



PEACE AND STABILITY THROUGH SUSTAINABLE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Lessons from Community Based
Approaches in Water Supply Projects for
Multi-Ethnic Neighbourhoods in Crimea

The Crimea Integration and
Development Programme

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St.Gallen, December 2004, Jürg Christen

CBE:	Community Based Enterprise / Entrepreneur
CIDP:	Crimea Integration and Development Programme
CO:	Community Organisation
FDP:	Formerly Deported People
FG:	Functional Group
KomunKhoz:	Communal Enterprise
NGOs:	Non-Government Organisations
O&M:	Operation and Maintenance
RFID:	Regional Forum for Integration and Development
SDC:	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
UNDP:	United Nations Development Programme

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Tenystoye is a relatively small village located in the south-western part of Crimea, between Bakhchisaray and the western coast of the Black Sea. The inhabitants are mainly of Russian origin. About two kilometres outside the main village, a new settlement of 40 or so households has been established on the barren slopes of an adjoining hill. This new settlement is mainly inhabited by Crimean Tartars who had been deported from the region and who had subsequently returned to Crimea, some 15 years ago.

Tenystoye is a typical „compact settlement“ with localised pockets of formerly deported Tartars who are socially, culturally and economically marginalized within the Crimean society. This marginalisation leads to intercultural tensions and can sometimes unleash open conflict.

Figure 1:
Tenistoye - a typical
Crimean Tartar
„compact“ settlement



Against this backdrop, the UNDP Crimea Integration and Development Programme (CIDP) was established with the aims of re-integrating formerly deported people and of contributing towards peace and stability in the area.

This brochure highlights the historic background and the origin of the programme. Based on the experiences in two pilot communities (Tenistoye and Sevastyanovka), it shows that the concept of community participation through social mobilisation can work well in the special social and cultural environment of Crimea. The approach not only contributes to the reduction of economic disparities by providing income opportunities, it also builds mutual understanding and cohesion and enhances governance through transparency and accountability within the communities.



Figure 2:
Previous water supply
by tanker

Historic Background and Origin of the Programme

The Crimean history up to the late 20th century is characterised by waves of large-scale migration. Particularly under Russian rule, forced emigration and deportation occurred so that by 1860 the total population of the region had fallen to about 194,000 - less than 100,000 of whom were Crimean Tartars. When a new railway was constructed in 1876, inward migration of Slavic and other persons into Crimea was fostered and the total population began to rise again.

The victory of the Soviet army over the Germans in 1944 led to mass deportations of more than 200,000 Crimean Tartars out of Crimea. Including other minorities (such as Bulgarians, Armenians, Greeks and Germans), the Crimean deportees were relocated to the various central Asian republics and other remote parts of the USSR. These acts were motivated by the Soviet position that the local populations had collaborated with the occupying German forces; the deportations resulted in the deaths of perhaps as many as 40% of those involved. The homes and lands of the deportees were expropriated and given over to large numbers of incoming migrants from southern Russian and Ukrainian regions.

Primarily due to the strategic importance of the Crimean peninsula, the deportee struggle for compensation and the right of return extended well into the late 1980s, when - in the spirit of „glasnost“ - the deportation was finally declared „illegal and criminal“ by the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. Crimean Tartars (other groups, such as Greeks, Armenians, Bulgarians, were

already cleared and allowed to return in the sixties) were subsequently allowed to return to the peninsula. Since 1989, more than 260,000 formerly deported people (FDP) have returned to Crimea. Crimean Tartars represent the vast majority of these FDPs, although small numbers of ethnic Armenians, Bulgarians, Greeks, Germans and other groups are also included in this category.

As Ukraine and Crimea were largely unprepared for such a sudden influx of people, tensions quickly escalated to a point where widespread violent conflict seemed likely, with potentially destabilizing effects for the young Ukrainian state. Timely and concerted efforts by the Government of Ukraine and the international community have contributed to stabilising the situation in Crimea in the nineties. However, the vast majority of Crimean Tatars continue to find themselves in a marginalized and excluded situation.

On an economic level, this is because most are living in isolated settlements in the rural steppe, often lacking access to basic services such as water, gas, electricity, schools and health facilities. Furthermore, Crimean Tartars were belatedly recognized as eligible recipients of land titles under the ongoing land reform programme – after most of the land had already been distributed.

Additionally, subjecting the Crimean Tartars to relentless, severe and systematic persecution has given them a very strong sense of cultural identity. In general, most Crimean Tartars are keenly determined to recover and protect their cultural heritage for future generations. This characteristic is frequently misinterpreted by other ethnic groups in Crimea as „radicalism“ or „fanaticism“, which sets the Crimean Tatars even further apart from the

rest of society, thereby aggravating the Tartars economic marginalisation with social and political exclusion. In such a situation, it is easy to identify scenarios that may trigger conflict. Such conflicts would probably be even harsher than those which occurred during the 90s.

Responding to this volatile situation, UNDP/CIDP's main goal has been to encourage and empower disenfranchised communities of Crimean Tatars and other ethnic groups, so that they can play an active role in the decision-making processes that affect their daily lives – acting as fully integrated citizens of their society and improving their living conditions through self-help initiatives.

Fact Box

Country:	Ukraine
Political status:	Autonomous Republic of Crimea
Geography:	Peninsula within Black Sea
Area:	25,500 square kilometres
Capital:	Simferopol
Population:	2,0240,000 (2001)
▣ Russians	58.5%
▣ Ukrainians	24.4%
▣ Crimean Tartars	12.1%
▣ Others	5.0%

National Flag of Ukraine



The Crimea Integration and Development Programme

Despite of the ambitious programme by the Government of Ukraine and the Autonomous Republic of Crimea to establish basic social and economic infrastructure and services in all (more than 300) new FDP communities, around one third of these settlements still have no electricity and half of them still lack safe drinking water. Most areas are still cut off from gas supplies and telephone lines and lack basic facilities - such as schools and health clinics. According to even the most conservative of estimates, unemployment is running at well over 40%. Largely because of these unresolved issues, strong feelings of resentment persist amongst FDPs, many of whom feel that they are excluded from equal participation in Crimean society.

In 1995, UNDP launched the CIDP as a response to the mounting tensions on the peninsula. During the first six years, the programme successfully supported the establishment of a network of (mainly Crimean Tartar) civil society and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs). It also addressed a number of key infrastructure priorities - such as water supply and sewerage systems, drainage systems, schools, and health care facilities. Finally the programme launched income generation measures, mainly in suburban areas. The different programme components were financed by a group of international donor agencies that included Switzerland, Canada, Turkey, Sweden, the Netherlands, and Norway.



The Swiss cooperation with CIDP dates back to the start of the communal infrastructure component in 1996. During the first two phases of the programme, responsibility for the construction and management of water supply and sanitation facilities was largely left to existing water authorities. These generally suffered (and still suffer today) from serious organisational and budgetary constraints, with hardly any involvement of the communities in the decision-making processes. This approach has led to a situation where operation of the system is not reliable and maintenance is not carried out on a regular basis. The inevitable consequence of unreliable service provision is a spiral of degradation – consumers are naturally unwilling to pay for poor services and the resultant shortfall in revenue leads to even poorer service levels.

The first evaluation of CIDP took place in 2000. In view of the programme's significant contribution to peace and stability in the Crimea the evaluation recommended a continuation of activities. However, it was strongly suggested that fundamental changes were required, shifting the focus towards the promotion of community self-help initiatives and good governance, the provision of policy advice, and the promotion of institutional strengthening in an inclusive manner for all ethnic groups. In response, a third phase of CIDP was launched in mid - 2001, expanding the programme's geographical coverage to include more regions, particularly focussing on rural areas.

Since then, CIDP is characterised by its adherence to a **people-centred approach** that emphasises broad participation and involvement of the communities in all stages of project planning, decision-making, implementation and Operation and Maintenance (O&M). It was realised that water supply facilities represent an overwhelming priority for most settlements and that the development of communal infrastructure can be used as an excellent entry point for community mobilisation, the promotion of good governance, fostering gender equity and the reduction of poverty through the creation of income opportunities. Reliable and effective water and sanitation services are also the sine qua non for public health improvements in the communities.

CIDP is now characterised by its adherence to a people-centred approach that emphasises broad participation and involvement of the communities.

Another important recommendation for change was that CIDP should take individual settlements and village councils as the starting points for a bottom-up, participatory promotion of self-governance and self-help initiatives. It was anticipated that, despite the prevailing top-down governance structure inherited from the Soviet period that remains ingrained in the minds of many Crimeans, the establishment of community organisations would provide citizens with a framework for identifying their needs, mobilizing their own resources and formulating their own development plans. By encouraging dialogue and networking between such community organisations and their respective village councils and regional administrations, consensus on regional development needs could thus be achieved.

Communal infrastructure such as water supply can be used as an excellent entry point for community mobilisation.

The strategic reorientation towards real community involvement was strongly promoted and assisted by SDC through an external backstopping arrangement and regular programme support. The resulting change prompted Switzerland to further expand its support to CIDP in 2001 through the provision of financial and technical assistance for the two pilot water supply projects of Sevastyanovka and Tenistoye in the Bakhchisaray Region (see Figure 3).



Figure 3:
Map of Crimea
(pilot communities
in Bakhchisaray
Region)

The Pilot Initiatives

As in many rural villages in Crimea, both pilot settlements identified reliable drinking water supplies and adequate water for home gardening (irrigation) as overwhelming priorities. Since more than 80% of the active population is unemployed, gardening is the main source of income for the majority of the households. This untenable situation has aggravated poverty and has naturally increased the potential for conflict by fuelling sentiments of frustration and despair amongst the 800 inhabitants of the two communities.

For many FDP settlements reliable water supply is the overwhelming development priority.



Figure 4:
Woman fetching
drinking water in
Sevastyanovka

The main aim of the pilot projects of Sevastyanovka and Tenistoye was to create an attitude of self-confidence within the communities. Since rural communities (and in particular FDPs) tended to wait for the central government to improve their

The pilot projects aimed at assisting both target communities to realise that they can do a great deal on their own, without outside help.

situation, the pilot projects aimed at assisting both target communities to realise that they can do a great deal on their own, without outside help. This new attitude amongst the majority of the population could be created by strictly adhering to the concept of community participation through social mobilisation.

Concept and Implementation Process

In order to ensure a participatory development approach that builds upon self-reliance and self-organisation right from the outset of the projects, the two communities were encouraged to organise themselves in several self-governing Community Organisations (CO). These are informal institutional set-ups at neighbourhood or settlement level that address community problems on the basis of democratic governance and the principles of transparency and accountability. Besides the formation of the community organisations, community saving funds were established in order to finance certain development initiatives, to assist needy community members as well as to provide small credits as a basis for expanding into income generating activities.

Identification and prioritisation of community needs:

Once the community organisations were formed and the saving funds established, several public meetings were facilitated by CIDP's Community Mobilisation Assistants. During such meetings, common interests, problems and needs were prioritised and a corresponding community development plan (including social, economic and infrastructure projects) was prepared. Water supplies ranked top on these priority lists.



Figure 5:
Meeting of the
Community
Organisation in
Tenistoye

The community organisations then presented their development plans to the local village councils in order to incorporate them into local and regional development plans. Preliminary project proposals were also presented to UNDP/CIDP for technical and financial assistance.

Project formulation, planning and design:

CIDP specialists, together with the community organisation subsequently studied the feasibility of the project proposals and initiated the necessary technical design. A so-called Functional Group (FG) - consisting of 3-5 community members having some technical knowledge related to water supply – was constituted to represent the communities' interests throughout the planning and design process. The functional group prepared the preliminary layout plan indicating potential water sources, the alignment of water mains, the location of proposed reservoirs, the proposed water distribution lines, etc. In addition,



Figure 6:
Residents of Sevastyanovka participate in excavation work for the water distribution network

the FG collected demographic data, information on public and private establishments located in the project area, and livestock levels - in order to calculate the total water requirements of the community. The FG also prepared a tentative cost calculation.

Both pilot projects are technically challenging, because the raw water sources are far away from the communities and because the availability of raw water is limited. When these considerations were combined with the requirement to follow old Soviet standards and norms, the original system designs that were prepared by the Republican Committee for Nationalities and Ethnic Minorities of Crimea pointed towards considerable per capita investment costs. A private consultancy firm working with CIDP and the communities then revised these designs, reducing the final investment costs significantly.

Subsequently, the CO presented the project proposal to the Regional Forum for Integration and Development (RFID), which is chaired by the Regional State Administration. RFID is facilitated by the local CIDP Integration & Development Centre and brings together all village councils, community organisations, local NGOs and other stakeholders in a given region.

Project implementation and monitoring:

After approval, UNDP/CIDP and the community organisations concluded contracts for the implementation of the projects. The contracts determine the scope of works; the cost-sharing contributions between UNDP/CIDP, the community organisation and the local authorities; the milestones for progress; the payment schedules and completion procedures. The contracts also stipulate responsibilities for the operation and maintenance of the systems.

For construction works, UNDP/CIDP selected specialized contractors by open competitive bidding in the presence of the community organisations. Complementing the work carried out by contractors, the community organisations actively participated in the construction of the water distribution systems, the individual house connections and the installation of water meters. Local authorities (village council and regional state administration) provided modest funds from their limited budgets and in-kind support such as equipment. Most importantly, they provided vital administrative support to ensure that all legal requirements were met, and that permits were issued (a) for construction works and (b) for user-based operation and maintenance of the systems. Moreover, the village council has taken the water supply system in its inventory that will ensure the possibility to allocate budget for future major maintenance and expansion of the system.



Figure 7:
Interaction with the
community

During implementation, progress of the projects was regularly monitored by CIDP staff (including the CIDP engineer), the CIDP community development specialist and the local community mobilization assistants.

Handing over:

Before handing over the completed projects, leakage tests were conducted for pipelines and reservoirs. Water quality was tested at the source, at the reservoir and at the house tap. The contractor received the final payment once all tests were completed successfully, and the projects was then handed over to Communal Enterprises (KomunKhoz) – the body responsible for the maintenance and management of rural drinking water supply systems in the village council.

KomunKhoz is the only institution responsible for operation and maintenance of water supply systems in rural areas, and the quality of water supply service provision is generally very poor. Water tariffs are centrally determined without taking into account the actual cost of operating and maintaining the water supply system. A lack of accountability and transparency, coupled with low involvement of users in the management of the systems, results in users not feeling responsible for the upkeep of the water system. Consequently, collection of water user fees is inadequate to meet operation and maintenance costs. The corollaries of this weakness are frequent breakdowns and service interruptions. In turn, the dissatisfaction of users with the poor service level results in a low willingness to pay. Low willingness to pay and inefficient fee collection leads to low revenue, which further undermines the possibility of improving service delivery. This vicious circle affects a large number of social and

communal services following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Although many local authorities would like to rescue poor public service providers from this spiral of decay, they cannot achieve this through subsidisation – not least because they simply do not have the budgetary reserves necessary to attempt remedial action.

UNDP/CIDP has responded to this progressively worsening situation - in close collaboration with all stakeholders - by developing an alternative institutional and organizational model for community-based water supply O&M management.

Operation and maintenance:

The result of past experience and extensive consultations between all stakeholders (and in particular with the communities) is a community-based O&M management system which is transparent and financially sustainable. This system is particularly suitable for relatively small rural water supply systems and has been successfully tested in the two pilot communities.

Following this model, the village councils responsible for the two settlements are now the owners of the water supply infrastructure, and have authorized the community organisations to autonomously manage, operate and maintain the systems. Agreements between the village councils and the community organisations regulate their respective responsibilities - particularly in terms of land taxation, tariff setting, monitoring and reporting.

Subsequently, the community organisations have selected a member from their functional groups who then registers as a so-called Community-Based Enterprise (CBE). The community



organisations have sub-contracted all O&M tasks and responsibilities (including financial administration of the water supply systems) to the CBE. To ensure payment by consumers, the CBE establishes service delivery contracts for the provision of water services with individual households, commercial enterprises and other institutions. Only households that joined the community organisations were connected to the water supply systems. In order to reliably monitor and charge for water consumption, all house connections were equipped with water meters.

The simplicity and transparency of this arrangement has been proven, and social control has already minimized misuse. In addition, water fees are directly linked to the actual costs of the components, which have been discussed with (and approved by) the community organisations. As the tariff and contract validities

Figure 8:
CBE of
Sevastyanovka
inspecting water
meter



are time-bound, there is a clear incentive for the CBE to be as cost-effective as possible in order to turn a reasonable profit – by minimizing overheads and ensuring that routine maintenance precludes the need for major (and costly) repairs. Under this lean management arrangement, users generally pay less because there is no need for the bureaucratic and technical apparatus generally associated with more centralized systems of water supply management.

Whilst water for Tenistoye is being supplied from a borehole, the system in Sevastyanovka is connected to the communal water supply. In the latter case, an agreement between Kommunkhoz and the CBE was signed that essentially determines the quantity and quality of water to be supplied to the settlement, the unit cost of water, the services to be provided in case of major breakages and the charges for technical services and equipment.

Financial mechanisms:

In the past, consumers were charged a fixed fee for water, calculated as a lump sum per head (for domestic use) and per m² (for irrigation) of the kitchen garden. The reason for this mechanism was that many users did not have water meters installed. As a result, there were no incentives for individual users to be frugal with their use of water, as the fees were not related to the actual amount consumed. Apart from being environmentally unsustainable, consumers also felt that this system was intrinsically unfair. Numerous misunderstandings have led consumers to mistrust the Komunkhoz, originally responsible for O&M. Consequently, many people simply did not pay for the water they used.

In response, water meters were installed by users in the pilot communities; although this is typically an expensive addition to any water system, the use of meters is seen a prerequisite for a fair and regular collection of water fees that can cover the following costs:

- production costs (power consumption for pumping, etc),
- royalties or procurement of water,
- recurrent operational and maintenance costs (remuneration for services),
- material cost for routine, periodic preventive and major maintenance,
- depreciation of the system,
- taxes and rent of land.

In addition, the communities were advised to determine a minimum basic per capita requirement for drinking purposes. The tariff for the water consumption that exceeds this basic requirement – the lifeline block - should be set at a higher level. This system is frequently referred to as a rising block tariff system.

In the pilot areas, monthly fees are now collected by the CBE. Revenue is deposited in a bank account that is expressly and exclusively used for financial administration of O&M for the water supply system. The CBE is responsible for monthly meter reading and for the collection of water charges based on the tariff approved by the community organisations. The tariff component that is reserved for depreciation is transferred on a monthly basis to a depreciation fund held and managed by the community organisation. The main purpose of this fund is to finance the rehabilitation of the system.

Whereas O&M can now be covered from revenue collected through fees, it is still unrealistic to expect users to cover the

capital costs of system extensions. In the event of major breakdowns or natural disasters, external support (from government) will probably be needed to restore the systems.

Although CBEs have been elected by the community organisations based on existing technical skills, a supporting training package has been developed by UNDP/CIDP. The aim of this initiative is to provide the CBEs with tailor-made training; the scope covers technical matters but is mainly focussed on basic business management, accounting and financial administration.

Institutional arrangement:

The general institutional framework and linkages of stakeholders is presented in Figure 9, below.

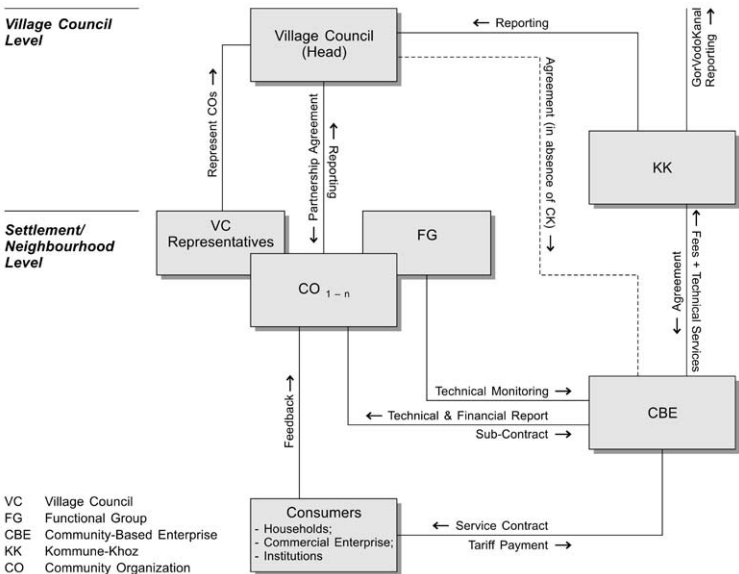


Figure 9:
Institutional
Framework

Challenges, risks and opportunities

After completion, the systems faced a situation whereby water consumption during winter months was much lower than expected - leaving the entrepreneur with a much smaller income than originally anticipated. However, each pilot community found a solution to this issue.

Tenistoye community organisation reacted quickly - and increased the tariff to ensure reliable operations. This peak cost was then compensated during the spring and summer months, when increased agricultural production caused more water consumption and better economies of scale could be realised.

Sevastanovka initiated negotiations to generate revenue by selling surplus water to a neighbouring community. This community had been following the successes in Sevastanovka and had decided to replicate the experience in order to construct its own system. Through the combined sales, Sevastanovka is generating sufficient throughput to cover the costs for operation and maintenance in a sustainable manner.

Impressed by the successful implementation of the Tenistoye water supply project, a neighbouring Russian community (39 households) has approached the community organisation with the request to connect their settlement to the system. Corresponding negotiations have meanwhile led to an agreement of sale of water between the two communities. Under this arrangement Tenistoye is now generating additional income that covers not only the total running costs but makes it possible to replenish the community organisation's depreciation fund.

Conclusions

- Within and beyond the region of Bakhchisaray, Tenistoye and Sevastyanovka settlements have become important references for other villages that are eager to learn about the processes and mechanisms for self-reliance and self-organisation.
- Previous conflicts over water distribution in the two settlements are clearly a thing of the past.
- Houses that were abandoned or sold years ago are being bought again, and the communities are enjoying a new lease of life.
- The communities are developing new plans to expand, and have started to promote local enterprises such as concrete block production, carpentry, etc.
- The new service has substantially improved the quality of life in the communities. Sufficient quantities of safe water are available for drinking, washing and irrigation throughout the year.
- Agricultural production - and thus income from the sale of surplus production - has increased substantially.
- The two cases show that mobilised communities are capable of resolving their own difficulties, even in rather complex situations.



Figure 10:
Vegetable
production in
Sevastyanovka

The May 2004 evaluation quoted the chairman of a participating village council as follows:

„In the past, I felt extremely uncomfortable going into open meetings with local communities. Most of the time would invariably be spent listening to biting criticism of the administration. Shouting was common, and in the end we would leave without having accomplished anything. Now, I meet with elected representatives of communities. They are well prepared, they propose specific projects and they indicate their own contributions, which are usually substantial. Shouting has given way to listening“.

Main Lessons Learned

The most important lesson learned from the pilot initiatives is that meaningful community involvement through social mobilisation can lead to positive changes in attitude - even in the complex environment of post-soviet Crimea. Attitudes can be changed so that communities are able to take stock of their own situation, identify their own needs, set their own priorities and decide what resources they can contribute towards the solution of their own problems.

With respect to observations made several years ago, the opinions of public authorities at **national, regional** and **local** levels towards CIDP and its approaches have shifted considerably. The new orientation towards real community involvement is increasingly seen as a viable approach (if not the only approach) for improving the desperate conditions prevalent in most rural villages - and particularly in FDP compact settlements. Nowadays, community participation is not just accepted but is actively and sometimes even enthusiastically supported by regional administrations and village councils throughout the Crimea.

This growing awareness is currently contributing to mainstream community involvement in planning and decision-making processes throughout the Crimea; it favours a gradual scaling up of the approach as it reaches influential decision-makers at the policy level. CIDP has been invited by the Republican Committee for Housing and Communal Services that is responsible for operation and maintenance of communal infrastructure to take an active role in the finalisation of a key policy paper.

At the **project level** CIDP combines technical know-how with social competence. As a result, technically sound water supply facilities have been constructed in the two pilot communities with substantial contributions made by the communities themselves. The communities can now rectify problems such as system leakage independently, right on the spot.

In both pilot communities, the establishment of community organisations has helped to overcome prejudices and inter-ethnic relations have greatly improved. With the advent of social mobilisation, people interact and work side by side on their priority projects. The communities feel overwhelmingly proud about their achievements. After just a few months of operation, they already realise that the new service has substantially changed their lives for the better.

Although the processes promoted by CIDP were followed during preparation, construction, operation and maintenance, the communities had to make their own adjustments regarding cost recovery. The fact that both communities were able to resolve cost recovery problems shows that even in the specific socio-economic context of the Crimea, the concept of community participation/involvement through social mobilisation works. The CIDP pilot approach is now being applied right across CIDP and is gradually being introduced in all UNDP projects in Ukraine. The conceptual framework, the social mobilisation process and the implementation mechanisms have been described in a comprehensive user manual.

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