

The Partnerships

German IDNDR Committee

Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan

"The enormous task facing us is to create a new development and environmental partnership between poor and rich nations, which will make our planet habitable for generations to come, too."

(Klaus Kinkel)

The German IDNDR Committee has partnerships with a region or country in Asia, Latin America and Africa that is particularly threatened and affected by disaster. The partner countries are Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Nicaragua and the Maghreb region with Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco. The activities of the Committee and its members vary considerably from country to country. At present IDNDR activities are concentrated in Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tunisia.

The IDNDR's co-operation partners are both scientific institutions and public and private sector disaster relief and development co-operation organisations.

Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan are particularly prone to earthquakes, landslides, avalanches, floods and drought. Large parts of Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan, were destroyed by an earthquake in 1966.

For Uzbekistan the drying up of the Aral Sea is its worst natural environmental disaster. The world's fourth largest inland lake has shrunk to just over half its original size, caused by decades of excessive use of the water from its tributaries, the Ama Darya and Syr Darya rivers, for the cotton industry.

The disused Maili-Su uranium ore mine on the border between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan poses a massive threat. The spoil banks are radioactive. A landslide would wash all the radioactive soil into the waters of the Syr Darya river, thus contaminating the water supplies of some eight million people.

In the peripheral regions and foothills of the entire central Asian massif the risk of landslides and earthquakes is

enormous. Between 1991 and 1995 alone the five central Asian states were hit by 500 landslides of larger magnitude. At present some 480 settlements are facing an acute risk. The houses, which are built using traditional construction methods, are not usually able to resist earthquakes. Moreover, some dams are located in regions that are prone to earthquakes. In the event of disaster the waters contained behind these dams would, if released, cause enormous floods.

These numerous threats make extreme demands on disaster mitigation. In this context, strengthening local disaster protection is of paramount importance. Furthermore, as a result of the socio-political change that came in the wake of independence from the Soviet Union, the promotion of decentralised structures and the establishment of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) has become important.

Disaster prone region in Kyrgyzstan, Photo: Archive





Houses destroyed by a landslide, the Mailuu-Suu, Kyrgyzstan
Spoil threatened by landslide, the Mailuu-Suu, Kyrgyzstan, Photos: Archive



Uzbekistan – general information

Capital	Tashkent
Area	445,000 km ² (a little smaller than Germany)
Population	22 million
Independent since	1.9.1991
Climate	particularly dry and continental; hot summers and cold winters, rain from November to spring
Per capita GDP	970 US dollars (1995)

Kyrgyzstan – general information

Capital	Bishkek
Area	Area: 200,000 km ² (0.9 per cent of the former USSR)
Population	4.5 million
Independent since	31.8.1991
Climate	particularly dry and continental; hot summers and cold winters, considerable fluctuations in temperature – up to 30 degrees Celsius in one day
Per capita GDP	700 US dollars (1995)

Projects

In order to help reduce this potential risk the Committee organised a seminar, which was run by the German Foundation for International Development (Deutschen Stiftung für Internationale Entwicklung), on the organisational and technical aspects of disaster mitigation with special focus on landslides and earthquake-resistant construction methods in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. The participants from these two countries were given suggestions and advice from German experts on how to reduce the disaster vulnerability of their respective countries.

The German IDNDR Committee is helping to organise partnerships between three Kyrgyz and four Uzbek towns on the one hand and local disaster protection organisations from Germany and the Netherlands (fire brigades and the technical relief organisation) on the other. The aim of this project is to reinforce local disaster protection structures in the Committee's central Asian partner countries. The exchange of experience and the training and advice is not merely limited to technical aspects of disaster protection, it also includes organisational aspects too.

Together with the German television station, Westdeutscher Rundfunk, and Uzbekistan and institutions from Kyrgyzstan and the German IDNDR Committee is supporting the production of films on disaster mitigation in Uzbekistan. A series of short films and radio features deals with the opportunities for self-protection against earthquakes open to the population; another film looks at earthquake-resistant construction methods for architects, technical experts and civil engineers.

In addition, the German IDNDR Committee has helped to organise or finance training seminars on, for example, search and rescue in Kyrgyzstan, on training rescue-dog handlers and on earthquake-resistant construction using traditional materials and methods.

Since 1992 the Geo Research Centre in Potsdam, a member of the German IDNDR Committee, has been studying movement patterns of the earth's surface in central Asia in order to gain insight into the frequent earthquakes and landslides in the region and, as a result, be in a position better to estimate and forecast potential danger. The Centre obtains the data necessary for its work from satellite measuring systems.

Disaster protection exercise in Kyrgyzstan, Photo: Gansen

