

ENVSEC Programme in Central Asia



ENVSEC in Central Asia has four components: the Ferghana Valley, East Caspian and Amu Darya sub-programmes and a cross-regional component. Altogether, ENVSEC CA consists of 31 projects of which 12 are ongoing. The total budget of the ongoing projects is app. 3 850 000 USD. In the Ferghana Valley, the first set of projects was completed at the beginning of this year and new projects are being planned. For the Amu Darya River Basin an extensive assessment report is being finalized and based on our experience in the Ferghana Valley, the assessment report will generate several project ideas and opportunities for cooperation. The same is true for the East Caspian region. ENVSEC's national counterparts are willing to continue cooperation with ENVSEC and are involved in the development of new concrete project proposals.

The **East Caspian** assessment report is fresh from the printer's and is available to donors and other interested parties. Reaching beyond an exclusively environmental perspective, the report analyses the changes that are profoundly modifying the livelihoods of people living in the eastern Caspian region (Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan) and could lead to social tension or even regional instability. The analysis identifies several areas that correspond to this concern. The boom in the energy sector in the last ten years has left a lasting mark on the region, changing its socio-economic conditions. In many cases these changes are a stress factor for both the environment and local communities. Furthermore, various military and industrial activities have in the past contributed to environmental degradation, or still do, which in turn has a negative impact on human security. Climate change and natural disasters are also a risk factor for the eastern Caspian region. As none of these elements can be isolated from the others, the report looks at how these risk factors interact.

In the stages leading to the finalization of the **Amu Darya** assessment report, field missions were conducted in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan – and in a more limited scope also in Afghanistan and Turkmenistan. The governments of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan offered their full support to the missions and also participated in field work. Regional meetings on Amu Darya have been held in Ashgabat and in Kabul last year. The priority areas first raised by desk studies and further discussed in the meetings in Ashgabat and Kabul were confirmed by the field missions: water resources, hydropower and irrigation; industrial pollution and military legacy; climate change, biodiversity loss and desertification. The next stage will be to establish cross-border projects tackling these issues.

Within a **cross-regional** component of ENVSEC CA, ENVSEC partners are tackling environment and security issues in water management sector.

In order to understand the best way forward for ENVSEC in Central Asia, a **Regional Review meeting** was organized in June 2008 in Dushanbe. Several ideas stemmed from the group discussions. The participants were divided on the 'mandate' of ENVSEC: some suggested ENVSEC should not engage in assessments if it has no way of ensuring further funding for follow-up. Some were of the opinion that ENVSEC should simply decide whether it conducts only assessments or whether it will deepen its activities to include e.g. remediation. All participants agreed that ENVSEC cannot call itself a regional programme unless all countries in Central Asia are equally presented. Kyrgyz and Tajik participants urged ENVSEC partners to further engage Uzbekistan in ENVSEC activities. There was also agreement on the fact that projects should be 2-3 years long. One year projects will not achieve much. Furthermore, ENVSEC was asked to engage in capacity building of national governments and

to encourage governments of Central Asia to submit project proposals. This will ensure deeper national ownership.

Some of the suggestions voiced in the regional meeting were related to **improved communication**. These have been taken up by the Regional Desk Officer and the first issue of the bilingual (Russian/English) ENVSEC CA Newsletter was published in August 2008. *The Newsletter contains updates on all current ENVSEC projects in the region and on meetings held.* In addition to the Newsletter, the Regional Desk Officer sends periodical updates to all interested parties by email.

In addition to consulting with national and non-governmental stakeholders, UNDP commissioned an **independent review** of ENVSEC activities in Central Asia conducted by an international consultant. The consultant's report identifies challenges and opportunities for ENVSEC work in Central Asia. The issues identified by him are mostly the same as identified by the national stakeholders. What is evident from his report is that many issues could be mended if ENVSEC CA received 'structural funding' as do other ENVSEC regions. ENVSEC stakeholders in Central Asia feel that decisions are being taken far from them and find that the establishment of a Central Asian Working Group (or a Secretariat) would help ensure national ownership.

ENVSEC is considered as a useful framework for politically sensitive work in Central Asia. New projects under the Ferghana Valley, Amu Darya River Basin and East Caspian sub-programmes should build on this trust.

The biggest financial contributor in Central Asia to date has been NATO. As can be seen from the update on ongoing project (ENVSEC CA Newsletter), NATO projects are rather technical in character focusing on a narrowly defined issue. Finland has funded the Amu Darya assessment as well as a cross-regional project on dam safety. Sweden (SEPA) has contributed to the East Caspian assessment and Germany to transboundary cooperation of communities in the Ferghana Valley. Switzerland supported the second phase of CAREWIB. Norway contributed to the Environmental Impact Assessment and Eastern Caspian (partly funded also by Canada) and OSCE provided funds for Aarhus Public Information Centers.