Mountain Societies Research Institute:

Programmes, Activities and Outputs

2013
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The University of Central Asia’s Mountain Societies Research Institute (MSRI) is a university-wide, interdisciplinary research institute dedicated to addressing the challenges and opportunities within Central Asian mountain communities and environments. MSRI’s goal is to support and enhance the resilience and quality of life of mountain societies through the generation and application of sound research. MSRI has five objectives: To generate new knowledge on mountain societies from academically sound research; To enhance Central Asian capacity to conduct sound research relevant to mountain societies; To serve as a knowledge hub for scholars, development practitioners and decision-makers; To inform policy and practice through sound research; and To contribute to the development of UCA academic programmes relevant to mountain societies. MSRI, together with its partners, actively works to transfer knowledge to policy and practice aimed at improving the quality of life for people of the mountain areas in Central Asia. MSRI’s Background Paper Series strategically identifies research priorities and pathways to application for MSRI priority areas, including pastoralism and farming, sustainable land management and mountain tourism. Other MSRI resources include an online interactive Knowledge Hub and the Central Asia and Afghanistan Research Fund. For more information about MSRI, please visit: http://msri.ucentralasia.org
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In the first half of 2013, the Mountain Societies Research Centre (MSRC) at the University of Central Asia (UCA) officially became an Institute within UCA’s Graduate School of Development. MSRC’s name was changed to the Mountain Societies Research Institute (MSRI) to reflect its expanded role. This consolidation within the University was further reflected by MSRI’s growth and activities during the year in research and project development and in infrastructure and capacity building activities aimed at strengthening research facilities at UCA.

In 2013, MSRI increased its capacity considerably, expanding its team with six new research fellows and two programme administrators. 2013 also saw the launch of several new projects at MSRI. Research was completed on the second paper in MSRI’s Background Paper series on sustainable land management, and research began on the third paper, on mountain tourism and sustainability. Other research was conducted in areas ranging from small scale farming systems to agroforestry to climate change adaptation.

Our mobile digital library eBilim began serving 10 villages in rural Kyrgyzstan. MSRI’s Central Asia and Afghanistan Research Fellowship (CAARF) was initiated and will provide both financial grants and technical support to scholars from Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Afghanistan conducting research on mountain societies in the region.

MSRI’s hosting of the Mountain Partnership Central Asian Hub continued, a partnership that is strengthened by joint activities and shared priorities. New partnerships were launched with the University of British Columbia and the University of Alberta.

This report describes these and other activities, as well as the Institute’s growing team, outputs and partnerships in 2013. As MSRI enters its fourth year, we look forward to continuing to generate research knowledge and skills in Central Asia and to building our own capacity as a vital institute of the University of Central Asia.

Dr Horst Weyerhaeuser
Director
Activities and Projects
MSRI Research Reviews and Background Paper Series

In 2013, MSRI published the second paper in its Background Paper Series and initiated two more. The background papers are based on an extensive review of existing literature and a structured assessment of both knowledge and gaps in priority areas, which inform MSRI’s emerging applied research agenda. They also form the basis of other products, including proposals to donors, briefs, presentations and articles in peer-reviewed journals.

Background Paper 2: Sustainable Land Management

An MSRI team comprised of Jyldyz Shigaeva, Bettina Wolfgramm and Chad Dear completed the second MSRI Background Paper, Sustainable Land Management (SLM) in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan: A Research Review. The paper includes an analysis of empirical Russian and English-language literature to assess the state of knowledge, identify critical gaps in knowledge and make recommendations for applied research on sustainable land management. The paper and a two-page brief were finalised and posted in Russian and English on the MSRI website and printed in January 2014. A synthesis of the paper was published in the international peer-reviewed journal Mountain Research and Development. The paper and an eight-page brief will be launched at a seminar in early 2014, and a reference book on SLM, incorporating Central Asian World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Techniques (WOCAT) case studies, is planned.

Background Paper 3. Mountain Tourism and Sustainability

An MSRI team comprised of Qobiljon Shokirov, Aisulu Abdykadyrova and Chad Dear began research on a background paper on Mountain Tourism and Sustainability in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The paper will include an analysis of empirical Russian and English-language literature to assess the state of knowledge, identify critical gaps in knowledge and make recommendations for applied research on sustainable tourism. Qobiljon Shokirov presented the results at the International Economic Forum Tajikistan-2013 in Khorog on 30-31 August 2013. A case study, Community-based Tourism in the Eastern Pamir, Tajikistan, was submitted for inclusion in University of Geneva’s global brochure on sustainable mountain tourism (forthcoming, 2014).

Background Paper 4. Agroforestry Potential for Central Asia

MSRI is assessing the level of scientific data on agroforestry, practical techniques farmers use to identify knowledge gaps, and opportunities and constraints for agroforestry in Central Asia under its agroforestry project undertaken with the United States Forest Service. A background paper is being developed to document this assessment and provide recommendations to strengthen agroforestry practices in the region. A literature review has been conducted, as well as field trips to assess the state of agroforestry practices in the region. Meetings with partners and organisations working in agroforestry or related areas were conducted to assess regional institutional capacity for development and research. A May 2104 workshop with partners will provide further data and insight for the paper. The background paper will also be developed into a guidebook aiming to improve agroforestry practices in Central Asia.
Mobile Digital Library, e-Bilim

In June 2013, MSRI launched its mobile digital library e-Bilim, in partnership with the Mountain Societies Development Support Programme Kyrgyz Republic (MSDSP KG) and with financial support from GIZ. E-Bilim is a one-year pilot project designed to bring information resources to communities in remote villages in Naryn Oblast. The library is housed in a new minibus refurbished to transport and facilitate the use of digital and electronic resources. “Bilim” means knowledge in the Kyrgyz language. “e” indicates electronic media. “e-Bilim” brings together locally accessible knowledge and current technology. The vehicle is equipped with laptops and a database of over 2,000 text, audio and video resources in a variety of subjects. It will also serve as a dynamic platform, assessing and responding to the expressed information needs of remote mountain communities.

The e-Bilim pilot project is:

• Increasing access to information and resources by residents of remote mountain areas through an offline database of multiple information resources. Resources are available in text, audio and video formats, for printing and downloading to USB devices, DVDs, cell phones and other devices. e-Bilim also has a set of children’s books, leaflets and information sheets for use while the vehicle is in the village. Public movie screenings will also be offered.

• Creating a tool for quick data generation, monitoring and survey activities for researchers, development organisations and other stakeholders. Library users in hard-to-reach communities can serve as important sources of information for various stakeholders. e-Bilim staff are trained to conduct surveys, monitor activities in the field or simply distribute questionnaires or brochures. Library use will also be monitored to assess information needs and demands in these communities.

• Creating a networking and information platform for mountain communities. e-Bilim is helping mountain communities access relevant institutions, activities, training and resources from various organisations, including universities, schools, government agencies and development organisations.

The vehicle travels to 10 villages in Naryn and Ak-Talaa districts in Naryn Oblast, spending one day every month in each location.

During the pilot phase (June 2013 to August 2014), e-Bilim will be implemented as a feasibility study, testing a series of possibilities for innovative information distribution and collection. Over the course of the year, e-Bilim will be adapted to the changing needs and interests of the communities it serves.
Central Asia and Afghanistan Research Fellowship (CAARF)

The Central Asia and Afghanistan Research Fellowship (CAARF) programme was established under UCA’s Research and Public Policy Initiative (RPPI), a three-year initiative to strengthen analytical and policy making practices in Afghanistan, the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan, while improving the evidence base for sound decision-making.

CAARF is designed to strengthen the capacity of researchers from Afghanistan, Tajikistan and the Kyrgyz Republic to conduct original research focused on learning from and informing sustainable development in mountain areas.

CAARF will create a network of Central Asian and Afghan researchers focusing on mountain societies and provide substantial financial, technical and mentorship support to selected candidates. Research grants of between $5,000 and $20,000 will be awarded to scholars from Afghanistan, Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan investigating the development of mountain societies. Qualifying fellows will advance their research through collaboration with peers and mentors. They will write and publish an academic journal article through a peer-review process and disseminate their findings in a policy-relevant format, with MSRI’s support. Additional awards of mentoring support will also be provided to strengthen proposals for the next round of grants.

In 2013, MSRI received 60 applications. In 2014, fellowships will be awarded. Additionally, an actor-network mapping exercise will be conducted to strategically improve knowledge flows between academics, policy makers and development practitioners and accelerate productive exchanges across functional and organisational boundaries by improving formal and informal communication channels. Initial mapping will locate key teams and individuals, including thought leaders, knowledge brokers and experts, and will identify isolated clusters of researchers and knowledge bottlenecks. The exercise will also help visualise relationships within the network and identify potential links to improve knowledge sharing across institutions and among individuals. The mapping will also increase the visibility of the MSRI Knowledge Hub and MSRI in general.
Assessment and Analysis of Small Scale Farming Systems in the Kyrgyz Republic

In last two decades, agricultural contributions to the gross domestic product of Kyrgyzstan decreased from over 35 percent to under 20 percent. At the same time, 50 percent of the population relies on livestock and crop production. An estimated 200,000 to 345,000 small or medium sized private farms came into existence after independence, and many more families depend on small scale subsistence farming.

Crop and livestock production in rural areas are frequently blamed for environmental degradation. Sustainable development requires a holistic approach, which considers the complex elements influencing interdependent farm, livestock, household and family activities.

The classification of evolving small scale farming systems on the basis of resource use (land, capital and labour) and other variables is necessary in this process. MSRI is adapting and developing a methodology to classify small scale farming systems in mountain regions of Kyrgyzstan. The study will describe prevalent systems and resource use and help guide further research on environmentally sustainable development pathways that may generate or enhance rural livelihoods under harsh conditions.
Assessment of Agroforestry Systems in Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia

In 2013, MSRI began an assessment of agroforestry systems in small holder farms and forests in Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia. Research was conducted on the current state of implementing agroforestry methods in local agricultural systems and mixed forests. MSRI researchers met with representatives of agroforestry, forest management and horticulture projects in Kyrgyzstan to assess existing projects and needs and to identify further contacts in the field. Interviews were conducted with key informants, including researchers focused on agroforestry practices on salinized lands in Uzbekistan.

Based on the research, recommendations are being developed on how to improve agroforestry in Central Asia. A background paper on agroforestry is being developed for feedback at a workshop with regional partners in May 2014.

The project is funded by the United States Forest Service. Partners include the Association of Forest and Land Users, the World Bank, the Rural Development Fund, GIZ and the Food and Agriculture Organisation (in Kyrgyzstan); all of which will serve as future partners of MSRI in developing a regional agroforestry programme.
Documentation of Mountain Societies Development Support Programme (MSDSP) Climate Change Adaptation Programme

In 2013, a team at MSRI consisting of Munavar Zhumanova and Aiganysh Isaeva began documenting the experience of the Aga Khan Foundation/MSDSP Climate Change Adaptation programme. The descriptive and informative report will be based on the archived documents of two completed projects of the CCA Programme, focusing on how these activities contributed to the target outcomes and lessons learned. The report also briefly describes the two currently funded projects. The purpose of the report is to bring together data, information and knowledge generated by the CCA projects into one accessible report and the associated program document archive in order to inform future CCA work within AKF, MSDSP KG, and MSRI.

MSRI will organize the programme data, information and knowledge, and this information will be used to guide further research and programme implementation.

MSRI is deepening its collaboration with MSDSP by identifying and documenting data, information and knowledge needs for implementing partners like AKF/MSDSP and beneficiaries.

Furthermore, together with Laurie Ashley study documentation of CCA project adaptation measures implementation in one field site.
Preparation of Mountain Observing Systems: Presentation and Feedback

In 2013, MSRI began preparing an exposition which will be presented at the Mountain Observatories Global Fair and Workshop in Reno, Nevada, July 2014. Activities include developing the concept for UCA’s Learning Landscape Initiative. Learning Landscapes are the socio-ecological systems within which UCA’s campuses are located. MSRI conducts research and monitoring on these systems in collaboration with local organisations and other stakeholders. The institute will establish demonstration and experimentation sites that future faculty may use for research and place-based experiential education and that community members and organisations may use for their learning purposes. The primary emphasis of research will be on generating and demonstrating how research-generated knowledge is (or is not) used in adaptive decision-making processes at household, community and various government administrative levels.

Participatory Monitoring of Pasture Lands

With support from the United Nations University Land Restoration Programme, Research Fellow Jyldyz Shigaeva explored the challenges and opportunities for establishing a participatory monitoring system of pasture ecosystems in Kyrgyzstan and Iceland. The project involved reviewing existing approaches to participatory monitoring of pasture ecosystems; analysing current pasture monitoring systems in Iceland and Kyrgyzstan; investigating the role, interest, influence and capacity of different stakeholders who could be engaged in participatory monitoring of pasture ecosystems; exploring both hindering and supportive factors for involving land users and communities in participatory monitoring of land restoration; and developing recommendations to improve participatory pasture monitoring in Kyrgyzstan and Iceland.
Hosting, Partnerships and Memberships
Mountain Partnership Central Asia Hub

The Mountain Partnership Central Asia Hub\(^1\) has been hosted at UCA since 2010 and at MSRI since its establishment in 2011. The Hub coordinates activities of Mountain Partnership members in Central Asia, focusing on creating platforms for information exchange between isolated mountain communities and regional knowledge sharing on climate change adaptation. In addition to hosting the Mountain Partnership Hub, MSRI engages in joint initiatives with the Hub and its members.

In 2013, the Hub contributed substantively to the Central Asian section of the United Nations (UN) Secretary-General’s *Report on Sustainable Mountain Development* at the 68th session of the UN General Assembly. The report included contributions by ten Central Asian Mountain Partnership members in Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and the Altai Republic of the Russian Federation, highlighting regional projects contributing to sustainable development in mountain communities. These included the mountain stakeholders group facilitated by the Hub, institutional and policy regulatory initiatives in Tajikistan, the CAMP Alatoo Annual Forum of 2012, trans-boundary and multi-national cooperation initiatives in the Altai mountain ranges, national development policy strategies on green development in Kyrgyzstan, jailoo kindergartens and highland kitchen gardens. Two recent programmes were also featured, including the Pilot Programme for Climate Resilience of Tajikistan and the Food and Agriculture Organisation/Global Environment Facility Sustainable Management of Mountain Forests and Land Resources of the Kyrgyz Republic Under Climate Change Conditions project.

A three-month, four-module online course on Sustainable Mountain Development was launched on International Mountain Day (11 December) for 30 students aged 11 to 15 from seven oblasts of Kyrgyzstan by Mountain Partnership member and regional ecological information portal Eko-Is (http://www.ekois.net/). It was the first distance learning training course adapted to remote mountain conditions and, despite power cuts and other challenges, the innovative format and interactive teaching methods made the programme a great success with participants.

In 2014, MSRI and the Hub will engage in more joint research, with a focus on climate change.

University Partners

In 2013, the foundation was laid for new partnerships with Canadian universities. MSRI will work with University of British Columbia on UCA’s Learning Landscapes Initiative and spatial information systems. With University of Alberta, MSRI will assess the potential for dissemination of resources and knowledge emerging from UCA’s Pamir Archive, an extensive archive of documents and photographs focused on the Pamir region.

Memberships

UCA memberships with the Eurasia Pacific Uninet and the Himalayan University Consortium remain current, as does UCA’s institutional membership with the International Mountain Society.

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\(^1\) The Hub is supported by a Secretariat which acts as a networking and liaison point for members, connecting institutions and activities in sustainable mountain development to ensure greater participation, coherence and impact.
Research Infrastructure and Capacity Building
A key component of MSRI’s activities is building capacity and infrastructure to strengthen mountain research in Central Asia. This includes the development of technical platforms and facilities, and facilitating access by Central Asian researchers to grants and technical support.

**MSRI Knowledge Hub**

The MSRI Knowledge Hub is an interactive source of information on Central Asian mountain societies and an interface for researchers, practitioners and policymakers. MSRI’s Hub includes an extensive library database and advanced search functions with multiple filters to help users locate specific information. Currently there are 2400 publications in 472 categories, uploaded by 55 registered users. MSRI library resources are available for free access under the Creative Commons license 3.0. The Knowledge Management Hub has had an influential role in a GIZ-led initiative on the development of regional knowledge hubs. The Hub has also been a part of the European Union-funded initiative on regional knowledge sharing, Flermonica.

**Geographic Information Systems (GIS)**

In 2013, under the Scientific Cooperation between Eastern Europe and Switzerland (SCOPES) project 2013-2016, MSRI received a preparatory grant to develop a joint research project on sustainable water governance, within integrated watershed management. A preparatory meeting was held in July 2013 at UCA in Bishkek. The grant will contribute to on-going studies and projects and will support the analysis of water governance within a broad framework. It will also support further building of GIS capacities at the institutions that participated in the SCOPES 2009-2012 Institutional Partnership on Geoprocessing for Natural Resource Monitoring in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. In 2013, MSRI also invested in the hardware and software required to develop UCA’s GIS remote sensing laboratory.

**Mentoring**

Researching and producing MSRI’s Background Paper Series involves a structured and supervised research and writing process that brings together regional and international researchers. In 2013, two teams made up of seasoned and new scholars worked together on the research reviews and the writing of MSRI Background Papers 2 and 3. The process is building MSRI’s network of researchers, enhancing relationships between researchers and strengthening the capacity of younger Central Asian scholars. Mentoring is also a key component of MSRI’s CAARF programme.
MSRI Team
The MSRI team includes Director Horst Weyerhaeuser; Senior Research Scientists Chad Dear and Christian Hergarten; nine Research Fellows: Aisulu Abdykadyrova, Azamat Azarov, Klara Dzhakypbekova, Aiganysh Isaeva, Samat Kalmuratov, Zheenbek Kulenbekov, Jyldyz Shigaeva, Qobiljon Shokirov and Munavar Zhumanova; two Project Managers Aline Rosset and Mokhira Suyarkulova, and Knowledge Hub Manager Eugene Novikov. These members are supported by Project Officer Jangyl Ismailova, Research Assistant Elnura Omurbekova, and Mobile Digital Library Outreach Officer Azamat Usupbekov and driver Kubanychbek Moidinov.

UCA’s International Research Fellows, Karim-Aly Kassam, Bettina Wolfgramm and David Gullette, also contribute to the work and development of MSRI.

MSRI hosts and engages in joint initiatives with the Mountain Partnership Central Asian Hub, which is staffed by Regional Programme Officer Zaya Batajargal and Communications Officer Alma Uzbekova.

**Horst Weyerhaeuser, Director**

Horst Weyerhaeuser leads MSRI, bringing with 25 years of experience in research for development in Asia. Prior to joining UCA, Horst spent five years in Laos as an advisor to the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, responsible for the development and implementation of large scale research programmes and developing national and regional research strategies. Horst spent eight years as a senior scientist and country representative in China for the World Agroforestry Center (ICRAF), where he developed ICRAF’s research strategy, partnership programmes and policy support framework for China. He also established and coordinated the joint Center for Mountain Ecosystem Research (CMES) in Kunming. Horst received his PhD in Silviculture Management from Freiburg University.

**Chad Dear, Senior Research Scientist**

Chad Dear leads MSRI research teams working on Sustainable Land Management, Mountain Tourism and Sustainability, and MSRI’s Ecosystem Services on Poverty Alleviation project among other research activities. He was involved in the establishment and the continued strategic development of MSRI. As an academic and development professional, Chad focuses on the nexus of rural development and conservation, particularly in and around protected areas. He has led or advised programmes on natural resource management, ecotourism, resettlement, disaster risk reduction, education, agro-enterprise, recreation, and women’s empowerment in Central Asia, Afghanistan, East Timor, Southern Africa and the United States, and publishes in academic, technical and popular literature. Chad is an affiliate faculty member of the College of Forestry and Conservation, University of Montana and a former Fulbright Fellow. He received his PhD in Forestry and Conservation from the University of Montana.

**Christian Hergarten, Senior Research Scientist**

Christian Hergarten leads the development of a spatial analysis unit at MSRI and oversees the development of a Mountain Environmental Observatory (Mountain EVO-ESPA project) and UCA’s long-term Learning Landscapes Initiative, which is initiating socio-ecological systems research in the Naryn watershed. Christian has a strong background in spatial analysis and natural resource monitoring using spectroscopy. His academic interest and work focuses on integrated analysis and assessment of ecosystem services, including participatory methods of environmental monitoring. Christian has worked in research, training and capacity building in various contexts and settings including soil and vegetation monitoring and analysis in Ethiopia, South Sudan and Mozambique, and natural resource modeling in Tajikistan and Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. He is also an affiliate research scientist with the Centre for Development and Environment at the University of Bern. Christian received MSc in Geography, Earth Sciences and Economics from the University of Bern.
Aiganysh Isaeva, Research Fellow
Aiganysh Isaeva holds a MSc in Sociology from the University of Oxford in the UK, and a BA in Sociology from the American University in Central Asia (AUCA) in Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic. Prior to joining MSRI, she has taught Sociology at AUCA and worked in the non-governmental and development sectors. At MSRI, Aiganysh is a research fellow within the Ecosystem services for Poverty Alleviation project (ESPA), researching various dimensions of poverty in relation to natural resource management in select villages of Naryn province.

Aisulu Abdykadyrova, Research Fellow
Aisulu Abdykadyrova has published widely on tourism in Kyrgyzstan, including books on Regional Aspects of Tourism Geography of Kyrgyzstan (2003) and Tourist and Recreational Potential of Issyk-kul Oblast (2008), and tutorials on Recreational Geography of Kyrgyzstan and Legal Basis of Socio-Cultural Service and Tourism in the Kyrgyz Republic. Aisulu has taught courses on tourism at Bishkek Humanities University and Kyrgyz National University. At MSRI, she is researching and writing a MSRI Background Paper on Mountain Tourism and Sustainability. Aisulu received her PhD in Recreational Geography from the National Attestation Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic. She conducted post-doctoral research on tourism at the Free University of Brussels and on academic mobility at Dublin Institute of Technology (2012).

Azamat Azarov, Research Fellow
Azamat Azarov is conducting research on food security in mountain areas at MSRI, with a focus on small and medium farming system analysis in mountain areas of Kyrgyzstan. Azamat is a PhD level candidate at the Kyrgyz National Agrarian University, writing his dissertation on “Classification and Problems of Farming Households in Mountain Regions of Kyrgyzstan (a case study of Chui and Naryn Oblasts).” Prior to joining UCA he taught agrarian marketing at Kyrgyz National Agrarian University. Azamat received his MBA at the University of Applied Sciences Weihenstephan Triesdorf in Germany.

Jyldyz Shigaeva, Research Fellow
Jyldyz Shigaeva led the elaboration of the MSRI background paper on Sustainable Land Management (SLM) focused in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Her research interests include SLM, livelihoods in rural areas, and sustainable mountain development. Prior to joining UCA, Jyldyz was a Senior Researcher in the Laboratory of Sustainable Development of Mountain Regions at the Institute of Mountain Physiology of the National Academy of Sciences of the Kyrgyz Republic, and an Associate Professor at the International University of Kyrgyzstan. Jyldyz also worked with the Pamir-Alai Land Management (PALM) project funded by GEF/UNU. Jyldyz received her PhD in Ecology from the International University of Kyrgyzstan and is pursuing her PhD within the National Centre of Competence in Research (NCCR) North-South at the University of Bern.

Klara Dzhakypbekova, Research Fellow
Klara Dzhakypbekova is an MSRI research fellow with the Agroforestry Systems of Central Asia Study Team supported and funded by the United States Forestry Service. She is involved in research on existing knowledge and practices on agroforestry experience of Central Asian countries that will be synthesised and analysed in a white paper on agroforestry potential in Central Asia. The research will serve as a baseline for further studies of agroforestry opportunities for more sustainable development in the region. Klara is MSc candidate in the Agricultural Sciences and Resource Management in Tropics and Subtropics (ARTS) programme funded by the DAAD.
Munavar Zhumanova, Research Fellow
Munavar has fourteen years’ experience in agrarian policy issues, and agricultural development projects. Her areas of expertise include pasture management, animal husbandry, farming practices, value chain analysis, and support for decision making in agro-pastoral systems. Munavar’s academic and professional work addresses environment and resource economics, natural resource (pastures and grassland) management and conservation, animal reproduction and nutrition science, ethno-botany and traditional ecological knowledge of agro-pastorals, rural economics and climate change issues in remote mountainous Kyrgyzstan. She has published several case studies on agrarian societies of Africa and Asia, as well as academic papers and book chapters on climate change, agricultural productivity and poverty in mixed crop-livestock production systems in Kyrgyzstan. She received MA in International Development and Cooperation from the University of Hiroshima and currently enrolled in PhD studies in Agriculture and Grassland Sciences at the University of Rostock in Germany.

Qobiljon Shokirov, Research Fellow
Qobiljon Shokirov has extensive experience in conservation projects, including ecological restoration, habitat restoration for wildlife in mountainous ecosystems, biodiversity and key conservation projects in the Great Basin Area and the Pacific Northwest as a part of public and national parks. He was part of a research team in the field of Sustainable Land Use Management in Tajikistan under the National Centre of Competence in Research (NCCR) North-South Research Project 11. At MSRI, Qobiljon is conducting research on mountain tourism and sustainability. Qobiljon graduated from Antioch University with MSc in Resource Management and Conservation and is a former Fulbright Fellow.

Samat Kalmuratov, Research Fellow
Samat Kalmuratov is researching on food security in mountain areas at MSRI, with a focus on small and medium farming system analysis in mountain areas of Kyrgyzstan. Samat received his MBA at the University of Applied Sciences, Weihenstephan Triesdorf in Germany.

Zheenbek Kulenbekov, Research Fellow
Zheenbek is a graduate of UCA’s Central Asian Faculty Development Programme (CAFDP). Prior to joining MSRI he has worked as an Instructor at Kyrgyz State National University and as a GIS expert. He has also worked as an Engineer of first category at Radiological and Biophysics Laboratory of Kyrgyz Russian Slavic University. He received a BSc in Physics from Kyrgyz State National University, an MBA from the Academy of Management under the President of Kyrgyz Republic and a PhD in Hydrogeology and Environmental Geology from TU Mining Academy of Freiberg, Germany.

Elnura Omurbekova, Research Assistant
Elnura Omurbekova is supporting the work of researchers at MSRI. Previously, she worked at the OSCE Academy in Bishkek as a Research and Training Assistant and an Academic Assistant. She has published an article on “Bride Kidnapping: Tradition or Crime?” with the Kyushu Silk Road Association. Elnura received her Graduate Diploma in Law from Kyrgyz Russian Slavic University and her Master of Law from Kyushu University, Japan.
Evgeniy Novikov, **Knowledge Hub Manager**

Evgeniy Novikov is a software-developer using PHP and MySQL. He has a degree in Computer Science from the International University of Kyrgyzstan in Computer Systems in Bishkek and a Masters in Software Development Technology from the International University. At MSRI, Evgeniy responsibilities include software development in open source technologies (Linux, Apache, MySQL and PHP); the daily administration of virtual information technology infrastructure; the development of knowledge management systems and procedures; the development of web portals; and developing, optimising and maintaining a SQL-based database of any level of complexity.

Mokhira Suyarkulova, **Project Manager**

Mohira Suyarkulova manages MSRI’s Central Asia and Afghanistan Research Fellowship (CAARF) which provides funding and technical support to researchers from the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan and Afghanistan to conduct applied research relevant to the development of the region’s mountain communities. Mokhira’s research interests include a regional focus on Central Asia and include a wide range of topics, including international politics of water to nationalist politics of dress and gender in Central Asia. She received her PhD in International Relations from the University of St Andrews, UK.

Aline Rosset, **Project Manager**

Aline Rosset manages MSRI’s e-Bilim mobile digital library pilot project, in partnership with GIZ and MSDSP. Her main interests and experience lie in the sustainable development of mountain regions, environmental education, sustainable management of natural resources, geographic information and knowledge management, as well as participatory and interdisciplinary research in remote mountain areas. Aline has previously worked on the establishment of Joint Forestry Management schemes on degraded riparian forest in the valleys of GBAO, Tajikistan in partnership with the State Forestry Agency. Prior to that, she worked in Europe, West Africa, and Central and South America. Aline has a MSc in Geography from the University of Zurich, where she was also employed as a teaching and research assistant for the chair of Human Geography, and as a management assistant of the National Centre of Competence in Research (NCCR) North-South hub in Zurich.

Jangyl Ismailova, **Project Officer**

Jangyl Ismailova works as a Project Officer for MSRI’s e-Bilim Mobile Digital Library project, supporting the project manager in the overall project management and implementation and overseeing communication with partner organisations, government officials and the media. She also supports the development and implementation of the Naryn baseline study as well as subsequent surveys and monitoring activities in remote areas and implementation in the field. Jangyl holds a BA degree in International and Comparative Politics from American University of Central Asia and she is an alumna of the United States Department of State Future Leaders Exchange program (FLEX) and the Global Village for Future Leaders of Business and Industry Program of the Iacocca Institute at Lehigh University.

Azamat Usupbekov, **Outreach Officer**

Azamat Usupbekov has worked at UCA since 2010 as an Outreach Coordinator. In 2013 he became an Outreach Officer for MSRI’s e-Bilim Mobile Digital Library. Azamat provides e-Bilim users with information on a range of issues and works close with local authorities and residents in the villages visited by e-Bilim.

Kubanychbek Moidinov, **e-Bilim Driver**

As driver of MSRI’s e-Bilim Mobile Digital Library, Kubanychbek delivers the e-Bilim team and equipment to its village destinations. He also assists visitors in finding library materials.
Bettina Wolfgramm, Senior Research Fellow

Bettina Wolfgramm is a Research Scientist and Member of the Natural Resources and Ecosystem Services Cluster at the Centre for Development and Environment (CDE) of the University of Bern, Switzerland. At MSRI, she elaborated a background paper on Sustainable Land Management (SLM) in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Bettina is doing her post-doctoral study in Tajikistan on a National Centre of Competence in Research (NCCR) North-South project on SLM systems for enhancing food security and mitigating climate change in semi-arid agricultural environments. Bettina received her PhD from the Faculty of Natural Sciences at the University of Bern.

David Gullette, Programme Manager, UCA Research Programme

David Gullette led and supported survey research initiatives at UCA, including the Naryn Baseline Study and a survey of businesses in Osh, Kyrgyz Republic. David has conducted research and worked in Kyrgyz Republic for over a decade, and has worked for various international organisations, including the United Nations. His research on conceptions of genealogy in Kyrgyz Republic and social and political instability in the Kyrgyz Republic culminated in the book, *The Genealogical Construction of the Kyrgyz Republic: Kinship, State and ‘Tribalism’*. David’s recent research focuses on conflict sensitivity and perceptions of energy in the Kyrgyz Republic. David received his PhD in Social Anthropology from the University of Cambridge.

Karim Aly Kassam, Senior Research Fellow

Karim Aly Kassam is International Associate Professor of Environmental and Indigenous Studies at Cornell University. He serves as Foreign Member (Academician) of the Academy of Sciences, Republic of Tajikistan and English Language Editor of the Academy’s *Journal of the Biological and Medical Sciences*. Karim-Aly works with Central Asian scholars to research the complex connectivity of human and environmental relations, and indigenous approaches to food security, sustainable livelihoods, climate change and pluralism in the Pamirs. In April 2013, Karim-Aly received the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences’ Diversity Award for promoting diversity in teaching and research. With UCA as a partner, Karim-Aly and his team are developing internet-based curriculum on research topics for ten universities to link students from the Pamir region to those at universities around the world, including Cornell, Beijing University and UCA. Karim-Aly has published widely, including recent articles in the journal *Human Ecology and Ecology and Society*, and received his PhD in Natural Resource Policy and Management from Cornell University, USA.

Elbegzaya (Zaya) Batjargal, Regional Programme Officer for Mountain, Partnership Central Asia Hub

Elbegzaya (Zaya) Batjargal oversees MP activities to support Mountain Partnership members in Central Asia working on sustainable mountain development (SMD), including knowledge sharing, capacity building and forging joint initiatives aimed at integrating regional contributions to global processes on SMD. Previously, Zaya worked as a Policy Analyst and Environmental Specialist with the Energy and Environment teams of United Nations Development Programme in Mongolia and the Maldives. She also headed the Fundraising, Marketing and Communication Unit of the World Wildlife Fund Program Office, Mongolia. Zaya received her MA in International Environmental Policy from the Graduate School of International Policy Studies at the Monterey Institute of International Studies, California, USA.

Alma Uzbekova, Communication Officer for Mountain Partnership Central Asia Hub

Alma Uzbekova coordinates communications and public relations activities for the Mountain Partnership Central Asia Hub. She has worked with various national non-governmental organisations in rural development, implementing projects funded by international donors. Alma served as Projects Coordinator with the public foundation “CAMP Alatoo” (Central Asian Mountain Programme) where she was responsible for communications and public relations. She earned her Master’s degree at the Kyrgyz Academy of Management.
Publications and Presentations
Publications


Forthcoming


Presentations


Karim-Aly Kassam. The Challenge of Climate Change and the Role of Local Knowledge in Adaptation and Food Sovereignty. Cornell Biological Field Station, Shackelton Research Station, Oneida Lake, New York, 26 June 2013.


