

SUSTAINABILITY FIELD STUDY

Understanding What Promotes
Lasting Change at the Community Level

December 2007



Be the change

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Executive Summary

Preface

Mercy Corps focuses on working in countries in transition, where communities are struggling to recover from political or economic collapse, conflict or natural disaster. Experience has identified community-led and market-driven programs as the critical factor in helping communities sustainably rebuild and recover. Key to this approach is enabling communities to mobilize successfully for action. Working in a variety of transitional environments, Mercy Corps has applied a community mobilization methodology that engages communities to identify priorities, resources, needs and solutions in a manner that promotes representative participation, good governance, accountability and peaceful change. Additionally, the approach seeks to link communities with government and the private sector so that productive relationships and interactions can continue in the long term. Most importantly, these programs aspire to enable communities, business and government to *continue working together* long after the immediate project has ended. Clearly, a sustained ability for collective problem solving offers the best path to lasting improvement in people's lives and, for donors, the best return on investment.

Recently Mercy Corps undertook a field study to gauge the post-program success of two USAID-funded large-scale, multi-year transitional community recovery programs in Central Asia. In the transitional and impoverished environment of post-soviet Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, Mercy Corps had sought to engage communities to address their needs and foster linkages with the public sector for long term social and economic change. One to five years after projects had ended, the organization was eager to understand the lasting impacts of the program, successes, challenges and recommendations for such programs in the future.

A research team made up of Mercy Corps staff, temporary employees and an intern research student, returned to the regions where the programs had operated, studied 51 randomly sampled communities in depth, analyzed the findings and was excited to discover significant and positive evidence of post-program sustained change. The study validates Mercy Corps' belief that, when properly implemented, community mobilization programs help empower communities to take action. This report reviews the research and contributes meaningful data to an area that has not been sufficiently documented in the development world: the longer term impact of community mobilization programs.

Why Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan?

In early 2000, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan were still reeling from the collapse of the Soviet Union. Their new-found independence had engendered economic collapse, and, in the case of Tajikistan, led to a bloody civil war. In 2001, Mercy Corps conducted a regional assessment¹ to identify key constraints to recovery. The assessment uncovered multiple obstacles including: challenging and interlocked borders; perceptions of ethnic discrimination; conflict over resources; little opportunity for economic development; and a citizenry previously used to relying on the government. As a consequence, basic services and infrastructure fell into deeper disrepair.

As part of a larger regional strategy, Mercy Corps negotiated with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to initiate the Peaceful Communities Initiative (PCI) in the Ferghana Valley Region, which was later expanded to the Zarafshan Valley. PCI sought to use mobilization

¹ Programs were implemented in Uzbekistan until 2007. However, the current political environment in this country made it impossible to conduct the research there for the purposes of this study.

methodologies to address resource needs, at the same time building linkages between different ethnic groups (often in border communities), as well as linking ethnically disenfranchised populations to governments.

Less than a year later, in May of 2002, Mercy Corps launched another USAID-funded regional initiative, the Community Action Investment Program (CAIP), initially in areas of Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan with later expansion into four communities of Kyrgyzstan. CAIP applied mobilization approaches to foster economic opportunity and job creation within the three countries. The CAIP and PCI community mobilization programs formed the backbone of Mercy Corps' regional programming for six years.

Basics of the Study: Approach and Methodology

During the summer of 2007 Mercy Corps set out to build a thorough understanding of sustained behavior change from these two programs, looking at two key questions:

- What behavior changes, if any, have taken hold since the programs ended?
- What program factors contributed to these behavior changes taking hold (or not)?

The researchers gauged a community's level of mobilization based on three key behaviors:

- **Participation:** To what extent do people actively engage in decision-making and act on those decisions?
- **Accountability:** To what extent do citizens hold people with decision-making power responsible for their decisions?
- **Collective community action:** To what extent do community members come together to solve problems or improve conditions?

Random sampling was used to select a statistically significant sample of 51 CAIP and PCI communities in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan that had concluded their Mercy Corps programs between one and three years ago. General community members, youth, government officials and community group leaders were then interviewed around a range of issues. Three key topics emerged of significant interest during the course of the discussions and analysis of the data: sustained community initiative, collaborative governance, and youth and community action.

Conclusions

As a result of the community mobilization methodology used by Mercy Corps in Central Asia, one to three years after the end of the program, communities believe themselves to be more capable to independently implement solutions and empowered to reach out to local governments and external organizations and businesses.

This field study of Mercy Corps' CAIP and PCI programs clearly demonstrates that the mobilization approach applied by Mercy Corps and many of our development colleagues can effect lasting positive change in transitional environments. The study shows a high sense of ownership and degree of usage of infrastructure projects. Even more importantly, communities and leaders continue to exhibit behaviors of participation, accountability and collective community action after programs conclude.

While community mobilization processes are undoubtedly time- and resource-intensive, our study shows that this approach effectively engages communities to make significant long-term contributions toward their own development, through change agents who have been empowered with the skills and confidence to act effectively. Carefully fostering inclusive, transparent and open processes for community decision-making and development returns lasting impact – especially when organizers vigilantly mentor and support carefully selected leaders to execute these processes.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS BY AREA

TOPIC 1: Sustained Community Initiative

“The program itself was progress for us. The most important thing is that we learned to work together in cooperation. We can now define the problems and priorities of the community. A lot of useful things were done for our community’s prosperity.”

– Partoev Mirzo, Librarian from Tarbulok, Tajikistan

Findings

CAIP and PCI communities showed sustained initiative to maintain or improve conditions in their communities one to three years after program completion, by continuing to engage in projects and take responsibility for the decision-making process. Communities demonstrated substantial efforts to maintain the many infrastructure projects implemented during the programs; 93% of surveyed projects are still being actively used by the community after our programs closed. The communities have continued to show initiative to overcome hardships and improve their life conditions beyond the scope of the original project. Direct program participants in 35 of the 51 surveyed communities reported that their communities worked collectively on new projects or repairs to existing infrastructure beyond traditional community labor during the first half of 2007 alone.

Leaders fostered through the programs continued to demonstrate initiative. Members of the CAIP and PCI Community Action Groups (CAGs) – representatives democratically selected to drive all program activities – demonstrated particularly strong initiative. With 44% of CAG members actively seeking resource assistance from organizations other than Mercy Corps in the first seven months of 2007, compared to 26% prior to our programs, these change agents have demonstrably greater confidence, motivation, knowledge and skills to improve their lives and their communities.

Increased community participation. CAG members in 61% of the communities studied reported, unprompted, that people were more willing to contribute and/or take action for the benefit of the community following their experience working with Mercy Corps. A total of 49% of all general community member and youth respondents said they had attended at least one community meeting this year, with 56 % stating that they feel fully involved in all aspects of decision-making and action or, at least, that they have some influence on the decisions made by others.

Recommendations

After analyzing the factors that contribute to varying degrees of sustained initiative as identified in the study, Mercy Corps recommends the following strategies to foster sustained community initiative:²

1. Promote an inclusive process for the selection and training of respected, representative and active change agents;
2. Allocate time and resources to guide the success of an initial confidence-building project;
3. Complement large projects with small ones that demonstrate success at low cost and encourage the use of local resources;
4. Combine skill-building training with practical experience so people can solidify new knowledge;
5. Build broad participation in project selection so the highest community priorities are addressed;
6. Accurately estimate labor and materials to ensure quality construction and community pride in the final product;
7. Carefully design maintenance systems for infrastructure lacking the benefit of established or traditional systems for maintenance.

TOPIC 2: Collaborative Governance

“PCI influenced attitudes, because trust between the community and the jamoat is stronger following practical cooperation during PCI project implementation. It was not very good before.”

– Mahtaleibov Zahirjon, Ovchi-Kalacha Jamoat Chairperson, Tajikistan

Findings

The study explored the degree to which communities and community leaders engaged in open and transparent dialogue and processes to address community problems and priorities. The researchers discovered improved collaborative governance in the increased frequency and improved quality of interactions and attitudes between leaders (official and unofficial) and the populace.

Improved relations between government and communities. The most telling evidence of change in collaborative governance was in the increased contact and improved relations between local government and community representatives. Seventy-three percent (73%) of CAG members feel it is easier now to approach local government than it was before Mercy Corps’ programs, and 68% have witnessed local government becoming more involved in community activities.

Continued use of skills relating to participation and accountability learned during the programs. Both official and informal interactions between communities and their leaders were characterized by greater openness and transparency in decision-making, with 57% of the communities studied continuing to use one or more of the decision-making practices promoted during the program.

² Recommendations are based on a combination of strong practices we found when implementing the programs as well as lessons learned that could be improved upon in future programs. For more detail refer to the main report.

Recommendations

It takes significant care and time to nurture the emergence of collaborative, transparent governance. This study suggests a few areas that require special focus in order for such efforts to succeed:

1. Build local government support for community mobilization early, and foster it throughout by active inclusion of government members in multiple stages of the process;
2. Involve local government in sustainability planning to encourage accountability and ownership by government and community;
3. Promote and model full transparency to demonstrate to leaders and communities the benefits of sharing information;
4. Promote open decision-making with care to avoid domination of the process or choices by any individual or by government.

TOPIC 3: Youth and Community Action

“Youth were isolated within our village, but the (PCI) camp helped them to widen their world views and to develop. We learned to make friends.”

– Gulzara Asdavlatkizi, teenage girl from Kaytpas, Kyrgyzstan

Findings

Increased tolerance. Community members report that young people are showing greater openness and tolerance for youth of other ethnicities and from neighboring communities. They report seeing fewer violent interactions and more inter-ethnic friendships and friendly competitions through sporting events. Many young people continued to engage in sports and other social activities that were initiated within and between communities during the programs. In addition, 72% of youth report that they continue to use at least one skill they learned during the programs. Those cited most often include teamwork and communication, as well as practical skills such as sewing, construction, roofing, journalism and cooking.

The role of migration. High numbers of young people from rural communities throughout Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan who have left their homes in search of employment posed a challenge for this study to even locate youth program participants for interviews. That said, in many communities the youth who do remain are demonstrating some of the key behaviors promoted in Mercy Corps' CAIP and PCI programs.

Recommendations

Youth represent a very important target group in Central Asia and elsewhere. To effectively engage this population, this study recommends the following:

1. Focus on developing youth objectives and mentors from the outset, as such efforts take time;
2. Create program plans that take into account migration and income-generation issues;
3. Adapt program interventions to be appropriate to the needs of the target age groups;
4. Engage traditional leaders to see the potential for youth to make meaningful contributions.

I. INTRODUCTION

Strategic Regional Development

For the past eight years, Mercy Corps has implemented a regional strategy in Central Asia that aims to reduce local and regional conflict by empowering communities and addressing the root causes of tensions through a variety of economic development and social and physical infrastructure activities. Mercy Corps' regional development strategy was formulated following a multi-sector detailed assessment in the Ferghana Valley³ in early 2001 that led to the development of a regional strategy (a new approach for Mercy Corps at the time). As part of this strategy, Mercy Corps negotiated with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to initiate the Peaceful Communities Initiative (PCI) in the Ferghana Valley Region, which was later expanded to the Zarafshan Valley. Less than a year later, in May of 2002, Mercy Corps launched another USAID-funded regional initiative, the Community Action Investment Program (CAIP). Implemented initially in areas of Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, CAIP was later expanded into four communities of Kyrgyzstan. The CAIP and PCI community mobilization programs formed the backbone of Mercy Corps' regional strategy for six years.

Measuring Key Behavior Changes

Community mobilization is the process of engaging communities to identify community priorities, resources, needs and solutions in a manner that promotes representative participation, good governance, accountability and peaceful change. **Sustained mobilization** takes place when communities remain active and empowered after the program ends.

This study set out to measure four key behaviors that were promoted through CAIP and PCI program interventions, behaviors that Mercy Corps believes are essential for a community to experience sustained mobilization: participation, accountability, peaceful change,⁴ and collective community action. The study was designed to build understanding of long-term (post-program) impact of the CAIP and PCI community mobilization programs.

1) Participation occurs when people can actively engage in processes and decisions that affect their lives and voluntarily contribute to carrying forward decisions. Participation requires concerted outreach to include traditionally marginalized groups, such as women, people with disabilities, youth, elderly and ethnic or religious minorities.

2) Accountability refers to the ability of citizens to hold people with decision-making power responsible for their decisions. It includes the willingness of those leaders, including those in the community, government, business and civic organizations, to hold themselves responsible for the decisions they make on behalf of others. Accountability requires a culture of transparency that promotes the right of people to understand the reasons for decisions that affect them, including the allocation of critical social and economic resources such as jobs and public funding.

3) Collective community action occurs when community members come together to solve problems or improve their conditions. Collective action requires that people within a community feel

³ The Ferghana Valley is an economically important and densely populated border region where the boundaries of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan meet and intertwine. It has traditionally been a center of regional tension, and peaceful interaction between the countries is critical for continued commerce and security.

⁴ Because of the complexity inherent in measuring peaceful change within the community, the study team determined that it was outside the scope of this assessment. Therefore, this report will focus on the remaining three key behaviors. (See Section IV for further explanation of constraints in the study methodology).

sufficiently empowered and possess the skills and tools to address the issues that affect them through lobbying the public sector, private actors and civil society for support or by pooling resources from within the community to effect change.

The findings are presented in three sections, each accompanied by recommendations for future implementation of mobilization programs. In Section V, the authors explore the levels of sustained community initiative that were observed in the study. Primarily, this section analyzes the behaviors of collective action and participation, as seen through the maintenance and use of infrastructure and initiative of communities to implement new projects and advocate for external support. In Section VI, Collaborative Governance is explored, with an examination of how behaviors of accountability and participation have contributed to mobilized communities and the interactions that communities have with local government and informal leaders. Finally, in Section VII, youth participation in community action is discussed. This section explores how youth as a specific target group are exhibiting the three key behaviors following implementation of CAIP and PCI.

II. BACKGROUND ON MERCY CORPS' CAIP AND PCI PROGRAMS IN CENTRAL ASIA

Both PCI and CAIP aimed to reduce local and regional conflict and tension by empowering community members to work together cooperatively and inclusively to identify, prioritize and implement much needed social service projects, and to create or improve access to local employment opportunities. These initiatives employed a similar community mobilization approach by empowering community members to democratically select representatives to serve on a community action group (CAG), the body that would drive all activities within the scope of the programs. Community members, working primarily through CAGs, joined together to prioritize community problems, find consensus on practical solutions, secure community resources and implement projects. These activities were complemented with training and support to CAGs, youth and entrepreneurs.

Both programs were successful in meeting their objectives upon completion. Some of the achievements of these programs are noted in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Key Achievements of PCI and CAIP

	PCI	CAIP
Total Program Value	\$6.1 Million	\$13.8 Million
Program Duration	Original: October 2001 – 2004 Extension: 2004 – September 2006	May 2002 – June 2005
Total Communities	73 core communities	65 core communities & 216 satellite communities
Geographic Coverage	Ferghana Valley of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan & Uzbekistan (all years); Zarafshan Valley of Tajikistan (extension only)	Southern Khatlon; Rasht Valley; Ferghana Valley of Kyrgyzstan & Uzbekistan
Projects Completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 437 multi-ethnic cultural and/or skill-building projects, including 140 youth projects were implemented. • 137 infrastructure projects were implemented. • 94 additional infrastructure projects were implemented without donor funding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1,203 community projects, including 423 infrastructure projects were implemented. • 989 projects implemented without donor funding.

	PCI	CAIP
Community Contributions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community contribution to infrastructure projects averaged 48% of the total cost. 85% of the infrastructure projects benefited from government contributions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community contribution to infrastructure projects averaged 39% of the total cost. 23% of community contributions were from government sources.
Capacity Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 43 users' groups were established, receiving a total of 71 trainings in management, organizational structure, fee collection and maintenance of infrastructure projects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 402 formal training sessions were offered to CAGs. 46,025 people were trained in a variety of topics by Mercy Corps or volunteer trainers who received their training from CAIP.
Economic Achievements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 64 new businesses were created as a result of USAID-funded infrastructure projects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6,126 short-term jobs and 2,376 long-term jobs were created. 1,297 clients received micro-loans.

Source: CAIP and PCI Final Reports. Note: Indicators differed for each program and are not directly comparable.

Additional background information regarding the CAIP and PCI programs can be found in Annex 3.

Map of Central Asia Including Mercy Corps Program Sites



III. COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION APPROACH

Representative Community Groups

CAIP and PCI employed a similar methodology for community mobilization.⁵ Communities first selected leaders to represent them on Community Action Groups (CAGs) who managed the decision-making and project implementation processes. CAG members were democratically elected following initial general meetings with communities to explain the structure of the program. These bodies became the primary decision-making and mobilization forces for project implementation. They were responsible for including the wider community in the process through public meetings and open discussions. While communities had autonomy to select members, Mercy Corps did require that the CAGs represent community demographics, with consideration for gender, ethnic, age and professional status representation.

The CAGs were supported with training, which included information and instruction on creating community plans, project sustainability, transparency and accountability, project management, managing conflict, advocacy, effective communication and facilitation of community meetings. Infrastructure and social projects were tools for practicing the skills taught through the programs.

With CAGs selected, residents began to work together within their communities and often with neighboring communities. They identified areas of potential conflict and recommended solutions, in the form of both social projects and higher-profile infrastructure construction and rehabilitation projects.



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Transparent Processes

Mercy Corps taught communities to utilize an open, transparent process for infrastructure project selection and management. They involved the wider community, including youth and government officials, through a project selection consensus meeting. This inclusion of as many people as possible from the earliest stages was intended to ensure greater participation during project implementation and greater community ownership and sustainability following donor support.

A transparent process was also utilized for selection of paid contractors, with open bidding processes involving the CAG for larger jobs. In addition, the CAGs were held accountable for results through periodic community meetings to track progress and through the use of transparency boards.⁶

Community Match Commitment

Communities were required to contribute in-kind or cash resources totaling at least 30% of the cost for each technical project. The purpose of the contribution was to ensure community buy-in and

⁵ Mercy Corps has implemented community mobilization programs that emphasize a community-driven approach since 1998. The largest mobilization programs have been in Georgia, Iraq, Central Asia, Lebanon, Serbia and Liberia; through these programs Mercy Corps has empowered over 800 communities to organize and undertake hundreds of different projects that have benefited over 5.4 million people. As the organization's methodology has evolved, and the results of putting community leaders in the driver's seat – combining concrete projects with skill-building in accountability, participation and collective action – have become evident, Mercy Corps has also taken core elements of the approach and applied it within other contexts. Notable examples are the food-for-work programs in Indonesia, the child survival programming in Tajikistan and Azerbaijan, and the post tsunami recovery in Aceh. Whether as a stand-alone program such as CAIP or PCI, or integrated into other programs, Mercy Corps has found the core methodology integral to achieving program objectives.

⁶ Large bulletin boards located in a public space, where information on each project was posted, including budget, names of CAG members and project plans.

ownership of the project, to strengthen relationships with government through government contributions, and to build the community's confidence that such projects could be implemented without donor support in the future.

Local Government Participation

Throughout the implementation process, local government participation was encouraged to foster a partnership between communities and the official governmental structure and to gain government support and ownership of both the process and the projects. Government was also influential in the development and successful implementation of sustainability plans for many of the infrastructure projects prioritized by communities. Local government representatives were therefore often encouraged to take part in sustainability planning and project handover ceremonies upon completion of projects.

IV. FIELD STUDY METHODOLOGY

Mercy Corps engaged community members in a self-assessment of community and personal change brought about by CAIP or PCI, in combination with observation and analysis by field study team members during visits to 51 communities during July and early August of 2007. The study team included Mercy Corps' Tajikistan Program Director, a research student from the University of Berkeley, and seven temporary staff from Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, two of whom had experience working directly on Mercy Corps' programs in the region.⁷

To understand post-program impact of the community mobilization programs, the study design focused on the key behaviors of participation, accountability, collective community action and, to a lesser extent, peaceful change, in which the study team expected to see change as a result of the community mobilization process.

A. Measuring Changed Behavior

Behaviors were not explicitly measured at the outset of the programs. The study team reviewed prior internal and external evaluation methodologies from Mercy Corps' global mobilization programs to devise a strategy for measuring changes in community behaviors. The methodology was developed to look at perceptions of behavior change from the perspective of four core stakeholder groups: ordinary community members; community action group leaders; local government officials and young people. Change was looked at within the categories of participation, accountability and collective community action. Five approaches were taken to collect this data:

- Collation and analysis of existing project data and secondary literature;
- Individual and collective assessments of sustained program impact through field interviews;
- Direct observations by the field study team;
- Interviews of, or email input from, key program staff; and
- One in-depth case study of a community.

⁷ Team members generally conducted interviews in pairs so that more than one person could make qualitative observations during the interview, thereby enriching the teams' overall impressions. Information was recorded by hand during interviews (questionnaire completion and note taking) to be entered onto computer later. Additionally, at the end of every day, each team regrouped to discuss the day's activities and to record salient observations. The questionnaires and the interview and observation process were tested in two communities prior to visits to the 51 select communities, and adjustments were made to the questionnaires based on this field test.

B. Community Selection

The principle unit of analysis for the field study was the community.⁸ The research team randomly selected and visited a statistically significant sample of 51 out of the 92 communities, representing 55% of the CAIP and PCI communities within Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan.⁹ See Table 2 for a breakdown of sample communities by region and program. A complete list of communities included in this study can be found in Annex 1.¹⁰

Table 2: Sample of Communities by Program & Region

PROGRAM/REGION	SAMPLED COMMUNITIES	TOTAL PROJECT COMMUNITIES
CAIP		
Batken Oblast, Kyrgyzstan	3	4
Khatlon, Tajikistan	7	12
Rasht Valley, Tajikistan	14	23
Total CAIP	24	39
PCI		
Ferghana Valley, Kyrgyzstan	10	20
Ferghana Valley, Tajikistan	9	17
Zarafshan Valley, Tajikistan (Penjikent)	8	16
Total PCI	27	53
Grand Total	51	92

C. Groups and Individuals Interviewed

With a program focus on empowering agents of change and developing young leaders, two key interview groups were identified as essential to the field study, namely the CAG members and youth participants of program activities. In addition, the team prioritized interviews with local government leaders as a means of triangulating the responses from CAG members and youth. As well, government were thought to play a potential role in the success of project implementation and sustainability. Finally, general community members who were not members of the CAG were interviewed to determine the effects of community mobilization outcomes on the wider community.

Table 3: Basic Demographics for Interviewees in all Categories

NUMBER OF PEOPLE INTERVIEWED				
Sub-group	# of Interviewees		Gender	Total
	CAIP	PCI	% Female	
CAG	44	54	23%	98
Youth	34	55	55%	89
General Community	73	85	49%	158
Local Government	24	20	20%	44
Total	175	214	41%	389

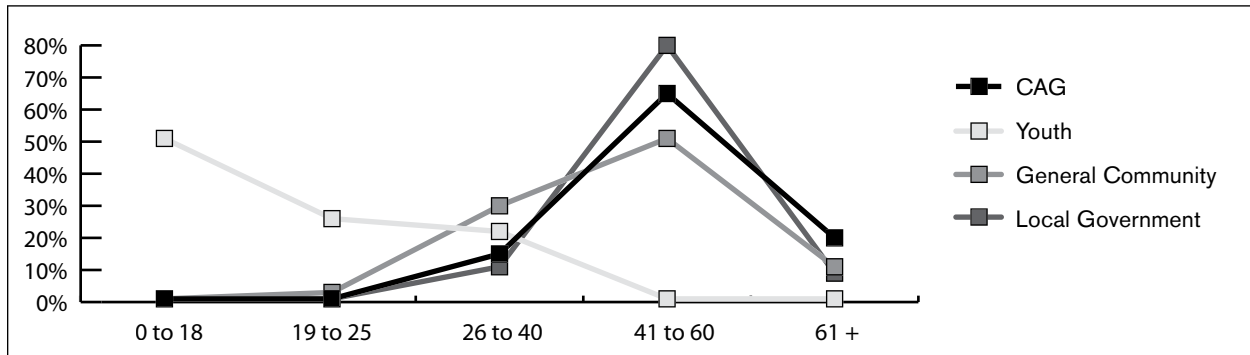
⁸ In this study, “community” refers to an individual rural village or a neighborhood within a larger town, the smallest population unit targeted by CAIP and PCI.

⁹ A statistical approach to community sample sizing was used (www.raosoft.com/sample_size.html). The size was determined using a 10% margin of acceptable error, 90% confidence interval and 25% response distribution. The recommended sample size was 23 for CAIP and 27 for PCI. One additional CAIP community was included to allow for better representation across regions.

¹⁰ Uzbekistan communities were not surveyed due to the risk that interview respondents would draw negative attention from the government. See Section IV.D, Methodology Constraints, for further explanation.

In each community, the teams sought to interview two former CAG members, two youths associated with the project and three members of the general population. In most places, interviews were held with one local government official at the *Jamoat / Aiyi Okmotu*¹¹ level for each *Jamoat / Aiyi Okmotu* visited (some communities were in the same *Jamoat / Aiyi Okmotu*). In some instances, someone at the *Raion* (district) level was also interviewed about the communities in its jurisdiction. Table 3 provides demographic data for all interviewees.

Figure 1: Age Distribution of Interviewees



A total of 389 interviews were held. CAG and Local Government respondents included many more men than women, a likely reflection of the gender balance of these roles within Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. It was also a result of the study’s strategy to reach out first to CAG chairs, who were almost always men due to the cultural propensity toward men holding positions of power. The dominant age group for CAG, general community and local government interviewees was 41-60, reflecting the prominence of this age group in positions of authority within society, as well as the greater presence and availability of this age group within communities given the high level of out migration among the younger generation (see Figure 1).

Interviewee Selection

CAG members and youth were identified using a list of committee members, where available, or referrals from the local government representative, starting with the Chair. The team would select a second CAG member, based on availability, gender (seeking balance), and the Chair’s assessment of the more active members. Similarly, where no youth committee was formed (PCI) or no list was available, the CAG members would be asked to identify available youth involved in the Mercy Corps programs. General Community members were selected through a blind selection of household visits, usually from different parts of each community to avoid multiple members of families or close friends being interviewed. The Local Government member interviewed depended on availability and the discretion of the *Rais* (Government Chairperson).

D. Methodology Constraints

The chosen methodology allowed for a random and wide sampling of communities from both CAIP and PCI within Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. However, the methodology does pose a few key constraints that should be considered when evaluating the data and results.

11 Smallest level of government responsible for a small cluster of villages: *Jamoat* in Tajikistan or *Aiyi Okmotu* in Kyrgyzstan.

Uzbekistan communities omitted from sample

CAIP and PCI were both very active in the Ferghana Valley region of Uzbekistan, with 26 and 20 target communities respectively. While both programs faced some difficulties toward the end of implementation as the political situation within Uzbekistan made NGO and community work more difficult, many impressive results were achieved by the end of the programs. Following the March 2005 revolution in Kyrgyzstan and the Andijon events of May 13, 2005, the operating environment in Uzbekistan for international organizations and local NGOs became increasingly difficult, beginning with tighter restrictions on community meetings and continuing today with the government closures of national and international NGOs. National staff working with NGOs faced increasing risk as government officials became more suspicious that their activities were somehow aimed against the government. By the time this study was undertaken in the summer of 2007, the risks to any national staff researchers and translators were considered by Mercy Corps to be too great. Recognizing that these individuals would be critical for implementing the study, the decision was made to exclude research in Uzbekistan. Therefore, this study focuses on the factors contributing to sustained mobilization only in PCI and CAIP target communities within the borders of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

Peaceful Change not adequately measured

While the study attempted to measure aspects of peaceful change,¹² such as how communities resolve disputes and how often communities have collaborated with their neighbors to implement multi-community initiatives, the authors recognize that peaceful change is a very complex behavior to measure. This is particularly true in the cultures of Central Asia, where issues of conflict and disagreement are not readily discussed by most people. A concerted effort to gain trust and focus on this topic more holistically is required to fully understand the effects Mercy Corps' programs have had on promoting peaceful change within and between communities. PCI, in particular, targeted clusters of communities that shared common tensions in an effort to help improve relations and reduce the potential for serious conflict. To fully understand the effects of PCI on relations between these clusters of communities, all communities within a given cluster would need to be thoroughly evaluated with an eye to understanding the conflict and relationship dynamics. The random community sampling approach of this study and the necessary omission of communities within Uzbekistan did not allow for analysis of inter-community relations, including those occurring across borders. This study only brushed the surface of the complexity of this behavior and therefore, can make few conclusions as to the overall effects that both CAIP and PCI have had on sustainably promoting peaceful change behaviors.¹³



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Lack of baseline or control group

This study was developed following completion of both CAIP and PCI as a way of understanding the long-term impacts on community mobilization behaviors. The measurements used here were not previously measured in the target communities and therefore no baseline data was available for

¹² *Peaceful Change* is the process and manner in which communities and societies manage, react to, live with and/or influence change. Promoting peaceful change means providing and supporting people with tools and mechanisms to work collaboratively and solve problems peacefully at all levels – from the community to the national level.

¹³ For more on the CAIP and PCI approach to promoting peaceful change, see Mercy Corps' 2003 *Ferghana Valley Field Study: Reducing the Potential for Conflict Through Community Mobilization*.

comparison of these results. Similarly, the methodology did not include a survey of communities not directly impacted by CAIP and PCI. Though such measurements would provide a point of reference for better understanding the results in program communities, there are few communities within the region that have not been touched by some level of NGO investment. It was therefore determined that a control group of non-CAIP and PCI communities would not provide an even base point against which to measure the changes in CAIP and PCI communities. As a result, the study relies on the memories and reflections of the interviewees to understand changes that have occurred within communities.

Finally, the study was led by Mercy Corps' program director and funded through Mercy Corps private which creates a potential bias. The above challenges clearly pose constraints and create potential bias to the research. However, the team triangulated enough information from the different stakeholders to have confidence in the conclusions reported herein.

V. SUSTAINED COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

The study sought evidence that communities or change agents within communities were continuing to take initiative to solve their own problems and care for public resources. Specifically, the study team examined whether projects implemented during CAIP and PCI continued to be valued, cared for and/or replicated following program closure. Also of interest were whether or not communities were pro-active in seeking solutions to additional priorities or problems, and the level of engagement by residents in community actions.

CAIP and PCI were initiated at a time when community infrastructure was in disarray. Mercy Corps' proposal for the CAIP program described the poor state of community facilities in the target regions of Central Asia:

Local schools, health clinics, youth centers..., and drinking water and irrigation systems are often old and dangerously run-down. Newer facilities often fall quickly into disrepair due to a lack of proper maintenance, and Soviet-era structures are crumbling after decades of neglect. Roofs and foundations are starting to crumble and cannot be repaired due to a lack of funds. This is due, in part, to a lack of a sense of responsibility for public property.¹⁴

Both programs attempted to address the issues of disrepair through community-identified infrastructure construction and improvement projects, while also aiming to improve community responsibility for public property through the mobilization process. While communities traditionally organized for community work days to assist neighbors with home building or to clean canals, at the time CAIP and PCI were launched, communities continued to await government intervention to overcome the larger challenges described above.

“The water pump didn't work for 30 years, now it is in good condition. People contributed to the pump repair and so they value and maintain it.”

– Isroilov Salohuddin of Garibak community in Penjikent

14 Mercy Corps. RFA No. 176-02-01 “Community Action Investment Program” (CAIP) Revised Application. March 2002. p.4.

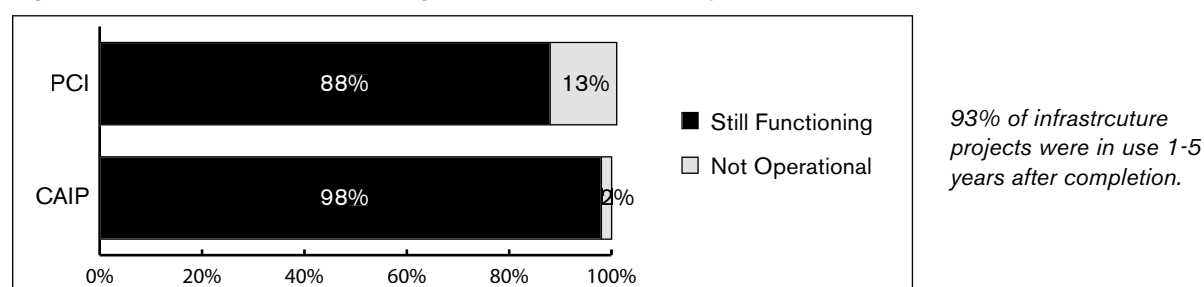
A. Key Findings

1. Maintenance and use of infrastructure¹⁵

The continued maintenance and use of infrastructure that was built or improved during the program duration serves as an indicator of the level of continued accountability and collective action that exists. Responsible parties are held accountable for care and for mobilization of resources when repairs or maintenance are required.

In total, 94 infrastructure projects were reviewed in the 51 sample communities, and 87 (93%) were reported as still functional and in active use by the community (see Figure 2). All but one of the PCI projects that were not functional were from the first phase of PCI that concluded in 2004. There appeared to be varying factors affecting the sustainability of projects, and much can be learned from successful maintenance as well as cases where projects were no longer in operation.

Figure 2: Status of Infrastructure Projects 1-5 Years After Completion



Why Some Projects Failed

Analysis of the survey results reveal three key reasons some projects are not sustained:

- 1. Government interference.** In one case, a drinking water project in the town of Karabog in the Isfara District of Tajikistan, government bodies raised the price of drinking water above what was considered affordable by the local populace and when households refused or were unable to pay, the public taps were shut off.
- 2. Poor design and/or quality.** In four cases, there appeared to be design or construction quality issues that affected the communities' ability and/or commitment to ensuring maintenance of the project.
- 3. Projects were not representative of community prioritization.** Two projects, a youth center in the southern Tajikistan community of Vatan and a bathhouse in Jangi Abad in Batken, Kyrgyzstan, appear not to have been high priorities for the populace and therefore ownership was not strongly felt by the community. In both cases, interviewees referenced some interference in the decision-making process by local leaders.

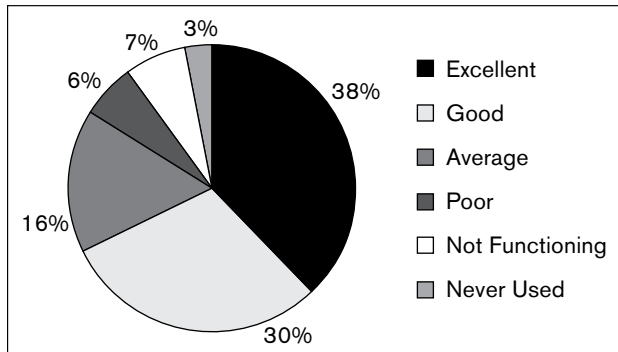
Condition and How Maintenance Was Secured

The team directly assessed the overall condition of 81 of the infrastructure projects and determined that 68% were in good to excellent condition (see Figure 3).¹⁶ Schools, roads and electrification projects fared very well, with all of these projects operational at the time of the study.

15 This study reviewed the current status of two infrastructure projects in each community, or just one in cases where only one project was implemented. In places where more than two projects were implemented, the most expensive project was reviewed alongside one other. The study team discussed the status of the infrastructure with at least one member of the CAG and cross-checked the information through observation, when feasible, and accounts offered by other community members during interviews.

16 Infrastructure projects were rated by observation by the research team on a five point scale that was cross checked for comparability between the different teams.

Figure 3: Current Condition of Assessed Infrastructure Projects



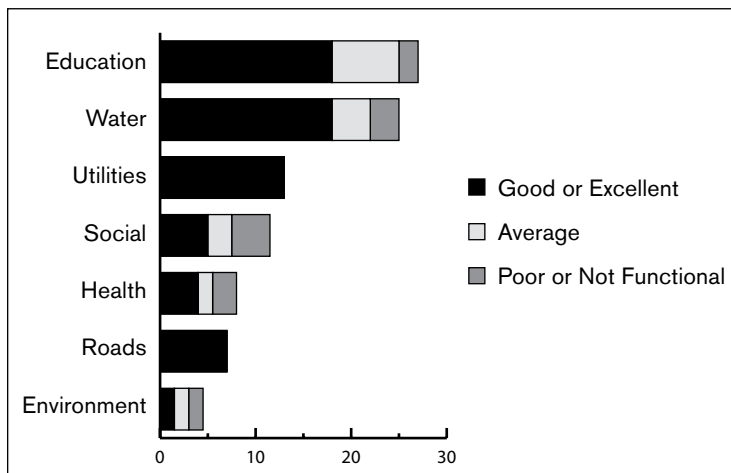
School maintenance was secured primarily through government support or parent contributions. Throughout the region, parents regularly contribute to annual maintenance costs, which usually support small repairs and painting that are done by teachers during the summer. In Kyrgyzstan, the government has taken responsibility for school upkeep and has outlawed the collecting of money from parents for this purpose. The schools that were rehabilitated or built with project support in

Kyrgyzstan were all in very good condition. Only one school, in the Sari Kenja Community of the Rasht Valley of Tajikistan, received a “poor” rating. The Department of Education had a project underway to construct a new school building in this community, likely lessening community motivation to contribute to maintaining the older school building.

Projects addressing basic utilities, such as gas, electricity and water (irrigation and drinking), were highly appreciated in communities and often benefited from community organized repairs. Communities usually appointed water user groups or individuals to care for these projects, and fees were collected for regular maintenance or on an as needed basis to ensure repairs. In the few cases where water projects were not functional due to issues of maintenance, design issues were often cited, with community members feeling less involved in the process.

Projects such as youth and community centers, sports fields, dykes and dams had less clear systems for maintenance, and as such, were generally in poorer condition or had not yet had any significant maintenance done. These types of projects do not traditionally have maintenance structures in place, so it has been harder to ensure sustainability. See Figure 4 for a summary of project quality across all categories.¹⁷

Figure 4: Project Quality by Category



Sub-standard construction, due to a lack of specialist labor on the project, was cited in one case where condition was rated as “poor”. In Yaldam-ich Community of Rasht Valley, some rooms of the CAIP-constructed maternity ward are not being fully utilized due to problems with their construction. These problems were attributable to the choice of unskilled labor from community members, used to reduce overall project costs and help meet community contribution requirements for the project.

¹⁷ “Utilities” include gas, electricity and communications projects; “Social” projects include youth centers, sport fields, a bathhouse, a community square and a commercial center; “Health” projects include work on medical points and maternity wards; and “Environment” projects include garbage collection points, dykes, dams and mud-flow channels.

2. New Community Initiatives

Most communities have continued to undertake collective community activities. The majority of CAG members (93%) and general community members (88%) alike said that collective activities or problem-solving have occurred in their community during 2007. In cases where CAG members stated no such activities have taken place, others in the community reported some level of activity, though often this was for hashars¹⁸ or holiday celebrations. More importantly, **42% of CAG members, representing 35 of the 51 communities, reported that the community had worked collectively on new projects or repairs to existing infrastructure, beyond traditional hashars, in 2007.** These activities varied from building a new mosque, organizing a mass livestock vaccination campaign and expanding drinking water systems to community-funded and organized repairs of existing transformers, roads and water infrastructure. These activities demonstrate that many communities have continued to actively engage in problem-solving. Rajabov Yuldosh, from the village of Jar Kyshtak in Osh, Kyrgyzstan, attested that, “[Mercy Corps] taught us many things, methods of work. People got motivated by the project and then implemented six other projects. Some projects were realized by ourselves, some of them with NGOs and local government.”



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Built Confidence for Collective Community Action

Community members and CAG leaders alike emphasized that once the first physical project in their community was successfully implemented, their willingness to contribute resources and participate in the prioritization, design and implementation process grew noticeably. “If we had trusted Mercy Corps in the beginning we could have done more projects, maybe got a transformer. Mercy Corps explained that if we are quick with the first project there may be time for a second, but we were too slow to understand the benefits, so missed this opportunity,” reflected Nasanov Davlatali, a CAG member from Jarbulok-Kalam in the Asht Raion of Sughd Oblast where PCI operated for two years. The approach of multiple project cycles in any given community was a deliberate part of the program design. These findings confirm the original hypothesis (that investment in building the confidence of communities to offer their time and energy in managing and implementing development projects) is critically important to fostering sustained collective action and the possibility of independent project implementation in the future.

Increased Advocacy for Community Resources

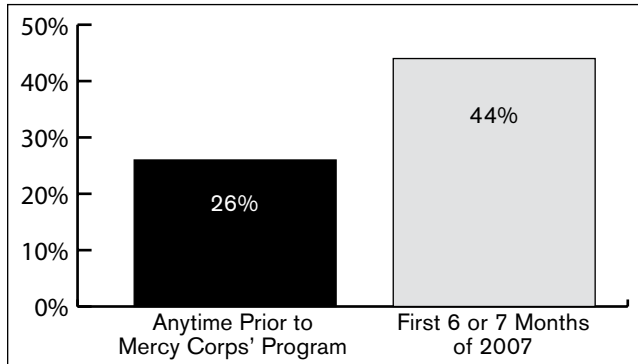
CAIP and PCI communities are now more actively seeking support for community needs and projects. Forty-four percent (44%) of CAG members reported seeking outside funding from NGOs, government, the UN or similar organizations, in the initial six or seven months of 2007, while only 26% reported having done so at any time prior to implementation of Mercy Corps' program in their community (See Figure 5). CAG members frequently cited lessons they learned during program implementation for this increased activity:

- 1) Twenty-four (24) CAG members mentioned proposal, budget or project development skills as a program lesson that they continue to use; and

18 Community workdays, often organized annually to clean and repair canals or streets.

- 2) Thirty-five (35) general community members volunteered that their community noted increased confidence and/or increased willingness to contribute toward community actions following completion of successful projects during CAIP and PCI.

Figure 5: CAG Members Reporting Efforts to Secure External Resources



Nasriev Muminjon, a former CAG member in Khilmony village of the Rasht Valley explained it this way, “Before Mercy Corps, labor was paid, and this meant there was difficulty in getting volunteer labor for CAIP. Leaders [from the CAG] had to explain, and community members eventually understood, that the work was for their own benefit, and so they are now happier to contribute. The CAG leaders gained trust and respect in the community after 12 CAIP projects were successfully implemented.”

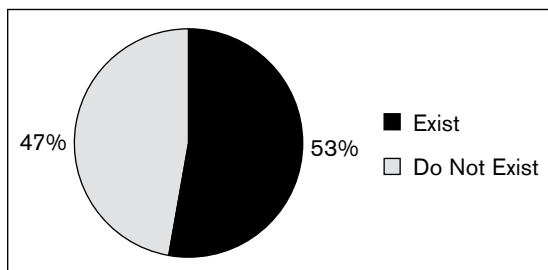
Contribution of Change Agents

The role of one or more key individuals was very important for the level of activity seen in communities following the close of CAIP and PCI. In several of the most active communities, a small number of people led the initiative to solve problems and organize the community to take action. In many cases, there was one clear leader, often a former or current member of the CAG. These leaders and others within the communities said that the skills and trust that they gained from Mercy Corps training and the successful implementation of projects during CAIP and PCI enabled them to be more effective leaders and mobilizers within their communities. “Before, nobody trusted the *Mahalla* Committee; now the *Mahalla* committee has become more active following Mercy Corps’ trainings,” declared Alikulova Jahon, a former CAG member and current member of the *Mahalla* Committee in Gidrostoitel Community of Khatlon Oblast, Tajikistan.¹⁹

“When CAIP started, the water project was without progress. At a community meeting, a new CAG leader was chosen. People did not trust each other. With the new leader the community completed 14 projects and helped a neighboring village with pipe construction.”

– Abrorov Mullo, CAG Chair, of Rasht Valley Community of Khoit

Figure 6: Communities Where CAGs Still Exist in Some Form



While the CAG appeared to remain in some form in about 27 (53%) of the communities, in other communities the individuals, tasks and procedures of the project CAGs had often evolved or blended with traditional community leadership structures (see Figure 6). General community members recognized the influence of CAIP and PCI on the existing groups

¹⁹ *Mahallas* are neighborhood divisions found within each *Jamoat* in Tajikistan. CAGs were designed to have representation from multiple *mahallas*.

and leaders within the community. Most commonly, they cited participation in Mercy Corps' programs as helping leaders and other community groups to better engage with the community in their actions or money collections. Fully 61% of the former CAG members interviewed reported still being active members in other community groups, such as an *aiyl* or *mahalla*²⁰ committee or women's committee.

3. Participation in Community Action

In both CAIP and PCI, communities were required to contribute towards the costs of the community development projects. Previously, most communities in the target areas of Central Asia were not accustomed to development assistance, only humanitarian aid, and were skeptical that their contributions of money, materials and labor would truly benefit the community. In many places, the programs' efforts to empower CAGs as change agents in their communities and to provide them with the tools to engage community members in decision-making and problem-solving processes in an open and transparent manner has shifted attitudes to be more open to participation in community and NGO initiatives. CAG members in 31 (61%) communities volunteered unprompted that community members were more willing to contribute and/or take action for the benefit of the community following their experience working with Mercy Corps.

In the Jarbulok-Kalam community of Asht District in Northern Tajikistan, Nasanov Davlatali discussed the changed attitudes experienced in his community, "Mercy Corps affected the general population. People were suspicious of NGOs before, but through work with Mercy Corps, people realized these organizations can help." He continued, "People now prioritize their problems as they didn't do before. They consider options based on what resources they have available. People used to address their problems separately, as they had less trust for each other, but now they work together to solve problems. Before people wanted aid, now they know they can solve their own problems without waiting for others to help."

When asked how many people participated in the implementation of community actions during 2007, 89% of the general community members that responded said more than 20 directly participated, while, 31% stated average participation exceeded 100 people within their community.

Change Agent for Sustained Collective Action

In the very active Kyrgyz border community of Dostuk, the former CAG chairman, Rodiv Abduvali, continues to serve the community as the village committee leader, utilizing skills learned during PCI to seek and implement new projects for the benefit of his community. Dostuk was suffering from poor electricity supply and community members turned to Rodiv Abduvali to do something about this problem. In response, he led an effort to secure external support for an electrification project for the whole community, first developing a proposal and budget using knowledge gained from PCI. Though his initial attempts to gain financial assistance from the local government were unsuccessful, he went on to higher levels, finally securing support from the oblast (province) government. A successful proposal to a local organization implementing a World Bank funded project, ARIS, provided additional support. Rodiv Abduvali carried on to mobilize the community to provide the necessary labor. The project was well underway at the time of the study team's visit and promises to provide improved electricity through the coming winter.

20 *Aiyl* Committees are village committees seen in most villages within Kyrgyzstan, while *Mahalla* Committees are neighborhood committees seen primarily in Tajikistan.

Participation in Community Meetings and Decisions

Nearly half of all general community member and youth respondents (49%) said that they had attended at least one community meeting so far this year, and 39% have attended more than one (see Figure 7). Respondents who were participants in at least one Mercy Corps activity were also more likely to have attended community meetings, with 67% reporting attendance this year. Teachers and government employees were particularly likely to attend (see Table 4). Further, 56% of youth and general community member respondents felt that they were either fully involved in all aspects of decision-making and action (32%) or that they at least had some influence on the decisions made by others (24%). However, even in these communities, there continue to be disparities between the levels of participation and empowerment experienced by men and women. Men were much more likely to have attended community meetings, with 65% having attended one this year as opposed to 33% among women.

Figure 7: Attendance at Community Meetings in 2007

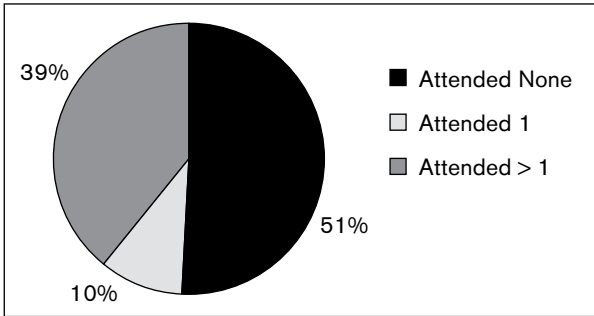


Table 4: Attended at Least 1 Meeting in 2007 by Occupation

Government	75%	Other	54%
Teacher	71%	Farmer	48%
Doctor	63%	Business	43%
Trade/Technical	59%	Student	38%
Unemployed	57%	Housewife	26%

B. Recommendations

1. Promote an inclusive process to select respected change agents.

Building the skills of strong leaders can boost a community's ability to take initiative and act collectively. Conversely, empowering leaders who crave personal gain and/or lack community trust can hold communities back. The careful selection of trusted leaders is a critical part of the mobilization process and must include wide participation through anonymous voting to ensure that trusted individuals are selected. Programs should be cautioned not to rely too heavily on traditional leadership structures, such as the Mahalla and Aiyi committees in Central Asia, for identifying potential change agents. Mercy Corps' evaluation of the USAID-funded Community Revitalization through Democratic Action Program (CRDA) reached a similar conclusion: "When deciding on the initial community representatives, assure that these include individuals who hold high respect and esteem in their communities. If held in this regard, the local representatives will have significantly more success in mobilizing their communities; decreasing skepticism about the assistance program; and increasing the level of local participation, including the willingness to provide cash and in-kind matching contributions."²¹

2. Allocate sufficient time and resources to guide initial project.

Community mobilization programs should allow sufficient time and human resources to carefully guide the process during initial implementation and may consider focusing initially on less expensive projects that require modest community investments and have a high likelihood of early success. This will foster the confidence and interest of communities to graduate to more expensive priorities and greater investments in later cycles. Building on initial success and community pride encourages repetition of

21 Vukovic, Bosiljka. *Project Assessment for Serbia CRDA Community Development Programming 2001-2004*. Mercy Corps, May 2007. p. 26.

the process, which reinforces behaviors and builds greater confidence in community capacity.

This recommendation echoes previous studies of Mercy Corps' community mobilization programs. In the evaluation of the CRDA Program in Serbia, the evaluator concluded, "Completing small, quick-start projects during the startup period were shown to be very effective as the practice quickly demonstrates that the organization's efforts are serious, genuine and in accordance with the needs of the communities."²²

In a field study of Mercy Corps' USAID-funded East Georgia Community Mobilization Initiative (E-GCMI), the evaluators found that "Sustained behavior change often does not take place during implementation of the first project" and that the learning process of reinforcing skills through multiple applications under the support of the implementing agency contributes to the likelihood of sustained behavior change.²³ Investing in positive outcomes from the first project cycle will contribute to greater motivation, confidence and opportunities for success in later cycles, thus instilling confidence in the process.



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3. Complement larger projects with small-scale opportunities.

Despite the confidence building that took place during the programs, some communities still felt that they required outside assistance to solve their problems. With program emphasis on implementing large-scale, expensive projects that addressed the most pressing priorities of the community, some communities and CAG members found it difficult to translate these experiences to independently implement smaller-scale projects. An integrated approach of addressing the big issues through a wide-scale mobilization process, combined with encouragement for smaller projects led and primarily funded by community members and/or action groups, can aid communities to maintain momentum and confidence that they can continue to improve their lives, even with limited resources.

4. Combine skill-building with practical experience.

Some CAG members mentioned that they wrote their first proposal during project implementation and then went on to write many more. Others talked about their experiences learning about and then applying group prioritization processes as having a large impact on how they work with the communities, and in the case of at least two teachers on CAGs, their students in the classroom. This combination of skill-building through seminars, camps and conferences combined with immediate practical application builds confidence and ownership of the new skills and encourages their long term use. Whenever possible, practical application should follow closely on the heels of training and skill-building activities. A similar finding was expressed in Mercy Corps' Georgia Field Study, which concluded "Fostering and mentoring a number of potential leaders throughout the mobilization process, while at the same time being inclusive of groups that may be excluded from leadership roles (e.g. women, youth and ethnic minorities), is critical to program success and sustainability."²⁴

22 Ibid. p. 26.

23 Hyder, Najia and Young, Anna. *Georgia Field Study: Understanding the Legacy of Community Mobilization*. Mercy Corps, July 2004. p. 26.

24 Ibid. p. 27

“Local government considers that they also have taken part in the project, and they are satisfied with community. Local government supports community’s requests, because the community makes its contribution as well.”

– Isakov Mamut, a CAG member in the Kara-Tokoy Community of Batken, Kyrgyzstan

5. Build broad participation in project selection.

The prioritization process under both CAIP and PCI brought together community members to voice their opinions, elect representatives and vote for the priorities that they felt were most important. The high level of maintenance and utilization experienced up to three years after program closeout demonstrates the programs’ effectiveness in identifying projects of high value to the community that warrant investment in care and maintenance. Additionally, early efforts to engage a large cross-section of the community in decision-making model an open and transparent process for allocating community resources, and this engagement ensures greater ownership and accountability is maintained and enforced by the community.

6. Consider real labor and material needs.

Programs requiring a specified level of community contributions risk cost-cutting design or material choices that can be detrimental to the sustainability of specific infrastructure projects. Programs must be cautious to ensure that communities or individuals wishing to minimize the total value of the community contributions do not compromise the quality of the overall projects. Standards of professional expertise in the design, implementation and supervisory processes and quality materials should always be employed if projects are to have a lasting effect for communities. Measures should be taken to inform and educate those participating in the design and budgeting process of the problems that can arise from excessive cost-cutting in labor and/or materials.

7. Invest in maintenance where traditional systems do not exist.

While some infrastructure projects, such as schools in the Central Asia context, benefit from traditional systems of community maintenance, others require a more deliberate and careful approach to establishing effective maintenance systems. Programs should take great care from the outset to identify these projects when they are selected and to ensure that communities are working to establish sustainable systems for maintenance. Infrastructure, such as youth centers, mud flow channels or sport fields, which may have been previously absent from the community, will require an investment of greater time to identify and execute systems that work.

VI. COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE

The evidence from this study demonstrates some impressive achievements in the development of collaborative and trusting relations between communities and the local governments that serve them. While the research clearly suggests success by CAIP and PCI in bringing governments and communities closer together, the findings must be viewed in the context of the changing environments in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

Both countries have undertaken efforts in recent years to strengthen local governments that are more closely engaged with communities. These local governing bodies have increased the frequency of contact that communities have with the government, contributing to greater trust and understanding. This contact has helped some local governments work toward their mandate to promote economic and

social development within the territories they govern. However, local governments continue to suffer from limited resources. The legal frameworks for local government in both Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan allow for local taxation, but in reality, few resources remain available for use within the communities. While Kyrgyzstan has certainly experienced a higher degree of success in its decentralization process, both countries have benefited from better community-government relations.

This study looked at changes in relations between communities and local government as well as between communities and the official and unofficial leaders within them, as trust, accountability and communication within each of these relationships are key components of good governance.

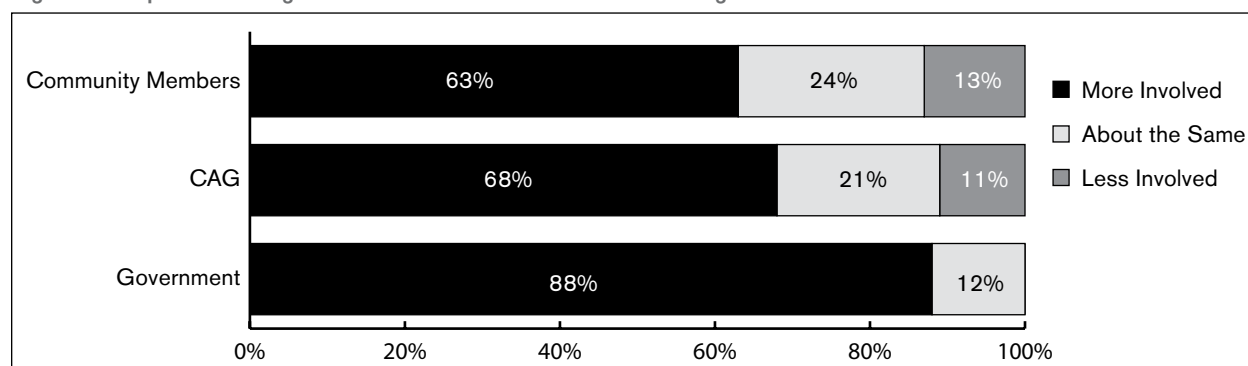
A. Key Findings

1. Perceptions & relationships with local government.

Stronger Local Government Involvement in Communities

Eighty-eight percent (88%) of local government²⁵ respondents reported that they are more involved in community actions than they were before the CAIP or PCI programs. Increased government involvement was confirmed by both CAG members (68%) and general community members (63%), who also felt that local government was more involved in community actions following the Mercy Corps programs (See Figure 8). In most cases, this increased involvement was perceived as a positive development. However, in some cases, particularly in the sensitive cotton growing regions of Khatlon, Tajikistan, there were indications that this involvement was not supportive of community priorities but was instead focused on enforcing or controlling political issues of land use and cotton production. The overwhelming reports of increased government involvement suggest that CAIP and PCI were very successful at increasing dialogue and cooperation between communities and local government.

Figure 8: Reported Change in Government Involvement Following CAIP and PCI



As shown in Table 5, explanations for both increased and decreased government involvement varied, with the most people (44) attributing the difference to changes within the community and people, including increased confidence, better knowledge of people’s rights and increased development overall. The second most commonly cited explanation was the positive experience of working closely together on project implementation and/or with NGOs (26), while others cited transitions within government personnel (17), changes in government policy (13), or increased use of government resources locally (10) as influencing factors. In addition, many people expressed that government representatives

25 “Local government” refers to the two levels of formal government most closely connected to communities, the *jamoat* (Tajikistan), *aiyl okmotu* (Kyrgyzstan) or city administration and the *raion* (District). Of the 44 local government respondents, 5 were from the *raion* level and 39 were from the *jamoat*, *aiyl okmotu* or town administration level. Eleven were chairpersons, 14 were deputy chairs and 19 were from other positions within the government, usually secretaries or accountants.

themselves had changed their attitudes toward communities or became more visible and active within the communities, perhaps as a result of one or more of the above explanations. Dodojonov Mahat Ibrov, the Chair of Government Administration in the *Raion* (district) government of Aravan, spoke of the change this way: “The greater collaboration through NGO partners has helped change attitudes and create a realization that government cannot contribute significant funds but that it can provide advice and support.”

Table 5: Explanations for Changes in Government Involvement

REASON	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS
Changes within community	44
Positive experience of working together	26
Transitions within government personnel	17
Changes in government policy	13
Increased local use of government resources	10

Government Became More Approachable

Both CAIP and PCI actively encouraged interaction between local government and the CAGs, specifically for project planning, implementation, collection of contributions and sustainability planning. The study confirmed that CAG members were the greatest beneficiaries of improved government relations and government involvement, with 73% stating that it is easier for them to approach local government now than it was before Mercy Corps’ program. “Government interest increased with projects. They tried to participate in meetings and activities even if they didn’t have resources. Before people were afraid of government, but had to address them often during PCI projects and are now less scared to approach government,” explained CAG member Abdurahimov Shaibek of Pahtaabad Community in Northern Tajikistan.



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Of the general community members interviewed, 58% also felt that attitudes toward local government have changed in the past five years. While there are many factors contributing to such changed attitudes, some community members specifically attributed the change to their experience working with government on Mercy Corps projects, while others spoke about improved communication overall. Nizomov Mahmadoir of Dombrachi community in the Rasht Valley of Tajikistan explained the change this way, “Before, the government did not participate in community meetings. Now, we invite them and they

participate. They highly appreciate our activities with Mercy Corps (CAIP) and changed their attitude toward us.” Koziev Muqomidding in the Havzak community in the Zarafshan Valley felt there was a change in the way community members approach local government following PCI, explaining “Mercy Corps taught people how to approach local government.”

CAIP Helps Community Achieve Self-Governance

“The CAIP program united people and enabled them to learn how to collect cash and solve problems together.”

– Tsoi Florida, Vice-Mayor, Kyzyl Kia, Kyrgyzstan

Mashzavod neighborhood is recognized nationally for its success implementing self-initiated projects and is known throughout Kyzyl Kia Town as a model of successful self-governance that collaborates closely with the Central Administration for the overall development of the neighborhood. The synergy between CAIP and the Territorial Public Self-Government Program (TPSG) and their ability to successfully implement projects within Mashzavod serve as an example of government and an international organization collaborating for the sustained mobilization and positive development of communities.

The City Administration in Kyzyl Kia launched TPSG in 2003 in an effort to shift responsibility for the development of neighborhoods to the local level and better engage people in decision-making that affects everyday life. At the same time the neighborhood of Mashzavod was engaging with Mercy Corps' and achieved exceptional success in self-governance, in part because of the complementary and opportune timing of the community's work with CAIP.

TPSG works closely with the city administration, which provides ongoing financial, technical and mentoring support to community leaders elected through community meetings. The original head of the TPSG in Mashzavod, Gulyam Kazakov, was also a member of the CAG and is credited by the Central Administration and peers in the community for a good deal of the neighborhood's success.

Mr. Kazakov also feels his experience with Mercy Corps helped the community get started on the right foot. “The seminars and trainings helped us, as TPSG leaders, to develop managerial abilities and be more active in our work with community members. Because of CAIP, people spoke more openly about their problems, were more active, and participated in general meetings. Our great advantage was that CAIP started work almost at the same time when TPSG was organizing in the communities of our town. Success factors of TPSG included highly active people; trust established through successful CAIP projects, especially after realization of the first project; installation of a new transformer; and motivated CAG members and TPSG leaders.” The current head of TPSG in Mashzavod confirms, “If CAIP did not work in Mashzavod, then people would certainly have a different attitude toward TPSG. People's belief in self-governance strengthened when they saw that projects work.”

2. Transparency & Accountability.

PCI and CAIP promoted transparency and accountability through a variety of methods, including transparency boards showing project budgets and CAG member names, frequent community meetings and careful tracking of community contributions and financial expenditures. While the study found few transparency boards still in use for their intended purpose, there was evidence that accountability mechanisms were in place in a number of communities.

Access to Information

Of the government representatives interviewed, 54% stated that the whole community has access to government records about meetings or agreements with communities. At the community level, 62% of



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CAG members interviewed confirmed that the whole community has access to local community-managed records regarding community projects, contributions and costs. In many of these cases, mechanisms were organized for regular reporting to community members about the use of contributions through meetings at the mosque or other community meetings, though it should be noted that women were at times excluded from such reporting at mosques. In some cases, this information was also posted publicly. In Dostuk, the CAG leader, Rodiv Abduvali, was pleased with skills he learned during PCI for operating transparently:

“We learned transparency. The community selected one person who reports on the activities of the CAG to the wider community.”

As stated previously, participation in community meetings in former CAIP and PCI communities was quite high, with nearly half of youth and general community respondents having attended at least one community meeting between January 2007 and the time the interviews were conducted in July of 2007. **This finding suggests that leaders in these communities are regularly sharing information with community members.** In Komsomol Community of the Khatlon Oblast, one community member testified that, “People now have more awareness about community events.” And, in the Okjar-Tajikokjar community in Northern Tajikistan, the CAG member, Goibova Kumshoy, explained the change in her community: “Before, the *mahalla* committee was active and they told people what to do; now they ask people’s opinion.”

Open Decision-Making

In 57% of communities, there was evidence that at least some of the decision-making practices introduced during CAIP and PCI have been adopted for dealing with regular community business. In the town of Aktash, Kyrgyzstan, Taerov Hailil, a CAG member, described it this way: “We listen to issues from everyone and discuss the pluses and minuses of each, and then we vote. We have used this method since 2005 and the last time was one and a half months ago. We gathered at the school and discussed water, gas and a sports complex, and then decided on a water project, which is now being realized. Sixty people participated with five or six from each *mahalla* (neighborhood).”

Saidov Valijon, a community member from the highly active village of Kichigizi in the Rasht Valley, recognized a big change in how the community interacts following CAIP: “Mercy Corps showed the community how to organize. We addressed a (community) problem just yesterday.” He went on to describe the open process by which decisions are now made: “The community lists problems they have and then they discuss and prioritize things that will benefit the most people. Issues are discussed in open meetings at the teahouse and decided by a committee. The result is better now with the trust established during CAIP.” Mr. Saidov also described local government as being “more accessible than before.”

B. Recommendations

1. Build local government support early.

Local government should be involved in all aspects of the mobilization and behavior change process. This statement is especially true in Central Asian countries, where government decentralization policies

encourage and empower greater engagement with communities by local government actors. Local government can serve as a great advocate of the behaviors of participation, collective action, accountability and peaceful change, and concerted efforts should be made by community development programs to develop understandings of these behaviors within the local government from the very early stages of program implementation. In all cases, these efforts should be balanced with open and transparent implementation processes that discourage abuse of power dynamics.

2. Involve government in sustainability planning and public handovers.

Whether or not government plays a direct role in the sustainability plan, efforts must be made to secure their endorsement of the plan that is in place, and they should be present for the public handover, including declarations to the whole community of how the project will be sustained. While accountable government relationships should be encouraged and fostered throughout work with communities, the handover of infrastructure or other projects is an important event to communicate established expectations and responsibility for sustainability firmly and publicly. Active engagement by government in the handover process adds strength to the sustainability strategy and discourages future interference by government or powerful community members in the future management of projects or infrastructure.

3. Promote transparency in all activities.

It is critically important for programs to demonstrate and practice transparent procurement, financial management, decision-making and planning processes that are led by community members or at least allow for community input. Transparency creates confidence that contributions are carefully managed, reinforces participative values, and builds trust within the community.

Promoting transparency is a challenging component of any community development program. Discussions should be held with community and CAG members to identify a transparency strategy that is appropriate for the community and that supports rather than replaces traditional communication mechanisms. Communication strategies for information about projects, budgets, community contributions and contractor selection should be built around local practices and capacities, and the names of community representatives and their roles should be openly communicated to the wider community to encourage accountability.

In rural villages, printing copies of budgets and other documents is difficult once an external organization is no longer providing these capabilities, so using local resources, including hand written documents posted by designated community members or government officials during project implementation may contribute to continued use of the transparency mechanisms after the project. Transparency boards are great for wide accessibility during project implementation, but they should be managed by local individuals and complemented with other communication strategies that are appropriate to the community and may be more likely to be sustained.

4. Do not allow individual or government domination of decision-making.

Engagement of local government and established community leaders is critically important. However, it is also important that implementation does not allow decision-making or planning to be controlled by government or individual priorities. When the process is being dominated, programs may observe disinterest or low participation by other CAG members and/or the wider community. Mobilizers should



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watch for signs that government or others are dominating the decision-making structure and take corrective action to ensure that the larger community voice is heard. Ownership, sustainability and community confidence in open mobilization processes are in jeopardy when government or individual leaders dominate too much.

VII. YOUTH AND COMMUNITY ACTION

Both PCI and CAIP actively targeted youth, as youth have historically contributed to escalation of violence or intolerance where tensions are allowed to build. The programs also recognized that youth will shape the future of Central Asia's communities. However, each program worked with a different age group. While PCI targeted young people who were still in school, primarily ages 13-19, CAIP worked mostly with an older group, aged 18-30, who were out of school and had recently entered the work force. Differing strategies accompanied the different target groups, with PCI focusing on relationship skill-building, improving communication and skills for handling difficult situations and, in the last two years, developing employable skills among young people. While CAIP also worked with young people on skills to manage disputes and handle difficult situations, greater emphasis was placed on integrating youth into community decision-making structures. Young people were often organized into youth committees who either supported the role of the CAG or identified and promoted youth-focused projects. Within this framework, youth were engaged in labor activities and were often paired with mentors to develop practical construction skills. The economic development components of CAIP targeted youth with business skills development and micro-lending.

A. Key Findings

1. Personal development.

Of the 89 youth interviewed, 72% said they continued to use at least one thing learned during the program (see Figure 9). Of these, the most common skills mentioned were:

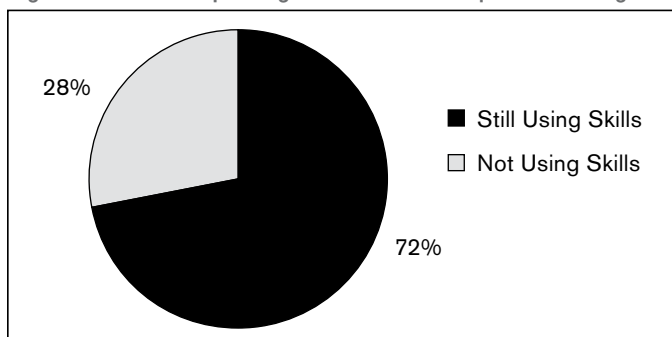
- 1) Teamwork or communication (27)
- 2) Practical skills including sewing, construction, roofing, journalism, and cooking (26).

Other popular answers included tolerance or conflict prevention skills, leadership skills, development of friendships, increased knowledge of or abilities in games and sports, and improved understanding of HIV/AIDS and prevention methods.

2. Youth perceptions of others.

While changes in youth perceptions were not explicitly measured by this study, evidence was presented by youth and community members alike that the programs helped to improve the outlooks of participating youth toward their neighbors. Interviews with young people, particularly those who participated in inter-community activities such as camps and sports competitions, revealed an openness and acceptance of young people from other communities, countries and ethnicities. The communities of Pahtaabad, Tajikistan, and Kulundu, Kyrgyzstan, were experiencing strained cross-border relations prior to PCI, despite sharing a common language

Figure 9: Youth Reporting Use of Skills Acquired in Programs



and Kyrgyz ethnic majority. Youth in Pahtaabad lacked access to education materials in the Kyrgyz language until PCI helped bring these communities together and improve a Kyrgyz language school in Kulundu. Kuldaikulova Kanyshai from Pahtaabad Community explained her experience: “Before there were quarrels with youth from another village. Now, from what we learned in tolerance training, attitudes are better, and youth teach children to be also more tolerant [with Kulundu Village]. Community members from Pahtaabad go to school at a PCI rehabilitated school in Kulundu following better relations established during PCI. The summer camp included children from all neighboring villages after tolerance training was held in each school separately.”

Parents often felt compelled to add their thoughts following interviews with the young program participants. The mother of one PCI camp participant, Abduvahab Kisir Kanakai, from the Min Oruk community in Batken, Kyrgyzstan, (near the border of Tajikistan) noted, “[Following PCI] there was a change in how youth from the community and from Tajik communities interact. Children now greet each other at the market and are generally more friendly and positive toward each other.”

Other general community and CAG members volunteered similar observations during discussions with study team members. While not directly addressed in the interview questions, **reduced tensions and increased tolerance and friendship between youth of neighboring communities were cited frequently as important outcomes of Mercy Corps’ work, particularly in PCI communities where the program actively sought to bring together young people of varying backgrounds.**



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3. Role of migration on youth activity.

High levels of labor migration throughout Central Asia have had a huge impact on the sustainability of CAIP and PCI youth activities within communities. Young people, particularly young men, faced with few opportunities for income generation within their communities frequently choose to seek work elsewhere, either permanently or for a large portion of the year. The study team observed that as a result of this outward migration some youth felt detached from their communities, knowing that their futures were elsewhere. In other cases, young people took incredible initiative to invest in their communities with money made while working abroad.

Migration and Youth Collective Action

Outward migration appeared to be a large contributing factor to the low levels of continued action by youth in communities. Just over half of youth (52%) reported a continuation of one or more youth focused activities that were initiated during CAIP or PCI.²⁶ However, youth and other community members frequently spoke of youth contributions to improving family and community life through labor and remittances. In the community of Khilmony in the Rasht Valley, community members told about youth in Russia who set up a fund under the management of elders from the mosque to help with expensive events and the needs of the poor in the community. In Kichigizi Community, also in the Rasht Valley, youth working in Russia collected money for an expansion of the community’s drinking water system to

26 The study itself also suffered the effects of high levels of migration. In each of the 51 sample communities, the study team aimed to talk to two participants of the programs’ youth activities. However, locating such individuals proved incredibly difficult. Through significant time and effort the team was able to interview a total of 89 youth participants. Because of this difficulty, the sample of youth did not always include those who were most involved during program implementation and at times included individuals who participated in only some small components of the program.



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reach more families with safe water. Although these trends are not necessarily a direct outcome of PCI and CAIP activities, they point to the growing importance and potential of labor migration and remittances among young people in Central Asia.

Outward migration and remittances clearly impact the level of activity and development throughout the regions targeted by CAIP and PCI. Yet, it was beyond the scope of this study to conduct a thorough evaluation of how the experiences and skills transfer activities of these programs are affecting the lives of

youth participants who are now abroad or their commitment to supporting the needs and development of their home communities.

4. Continued activities.

In total, 40% of general community members interviewed reported that youth had initiated community activities since January 2007, and **68% of these community members recognized that some or all of the activities had not taken place prior to Mercy Corps' program.** The majority of these activities were sporting events, with 20% of those reporting youth organized activities also mentioning other types of projects, primarily social events such as holidays or concerts, or construction projects using remittances sent by youth in Russia.

Similarly, 52% of youth respondents said at least one of the activities that was organized for youth during the program had been organized again since the close of the program (not necessarily by youth), and 70% of these young respondents identified sports as the activities that have been continued or repeated (see Figure 10). The relatively high level of sports activities being replicated or continued shows the popularity of these events, but also suggests that **communities and youth have continued to interact with neighboring communities through sport competitions.** Sports may also represent an area where youth feel empowered to be active.

Benefit of Adult Mentors for Youth Activities

In communities where the study team observed the greatest level of youth activity, such as Jeke Miste in Kyrgyzstan, **youth often benefited from the motivational and practical support of an adult mentor.** In Jeke Miste, youth who participated in PCI activities organized a club within the school, the Progress Stars. Progress Stars is supported by an active teacher who served on the CAG in the PCI program. The group organizes various events, including cross border activities with a school in neighboring Uzbekistan, regional sports competitions and workshops and trainings for younger students. It has attracted the support of outside donor organizations. As the members of the club graduate, the next class of students takes over the work of Progress Stars and continues to promote tolerance, teamwork and communication skills among youth. This club continues three years after PCI concluded its direct work in Jeke Miste.

Constraints on Youth Action

Youth activity may have been affected by constraints identified by the CAIP implementation team and outlined in the final report for that program, namely that:

- 1) Traditional leaders were skeptical about the ability of ... youth to provide valuable input when it came to community decision-making. This was especially the case with youth who, as central Asian cultures dictate, must not challenge the opinions of elders.

- 2) Largely as a result of the above ... youth lack the confidence and experience necessary to play an active role in the governance of their communities.²⁷

Both programs took measures to overcome these constraints. In the case of CAIP, youth initially identified and implemented separate projects to help demonstrate their potential to both themselves and the broader community and leadership. Unfortunately, neither CAIP nor PCI fully achieved integration of these groups in the decision-making processes of many communities, possibly due to the limited timespans of the programs.

B. Recommendations

1. Focus on youth mentors and objectives from the beginning.

Programs targeting youth need to be very proactive from the beginning to engage youth and focus activities on a few key outcomes. Young people are a valuable target group, representing the future of the communities and so should be engaged from the very beginning of activities within the community. Strong youth-focused community leaders, such as teachers or active parents, can play a pivotal role in organizing and motivating young people after the program is over. Care should be taken to identify and develop the skills of mentors early in the program and to engage them in structuring program activities that they feel ownership for and that are adapted to the context of the community.

2. Consider migration and the importance of income generation.

Migration and the pressures on young people to generate income must be major considerations of any program working with youth in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. As it continues to be a growing trend, programming that focuses on providing youth with marketable skills can contribute to both greater success during labor migration and the potential to seize work opportunities closer to home. Evaluating the experiences of recent labor migrants and the skills and experiences they found lacking or useful when they first migrated can help to ensure that work conducted with youth targets their future needs. When engaging youth in community actions, programs should consider means for reaching out to peers participating in the labor migration cycle and emphasize ways that youth can contribute to the development of their community both when they are present and from abroad.

3. Adapt interventions to meet the needs of the target age group.

Definitions of “youth” vary widely, even within the region of Central Asia. Interventions should be targeted to the needs and interests of the target groups. Sports events and camps that taught life skills of tolerance, leadership and friendship were very well received by secondary school students in the PCI program and appear to have impacted their perceptions of others. The older youth who participated in CAIP were responsive to activities that helped them to develop marketable and practical skills for improving their homes and finding better jobs.

4. Engage traditional leaders to see the potential of youth.

Working with youth to improve their confidence and abilities to contribute to community life is not sufficient. Perceptions of youth among traditional leaders and others in the community are also important for the success of youth activities. Leaders need to recognize the unique energy and insight that young people can bring to the decision-making process. This can be done through separately funded youth-led activities that demonstrate the capabilities of youth. Traditional leaders and others can also be encouraged to consider the ideas of youth through structured processes for bringing youth ideas

27 Huls, Debra. *Final Report for the Community Action Investment Program (CAIP)*. Mercy Corps, August 2005. p.29.

and contributions to the wider decision-making process. Attendance at community meetings, where youth voices may be dominated by elder community members, may not be sufficient, and programs should aim for structures that better represent youth in these processes.

VIII. SUMMARY OF LESSONS LEARNED FOR SUSTAINING MOBILIZATION BEHAVIORS

At the launch of this study, Mercy Corps set out to understand how the behaviors of participation, accountability and collective action have or have not been sustainably fostered through Mercy Corps' USAID-funded community development programs in Central Asia. In so doing, the organization hopes to better target future program interventions to continuously improve long-term impacts on these behaviors that have the potential for positively transforming communities and societies.

A. Participation

Mercy Corps' Georgia Field Study concluded that "It is unrealistic to expect everyone in the community to be engaged in the mobilization process,"²⁸ a conclusion shared by this study. However, the results do point to a key program attribute that supports increased participation: a community mobilization process that actively promotes transparency and open, inclusive decision-making processes, fosters the capacity of leaders to engage community members in problem-solving and builds confidence in communities' capacity.



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Communities who participated in Mercy Corps' programs showed high levels of attendance at community meetings, suggesting an interest in the activities of the community. It also arguably reflects that such meetings are important to the lives of the community's residents and provides them an opportunity to be heard. These communities showed high levels of participation in community initiatives, with most communities averaging over 20 direct participants in any one community initiative and many attracting over 100 on average.

Community development programs within traditional communities of Central Asia and elsewhere will continue to be challenged to engage women, youth and other marginalized groups. Yet, by modeling an open and inclusive process that puts decision-making power in the hands of all community members and engages with leaders that are trusted and representative of the true population as a whole, community members from all sectors of society can begin to see the value in contributing to the development of their own community.

B. Accountability

The high levels of maintenance seen among infrastructure projects suggest that the collective community action encouraged during program implementation is directly tied to a community's later actions in holding leaders accountable for the sustainability of those projects. The open implementation process with a high level of community contribution built ownership for these projects as well as strong relationships with government and non-government community leaders. As a result, community members, unwilling to see their investments lapse into disrepair, actively pursue maintenance.

28 Hyder, Najia and Young, Anna. *Georgia Field Study: Understanding the Legacy of Community Mobilization*. Mercy Corps, July 2004. p. 27.

Fifty-seven percent (57%) of communities surveyed demonstrated some evidence of more inclusive and/or transparent decision-making processes following the Mercy Corps program, showing that promoting and mentoring transparent and accountable methods for implementing community activities can clearly impact future actions. Similarly, by engaging government throughout the mobilization process, PCI and CAIP were successful in weakening the barriers between communities and local government. This impact is best seen among CAG members, with 73% reporting greater ease in approaching their local government representatives.

Community development projects should consistently seek to introduce and model transparent and accountable processes with emphasis on supporting, rather than replacing, traditional communication mechanisms.

C. Collective Community Action

The ability of well-conceived and well-implemented community mobilization programs to improve collective action can best be seen in the 35 of 51 communities (69%) who had already engaged in new community projects or repairs in the first seven months of 2007. There has also been a significant increase in outreach to secure external funding for community activities.

Sustained collective community action is built on the positive experiences of past achievements and is strongly influenced by leaders with developed mobilization skills, strong motivation and commitment to their communities and widespread respect among the people they serve. Community development programs should continue to target these community change agents to give them the tools and experiences they need to mobilize others for collective action that serves the development of their communities.



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Similarly, when donors and implementers invest time and resources to ensure positive early experiences of communities in problem-solving and project implementation, participants gain the confidence they need to continue addressing their own problems and priorities when external agencies are no longer present.

IX. CONCLUSION

At the start of this study, Mercy Corps had not worked in most of the communities to be surveyed for one to three years, and did not know what had become of communities and projects since closeout. Organizers of the study were impressed with the degree to which communities were continuing to adopt program methodologies and take ownership for the care of their assets and responsibility for their concerns. At the same time, the study team clearly identified factors that influence sustainability, through both positive examples and non-sustained projects and practices. These factors are articulated as recommendations throughout the body of this document.

The results of this study confirm the design hypothesis: that a carefully managed process of community mobilization can both increase the sustainability of community development investments and contribute to shifting outlooks and behaviors of communities to be more open and self-sufficient in decision-making and problem-solving.

When programs work collaboratively with well-intentioned but under-resourced local government representatives, prospects for sustainability become greater. To increase sustainability, development programs must seek out committed government representatives and invest in their capacity alongside informal community leaders, building an understanding of transparent, accountable and participative processes for engaging communities in their own development.

Additionally, programs should reach out to youth to help expand their opportunities for income generation and foster tolerance and community commitment. Modeling open processes of community mobilization and instilling associated skills within this younger generation will help to shape the leaders and communities of the future.

This study reaffirms Mercy Corps' belief that by investing in mobilization methodologies, program impact can be extended beyond the lifespan of individual projects. This study demonstrates the potential for sustainability through the development of communities and community leaders, and it identifies areas where further investment can contribute to greater impact.

It is Mercy Corps' hope that this study will serve to open dialogue and engagement with donors and peer implementing agencies to refine and incorporate community development methodologies into future program designs based on analysis of experience and impact.

X. ACRONYMS AND DEFINITIONS

<i>Aiyl</i>	Village
<i>Aiyl okmotus</i>	Local government divisions in Kyrgyzstan responsible usually for a small cluster of villages
CAG	Community Action Group
CAIP	Community Action Investment Program
CIG	Community Initiative Group
CRDA	Community Revitalization through Democratic Action Program (Serbia)
E-GCMI	East Georgia Community Mobilization Initiative
<i>Hashar</i>	Community work days
<i>Jamoats</i>	Local government divisions in Tajikistan usually responsible for a small cluster of villages
<i>Mahalla</i>	Street or neighborhood division within Tajikistan's communities
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PCI	Peaceful Communities Initiative
<i>Raion</i>	District
<i>Rais</i>	Government Chairperson
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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ANNEX 1: Communities Visited for the Field Study Research

#	PROGRAM	COMMUNITY NAME	OBLAST (REGION)	RAION (DISTRICT)	COUNTRY	POPULATION
1	CAIP	Ak Sai	Batken	Ak Sai	Kyrgyzstan	5104
2	CAIP	Kadamjai	Batken	Kadamjai	Kyrgyzstan	3200
3	CAIP	Mashzavod (Kyzyl Kia Town)	Batken	Batken	Kyrgyzstan	2900
4	CAIP	Beshtemir	Khatlon	Qabodiyon	Tajikistan	4420
5	CAIP	Birlyash	Khatlon	Shaartuz	Tajikistan	4560
6	CAIP	Gidrostoitel	Khatlon	Shaartuz	Tajikistan	2444
7	CAIP	Kamarob	Khatlon	Qabodiyon	Tajikistan	3860
8	CAIP	Komsomol	Khatlon	Beshkent	Tajikistan	3399
9	CAIP	Shaartuz	Khatlon	Shaartuz	Tajikistan	8348
10	CAIP	Vatan	Khatlon	Shaartuz	Tajikistan	2082
11	CAIP	Dombrachi	Region of Republican Subordination (RRS) / Rasht	Jirgital	Tajikistan	2135
12	CAIP	Garm1	RRS / Rasht	Rasht	Tajikistan	2015
13	CAIP	Humdon	RRS / Rasht	Rasht	Tajikistan	1760
14	CAIP	Jailgan	RRS / Rasht	Jirgital	Tajikistan	1655
15	CAIP	Kabutiyon	RRS / Rasht	Nurobod	Tajikistan	1546
16	CAIP	Khilmony	RRS / Rasht	Rasht	Tajikistan	1200
17	CAIP	Khoit	RRS / Rasht	Rasht	Tajikistan	3500
18	CAIP	Kichigizi	RRS / Rasht	Tojikobod	Tajikistan	1522
19	CAIP	Kochon (Bedak)	RRS / Rasht	Rasht	Tajikistan	2689
20	CAIP	Sari-Kenja	RRS / Rasht	Jurgital	Tajikistan	1400
21	CAIP	Shule	RRS / Rasht	Rasht	Tajikistan	1250
22	CAIP	Tarbulok	RRS / Rasht	Tojikobod	Tajikistan	1298
23	CAIP	Tegermi	RRS / Rasht	Nurobod	Tajikistan	1997
24	CAIP	Yaldamich	RRS / Rasht	Rasht	Tajikistan	3010
25	PCI	Aktash	Osh	Kara Su	Kyrgyzstan	3850
26	PCI	Boz Adyr	Batken	Batken	Kyrgyzstan	1890
27	PCI	Dostuk	Batken	Batken	Kyrgyzstan	450
28	PCI	Jangi Abad	Osh	Aravan	Kyrgyzstan	4200
29	PCI	Jar Kyshtak	Osh	Aravan	Kyrgyzstan	1800
30	PCI	Jeke-Miste	Osh	Batken	Kyrgyzstan	2313
31	PCI	Kara-Tokoy	Batken	Kadamjai	Kyrgyzstan	822
32	PCI	Kaytpas	Batken	Batken	Kyrgyzstan	1600
33	PCI	Min-Oruk-Min-Bulak	Batken	Aksu	Kyrgyzstan	430
34	PCI	Uluk	Jalalabad	Isfara	Tajikistan	1337
35	PCI	Chorbog-Karobog	Sugd	Isfara	Tajikistan	300
36	PCI	Guliston	Sugd	Asht	Tajikistan	1849
37	PCI	Jarbulok-Kalam	Sugd	Babojon-Gafurov	Tajikistan	1242
38	PCI	Kalacha	Sugd	Isfara	Tajikistan	6057
39	PCI	Kim	Sugd	Asht	Tajikistan	1700
40	PCI	Okjar-Tajikokjar	Sugd	Asht	Tajikistan	1512
41	PCI	Okjar-Uzbekokjar	Sugd	Babojon-Gafurov	Tajikistan	1850
42	PCI	Pahtaabad	Sugd	Asht	Tajikistan	817
43	PCI	Punyuk-Navbunyod	Sugd	Penjikent (Zarafshan Valley)	Tajikistan	830
44	PCI	Changal	Sugd	Penjikent (Zarafshan Valley)	Tajikistan	715
45	PCI	Garibak	Sugd	Penjikent (Zarafshan Valley)	Tajikistan	2351
46	PCI	Havzak	Sugd	Penjikent (Zarafshan Valley)	Tajikistan	1200
47	PCI	Katta-Kishlok	Sugd	Penjikent (Zarafshan Valley)	Tajikistan	1761
48	PCI	Koshona	Sugd	Penjikent (Zarafshan Valley)	Tajikistan	611
49	PCI	Kuloli	Sugd	Penjikent (Zarafshan Valley)	Tajikistan	1478
50	PCI	Veshist	Sugd	Penjikent (Zarafshan Valley)	Tajikistan	1145

ANNEX 2: Sample Questionnaire for Community Action Group Members

Note: The questionnaires were differentiated slightly according to stakeholder group (community member, community action group, youth, government). The following questionnaire was the one used with community action group leaders. To see other questionnaires please contact Mercy Corps.

INTRODUCTION

Good morning / afternoon. I am working for Mercy Corps. We are trying to understand the usefulness of the CAIP PCI program that worked in your village between Summer 2002 and Spring/Summer 2005. We are interested in understanding what has happened since we left, what has continued and what you think worked and did not work about the program. This is important to us in understanding how we can be more successful when we work in other parts of the world. We would like to ask you questions and note your responses if that is OK. The questions will take approximately 60 minutes to complete. Are you able to participate in this today?

[If there respondent says they are NOT able to participate today, thank them for their time and proceed to the next person. If they are willing to participate, thank them, complete items number 001 to 009 and then begin the survey with Question 101.]

Interviewer Identification Number: (refer table below)	001 _____ (interviewer lead)	002 _____ (translator / assist)																				
003 Date:	____ / ____ / ____ Day Month Year																					
004 Region:	<input type="checkbox"/> (01) Southern Khatlon, Taj <input type="checkbox"/> (02) Rasht Valley, Taj <input type="checkbox"/> (03) Northern Sugd, Taj <input type="checkbox"/> (04) Zarafshan Valley, Sugd, Taj	<input type="checkbox"/> (05) Batken, Kyrg <input type="checkbox"/> (06) Osh, Kyrg <input type="checkbox"/> (07) Jalalabad, Kyrg																				
005 District:	_____																					
006 Jamoat / Ayil Okmotu:	_____																					
007 Village:	_____																					
008 Date MC left this village:	____ / ____ Month Year																					
009 Program:	<input type="checkbox"/> (01) CAIP [therefore CAG]	<input type="checkbox"/> (02) PCI [therefore CIG]																				
<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="4">Interviewer Identification Number</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>01</td> <td>Brandy</td> <td>05</td> <td>Najmiddin</td> </tr> <tr> <td>02</td> <td>Zaro</td> <td>06</td> <td>Sabzali</td> </tr> <tr> <td>03</td> <td>Matluba</td> <td>07</td> <td>Sandy</td> </tr> <tr> <td>04</td> <td>Nadira</td> <td>08</td> <td>Tahmina</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>			Interviewer Identification Number				01	Brandy	05	Najmiddin	02	Zaro	06	Sabzali	03	Matluba	07	Sandy	04	Nadira	08	Tahmina
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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

101 Name of Interviewee _____

102 Gender (01) Male (02) Female

103 How old are you?
 (01) 0 to 14 years old (04) 26 to 40 years old
 (02) 15 to 18 years old (05) 41 to 60 years old
 (03) 19 to 25 years old (06) 61 years or older

104 What is your native language?
 (01) Tajik (04) Turkish
 (02) Kyrgyz (05) Other _____
 (03) Uzbek

105 What is your current occupation?
 (01) Farmer (06) Housewife
 (02) Teacher (07) Student
 (03) Doctor (08) Businessman (entrepreneur)
 (04) Government Official (09) Unemployed
 (05) Tradesman (technician) (10) Other _____

106 What was your position on the CAG / CIG committee?
 (01) Chairman (03) Member of Committee
 (02) Deputy Chairman (04) Other _____

COMMUNITY GROUP EFFECTIVENESS

201 When was the last time the CAG/ CIG met together?
 (01) Several days ago (04) Since 1 January 2007
 (02) Several weeks ago (05) Since MC left
 (03) Last month (06) Has not met since MC left

202 Are you still an active member of the CAG/CIG?
 (01) Yes [go to Q 204] (02) No [go to Q 203]

203 If No, why not?

204 How often has the CAG/CIG been meeting since the MC program closed?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> (01) Weekly | <input type="checkbox"/> (04) Once a year |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (02) Monthly | <input type="checkbox"/> (05) Rarely |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (03) Several times a year | <input type="checkbox"/> (06) Other _____ |

205 How many people participated in your last CAG/CIG meeting?

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> (01) 0 to 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> (03) 6 to 10 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (02) 3 to 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> (04) More than 10 |

Please compare the last group meeting with the original Committee. How many of these type of people were...

...in last group meeting?

- 206 ___ # of women / girls
- 207 ___ # age 25 years or younger
- 208 ___ # of original members from the time of the MC program
- 209 ___ # of new members since the MC program finished

210 What was discussed at the last meeting?

211 How are CAG/CIG decisions communicated to the wider community?

- | |
|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> (01) Community meetings are held |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (02) The Transparency Board is used |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (03) Word of mouth after CAG/CIG meeting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (04) Other |

212 If CAG/CIG is no longer active, why not?

213 Are there things that you learned during the program that you continue to use? Please give examples.

OTHER COMMUNITY GROUPS

301 **Are there other active committees or groups in the community?**

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> (01) No other groups | <input type="checkbox"/> (03) Mahalla committee & other groups |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (02) Mahalla committee only
<i>[if (01) go to Q 314]</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> (04) other groups but no Mahalla committee
<i>[if (02), (03) or (04) go to Q 302]</i> |

302 **What do these groups do?**

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> (01) Organise the community | <input type="checkbox"/> (06) Come up with ideas to solve problems |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (02) Seek funds from external orgs | <input type="checkbox"/> (07) Identify community priorities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (03) Lobby local government | <input type="checkbox"/> (05) Communicate messages for government |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (04) Talk to local gov for community | <input type="checkbox"/> (08) Other _____ |

303 **How were they formed?**

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> (01) Started up on their own | <input type="checkbox"/> (05) Previous members of CAG/CIG |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (02) Had assistance from an NGO | <input type="checkbox"/> (06) Previous members of another group |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (03) Had assistance from local gov | <input type="checkbox"/> (07) Other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (04) It is a local gov / Mahalla committee | _____ |

304 **In your opinion, were any of these committees / groups influenced by the community's experience with Mercy Corps? If so, how?**

305 **Are you an active member of any of these committees / groups?**

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> (01) Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> (04) No <i>[skip to Q 314]</i> |
|-----------------------------------|---|

What committee / group? *[List groups below]*

306 _____	<input type="checkbox"/>
307 _____	<input type="checkbox"/>
308 _____	<input type="checkbox"/>

309 **How often does the committee / group meet?**

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> (01) Weekly | <input type="checkbox"/> (04) Once a year |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (02) Monthly | <input type="checkbox"/> (05) Rarely |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (03) Several times a year | <input type="checkbox"/> (06) Other _____ |

310 How many people participated in the last committee / group meeting?

- | | | | |
|-------------------------------|--------|-------------------------------|--------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> (01) | 0 to 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> (03) | 6 to 10 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (02) | 3 to 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> (04) | More than 10 |

How many of these type of people were in last committee / group meeting?

311 _____ # of women / girls

312 _____ # age 25 years or younger

313 What was discussed at the last committee / group meeting?

314 We are interested to know more about any changes in the way things are done now, compared to the time before MC worked with your community. Are there any differences in the way community issues and priorities are identified and solutions are found?

STATUS OF PAST PROJECTS / ACTIVITIES

Use separate sheet with pre-printed Table 401 and Question 402

[Proceed to table, Q 401 with CAG/CIG committee chair only. If no committee chair available, ask another CAG/CIG member. Follow instructions on separate sheet carefully]

CURRENT ACTIVITIES

501 Have their been any collective community activities this year to address needs or solve problems (since 1 January 2007)?

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|--|---------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> (01) | Held community meetings / discussions | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (02) | Held meetings with neighbouring communities | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (03) | This community worked collectively on projects/ activities | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (04) | Hashar (community workdays) | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (05) | Held social events (celebrations, national holidays etc) | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (06) | No activities have been held or problems solved | <i>[if (16), skip to Q 507]</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (07) | Other | |

502 **Whose idea was it to implement the activities?**

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|---|---|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | (01) created by community initiative | } | [if (01), (02) or (03) move to Q 503] |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | (02) CAG/CIG | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | (03) Mahalla committee | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | (04) Initiative of one or two individuals | } | [if (03), (04), (05) move to Q 507] |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | (05) response to external non-governmental initiative | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | (06) response to external governmental initiative | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | (07) don't know | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | (08) other | | [if (08), move to Q 507] |
-
-

503 **On average, how many people participated in each of the activities ? (not including social events)**

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | (01) 0 to 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> | (05) 250 to 1000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | (02) 6 to 50 | <input type="checkbox"/> | (06) over 1000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | (03) 21 to 100 | <input type="checkbox"/> | (07) most of community |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | (04) 101 to 250 | | |

504 **What was the role of local government, if any?**

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|---|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | (01) provided all funding | <input type="checkbox"/> | (05) provided materials |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | (02) provided some funding | <input type="checkbox"/> | (06) they didn't play role in any activit |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | (03) provided advice | <input type="checkbox"/> | (07) other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | (04) provided technical assistance/training | | _____ |

505 **Is local government more or less involved in community actions now compared with before CAIP/ PCI?**

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | (01) more involved | <input type="checkbox"/> | (03) about the same |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | (02) less involved | | |

506 **Which community members benefit most from these activities?**

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | (01) CAG / CIG | <input type="checkbox"/> | (06) Children (under 15) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | (02) Youth | <input type="checkbox"/> | (07) People more than 50 years old |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | (03) Women | <input type="checkbox"/> | (08) Disabled |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | (04) 3 or fewer households / families | <input type="checkbox"/> | (09) Other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | (05) The general community | | _____ |

507 **In 2007, have youth in the community (aged 15 to 25) organized any activities for the community, using their own initiative? (Not instructed by Mahalla or others)**

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | (01) Yes [give examples below] | <input type="checkbox"/> | (02) No [skip to Q 510] |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|

508 **If yes, what kinds of activities did youth were organized?**

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

509 **Were these types of activities organized by youth prior to the MC project?**

- (01) Yes - all of them
- (02) Yes - some of them
- (03) No - none of them

List 'new' activities below:

[Now we have a few questions to compare how things are done now versus when MC was here versus before MC's program.]

Has the community sought resources / assistance from outside organizations other than MC in order to solve community problems or run activities ?

510 In 2007?

- (01) Yes
- (02) No

[if no, skip to Q 516]

511 Before MC's program?

- (01) Yes
- (02) No

[if no, skip to Q 516]

From whom did the community seek resources / assistance?

512 In 2007?

- (01) Local NGO
- (02) Government
- (03) International NGO

- (04) UN / WB type
- (05) Business
- (06) Other

513 **In 2007, was the community successful in securing these resources / assistance?**

- (01) Yes, all
- (02) Yes, most
- (03) Yes, some

- (04) No, none
- (05) Other

514 **How often did government contribute these resources in 2007?**

- (01) Contributed once in 2007
- (02) Contributed 2-3 times
- (03) Contributed 4-5 times

- (04) Contributed more than 5 times
- (05) Never
- (06) Other _____

515 **What kind of resources have community members themselves contributed to community activities?**

- (01) Labour
- (02) Material

- (03) Money
- (04) None *[skip to 524]*
- (05) Other _____

ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

601 **How often is there communication between the district level government and community members in Jamoat communities?**

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> (01) Never | <input type="checkbox"/> (04) Regularly - monthly |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (02) Only when we need to | <input type="checkbox"/> (05) Regularly - weekly |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (03) Regularly - every 6 months | <input type="checkbox"/> (06) Daily |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> (07) Other _____ |

602 **How often is there communication between the local Jamoat leader and community members in Jamoat communities?**

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> (01) Never | <input type="checkbox"/> (04) Regularly - monthly |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (02) Only when we need to | <input type="checkbox"/> (05) Regularly - weekly |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (03) Regularly - every 6 months | <input type="checkbox"/> (06) Daily |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> (07) Other _____ |

603 **How easy is it for you to approach local government?**

- | |
|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> (01) Easier now than <u>before</u> MC program |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (02) About the same |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (03) Less easy now compared with <u>before</u> the MC program |

604 **How are local district and jamoat government decisions communicated to the wider community?**

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> (01) in writing to community leader | <input type="checkbox"/> (05) through the media |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (02) through formal meetings | <input type="checkbox"/> (06) they are not communicated |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (03) through informal meetings | <input type="checkbox"/> (07) Other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (04) through the Mahalla committee | |

605 **Have you seen any change in the way local (district or jamoat) government and communities interact compared with how it was before the MC program?**

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> (01) Yes <i>[answer below]</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> (02) No <i>[skip to Q 607]</i> |
|---|---|

606 **If yes, can you explain how things have changed? Perhaps offer some examples?**

607 **Have attitudes towards the local government changed among community members within the past 5 years?**

- | |
|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> (01) Yes, change started more than 5 years ago |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (02) Yes, change started between 2 and 5 years ago |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (03) Yes, change started within the last 2 years |

608 If yes, can you describe how or offer some examples?

DIFFERENCES OF OPINION

How are differences of opinion resolved?

701 Within the community?

- (01) community discussion
- (02) community voting
- (03) CAG/CIG decide
- (04) Mahalla committee decides

- (05) neutral party mediates
- (06) issues left unresolved
- (07) other

702 Between neighbouring communities?

- (01) communities discuss separately
- (02) communities discuss together
- (03) communities vote
- (04) CAG/CIG or Mahalla committee decides

- (05) government mediates
- (06) government decides
- (07) issues left unresolved
- (08) other

703 Within the CAG/CIG (if exists)?

- (01) CAG/CIG comes to mutual agreement
- (02) CAG/CIG chair decides

- (03) issues left unresolved
- (04) other

Please give the examples (if any)

SKILLS & BEHAVIOURS

801 We would like to know what effect the community experienced as a result of working with MC. Positive or negative. Can you offer some examples? It could be physical (infrastructure project) or non-physical (skills, ideas, attitudes).

802 Is there anything else you'd like to tell us relating to the time during CAIP/PCI and since it closed?

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Thank you for your time today. Your participation in our work today is very helpful. At this stage we do not have additional funds to continue the CAIP / PCI program but we will take this information away and use it to help us learn from the work we did with your community and others. If the opportunity should arise, we look forward to working with you again in the future. In the meantime, thank you again for your time today.

TABLE 401 completed	<input type="checkbox"/> YES !!!!	<input type="checkbox"/> No > then please fill it in!
---------------------	-----------------------------------	---

Question 402 completed	<input type="checkbox"/> YES !!!!	<input type="checkbox"/> No > then please fill it in!
------------------------	-----------------------------------	---

ANNEX 3: Summary of Activities Conducted Under PCI and CAIP

Peaceful Communities Initiative (PCI)

Beginning in 2001 and extending through September of 2006, PCI directly implemented community mobilization and conflict mitigation activities in 73 primary communities in three countries. In its first three years, PCI targeted 38 communities in the Ferghana Valley region of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. With an extension of the program beginning in 2004, PCI expanded to 35 new communities, including the addition of communities in the Penjikent Raion of Zarafshan Valley, Tajikistan.

PCI utilized a cluster approach for selecting and working with communities. The communities and clusters were selected based on a history of or potential for conflict as well as for their level of poverty, isolation and relative under-development. Consisting of at least three target communities each, clusters were most often interdependent on shared or even cross-border infrastructure, resources, land or public buildings and services. Mercy Corps worked with each of the communities within the clusters to develop their intra-community capacities as well as to facilitate improved relations between the communities through close collaboration on the identification, planning and implementation of joint social and infrastructure projects.

During the initial three years, known as PCI I, many of the clusters were cross-border clusters focused on alleviating tensions that emerged with the recent imposition of international borders. However, the internal political situations in both Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan changed things significantly, bringing negative attitudes on the part of governments for cross-border movement and exchanges. After the revolution in Kyrgyzstan in March of 2005, Uzbekistan in particular became extremely concerned about the potential for instability to spread. This concern was compounded following the events of Andijan in May of the same year and the resulting flow of refugees into Kyrgyzstan. As a result, borders became a very sensitive issue for the remaining period of PCI's implementation. At the same time, the relationships that became the most tense were no longer between neighboring communities, but even more between communities and government. PCI adapted by placing greater emphasis on government-community accountability and a focus on village clusters that did not necessarily span across international borders but that were instead affected by other issues, such as resource allocations and ethnic differences.



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From initiation of the program, PCI recognized that tensions exist between communities and the local government representatives that serve them. The program made a concerted effort to engage government in all aspects of the mobilization and peace building process. Oblast, raion, rural board and village representatives took part in tenders, provided material and financial contributions to projects, lobbied higher levels of government for contributions and were regular participants in meetings and trainings. If not members of a CAG themselves, government officials were actively engaged with CAG members, assisting with the design and monitoring of projects and taking part in many communities' decision-making processes.

Engagement of youth in the program was a primary focal point of PCI, as the design assumed that addressing sources of tension is only possible through the inclusion of youth in the community decision-making process, in order to foster a sense of identity with the community and introduce



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healthy lifestyle alternatives to conflicts. A variety of interventions specifically targeted youth, though not all were present in every PCI community. These included: international and regional youth summer camps, social and skill-building projects, media projects, sports events, vocational trainings and social theater.

Local NGO partners were actively utilized in the implementation of PCI. In the initial three years of the program, individuals from the partner organizations worked side-by-side with Mercy Corps staff on field teams that engaged in every aspect of the community work. This structure was intended to maximize skills development that would then be transferred back to the wider organizations. In reality, however, the teams worked almost exclusively with PCI and had little contact with their host organizations. Therefore, in the final two years of PCI, the approach was altered to allow partner NGOs to design, apply for and implement independent projects for greater transfer of

improved skills and experience throughout the partner organizations, particularly for proposal writing, budget development, financial and program reporting.

PCI reported many impressive achievements from more than five years of implementation. Among some of the most noteworthy are:

- 437 cultural and/or skill-building projects engaged at least two ethnic groups.
- 137 program-funded community infrastructure projects were implemented.
- 36 infrastructure projects completed for multi-ethnic or multi-community use.
- 94 additional infrastructure projects implemented without donor funding.
- 43 users' groups established, receiving a total of 71 trainings in management, organizational structure, fee collection and maintenance of infrastructure projects.
- Community contribution to infrastructure projects averaged 48% of the total cost.
- 85% of the infrastructure projects benefited from government contributions.
- 64 new businesses were created as a result of USAID-funded infrastructure projects.
- 140 multi-ethnic youth projects were implemented.
- Partner local NGOs received 19 grants from outside donors.

The Community Action Investment Program (CAIP)

The goal of this far-reaching initiative was to “help prevent conflicts and promote broad based citizen dialogue and participation in target areas of Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan; resulting in improved standards of living, more active and engaged citizens and more open, accountable local government”. CAIP targeted communities in Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, but as greater restrictions were repeatedly placed on the organization in Turkmenistan by local authorities, Mercy Corps was forced to withdraw in the spring of 2003. Following termination of the program in Turkmenistan, Mercy Corps added communities in Kyrgyzstan to the program following the first year of CAIP implementation. The program lasted from May of 2002 through June of 2005, with target communities in Kyrgyzstan receiving support for just two of the program’s three years.

In total, CAIP reached 65 core communities²⁹ and 216 cluster communities. CAGs in each community were structured to be representative of the larger community and intentionally included all ethnic groups, women and youth. Mercy Corps implemented CAIP in 3 areas: the Ferghana Valley (Uzbekistan since the start of the program and Kyrgyzstan, added in June 2003), and the Rasht Valley and Khatlon regions of Tajikistan.

The projects undertaken during CAIP included community-prioritized infrastructure projects, social events and new economic opportunities. These projects were designed to reduce sources of inter- and intra-community tensions by reducing competition over limited resources, providing outlets for networking and connecting, building individual potential, and increasing business development in the region.

Youth were targeted with skill-building activities intended to help them be more employable. The economic development component of CAIP set up master-apprenticeship programs for youth in carpentry, plumbing and electrical skills. Mentoring programs were set up for tailoring and baking, which provided mentors with essential equipment in exchange for mentoring others in their trade. Youth were also included on CAGs and were included in health education activities, leadership trainings and interactive trainings, such as anger management, during sporting competitions especially organized for them.

Similar to PCI, the CAIP program recognized that the lack of social services in communities was greatly contributing to tensions within communities, between communities and between communities and local government. Frequent complaints to authorities went unanswered as local government was usually under-resourced to handle social service and infrastructure problems in the communities. CAIP actively sought to engage government officials in the community mobilization and project implementation process. Local officials often participated on CAGs or collaborated closely with them to monitor and support project identification and implementation. Nearly 90% of CAGs had a government official as a member, often the village leader or a technical department representative. The program taught both government and community members to achieve results through a more collaborative, partnership-based approach to problem-solving and government officials took part in the many trainings offered to CAG members and others in the communities. Local government was also encouraged to contribute to helping communities meet their contribution shares, which would contribute to more positive perceptions of the government’s concern for communities.



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29 This study sampled only core communities of CAIP, where the program was most active.

Achievements

- Completed 1,203 community projects, including 423 infrastructure projects.
- Community contribution to infrastructure projects averaged 39% of the total cost.
- 23% of community contributions were from government sources.
- 402 formal training sessions offered to CAGs.
- Created 6,126 short-term jobs and 2,376 long-term jobs.
- CAIP expanded into 216 cluster communities, with 70 of these implementing CAIP-funded projects.
- 46,025 people trained in a variety of topics by Mercy Corps or volunteer trainers who received their training from CAIP.
- 1,297 clients received micro-loans.

“People believe in their own power now.”

– Naimov Khujamhammad, Community Leader, Koshona, Tajikistan

This study affirms the hypothesis that by investing in mobilization methodologies, program impact can be extended beyond the lifespan of individual projects.

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