

MMSD Biodiversity and Mining Workshop

Learning from Existing Initiatives

**The Kyrgyzstan
Community & Business Forum**



The Kyrgyzstan Community & Business Forum (CBF)

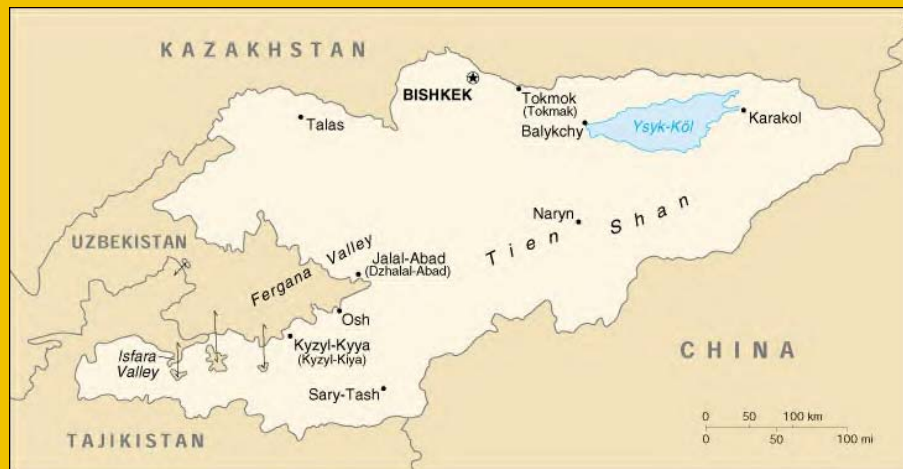
- Promotes **informed dialogue**
- Between **businesses, NGOs, local communities** and **government**
- By **building relationships** between these groups, **sharing information** and **promoting models** of practice
- In order to encourage **sustainable social, economic** and **environmental benefits** in Kyrgyzstan.

Structure of CBF

- **Steering Committee** - 9 representatives from local and national NGOs, government and business
- **Staff** - 3 Kyrgyz nationals
- **Management** - conservation NGO Fauna & Flora International
- **Funding** - EBRD, IFC and DFID, with independently funded Small Grants Programme
- **Duration** - 2 years with possible extended funding
- **Focus** - Kumtor gold mine and nearby communities

Kyrgyzstan

- **Small mountainous country** in Central Asia
- Gained **independence from the Soviet Union** in 1991
- Reforming to a **market-led democratic state**
- Current **economic and social hardships** - 55% below poverty line, average wage \$21/month, declining social services
- Changing roles of **government, business and civil society**



Kumtor Gold Mine

- **Canadian-Kyrgyz joint venture** between Cameco and Kyrgyzaltyn
- **Test case** for international business investment, legal and fiscal reform
- **Largest single business** in Kyrgyzstan
- **Benefits** through taxes, employment, infrastructure development and social investment programme
- **Unique environmental issues** due to high altitude - 4,500m
(e.g. no nearby settlements, frozen tailings, long term rehabilitation)
- **Environmental standards** taken as highest of Canadian or Kyrgyz
- **ISO 14000** level environmental management system
- **Biodiversity monitoring** - few large impacts, possible benefits
- **Nearby protected area** - but no direct interactions

Biodiversity Context

- Considerable **ecosystem diversity** due to geographic variation
- Many **endemic and endangered species**
- **Wild relatives** of domesticated species - apples, walnuts, apricots, tulips, onions,
- **Economic importance** - particularly tourism and agriculture
- **Social & cultural importance** - folklore, art, music, spirituality

Key problems

- Poor institutional capacity - state & NGO
- Limited economic opportunities
- Pollution
- Macro-level changes and instability



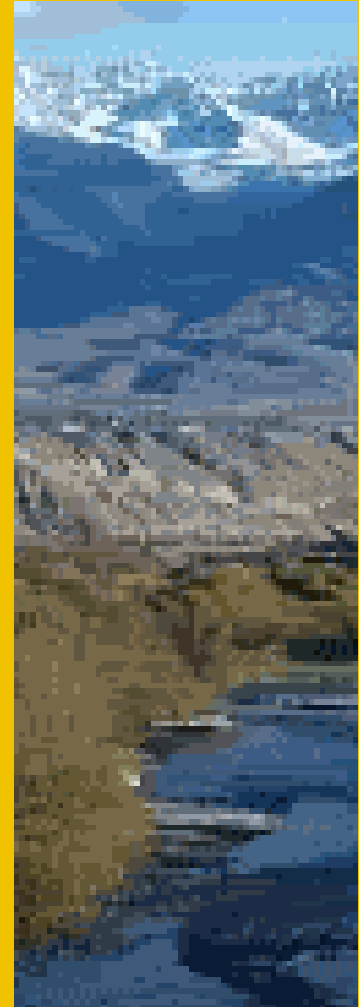
Formation of the CBF

Key Issue

- **Cyanide spill** - May 1998 Kumtor transport lorry crashed into Barskoon River

Underlying Issues

- Poor access to credible **information**
- Poor **communication** and understanding
- Lack of **accountability** of all groups
- Lack of **trust** between different groups
- Lack of **investment** and sustainability
- Few **examples** of good practice to follow
- **High expectations** of the benefits
- Lack of emphasis on **social issues**





Involvement of Fauna & Flora International



- **Previous involvement** with NGOs, government and Kumtor on issues such as sustainable tourism, protected area development and NGO capacity building
- Involvement in production of the Kyrgyz national **Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan**
- Experience of **partnerships with other businesses**
- Experience of **participatory approaches** to difficult issues
- Need to address **wider issues** as well direct conservation activities e.g. social and economic development
- Need for an organisation which could be **trusted** by all groups and act as an **independent facilitator**
- **Positive role of biodiversity** as an issue through which other more difficult issues can be addressed

The Groups Involved

- **Kumtor Operating Company** - Canadian-Kyrgyz joint venture
- **Local communities** - NGOs, small businesses, informal groups
- **International financial institutions** - IFC and EBRD
- **Government agencies** - local and national
- **National NGOs**
- **International NGOs** - advocacy groups
- **Media** - TV, radio, newspapers

*There were many **different perspectives**, within groups, between individuals in the same organisation, and through time*



Activities of CBF

Building Relationships

- Mine site visits
- National and local workshops
- Regular visits and meetings

Sharing Information

- Newsletters
- Local consultations and assessments
- Working with mass media
- Website (www.kyrgyzstan-cbf.org)

Promoting Models for Action

- Small grants programme
- Production of Emergency Response Plan



Outcomes of CBF

- Increased **voice for local communities**
- Increased **NGO capacity** and experience, particularly at local level
- Increased **understanding** between the different groups
- Provided an **example** to learn from and build upon
- Opened-up opportunities for **support to protected areas and conservation**
- Promoted a **positive and proactive approach** to mining and biodiversity issues

Lessons Learnt

- Taking a **holistic approach** - understanding both biodiversity and mining as embedded in wider issues, context and history
- Positive role of incorporating **differing (even conflicting) perspectives** - particularly government, IFIs and local groups
- Partnership and dialogue is highly **complex, slow and contested**
- **Enabling people** to take their own decisions and initiative
- Providing **appropriate information** - not just access
- Positive role of **ambiguity** - creating space for discussion
- Importance of **flexibility and learning** - embracing positive and negative **unexpected outcomes**
- Building on **existing ongoing initiatives**
- Importance of building **trust** through **action** on the ground - not just dialogue

Ongoing Questions

- How can **different perspectives and priorities** be reconciled? Global, national or local priorities? Short-term or long-term? Social, environmental or economic?
- How much does **institutional culture and structure** determine an organisation's approach? Can it be changed?
- What are the **governance roles and responsibilities** of international NGOs? Financing institutions? Leading mining companies?
- When should initiatives be **voluntary or mandatory**?
- How can the differentials in **power** be addressed?
- How can we **engage** those not sitting around the table?
- What about **other mining companies**? Concentrating too much on the high-profile companies? Listening too much to INGOs?
- Where is the **room for manoeuvre** to bring about concrete action?