in the initial Social Inventory Assessment (SIA).

Empowering Communities

"CAIP program opened our eyes. Thanks to trainings we learned about NGOs, fundraising, ownership, private entrepreneurship and juridical entities. The program also helped us to manage human resources and to identify problems to resolve the problems. Besides I am using myself the methods which I learned at the seminars at school."

An important additional impact of CAIP was its 'demonstration effect'. CAIP communities served as an example to neighboring communities of the effectiveness of community and local government participation in problem-solving. In some cases these communities joined the CAIP communities in supporting cluster projects. Furthermore, CHF conducted extensive media outreach efforts to ensure that CAIP communities' successes were recognized by other communities. Through these efforts **over 150 articles on CAIP projects appeared in the local media, reaching over 350,000 people.**

1. Program Overview

CHF International and Counterpart International in partnership with talented local non-government organizations implemented the Community Action Investment Program (CAIP) in 71 communities in Southern Uzbekistan. The program was designed using the results of the *Social Inventory Assessment (SIA)* which utilized the USAID tension index to identify sources of conflict within the target communities. This initial research found that communities in the region were ripe for mobilization and capacity building in participatory democratic decision making toward the reduction of tensions and resolution of conflict. Among the key findings were:

1. **Citizen participation in public organizations was extremely low.** Individuals, particularly in rural areas, generally did not join political, economic or social institutions. Civil society was in the first stages of development and citizens continued to rely upon traditional social institutions (*mahallas*) to address problems in their community. Citizens trusted *mahallas* and their leadership, more than any other institution – there were particularly low levels of trust in municipal or regional governments or their representatives.
2. The **overwhelming mistrust of government** was the result of the perceived inability/or unwillingness of appointed government officials and bureaucrats to respond to the needs of their constituents. This lack of accountability and responsiveness on behalf of government coupled with widespread poverty, rising income inequality and pervasive unemployment fostered growing animosity toward authority, especially towards representatives of the lower tiers of government whose dishonesty and greed was often blatant.
3. The ethnic and religious homogeneity of the population in Southern Uzbekistan contributed to relatively little risk of identity-based conflict. Instead increasing economic inequality and perceptions of **government exploitation of its citizenry was perceived as the greatest threat to stability** in the region. At that time growing tension had not yet resulted in large-scale demonstrations or serious conflict.
4. Citizens of southern Uzbekistan demonstrated a willingness to address everyday problems in their communities, including the improving social and economic infrastructure, without government assistance. However, at the time of the SIA **citizens and traditional institutions possessed very little capacity, and limited resources to effect change.** Without funding, specialized technical skills or appropriate equipment community-initiated improvement efforts rarely got off the ground.

Other factors contributing to the vulnerability of Kashkadarya and Surkhandarya to conflict included high rates of labor out-migration, a precarious geographic location (bordering with Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Turkmenistan), and an increase in the incidence of religious extremism, drug abuse and other anti-social behavior among youth.

Familiarity with these circumstances provided CHF International and Counterpart International with the ability to design and continually adapt the CAIP program to best

meet the needs of target communities. The program was launched in May of 2002 in 30 communities in each province. The initial program scope was then augmented in May 2003 when 12 communities were added to the CAIP portfolio and the economic development component was launched. In spring 2005 the program was extended beyond its original end date to November 31, 2005. The final extension enabled CHF International's PRS team to continue to provide technical support to USAID and implementers with ongoing activities. Work with the communities was finished in May 2005, having met all of its stated goals and objectives.

1.1. Program Objectives

CHF International and Counterpart International worked toward USAID's cross-cutting goal of: **Preventing conflict and reducing tension within target communities.** To achieve this goal, CAIP activities promoted the following programmatic objectives:

1. Participatory and democratic processes strengthened at the community level
2. Improved community social services through improved infrastructure
3. Creation of sustainable and short term jobs

Improved Relations with Local Government

"When deputy *khokim* heard about our work on installing a water pump he came to visit us and during the monitoring he suggested to increase the power of the pump. Our CIC leader explained that resources of the *mahalla* were sufficient only for this type and if *khokimiyat* would provide with additional finance we could increase the power. The week after *khokimiyat* with the local farm sponsored purchase of a new pump" - CIC leader in Obodan

1.2. Technical Approach

CHF International employed our *Participatory Action for Community Enhancement (PACE)* methodology as the theoretical and analytical guide to the implementation CAIP. This manual of best practices was honed through the implementation of similar programs in countries in transition to impart sustainable community empowerment processes, ease tensions and produce tangible economic results. Combined with Counterpart International's expertise in training and information dissemination, the CAIP program improved democratic participation, encouraged non-traditional leadership and engaged disparate groups, including local government officials, in improving their communities.

Six critical dynamics underpin the democratic processes promoted during CAIP; each had a direct positive impact on mitigating conflict while realizing community ownership of local development in target communities. They were:

- Communities increased their expectations of inclusive and transparent decision-making;
- CAIP community mobilization activities had a positive "demonstration effect" in the communities.¹
- Opportunities for continued improvement of community well-being led to increased participation by communities and local government officials;²

¹ As evidenced by the increasing number of community self-initiated projects throughout the life of the program. At least 147 such projects were completed by communities during the program.

² As the CAIP program demonstrated positive impact in the communities there was an increased willingness of government officials to recognize and participate in CAIP activities and be associated with the results.

- Community matching contributions, including time and resources, steadily increased over the life of the project;
- A forum was provided for interaction between diverse groups;
- Concrete incentives and common goals served as a basis of cooperation among disparate populations.

Together these dynamics increased communication across divides to allow actors better access to resources and improved infrastructure made available under CAIP. The processes employed under CAIP demonstrated to citizens how to effectively organize, represent and negotiate their concerns, and enable local government to systematically incorporate those concerns into future responses to their constituents. As a result the CAIP program in Southern Uzbekistan provided a platform for introducing sustainable processes that validated core, community-centered values, such as self-help, trust, responsiveness, cooperation and pluralism.

**CAIP Social Outreach
Strategy and Training
Modules:**

The CAIP Final Assessment reported that “75% of the participants report that they applied the skills they learned in the trainings during the project implementation process, and have continued to do so in their personal and professional lives.”

Target communities for CAIP were selected following the *Social Inventory Assessment (SIA)* which was rooted in the USAID tension index. Over 200 communities in Southern Uzbekistan were evaluated on their potential for conflict and existing tensions, and 72 high-risk communities were selected for participation in CAIP.³ Following best practices from similar PACE programs, CHF and CPI adapted the *Social Outreach Strategy (SOS)* to mobilize communities and form effective Community Improvement Councils (CICs) in Southern Uzbekistan.

The SOS ten-step process ensured a logical, smooth transition through the application and assessment stages in planning, implementation, and monitoring of the individual projects. It outlined the timing of the steps to implement projects, defined roles and responsibilities, and provided methods for monitoring and documenting activities and sub-activities. The SOS focused heavily on the processes used in democratic decision-making and ensured that project implementation was participatory and benefits broad reaching. Finally the SOS was kept simple so communities could immediately understand the process *and* continue using it beyond the end of CAIP.

Utilizing the SOS and adapting and developing the CPI training curriculum to the needs of CAIP, each CIC completed six-modules of training (see section 2.2.1 below) and implemented two or three community-focused infrastructure projects. In addition to the projects that were aimed at assisting individual communities, most of the communities also participated in a cluster project that brought together a CAIP community with up to four neighboring communities with a shared infrastructure need. Some key characteristics of CAIP community mobilization activities included the following:

³ After the first year, CAIP withdrew from one community in southern Uzbekistan (Gulistan in Termez) due to a poor relationship with the *Mahalla* leader, who refused to respect CAIP principles and work towards CAIP goals.

- Although the CICs guided the decision-making process, they also sought **community input throughout the process**, from project selection through its implementation.
- Communities were required to **contribute at least 25%** of the value of the infrastructure project; over the life of the project community contributions totaled more than 30%.
- **Local government support** was enlisted in the form of donated equipment, space, supplies, staff or sometimes even monetary contributions.
- Government agencies were also **involved in project approval and often incorporated into project sustainability plans** as they agreed to take responsibility for maintenance and upkeep of specific infrastructure projects (gas lines, medical centers, etc.)

With the expansion of the program in year two CHF and CPI sought to address the lack of economic opportunity found in CAIP communities, and identified as an additional source of potential conflict. Economic development activities were successfully integrated into the program through three distinct approaches: (1) Pilot projects were initiated in CAIP communities, testing feasibility of social enterprises and vocational training centers in southern Uzbekistan. (2) Micro-lending resources were provided through two different mechanisms: sub-grants to ACTED and PAD, and organizing trainings on Rotating Savings and Credit Associations (ROSCA). (3) Economic development trainings were delivered to interested entrepreneurs in all communities as a part of the 6-module curriculum.

Recognizing the specific needs of different demographic groups including women and youth, CAIP encouraged participation of women on each CIC and often found that empowered women leaders were among the most engaged and proactive CIC leaders. In addition, CAIP staff encouraged implementation of projects that involved youth or benefited the community youth in a specific way. Furthermore, two youth forums were held and in their aftermath youth leadership groups were established and supported.

Encouraging Saving Among Women:

After a female CIC leader participated in a CAIP Rotating Savings and Credit Association Training, the Deputy *Khokim* of Women's Issues in Uzun region asked that she share the information with additional women's groups in the region. Three separate meetings were organized and attended by women in the community who had the opportunity to learn about this important savings and lending tool.

All CAIP interventions were coordinated with local and international NGOs in order to maximize the exposure of CAIP communities to available resources. Among CAIP partners were the Academy for Educational Development (AED), Junior Achievement (JA), the Business Women's Association (BWA), Populations Services International (PSI), the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX), Partnership for Academic and Development (PAD), Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED) and Project Hope. They provided various trainings (AED, JA), computer equipment (IREX), loan capital (PAD and ACTED), or opportunities for exchange of ideas (BWA and PSI) to CAIP communities, thus augmenting the efforts undertaken within the scope of CAIP and firming up its overall success.

2. Key Impacts and Activities

The outcomes of CAIP activities contributed directly to progress toward the 3 overall CAIP goals:

- (1) *Participatory and democratic processes strengthened at the community level*
Both communities and local governments increased their capacity and participation in addressing community needs together, as demonstrated by survey responses as well as increasing community contributions, community self-initiated projects, and government participation in projects.
- (2) *Improved community social services through improved infrastructure*
Over 250 community or cluster-level infrastructure projects were completed, addressing a broad range of needs, from provision of potable water or electricity to construction of community and sports centers, medical facilities, and roads.
- (3) *Creation of sustainable and short term jobs*
Over 2,000 people received short-term employment through CAIP; over 580 long-term jobs were generated by CAIP projects and activities.

Furthermore, CAIP resulted in a substantial decrease of tension and reduction in the potential for conflict between the community and local administration, among community residents and between communities. The impacts described above all contribute to the improvement of key sources of potential conflict identified in the early stages of CAIP: low levels of citizen participation in public organizations, mistrust of government, lack of capacity and resources to effect positive change, and lack of economic opportunity. In addition, responses to surveys of CAIP participants specifically indicate that communities perceived a reduction in tensions, and an increase in their capacity to effect change.

2.1. Results Framework and Outcomes

The following chart shows the overall achievements of the CAIP program in Uzbekistan, as compared to targets agreed with USAID:

Activity	Achieved (Target)
Communities mobilized	75 (72)
CIC trainings held	434 (432)
Projects started (social and infrastructure)	243
Projects completed (social and infrastructure)	243 (216)
Cluster infrastructure projects started	18
Cluster infrastructure projects completed	18
Projects implemented w/o donor support	147 (144)
Articles published about CAIP in local media	153 (80)
People reached through print media efforts	356,766 (70,000)
Roundtables held	15

People employed short term	2,097 (3600)
People employed long term	586 (125 direct, 1,500 indirect)
Beneficiaries	739,548 (250,000)
ROSCA Trainings	454
Community Consultations	97

CHF International and Counterpart International exceeded all targets under CAIP, with the exception of short-term employment generation (2,097 people received short-term employment, vs. a target of 3,600). This is due primarily to the fact that a large part of community in-kind contributions was through donation of labor, lowering the amount of paid short-term labor generated by projects. At the same time, long-term employment generated over 4 times its target, a greater community benefit than short-term paid labor. It is notable that communities contributed 30% of overall project costs, 5% above the CAIP requirement. This additional leveraging of funds by communities allowed CAIP project funds to be stretched further, resulting in the implementation of over 20 projects above the LOP target. Throughout the life of the project CAIP staff listened and responded to community demands for additional development interventions including activities which encouraged implementation of cluster projects, provided greater access to capital for small entrepreneurs, and a voice for youth leaders. These activities contributed to the initial objectives of CAIP and further built the capacity of communities to address the needs of all citizens.

Over the life of the project communities demonstrated an increasing sense of ownership over the decision-making process and responsiveness to needs of varying constituencies within their communities from households, to businesspeople - including agribusiness entrepreneurs and traders, to school children and unemployed youth. In addition to the increasing number of projects implemented by communities without donor support reflected in the chart below, communities also frequently raised more resources for contribution toward second-round projects than they had done for initial projects, another indication of a growing sense of ownership by communities.

	I May 02 - Sep 02	II Oct 02 - Sep 03	III Oct 03 - Sep 04	IV Oct 04 - Jun 05
# of projects initiated	4	66	164	9
# of long-term jobs	4	46	496	40
# of short-term jobs	9	315	1,712	61
# of projects w/o donor support	0	33	79	35
# of direct beneficiaries	8,293	171,641	547,247	12,367
% of projects focusing on youth *	1 (25%)	19 (29%)	34 (21%)	2 (22%)

* includes youth centers, sports grounds, sports complexes, culture clubs.

In addition to the achievements described above, the CAIP Final Evaluation revealed an overall change in the outlook of community members who participated in CAIP. They reported an increased level of engagement in decision making processes on the community level, greater confidence in fostering dialogue with the local administration, and heightened trust of neighbors and public organizations. More than 90% of CAIP-CIC members reported “good” relations with the *khokimiyat*, a drastic turnaround from the high mistrust of government cited as the greatest cause of tension in the initial SIA. The reasons cited by CIC members for their improved relations with local government included:

1. Confidence and capacity to solve tangible problems in their communities through the implementation of infrastructure projects, and
2. Greater ability to communicate and negotiate successfully with community members and local government representatives as a result of CAIP training.

In the final evaluation 95% of respondents reported reduced tension within their community – both among neighbors and between residents and local authorities and citizens. Survey participants attributed this reduction in tension to several factors:

- Broad community participation in implementation of tangible infrastructure improvements;
- Development of community skills in planning and implementing such projects, leading to empowerment of community leaders;
- Increased confidence among communities in their ability to address problems and effect positive change.

The increase in participation by local government officials over the life of the project helped increase trust between communities and local government officials, initially identified as a major source of tension within communities. In addition, infrastructure projects often directly removed sources of potential conflict between and among communities by addressing issues of unequal access to resources such as potable water. Finally, economic development activities integrated into CAIP in year two directly addressed the issue of unequal economic opportunities. In addition to the generation of short and long-term employment, these activities focused on increasing access to financial resources (through micro-lending and ROSCA training), as well as improving business skills (through economic development trainings).

2.2. Key Activities

CHF and CI achieved the impacts described above through an integrated set of activities that linked the community participation *process* to the *product* of tangible improvements to community infrastructure and economic development, supported by targeted training and technical assistance to ensure sustainable improvements in community and government capacity to identify and address needs and issues.

Community Mobilization

This combination of process and product was the cornerstone of CHF and CPI success in Southern Uzbekistan, and directly contributed to the achievement of the goal of CAIP. Providing demand-driven training and technical assistance at all stages of the community

mobilization process, and creating a strong incentive for community involvement through construction of small infrastructure which improved their social and economic conditions, resulted in empowered community leadership, and local ownership of the development process. One CIC member describes the maturing of the community throughout CAIP:

“At the beginning the people (community members) requested that the program do everything but now they have witnessed community leaders resolving problems on their own and now the community has a new perspective. Now they believe that we can accomplish things without the assistance of CAIP. If we bring up an issue and offer to work on its resolution together, the people join us.”

The CAIP community mobilization process also empowered community leadership by encouraging CIC members to internalize their roles as elected officials and provide a new model of accountability and responsiveness to their communities. One important result was the election of a CAIP CIC member to the Federal Senate:

Mr. Oltiev Abdurashid was a CIC leader, because he was very active in resolving problems within the mahalla and as a result of CAIP he gained confidence and become respected among residents. Thanks to his contribution in solution of mahallas problems in January 2005 he was elected as a delegate and a member of Senate by the members of his community.

Unlike most appointed and elected officials in Uzbekistan, Mr. Abdurashid has already demonstrated his commitment to the people through frequent consultations with his constituents.

Community Infrastructure Projects

Community infrastructure projects are the nexus of PACE methodology used in CAIP. They effectively draw disparate groups together around a shared goal of community improvement and provide a mechanism for mobilizing community resources and engaging local government. In Southern Uzbekistan, CHF found that community infrastructure acted as a strong incentive for participation not only of traditional community leaders, but also of women, business leaders, youth, government officials and others. Further, communication lines between antagonists were often opened through participation in the process of identifying and carrying out an important infrastructure project. The CHF International and Counterpart International CAIP program emphasized: **transparency and accountability; community ownership of the process and product; local government engagement and conflict prevention** throughout each stage of project identification, tender, construction and maintenance.

Transparency and Accountability

CAIP Uzbekistan built on CHF experience in other PACE programs to develop a comprehensive procurement manual which facilitated an efficient and transparent procurement process. The CAIP Program Operations Center (POC) staff worked closely with CAIP communities in every step of the procurement process – gradually shifting more responsibility to the communities. CAIP also offered procurement and vendor workshops where CIC members, vendors and POC staff learned procurement procedures and discussed related issues. Upon CAIP graduation, each community received an abridged CAIP procurement manual and a contact list of all regional contractors that have satisfactorily worked with CAIP communities to assist them in procurement for future community development initiatives.

Community Success Story: Accessing Potable Water in Kashkadarya

One project implemented without donor assistance is the potable water project in Musabozor community in Kashkadarya. For their first CAIP project - construction of a gas pipeline - Musabozor's residents contributed more than 60% of the overall cost. The transparency of the process and their subsequent success inspired the community to attempt a small road project without CAIP assistance. When this project was also a success gave they felt confident in addressing the most challenging issue in Musabozor, the lack of potable water. Musabozor shared this problem with the neighboring village of Surum whose support was necessary for project success. Musabozor's CIC members explained to their neighbors the benefits of the CAIP methodology, and some Surum residents were even invited to participate in CAIP trainings. The result of this communal action was equal cash and in-kind contributions by both communities toward the improvement of potable water. In addition, they enlisted significant in-kind support from the local collective farm. As a result of this joint action, almost 850 people received direct access to clean, potable water.

Community Ownership

Throughout the program, CHF and Counterpart noted increasing community buy-in to improvement efforts. Requirements for “matching contribution” to projects mandated CIC members mobilize resources from a broad cross-section of the community, which resulted in increased trust in the process and ownership of the product. One CIC member describes this well:

“In the beginning we did not believe in ourselves or trust that a project could successfully be completed. Only after the construction materials were purchased and delivered to the mahalla, and the first project was completed did we gain confidence. In the next projects it was easy for us to collect money from the community members to contribute toward new infrastructure. And in the third project the residents took active part in the CIC decision making process.”

Another indicator of the success of CAIP community mobilization efforts is the significant number of self-initiated and community-funded projects undertaken by CICs and CAIP communities. Over the course of the project, CHF identified 147 such projects, and we believe that an even greater number went uncounted. The substantial number of self-initiated projects demonstrates the successful transfer of skills to the CAIP communities and their improved abilities to leverage funding from diverse sources for construction and maintenance of new infrastructure.

Local Government Involvement

An important factor in reducing tension within communities was building trust between citizens and their local government representatives. Although not explicitly a local government initiative, the CAIP program made great strides in many communities to improve the accountability and responsiveness of local government officials while increasing the confidence of community leaders in their ability to both leverage monetary and in-kind contributions from government and ensure ongoing maintenance of infrastructure projects by the appropriate government entity. In several cases the government has improved existing CAIP projects, or funded complementary projects in CAIP communities.

Conflict Prevention

In addition to reducing tension between community members and local government officials, infrastructure projects often provided an opportunity for communities to recognize and address sources of conflicts in their communities through encouraging CICs to prioritize interventions which resolved conflicts over resources or improved conditions for vulnerable populations. In one CAIP community, conflicts frequently arose between the farmers of *mahalla* and other residents over access to water. There was only one pump for both irrigation and everyday use within the *mahalla*. Farmers often monopolized this pump and left little water for other residents. The CAIP CIC chose to install a second pump in their community and the problem was resolved. According to one CIC leader, “*There are no longer conflicts in our mahalla.*”

Training, Capacity Building and Technical Assistance

A critical component to the success of the Community Action Investment Program (CAIP) was the comprehensive capacity building component. CAIP expended a great amount of effort in building the capacity of an elected group of community leaders who formed the Community Improvement Councils (CICs). Each CIC received a core series of trainings that included community group management, project design and management, project sustainability and long-term community strategic planning. Capacity building training, coupled with community development project grants, proved to be an effective method of sustaining community development interventions. Building the capacity of the community was a focus of the project implementation process from the beginning, rather than emphasizing speedy implementation (with more direct work by the INGO implementers) at the start. In fact, the community infrastructure grant program finished ahead of schedule because communities learned the skills to work at a more effective and efficient pace. The effectiveness and sustainability of this approach is demonstrated by nearly 150 self-funded community improvement projects.

Based on skills learned at CAIP trainings and other capacity building interventions, community leaders were able to acquire the skills and tools to continue the CAIP community development process with internal or outside donor funding. Future development initiatives will include gaining broad community participation, documenting project strategy, designing project budgets and creating sustainability plans with

individual roles and responsibilities – all skills learned at CAIP trainings. Specific capacity building interventions included:

- Designing a core series of 6 capacity building training modules
- Selecting local NGO Resource Centers to deliver the core capacity building modules to all 71 Community Improvement Councils (CICs)
- Providing additional technical trainings such as Conflict Resolution, Rotating Savings and Credit Associations (ROSCAs), Condominium Association, Advocacy and Business trainings through other local and international organizations
- Staging issue-based forums and roundtables
- Providing individualized community consultations to CAIP program participants
- Facilitating community exchanges

All capacity-building activities were conducted in a demand-driven, cost-effective manner and emphasized results *not* delivery. In year two of the program, CAIP commissioned a training program assessment and used the findings to improve training design and delivery. Training assessment findings included:

- 90% of participants questioned had a favorable opinion of the CAIP training program.
- 40% of participants felt that some trainings could be shortened or scheduled differently.
- The majority of respondents said that trainings had a practical value because they learned about project proposal writing, budgeting, and working with the community.
- In most cases, motivation was low at the beginning of the training program, but as CIC members noticed successful implementation of their projects, motivation improved.
- 65% of the participants applied the above-mentioned skills during the project implementation and they have continued to do so in their family and professional lives.
- Some CICs reached higher levels than others and CAIP should therefore approach each CIC with an individual training plan.
- 30% of respondents said that CAIP training had reduced conflict in their communities.

Capacity Building Training Modules

CAIP utilized local expertise and contextual information when developing or modifying training modules. During the program, CAIP staff, trainers and consultants developed a series of six training modules:

- (1) Community Group Management
- (2) Project Design and Application for Funding
- (3) Project Sustainability and Management
- (4) Long-term Strategic Planning
- (5) Community Driven Business Development Services
- (6) Community Development Groups and Organizations.

Each of these six capacity building training modules were delivered to all 71 Community Improvement Councils.

Contracting with NGO Resource Centers for Training Design and Delivery

CAIP localized training expertise by using a training of trainer (TOT) methodology to train and certify contract teams of local trainers in Kashkadarya and Surkandarya. CAIP did not want to simply employ full-time trainers, nor did it want to sign contracts with individual trainers on an add hoc basis. As a result, we contracted with registered organizations that would (1) maintain a qualified team of contract trainers, (2) keep financial records of training activities, (3) be responsible for organizing and monitoring trainings and (4) assist CAIP with other activities such as exchange visits, roundtables and forums.

To select these training provider organizations – i.e., Resource Centers (RCs) – CAIP issued an RFA for interested organizations. We received approximately 8 applications per region. The organizations that scored the highest on the predetermined criteria were selected for site visits. After a series of interviews and visits with the top scoring organizations, the 2 main RCs were selected as CAIP training providers. We gave each RC a one time institutional support grant. This was tied to what we required of them in terms of reporting, monitoring and general program support activities. This relationship was governed by a master contract with other small fee-for-service contracts. CAIP staff provided them with advice, technical assistance and financial support.

Additional Training and Technical Assistance

CHF and Counterpart identified additional resources for training and technical assistance for CAIP community members. These opportunities provided knowledge and skills critical to sustaining community-driven development activities. The beneficiaries of these trainings represented a broad cross-section of community members including youth, women entrepreneurs, local government representatives and CIC leaders.

Creating Avenues for Conflict Resolution:

“Now people’s attitude changed to mahalla committees and CICs. In the past they would approach district khokimiyat, or the militia; now they come directly to elected community leaders to resolve their family problems. For example not long ago there was a quarrel between relatives. They approached mahalla committee and the CIC who in their turn helped them to resolve their family conflict.” CAIP CIC leader.

Conflict Prevention and Resolution Training

CAIP resource centers trainers and 4 CAIP staff members participated in a Training of Trainers on *Conflict Prevention and Resolution*. The training was conducted by CAIP Kyrgyzstan (ACDI/ VOCA) trainers and was funded through the AED START Program. Following the Conflict Prevention and Resolution Training of Trainers, CAIP Resource Center trainers conducted over 40 trainings for 600 CAIP community members. The training focused on (1) demystifying conflict through providing information on conflict mitigation terminology and techniques and (2) encouraging dialogue on sources of social tensions and underlying roots of conflict in both personal and community settings. Participants reported learning new techniques, feeling more comfortable discussing conflict issues and being more willing to employ new techniques in resolving conflict.

Condominium Association Training

CAIP contracted with 2 Urban Institute trainers to design and conduct a 3-day Condominium Association Training of Trainers (TOT) in Termez, Surkhandarya. A total 12 participants (9 from Termez and 3 from Karshi) participated in this training. As a

follow-up activity, 174 people from 10 urban CAIP communities participated in the Condominium Association Establishment and Management Training. A major impact of this training was the Surkandarya government's contracting the RC to conduct the same training for government officials.

Rotating Savings and Credit Associations (ROSCAs)

Improving Traditional Lending Practices:

CAIP Trainer Jahongir Norqobilov says "It was difficult to motivate the initial ROSCA groups. People believed they knew all about this concept and thought it ineffective. During the trainings and consultations we differentiated between using loans for *consumption* or for *economic activities* and helped ROSCA members formalize their groups. We also taught them specific business skills such as budgeting, marketing and writing a business plan. Participants are now seeing the benefits of formalized ROSCAs and the resulting productive economic activities."

Following a Central Asian Microfinance Association (CAMFA) training of trainers made possible by the AED START program, 20 CAIP trainers learned how to assist community members in establishing Rotating Savings and Credit Associations (ROSCAs). CAIP trainers delivered a series of 10 trainings and consultations to 36 selected, economically-active CAIP communities. The result of these trainings exceeded all expectations. A total of 100 ROSCAs were initiated due to CAIP trainings and consultations. These 100 ROSCAs have a total of 784 members and cycled more than \$50,000 in

loans from June 2004-January 2005. At the close of CAIP nearly all of these ROSCAs were still functioning, and several non-CAIP trained ROSCAs emerged in neighboring communities after witnessing the success of the CAIP-trained groups.

Community Owned Business and Social Enterprise Training

A total of 40 CAIP Community Improvement Council (CIC) members participated in two, four-day Community Owned Business and Social Enterprise trainings in Termez and Karshi. The training was conducted by Junior Achievement and funded by the AED START program. Participants learned the legal and theoretical foundations of social enterprise and community owned business as well as the fundamentals of market economics. All participants were from communities that have economic projects that are either owned by the CIC or the *Mahalla*. The training was intended to help the business managers operate their CAIP community businesses more effectively.

CAIP Community Consultations

CAIP contracted with 2 Counterpart International Civic Advocacy Support Program (CASP) trainers to conduct a four-day training on *Consultation Skills* for trainers of both CAIP Resource Centers. Following the TOT, CAIP Resource Center staff conducted 137 consultations for 998 individuals in Surkhandarya and Kashkadarya. The consultations were focused on NGO registration, locating and approaching possible donors, writing grant applications, advocacy, social marketing, teaching motivational skills, implementing youth programs and preventing conflict. This initiative proved to be a highly demanded and cost-effective service. Feedback from trainers and community members has been nearly uniformly positive, and both groups believe this has been an important value-add to the CAIP community mobilization process. Each consultation is specifically requested by a community, and many of the consultations contributed to solving concrete problems.

Issue-Based Forums and Roundtables

CAIP conducted 15 issue-based forums in Kashkadarya and Surkandarya on topics such as Youth Leadership, CIC Stakeholders, Economic Development, and Sustainable Communities as well as a CAIP Final Forum. Highlights included:

CAIP Youth Forums

Following the Youth Forum in Termez, a local NGO organized Termez youth to draft and promote a Youth Charter. The Charter outlined Surkhandarya youth's interest in issues related to their education, environment, health, employment and safety. The youth group was registered by the Regional Justice Department and were invited by a number of local government officials throughout the region to present their findings.

Youth Forum and Other Programmatic Activities

CAIP facilitated participation in several youth events over the life of the project including: development of youth charters in Kashkadarya and Surkhandarya following CAIP Youth Forums in each region; exchanges with youth from CAIP communities in the Ferghana valley; participation in anti-drug theatrical performance by a Tashkent youth group supported through Population Services International (PSI).

Economic Development Forums

More than 400 participants took part in the CAIP Surkhandarya and Kashkadarya Economic Development Forums. The goals of Forums were to (1) Give citizens interested in business development in the region an opportunity to network with other entrepreneurs and employers, (2) Present short instructional sessions on targeted business issues to Forum participants, and (3) Have small group and panel discussions on impediments and solutions for economic development in the region. The Forums also produced documents that articulated economic problems and proposed solutions in both CAIP regions.

Three business people were invited from each of the 36 communities in both regions. The Forums were also attended by regional bank representatives, local government officials, local entrepreneurs, local media, CAIP and RC staffs, local NGOs including Samarkand Civil Society Support Center (CSSC), and international NGO representatives including JA, PAD, IFC, Eurasia Foundation. The Forums' were marked by excellent cross-divisional organization, solid logistics and strong content. Economic Forum Findings were finalized and distributed to all CAIP communities.

NGO Legal Roundtables

In cooperation with ICNL and the Resource Centers, CAIP organized NGO Legal Roundtables. The goal of the roundtables was to increase the knowledge of current and potential NGO leaders in the Surkhandarya and Kashkadarya regions on NGO legal issues. The focus was NGO legal issues such as types of organizations, registration procedures, banking regulation and advocating for improved NGO legislation. More than 100 people representing communities in Surkhandarya and Kashkadarya attended the Roundtables and learned about registering and operating legal nongovernmental organizations. Community representatives held a discussion with representatives of nongovernmental organizations and government agencies in order to learn and ask questions concerning NGO activities. As a result of the Kashkadarya Roundtable, a representative from the local Ministry of Justice organized a follow-up session so individuals could ask additional questions about NGO registration and legislation.

CAIP Social Partnership Forum

More than 250 participants took part in the CAIP Surkhandarya and Kashkadarya Social Partnership Forums. The focus of the forums was constructive cooperation between government and citizen groups. The 2 most active Community Improvement Council members from each of the 71 CAIP communities and 30-40 government officials (hokimiyat and *mahalla* authorities) were invited to each forum. The goals were to (1) Provide a forum where citizens from CAIP communities and government officials can openly discuss opportunities for improved collaboration and network with each other, (2) Share specific examples and lessons learned in government/citizen collaboration, and (3) Have small group and larger presentations on benefits, expectations and concrete social partnership possibilities and (4) Present short instructional sessions on defined social partnership activities and techniques. A final document summarizing these discussions was distributed to all participants and other interested parties.

Sustainable Communities Workshops

More than 90 participants took part in the one-day Sustainable Community workshops and experience exchanges in Termez and Karshi. The most active CIC member from each of the 71 communities was invited. The workshop also was attended by local government officials, local and international NGO representatives, CAIP and RC staff. The main topics of the workshop included (1) Financial Sustainability (grant writing, social enterprises, fundraising) (2) Social Sustainability (conflict management and mediation) and (3) Governance Sustainability (advocacy and social partnership). The goal of these workshops was to increase participants' understanding of concepts of sustainability through instruction and experience exchange with other CAIP communities and government officials.

CAIP Final Forum

More than 110 individuals participated in the CAIP Final Forum in Boysun in May 2005. The goal of the CAIP Final Forum was fourfold: (1) To exchange ideas, successes, challenges and lessons learned during the 3-year Community Action Investment Program; (2) To recognize and award the most active CAIP communities and government officials; (3) To design a community activism and networking action plan; and (4) To deliver instructional sessions on a variety of topics. CAIP achievement awards included most self-funded projects; highest project cost share; most involved government officials and longest serving staff and all CAIP trainers. Participants included one member from each CAIP community as well as interested government officials and CAIP staff and partners. The aim of the Forum was to celebrate the achievements of CAIP, to strengthen relationships of CAIP communities and to share best practices and other useful information.



Vocational Training Students
Practicing Welding.

Community Success Stories: Building Trust with Local Government

Through implementation of projects, community members learned how to better communicate with local administrations. The CIC leader in Obodan established a very good relationship with the district *khokim* during implementation of the cluster project: *"I wouldn't dare to do it before, to talk freely with a khokim about community needs and insist on khokimiyat's participation in solving the problem, since CAIP I feel comfortable discussing these issues with the khokim."*

In another CAIP community, a CIC member highlighted the changing relationship between community and local government throughout the project: *"We were afraid of going to khokimiyat in the past. Now there is completely another situation. We can approach khokimiyat and can meet with khokim. He visited our mahalla a few times during implementation of our project. During the implementation stage they even provided us with machinery and fuel"*

CAIP activities were often seen by local government as beneficial to both themselves and their constituents. One Nekuz CIC member reiterated the importance of local government engagement with citizens: *"After we implemented the second project khokimiyat officials began to pay more attention to our community. They started visiting us more often to meet with the CIC members and to hear our input."*

Economic Development Component

The economic development component was introduced to CAIP during the last 2 years of implementation. Major activities under this intervention include implementation of community-based pilot economic development projects in both rural and urban areas of Surkhandarya and establishment of 6 Business and Labor Information Centres (BLICs) in the Kashkadarya and Surkhandarya regions.

These interventions were supported through provision of business trainings to project implementing partners. Trainings included:

1. Association development and management
2. Accounting and financial management
3. Marketing
4. Basics of successful business
5. Leasing business management
6. Community-based business management and
7. Business consulting

In addition, CAIP organized supporting activities including 4 economic development forums and round-tables to further promote business development and improve the business environment in southern Uzbekistan.

Job Creation and Income Generation Pilot Projects

While all projects were community based, different types of projects were piloted in order to ascertain the most appropriate approach for the existing environment. Two of the pilot projects supported community-based enterprises – an equipment leasing company and a peanut butter production facility. The additional two projects built the capacity of local partners to establish a vocational training center and create Business-Labor Information Centers (BLICs).



A businessman leases car washing equipment.

The enterprise support projects resulted in long term employment for 14 people as well as improved income for various small businesses and peanut farmers. The vocational center in Termez has been a tremendous success in several aspects. It is already fully self-sustainable and able to expand its activities. Our local NGO partner worked closely with the Labor Department of Surkhandarya in order to find job placement for their graduates. More than 50% of the first group of graduates (welders and carpenters) were employed immediately following completion of the trainings, while an additional 30% were employed within the next month.

The BLICs were established in order to support existing businesses in expanding their operations, as well as to assist entrepreneurs and new businesses in developing their ideas and creating new employment. Each BLIC employs 2 people full-time, and their salaries are paid by the local partners (Chamber of Trade and Industry, Labor Department or Dehkan-Farmer Association). In the first 6 months, over 2,000 people approached the BLICs with questions and requests for advice, and nearly 80% reported benefiting from the service they received.

Finally, through MBM Group, a private business consulting company, CAIP delivered a range of specialized business trainings to the BLIC staff, other pilot project grantees, CAIP staff and Resource Center Trainers. The trainings include Basics of a Successful Business, Management, Accounting and Marketing and Finance. Through these trainings, knowledge of fundamental business concepts was improved and utilized to enhance business performance throughout the life of the projects.

Demand-driven Local Economic Development Training

CAIP developed and delivered business development trainings in nearly all of its communities. Community training topics included:

1. The role of the community in business development
2. Legal aspects of operating a business
3. How to write a business plan
4. How to write a marketing plan
5. Financial projections and cash flow analysis

Local experts were invited to participate as guest speakers, and all participants presented their business plans at the conclusion of the training. The goal of the training was to teach potential entrepreneurs how to rigorously analyze the key success factors of starting and operating a small business and to translate that analysis into a logical business plan. As a result more than 1,000 individual business people who participated in this training have detailed business plans that they can use for applying for credit from banks or microfinance organizations.



BLIC employee searching the employment database

Improving Access to Capital

Through the AED START program, CAIP offered Rotating Savings and Credit Association (ROSCA) training to 36 economically active CAIP communities. Following these trainings 100 ROSCAs with 784 members were initiated, and as of the close of the project these ROSCAs had cycled a total of \$50,000 in capital to their members. In addition several non-CAIP trained ROSCAs have emerged in neighboring communities after witnessing the success of the CAIP-trained groups.

Through 2 grants to ACTED and PAD, CAIP was able to provide micro-finance assistance to 20 selected CAIP communities and leveraged USAID funds at a 1:5 ratio. As a result PAD and ACTED were able to disburse approximately \$100,000 in group and individual loans to almost 500 agro-business entrepreneurs in Surkhandarya and Kashkadarya, at a more than 97% rate of return. Support to PAD was also essential in securing their ability to register the lending agency as a local organization, bringing them one step closer to becoming fully sustainable and able to provide micro-credit in Uzbekistan without future outside funding.

Local Economic Development Planning

CAIP hosted Regional Economic Workshops in both Kashkadarya and Surkhandarya providing 80 participants with the knowledge and skills to identify, prioritize and address impediments to economic development in their regions. The goals of workshops were:

1. Offer entrepreneurs, business associations, labor unions and government officials an opportunity to interact and discuss regional economic development.
2. Provide a forum for open and honest discussion of impediments to regional economic development and prioritize those problems.
3. Develop a hierarchy of problems and solicit commitments by all stakeholders to pursue a plan to address these problems.

A final workshop document summarizing this discussion was distributed to all workshop participants and other interested parties. This document provided a foundation for an advocacy or lobbying campaign by participants.

Public Awareness and Information Exchange

The Public Awareness and Information Exchange component contributed to the success of CAIP through providing accurate, up-to-date information on successful community development initiatives for the a broad cross-section of the populations as well as opening a channel of communication between CAIP communities through which they could share lessons learned and success stories.

The information component of CAIP provided a voice for CAIP communities and a critical feedback mechanism for CAIP staff in addition to advertising the successes of the program and promoting replication of CAIP processes in other communities. For example, providing information to other communities on the success of CAIP sometimes led neighboring communities to seek the guidance of CAIP trained CIC members. In Nekuz a neighboring community approached CIC leaders with questions about how to solve problems in their own mahallas. One CIC member explains:

“The mahalla committee chairman and several aksakals from a neighboring community came to us and asked for our help to solve a problem with their access to natural gas. They even said that they had already collected 300,000 soum! When we asked about how they learned about it, they said that people are talking about this new ‘approach’.”

CAIP approached public awareness through a variety of media, seeking to reach a broad cross-section of the population. The component evolved from information sharing between communities in year one to comprehensive communications strategy later in the program. Some of the highlights include:

CAIP Community Exchanges

Between October and December of 2004, all 71 CAIP communities participated in Community Exchange Visits. CAIP Community Facilitators and Trainers supported these visits, allowing more than 1,000 community members to participate and benefit from the exchange. The purpose of the visits was to provide CAIP community CIC members and other interested stakeholders the opportunity to visit other CAIP communities, to learn from other communities’ successes and mistakes and to strengthen a network of CAIP communities and CIC members for long term regional development.

CAIP Media Coverage

CAIP issued more than 20 press releases and tracked 124 Newspaper Articles in national and regional newspapers such as *Narodnoye Slovo*, *Adolat*, *Novosti Uzbekistana*, *Pravda Vostoka*, *Kashkadaryo*, *Mahalla* and *Surhon Tongi*. CAIP print media coverage reached an estimated 360,000 people based on newspaper subscriptions.

CAIP received **510 minutes** of national and regional level television and radio coverage on news programs, interviews and special programs. Broadcast media representatives were always invited to special events such as Town Hall Meetings, Project Opening Ceremonies, Graduation Ceremonies and Forums. During the above-mentioned events, journalists were provided with CAIP information folders and were granted interviews with program implementers. CAIP worked closely with television and radio stations such as National Channel One, Yoshlar TV Channel, National Surkhandarya and Kashkadarya Regional Stations, district level Ishonch TV and Denau TV.

CAIP tracked **91 Internet news articles** covering CAIP activities on such Internet sites as www.uzreport.com, www.uza.uz and www.tribune.uz

CAIP Outreach and Information Materials

CAIP created and constantly revised a series of information materials usually distributed in folders to government officials, community members, partners and donors. Materials included:

- CAIP brochures (1,800)
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Individual Success Stories (34) and Success Story Book

- CAIP Community and Project Logs
- 10 Step Social Outreach Strategy
- Training Module Summary
- Community Project Snapshots

CAIP Website

The CAIP Program website www.caip-suz.org was launched in April 2004. The website included a program description, impact indicator table, success stories, information on events and news, CAIP *Monthly Messenger*, CAIP Outreach Materials and program photos in three languages. CAIP website had more than 1,800 visitors throughout the life of the project. The website served as an electronic brochure and was utilized by donors, staff, partners and community members.

CAIP Monthly Messenger and Community Empowerment Network (CEN) Newsletter

CAIP communities were often isolated and had very limited access to independent information. CAIP therefore distributed 2 informational newsletters on a monthly basis to all CAIP communities. Beginning in July 2004, CAIP wrote, printed and distributed 10 editions of CAIP Monthly Messenger. The newsletter was in the Uzbek language and included information on program news, recent success stories, ‘citizen of the month’ and grant opportunities. More than 1,000 copies of *Monthly Messenger* were printed and distributed among 71 CAIP communities. CAIP also translated into Uzbek and distributed more than 1,000 CEN newsletters over 8 months to all 71 CAIP communities.

2.3. Sustainability

CAIP emphasized sustainability in both process and product rooted in efforts to build the capacity of elected community leaders in the Community Improvement Councils (CICs). Each CIC received a core series of trainings including community group management, project design and management, ensuring project sustainability and long-term community strategic planning. These capacity-building trainings, coupled with community development project grants, has proven to be an effective method of sustaining CAIP community development interventions.

Process Sustainability

The effectiveness and sustainability of the PACE approach is demonstrated by high levels of community contribution⁴, the pace at which communities were able to implement projects and the fact that almost all projects continue to be operational. The final evaluation supports the hypothesis that communities will continue to apply the PACE approach in community improvement efforts:

“At the close of the project, 8 CICs were registered as legal entities. More than 90% of CIC members plan to continue work on CAIP-like activities. Approximately 40% intend to establish a formal organization (and NGO or business) in order to represent their interests officially in public.”

⁴ Over the life of the project more than 30% (7% cash and 23% in-kind) of CAIP infrastructure costs were contributed by communities

Throughout the life of the project, CICs and CAIP communities continued to demonstrate their full grasp of capacity-building activities including participatory needs assessments, gathering community contributions, project planning, transparent procurement, effective project management, ensuring project sustainability and project monitoring and evaluation to both enhance the outcomes of CAIP projects and implement other priority community projects.

Another critical component to CAIP's sustainability is the encouragement of community networking and sharing of best practices and lessons learned. During years two and three of CAIP, CHF and Counterpart facilitated community and NGO networks as well as cross-sector dialogue in southern Uzbekistan. As a result more than 850 CAIP community leaders, government officials, NGOs and business representatives participated in CAIP Forums. CAIP also encouraged networking and information exchanges through the newsletter published by our Resource Center partners, community exchanges and targeted community consulting. At the close of the project, individual communities had the information and the ability to further permanent or issue-based networks, initiate dialogue with business and local government officials as well as create and disseminate information to other communities throughout southern Uzbekistan.

"Solving Our Own Problems"

In the final evaluation CAIP community members recognize the importance of the collective decision-making, and resource mobilization skills they gained:

"Now we can use earned money to solve our small problems without waiting for someone to come and help us" – Varganza community member

"We can earn money, collect it, and spend it to further solve our small problems, and maybe later even bigger ones" – Hirmanjoy CIC leader

By working through locally registered NGOs to conduct trainings and deliver technical assistance, we have built our partner Resource Centers' capacity towards becoming lasting NGO and community development service providers. These Resource Centers also have gained the trust and respect of the communities in which they work. They are committed to the long-term economic and community development of the Kashkadarya and Surkhandarya regions. Already the Resource Centers are recognized for their knowledge of community development:

The regional committee on communal households management approached the Resource Center in Termez with the request to conduct a number of training seminars on conflict management. The first round of trainings for Condominium association was planned for early summer. Urban Institute is providing the Resource Center with informational support for the trainings.

Both Resource Centers will continue their established relationships with the CAIP communities through activities such as developing new project proposals for regional development, convening periodic CAIP community network meetings, voluntarily visiting CAIP communities to provide consultations and monitoring the long term impact of CAIP trainings and CAIP projects. The Resource Centers are now able to market the

trainings and services they delivered during CAIP to government officials, businesses, other donors as well as CAIP and non-CAIP communities.

Project Sustainability

Project sustainability was emphasized throughout each stage of the decision-making and tender processes. All infrastructure projects that improved existing utilities or other public works (such as gas and electricity interventions) were vetted with the appropriate regulatory agency early on and upon completion were absorbed into the regional network. These new gas lines and electrical transformers will be maintained by the relevant utility company or government organization. Schools and health clinics were similarly vetted and integrated into the appropriate regional department. In the instances where small, autonomous water systems were developed or community centers were built, communities have initiated a fee collection system and are using these funds for the upkeep of the infrastructure projects.

CHF and Counterpart encountered greater difficulty in ensuring the sustainability of the economic development pilot projects. Of the 3 distinct interventions, the Vocational Training Center created in partnership with local NGO Dekhan-Farmer will be fully sustainable and likely expand their course offerings beyond the end of CAIP to incorporate new technical skill sets and reach a more diverse population including young women. The other pilot projects face greater challenges in maintaining profitability over the long run. Although the peanut-butter facility and leasing company brought together investors around the development of a new product for Uzbekistan, the limited time available for organizing, training and mentoring these fledgling businesses due to the late start in the CAIP program coupled with the extremely difficult business environment in Uzbekistan prevented their full development. The BLICs were designed with a connection to the local government institutions in mind, and this allows them to rely upon local government support to maintain their activities.

2.4. Monitoring and Evaluation: PRS

Through the course of CAIP activities, all implementing partners used Web-PRS to record their programmatic activities. These included information on target communities and project activities with financial, beneficiary, operative and descriptive information. USAID used Web-PRS to search through the consolidated information and create various reports. In addition to CAIP, Mercy Corps also used Web-PRES to record their Peaceful Communities Initiative (PCI) projects in the region. Web-PRS allowed for separate reporting under PCI and CAIP as well as cumulative information on both programs.

CHF International was dedicated to providing a high quality service to all the implementing partners of CAIP and worked together with USAID to ensure partners had all requisite information and support to successfully utilize the Web-PRS tool. During CAIP implementation the Web-PRS team of CHF International in Serbia was transformed into the Software Development and Support Team (SDS) and enhanced its capacity to provide technical support and custom programming in support of CAIP. The CHF team continuously collaborated with CAIP implementing partners and USAID to enhance the PRS application.

The feedback the SDS team received from CAIP and PCI users was invaluable in improving the general functionality and user friendliness of the system. In fact, during the lifetime of the CAIP program, the SDS team produced 4 major upgrades to the system and several small updates to ensure PRS functionality stayed abreast with the changing needs of the CAIP program. Members of SDS team were regular attendees of semi-annual meetings, where they had a chance to present all the changes to the system and provide Web-PRS system training to the end users. CHF International maintained open communication channels via online discussion boards and supported an email distribution list (prascaip@chfserbia.org) with all the implementing partners to provide technical support and address any Web-PRS related issues.

In order to promote transparency and present information related to programmatic activities to the wider audience, the Web-PRS team worked with USAID and partners to create the CAIP public website (<http://caip.usaidcar.info> or <http://www.web-prs.com/caipweb/index.html>) with information dynamically driven by Web-PRS. The website contained information on communities, general information related to projects and beneficiaries and success stories entered in Web-PRS. According to the server statistics, throughout the entire program, the website recorded 13,026 visitor sessions and 226,023 hits in total.

PRS Lessons Learned

Since Web-PRS is a purely web-based application, it allowed access to information regardless of location. Thus some implementing partners chose to centralize their data entry from one office, while others distributed the workload among field offices. In general, those partners who centralized their data entry process experienced fewer data quality problems. Also, having a dedicated database manager was very beneficial in terms of overall data quality and management.

Most assistance requested was due to the user's inexperience with the system and lack of training due to employee turnover. Hence the user support proved to be essential part of Web-PRS Management. Recognizing that this will continue to be an issue, CHF International started developing online training modules that remote users can use to enhance their understanding of the system.

In the early days of the CAIP program, implementing partners insisted on having local versions of Web-PRS installed on their LAN due to the concern that lack of high speed internet connectivity would preclude them from maximizing the benefit from Web-PRS. This proved to be an impractical solution because implementing organizations lacked the capacity to administer the Web-PRS system and it seriously diminished the Web-PRS team's ability to provide technical support. Soon a decision was made to transfer everybody to the online version of Web-PRS hosted by CHF International and managed by the PRS technical team. This way all the upgrades and support interventions were implemented seamlessly to the end users. It turned out that speed was also not a critical issue and that conventional dial-up connection was sufficient for regular functioning of PRS.

3. Lessons Learned

CHF and Counterpart have learned tremendous lessons and have a number of best practice experiences that can be shared in future building of organizational capacity of community groups. Some of the major lessons learned are provided below.

- ✓ Much attention must be paid to the community needs assessment phase of the Social Outreach Strategy in order to ensure that the communities' priorities are well vetted and the community group has the capacity to implement and sustain the community project.
- ✓ Community groups are the best teachers and motivators for one another. CHF has found that community groups that are particularly active are excellent catalysts for sparking initiative within other communities. CAIP Forums have built upon this concept.
- ✓ Government participation was inconsistent across *mahallas*. In some areas CAIP garnered strong support from "reform-minded" government officials whereas in others CAIP activities received very little recognition. Where government support was present, there was a greater likelihood of overall success and sustainability of the projects and processes.
- ✓ Sufficient time should be taken at the beginning of the program (and carried on throughout its duration) to ensure that all bridges are built for successful program implementation. This should include massive outreach campaigns to all target areas, partners and stakeholders. Coordination and information/outreach also are critical to successful implementation.
- ✓ Practical application of skills gained in trainings significantly reinforces knowledge gained and retained.
- ✓ Communities require more technical assistance than anticipated to ensure successful implementation. Bolstering the core training curricula with demand-driven technical skills had a significant value-add to the internalization of the decision-making processes promoted under CAIP.
- ✓ Greater emphasis must be placed on establishing mechanisms within the community that will garner the support and maintain the initiative of the wider community.
- ✓ Encouraging non-traditional leadership from the beginning is important. In those communities where traditional leadership structures dominated CICs there was often less openness to CAIP processes. This was of particular concern in instances where *mahalla* leaders "taxed" all citizens regardless of their ability to contribute in order to achieve community match requirements.
- ✓ Setting expectations ahead of time for ownership and management of economic projects is critical to their success. Often in cases where the *mahalla* leader would impose himself as manager of refurbished marketplaces or community centers, fairness or transparency in decisions related to running the facility would be compromised.