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# MRI Newsletter 6: Global Change Research in Mountain Biosphere Reserves of the Russian Federation

Authors: Badenkov, Yuri, and Drexler, Claudia

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Swiss Cooperation Develops a Focused Profile

# Switzerland and the Millennium Development Challenge




*The development policy context definitely changed after the Millennium Summit and the Monterrey Consensus early this century. Home-made and individual solutions—irrespective of their quality—are increasingly inadequate in a complex and globalized world. Swiss development policy must streamline and profile its strategies in order to retain its edge in terms of comparative advantages and contribute effectively to making the world more inclusive and sustainable.*

## Many pilots, even more navigators

For decades, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) focused its programs and limited resources primarily on carefully selected partner countries and key thematic areas (poverty reduction and social and economic discrimination). Cooperation strategies were crafted jointly with partners and based on local needs and priorities. Meanwhile, the development policy context has evolved to become more interrelated. Apart from SDC and the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (seco)—the principal Swiss public sector institutions mandated with international cooperation—numerous other line departments have launched international activities on their own. Accordingly, the Swiss Parliament is confronted with a growing number of decisions on cooperation in the fields of health, agriculture, security and peace building, and the environment. The direction of Swiss development policy is meanwhile driven by numerous actors with often diverging interests. Securing coherence in the framework of the Millennium and Monterrey partnership agreements—both key commitments for Switzerland—has turned out to be a Herculean task.

Internationally, Switzerland is confronted with other challenges. Policies and instruments need to be more effectively harmonized with development and transition country partners, as well as with other donor agencies. The UN further expects donor countries to increasingly commit to global security and human rights. With these and other recent changes, an era of sovereign Swiss development policy practice is slowly coming to an end in favor of a more orchestrated approach. The Millennium Consensus, but also recent Swiss membership in the United Nations, have clearly revealed that an optimal blend between bi- and multilateral instruments and a stricter sharing of roles among multiple actors have become necessary.

## Dispersed...

Changes in context have resulted in a gradual erosion of policy focus. Swiss development policy today is accused by the Development Assistance Committee of the OCDE and the World Bank of proliferation, with too many thematic partnerships in too many countries, resulting in fading effectiveness and leverage.

It is an acknowledged reality that SDC's portfolio is broad. Since 1990, SDC has withdrawn cooperation from 5 countries but initiated cooperation in another 23, including countries formerly part of the Soviet Union, often with small programs. Added to these are numerous initiatives for peace building, conflict prevention, and promotion of human rights by other Swiss government departments and the over 20 partner country programs of seco. Recent reform of SDC's thematic division has resulted in commitments of often scarce resources and minimal capacity in over 30 priority areas of thematic cooperation, while humanitarian initiatives continue worldwide.

The consequences of this diversification include a gradual loss of institutional orientation and profile, inconsistency of objectives, erosion of core competencies, and inflated overheads. As a result, the impact of SDC in its core tasks—poverty alleviation and economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable development—is threatened in the longer term.

## ...and focused

SDC's programs continue to be perceived by the Swiss public as highly relevant and professionally implemented. Long-term accumulation of competence and experience with direct cooperation have helped SDC to become a partner respected in many countries and by many international institutions.

On top of this, the Federal Law on International Cooperation already laid the foundation for a development policy committed to "reducing poverty, hunger and malnutrition and promoting balanced ecosystems" as early as 1976. In the 1990s, SDC further refined its strategies in such a way that they can be considered largely compatible with the Millennium Consensus, in spirit as well as practice.

In 2003, SDC reported that over 26% of its resources went directly into initiatives related to poverty reduction and food security *(MDG 1)*. These included programs for rural development, promotion of small-scale industry, vocational education, agricultural research for development, and food aid in emergencies. A 30% share of resources was invested in development partnerships *(MDG 8)*, eg for strengthening local institutions, bi- and multilateral networks for debt reduction, governance, and health, to name but a few. An additional 30% was spent on environmental sustainability *(MDG 7)* and public health *(MDG 4–6)*, and smaller proportions on gender (*MDG 3*) and basic education *(MDG 2)*. The remaining 14% of SDC's resources were earmarked for security, decentralization, human rights, support

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of transition countries, and research. Among SDC's partner countries, a clear bias can be observed for poor states and regions in mountain areas (see *Mountains and People*, published by SDC in 2002).

In its Progress Report on the MDGs (2005), the Swiss Government states that "Switzerland accords high priority to a sustainable use of natural resources. The principle of environmental sustainability enshrined in Swiss Foreign Policy is a fundamental pre-condition and building block of pro-poor development. …The sustainable development of mountain regions is another priority. As an Alpine country, Switzerland has vast experience in sustainable mountain development and is engaged in partnerships with mountain countries such as Bolivia, Nepal, and Bhutan, as well as in Central Asia. The respective focus is often on the protection of natural resources and the preservation of biodiversity." (SDC 2005)

Hence, SDC, Swiss NGOs, and other actors in international cooperation have already made a substantial contribution to reaching the MDGs to date. However, after the UN General Assembly of 2005, many crucial challenges remain to be addressed. Among them are the continued commitment to debt reduction, accelerated progress in fair trade, and the financing of development. Equally important are domestic efforts to harmonize development policy initiatives, simplify procedures, and improve framework conditions for more effective impact.

## Globalization requires modified approaches

Developing countries are called upon to formulate comprehensive national development strategies based on the Millennium Consensus. Donor countries, including Switzerland, increasingly need to insert their own cooperation program into this framework strategy, thus strengthening local initiatives as well as ownership of both the process and the resources.

For SDC, one of the most important challenges consists in crafting development priorities based on partner needs and depoliticizing this process. A development agenda which pretends to strengthen national ownership and responsibility has to be the fruit of planning in partnership. In the best interest of coherence and synergies, all available thematic, multilateral, and humanitarian instruments should be relevant and effective when addressing these priorities. Moreover, it is inevitable that SDC concentrate its interventions in such a way that limited resources are invested in a few countries, focusing on selected key issues with the most relevant partners. Priority country programs should not fall below a minimal critical level, multilateral measures should be increasingly linked with bilateral priorities. Effective coordination and role-sharing in humanitarian initiatives is imperative, as recent natural disasters have amply reconfirmed. Such measures can help to better link SDC's mandate to the roadmap of implementing the MDGs.

## Joint efforts—differentiated roles

By way of direct presence on the ground, SDC has been and will be in a position to ensure quality cooperation. Where it has important program experiences, such as in the water sector in India, in health in Tanzania, or decentralization in Bolivia, SDC participates actively in national policy dialogue with governments. SDC continues to cofinance MDG-related local initiatives and to focus on those issues which have a high probability of effectively reducing poverty, increasing food security, and securing sustainable social and economic development.

SDC will also ensure that access to knowledge and technology for partner countries will be enhanced, eg through its substantial participation in the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research and in information technology. On the multilateral level, SDC is dedicated to fostering enabling framework conditions to accelerate progress towards attaining the MDGs. Active participation in international agreements, the strengthening of selected institutions and programs, and the promotion of better role-sharing in international cooperation are some strategies for achieving this.

The agenda for the MDGs has been negotiated by all UN member countries. To implement them, and to make shared and mutual responsibility a reality at all levels, Switzerland, like other rich countries, must mobilize additional and sustainable efforts as well as resources. As a member of the global community, and in order to maintain political credibility, our country will have to honor all its international commitments and move from words to action along this way. It will also be important to clarify conflicting foreign policy objectives and do everything possible to improve framework conditions for early and significant reduction of poverty and hunger, and elimination of environmental degradation, and thus improve global security. This will ultimately pay unimaginable dividends to everyone.

***Martin Sommer***
Head of the Natural Resources & Environment Division, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), Freiburgstrasse 130, 3003 Berne, Switzerland.

*The opinions expressed in this article are the author's own and do not necessarily represent those of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.*

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# MRI Newsletter 6: Global Change Research in Mountain Biosphere Reserves of the Russian Federation

## Mountain Biosphere Reserves in the Russian Federation

Mountains and highlands occupy more than 50% of the territory of the Russian Federation. In 2005, Russia had 36 Biosphere Reserves (BRs), of which 15 are Mountain Biosphere Reserves (MBRs). The MBRs represent different environmental and economic zones of Northern Eurasia; they lie far apart from one another (Figure 1). Laplandskiy MBR on the Kola Peninsula (No 1) is an example of a reserve located in the arctic belt and affected by the mining industry, while Kavkazskiy MBR (No 2), 2500 km further south and located on the border with Georgia, represents eastern Mediterranean ecoregional features.

### From biosphere *zapovedniki* to biosphere reserves

The protected areas network in Soviet times was based on *zapovedniki*: strictly protected areas not subjected to human activity, except research and monitoring. The first *zapovednik* was created in 1916. By 2005 there were over one hundred.

In the mid-1970s the USSR adopted the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Program. This action drove the development of new approaches and a transition of some *zapovedniki* to biosphere reserves (BRs). BRs are terrestrial and coastal ecosystem areas where managers promote solutions that reconcile conservation of biodiversity with sustainable use of resources. In a first wave, for example, Sikhote-Alinskiy (No 12) and Kavkazskiy (No 2) were nominated as BRs in 1978. In 2005, 31 *zapovedniki* had BR status. The original protected areas are now defined as "core zones." Surrounding them are the buffer and transition zones, which allow for sustainable human use.

Many of the Russian BRs are classified as reserves but do not yet function as such.

## Global change research in Russia's protected areas

Research institutes played a leading role in defining the scientific programs in protected areas. These often included global change topics, even if they were not explicitly identified as such. Many *zapovedniki* developed multidisciplinary research strategies in ecology and biogeochemistry. Paleogeography, tree line migration, biogeography of rare species, and background monitoring of pollutants were traditional "global change" studies. A state-supported system of monitoring stations is still functioning in some of the *zapovedniki* (for instance, in Kavkazskiy) but is not very reliable, owing to the lack of financial and logistic support.

The traditional cooperation between reserves and research institutions could have been an asset in planning future global change research, but the economic and administrative weaknesses of the early post-Soviet era prevented its use. While research had previously had a close connection with conservation policy, there was never a strong link between research and development policy, sustainable or otherwise.

## Towards a national global change research program in mountains

### Goals of the program

In 2004 the MAB-6 group at the Institute of Geography of the Academy of Sciences in cooperation with the Federal Ministry of Natural Resources in Moscow initiated a long-term National Global Change Research Program in Mountain Biosphere Reserves (NGCRPinMBR). The goals of the program are:

- Sustainable management of natural resources;
- Conservation of biological and cultural diversity;
- Definition and creation of mechanisms for the integration of research outcomes into the development agenda on local and regional levels;
- Adaptation of livelihoods to global change;
- Development of recommendations for adapting the UNESCO-MAB Seville principles to Russian MBR practice.

### Background

The MAB-6 group is the driving force behind the program. It has been influenced by the International Human Dimension Program (IHDP), the International Geosphere Biosphere Program (IGBP), the Mountain Research Initiative (MRI), and the Russian National Committee of MAB, all stressing the need for and importance of coordinated global change research. They also recommend restoration of traditional cooperation between biosphere *zapovedniki* and the research institutes in the Academy. The Federal Ministry of Natural Resources (State Departments of Environmental Policy and of International Relations) supports the initiative financially and politically—an initial success.

### Building the program's foundations (2004–2006)

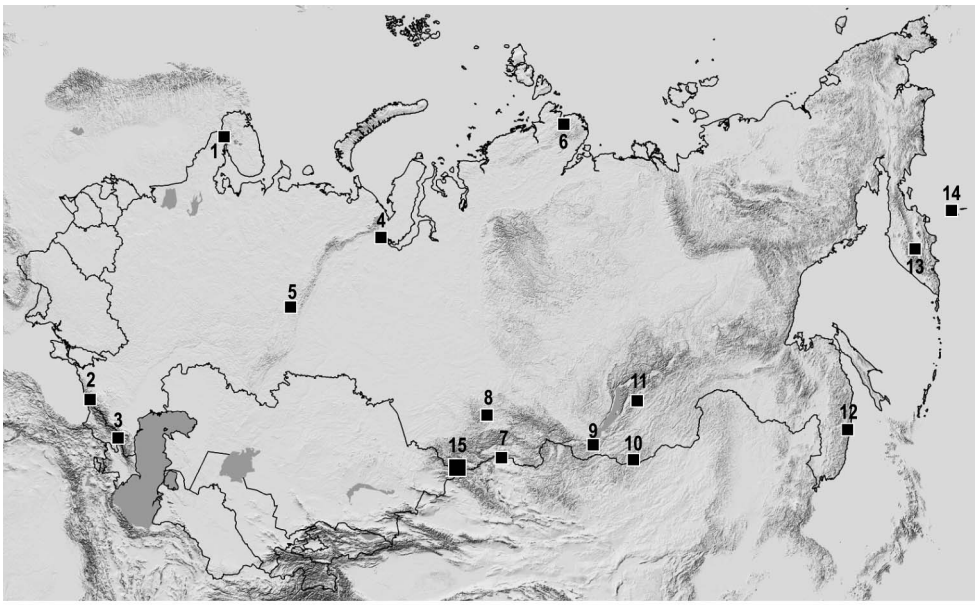
In 2004 and 2005, Yuri Badenkov and representatives of the Katunskiy (No 15) and Teberdinskiy (No 3) MBRs participated in workshops at the GLOCHAMORE Open Science Conference, organized by MRI. They ensured that the Russian initiative was linked to and inspired by other global change research.

The first phase of the research program began in 2005 and will continue throughout 2006.

This phase will:

- Develop recommendations for the modernization of MBRs according to the UNESCO Seville Strategy (results of the 1995 UNESCO conference in

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**Mountain Biosphere Reserves in the Russian Federation**

| *Northern mountains* | *Southern mountains* | | | *Far East* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 Laplandskiy | **Caucasus** | **Altai-Sayan** | 7 Ubsunurskiy | 12 Sikhote-Alinskiy |
| 6 Taimirskiy | 2 Kavkazskiy | 15 Katunskiy | 9 Baikalskiy | 13 Kronotskiy |
| 4 Pechoro-Ilichskiy | 3 Teberdinskiy | 8 Sayano-Shushenskiy | 10 Sokhondinskiy | 14 Komandor Islands |
| 5 Visimskiy | | | 11 Barguzinskyi | |

**FIGURE 1** Location of the 15 Mountain Biosphere Reserves in the Russian Federation; the boundaries of the New Independent States are visible at the west and southwest of the Russian Federation. (Map by Merzlyakova, adapted by Jürg Krauer and Ulla Gämperli)

Seville, Spain, on the future development of BRs);
- Develop the Global Change Research Program plus guidelines for its implementation in Russian MBRs (2nd phase, 2007–2012).

The first step is a diagnostic analysis of 4 MBRs: Katunskiy, Kavkazskiy, Sikhote-Alinskiy and Teberdinskiy. The Mountain Group at the Institute of Geography has been chosen to analyze their representativeness in terms of mountain ecoregions and global change issues, the capacity of the selected MBRs and joint research teams, and the presence of transition and development zones. At the end of 2005, the Mountain Group assembled a project team that includes scholars from the Institutes of Geography, Ecology and Evolution of the Russian Academy of Sciences and the Universities of Moscow, St Petersburg, Altai, Tomsk, and Kubanskiy, as well as representatives of the pilot sites.

## The future

After analyses of the selected MBRs in 2006, the Russian Academy of Sciences and the Federal Ministry of Natural Resources should sign a larger agreement for cooperation in the NGCRPinMBR. The agreement should encompass research cooperation, coordination, and financial/institutional support over the long term.

The period 2007–2012 should see the program's implementation. This phase will include international cooperation at a multi- and bi-lateral level. The GLOCHAMORE Research Strategy will be the framework for partnership at the theoretical as well as the operational level. For every research field specific partners will be determined. For example, in glaciology, there are important partners in the US, Switzerland, and France.

Further information on the concept and functioning of BRs, on BRs in the Russian Federation, and on the MAB program are available on the Internet at www.unesco.org/mab/; information on the GLOCHAMORE project and Research Strategy is available at mri.scnatweb.ch/content/category/3/10/31/

The following persons can provide information on the National Global Change Research Program in Mountain Biosphere Reserves:

*Yuri Badenkov*, Leader of the Mountain Group at the Institute of Geography of the Russian Academy of Sciences and coordinator of the UNESCO MAB Project 6 "Human influence on high altitude ecosystems" in Russia: yubaden@mail.ru

*Tatyana Yashina*, Science Director, Katunskiy BR: katunskiy@mail.ru

*Yuri Efremov*, Teberdinskiy and Kavkazskiy BRs: efremov_kubsu@mail.ru

A web site should be online in the first months of 2006.

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***Yuri Badenkov***
Leader of the Mountain Group, Institute of Geography, Russian Academy of Sciences, Staromonetny, 29, 119017 Moscow, Russia.
yubaden@mail.ru

***Claudia Drexler***
Communication and Event Management, The Mountain Research Initiative (MRI), Schwarztorstrasse 9, 3007 Berne, Switzerland.
mri@scnat.ch
mri.scnatweb.ch

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