

Community Cooperation

Spreads in Central Asia

ACDI/VOCA's Community Action Investment Program (CAIP), launched in 2002 under a cooperative agreement with USAID, is a multifaceted initiative designed to promote cooperation and participation in community goals and activities in the southern regions of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. Like similar ACDI/VOCA community development projects in Serbia, Bolivia and Iraq, CAIP depends on citizen involvement in its operations. CAIP rapidly mobilizes and leverages local resources and donor funding for community infrastructure projects—water supply, education or health care, for instance—in order to create a new paradigm for community problem-solving and the capacity for joint community action.

The CAIP program is unique in that it addresses community tensions before they reach a crisis point by facilitating a culture of participation, creative cooperation and productive ways of working together that incorporates all groups in the community, including youth, women, religious leaders and members of all ethnic groups in disadvantaged and conflict-prone areas. Operating under the localized name “Bereke”, meaning ‘prosperity’ in Kazakh, and “Kosh Araket”, meaning

‘joint effort’ in Kyrgyz, CAIP works with 51 partner-communities in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan and has co-implemented 109 community-driven projects. As of March 2004, CAIP has contributed more than \$1.4 million to community projects that have directly benefited 271,674 residents and created 2,346 short-term and 2,581 long-term jobs. To further assist its partner



Residents work together on a strategic plan for their community.

communities, CAIP provides or facilitates the provision of training activities and consultancies to enhance the technical skills and knowledge base of community members.

Spirit of Community Development Spreads

Just one of CAIP's many success stories, the neighboring cities of Saule and Gulisman in southern Kazakhstan demonstrate not only the effectiveness of the CAIP program, but how CAIP's methodology has caught on. This area is prone to conflict due to the fact due to pressures of resettlement of diverse refugee groups, resulting in tension and sometimes overt conflict over resources. During the construction of a potable water supply system project co-funded by CAIP in Saule to alleviate some of these pressures, the residents of the nearby Gulisman

community observed the program and wanted to become involved. They applied to collaborate with CAIP and build the same type of potable water supply system in their municipality. However, since Gulisman is not within CAIP's jurisdiction, it was not eligible for project funding. Despite the geographical limitations, however, CAIP community mobilization officers advised and consulted the community on how to mobilize, raise funds and prepare the necessary technical documents so that Gulisman would be able to implement the water supply project and likewise enjoy the benefits of a clean and accessible water supply.

After learning about community mobilization techniques from CAIP staff, community leaders in Gulisman collected approximately \$100 per family, met with the local government officials to request assistance, applied to the local water management company, and hired vendors to implement their community water project, which took almost three months. Despite the steep cost, higher than it would have been if they had been able to work with CAIP, the 204 residents of Gulisman are very happy to have potable water in their houses.

After the completion of the CAIP co-funded project, not only Saule but also Gulisman has potable water access for all residents. While the potable water project has improved the lives of the two communities, more importantly, it has improved their communal relations and strengthened their self-confidence to collectively address the concerns of the community. Now, the residents of the two municipalities are no longer envious of each other, but are active and eager to improve their lives through coordinated efforts.

For more information on the Community Action Investment Program, please visit www.acdivoca-caip.kz.

