Conflict Factsheet

Livelihood Conflicts in the Ferghana Valley

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of conflict</th>
<th>Intensity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main</td>
<td>4</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conflict Locality</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central Asia</td>
<td>1991 – ongoing</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>Resources</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan</td>
<td>Agricultural / Pastoral Land, Water</td>
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Conflict Summary

The Ferghana Valley, a single 300km geographical formation, has been a source of inter-ethnic conflict since the disintegration of the USSR and the partitions made by the Central Asian republics of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The divided region is characterised by disputes over scarce water and land resources, but also tensions pertaining to borders, their changed status and control regime. Present-day strains are exasperated by the pressures of global climate change and complex cultural and religious constellations.
Conceptual Model

**Climate Change**
- Gradual Change in Temperature and/or Precipitation

**Environmental Change**
- Increased Water Scarcity
- Land Use Change
- Increased Land Scarcity

**Intermediary Mechanisms**
- Change in Access / Availability of Natural Resources

**Fragility and Conflict Risks**
- Interstate Tensions
- Grievances between Societal Groups

**Social and Economic Drivers**
- Economic Development
- Demographic Change
- Agricultural / Pastoral Land, Water

**Context Factors**
- Water-stressed Area
- History of Conflict
Conflict History

Interethnic tensions in the Ferghana Valley, the most populous region in Central Asia, centre primarily on access to natural resources, especially water and land. Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan are highly interdependent concerning their water and energy, and this is a significant, although not exclusive, cause of international disputes and interethnic tensions in the area (Baker, 2011). The region is also seen as an extremely sensitive border area with a high level of militarization. In more recent years, this militarization has seemingly been legitimised by a security discourse which perceives the valley to be a breeding ground for Islamic fundamentalist organisations (Ismailbekova, 2012).

Multi-dimensional causes of the problem
The root cause of the problem is multi-dimensional and inherently linked to the break-up of the USSR. On the one hand, in the post-Soviet sphere, the three newly independent states of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan emphasised their newly found national identities whilst understating their diverse multi-ethnic foundations. On the other hand, living conditions across the valley decreased sharply as the previous system of Soviet collective farming collapsed. In turn, this has triggered a new competition for resources and livelihoods (Recknagel, 2010). Since 1991, the region has been divided between the republics of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. In terms of population density, 51% of Kyrgyzstan’s population is located in the three provinces of Osh, Jalal-Abad and Batken. 31% of Tajikistan’s population is found in the Sughd province and 27% of Uzbekistan’s population is situated in the three provinces of Andijan, Fergana and Namangan (IRIN, 2015).

Water concerns in the Ferghana Valley
As population has increased within the Ferghana Valley, so too has water consumption. In the same period, temperatures have risen and average rainfall has decreased (Baker, 2011). Indeed, the average regional surface temperature has increased by an estimated 0.5°C over the past 30 years, thus reducing net water in the region (Mitra & Vivekananda, 2013). Global climate change is set to compound these issues, heightening the threat of resource depletion, competition and conflict. Water concerns in the valley primarily relate to the availability and access to clean water, but also include fears pertaining to rising groundwater and water logging. Increasingly, electricity and agricultural sectors are competing against one another, as there is a twofold demand for electrical production and agricultural irrigation (Baker, 2011). Furthermore, complicated territorial divisions present a challenge to accessing water for drinking purposes and irrigation.

New collective identities and social unrest
Additional fears are related to wider issues pertaining to territorialization and the emergence of new collective identities in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union (Starr, 2011). The result of unclear border definitions has seen a constant series of minor and major clashes around the predominant ethnic enclaves. Due to these factors, the region is especially vulnerable to internal and external provocation and environmental pressures. In June 2010, an estimated 200 people were killed and many more injured during violent clashes in Osh and Jalal-Abad. The violence was catalysed by a combination of ethnic tensions, an economic slump and political discontent following the ousting of Kyrgyz President Kurmanbek Bakiyev in April 2010. A major humanitarian crisis ensured with between 100,000 and 300,000 refugees,
predominantly of Uzbek ethnic origin, attempting to flee to Uzbekistan (Baker, 2011). In more recent years, tensions have been identified around the Uzbek area of Sokh, inside Kyrgyzstan. In 2013, disagreements over resources boiled over leading to ethnic clashes. Previously, in September 2012, a number of Tajik and Uzbek guards exchanged gunfire along the border of the two countries, severely injuring one Uzbek guard (Belafatti, 2014).

**Resolution Efforts**

In terms of conflict resolution, the Ferghana Valley Development Programme (FVDP) established by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was the first project to approach conflict prevention in the region, stressing regional dialogue, the maintenance of inter-ethnic peace and improved community relations. The international community has a modest record of identifying and resolving common problems and interests within the region (Starr, 2011). In November 2010, Saferworld, Foundation for Tolerance International (FTI) and the Association for Scientific and Technological Intelligentsia (ASTI) facilitated the first community security consultations and focus group discussions in parallel villages along the Kyrgyz-Tajik border aimed at improving trust (Saferworld, 2011). However, violent interethnic clashes which first erupted in 1990 and then again in 2010 in the Osh and Jalal-Abad regions of Kyrgyzstan between the local Uzbeks and Kyrgyz underscore the long-term nature of the issues affecting the region. These clashes alone claimed more than 2000 lives (Rotar, 2012).

The conflict in the Ferghana Valley is multi-dimensional in nature and, although many actors are working in the region, a quick resolution seems unlikely.
### Intensities & Influences

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>INTENSITIES</strong></td>
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<td>International / Geopolitical Intensity</td>
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<td>Human Suffering</td>
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<td><strong>INFLUENCES</strong></td>
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<td>Environmental Influences</td>
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<td>Societal Influences</td>
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- Diplomatic Crisis
- Interstate Violence
- Violent Conflict
  - Yes
- Salience with nation
  - National
- Mass displacement
  - None
- Cross Border Mass Displacement
  - No

### Resolution Success

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<tr>
<td><strong>Reduction in Violence</strong></td>
<td>There was no reduction in violence.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Reduction in geographical scope</strong></td>
<td>There has been no reduction in geographical scope.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Increased capacity to address grievance in the future</strong></td>
<td>There is no increased capacity to address grievances in the future.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Grievance Resolution</strong></td>
<td>Grievances have been mostly ignored.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Causal Attribution of Decrease in Conflict Intensity</strong></td>
<td>There has been no reduction in intensity</td>
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Entry Points for Resilience and Peace Building

Mediation & arbitration
The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) established the Ferghana Valley Development Programme (FVDP) to approach conflict prevention in the region. The project has a modest record of identifying and resolving common problems and interests within the region. Subsequently, Saferworld, Foundation for Tolerance International (FTI) and the Association for Scientific and Technological Intelligentsia (ASTI) facilitated the first community security consultations and focus group discussions in parallel villages along the Kyrgyz-Tajik border aimed at improving trust. However, due to the multi-dimensional nature of the conflict, a quick resolution seems unlikely.

Resources and Materials

References with URL
IRIN (2015). CENTRAL ASIA: Focus on conflict prevention in Fergana Valley
Rotar, I. (2012). Fresh Border Incidents Underscore Unresolved Problems in Ferghana Valley
Saferworld (2011). Improving Community Security in the Ferghana Valley

Further information
https://factbook.ecc-platform.org/conflicts/livelihood-conflicts-ferghana-valley