

## **The Centre for Development and Environment (CDE), University of Berne**

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Source: Mountain Research and Development, 21(1) : 84-85

Published By: International Mountain Society

URL: [https://doi.org/10.1659/0276-4741\(2001\)021\[0084:TCFDAE\]2.0.CO;2](https://doi.org/10.1659/0276-4741(2001)021[0084:TCFDAE]2.0.CO;2)

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# The Centre for Development and Environment (CDE), University of Berne



Riederalp and Driest Glacier in the Valais, Swiss Alps. Rough mountain terrain and experience in developing it as a cultural and economic resource make Switzerland a logical advocate of mountain issues in discussions at the global level. (Photo by Hanspeter Liniger)

The primary focus of CDE's work is on development and environmental issues in the South and the North, with a special emphasis on management of natural resources and sustainable regional development. These issues have become a major global concern because human beings, as well as all other living organisms, depend directly or indirectly on the quality and availability of natural resources.

CDE's focus on mountains and their interactions with surrounding lowlands has existed since the Centre was founded. Work in these ecoregions has been done in collaboration with local institutions and populations. Long-term research partnership programs currently being carried out in Africa focus on mountains and highlands in eastern and southern Africa (Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania and Madagascar). Other programs deal with Asia, including the Himalayas, the Pamir and Tien Shan mountain ranges, and hilly areas of Southeast Asia. Further activities have recently been initiated in the mountains and hilly areas of Central and South America. These programs have helped to lay the foundations of CDE's spe-

cial competence in issues of mountain research and development.

Apart from mountainous environments, CDE is also involved in programs focusing on semiarid and arid areas, and on humid tropical environments. While rural settings are the major area of concentration, CDE is also interested in urban-rural links and sectoral transition.

## Special mountain initiatives

At the international level, CDE has mandates to pursue a number of activities designed to promote sustainable mountain development, including

- Serving as the editorial office of *Mountain Research and Development* (MRD) on behalf of the International Mountain Society (<http://www.mrd-journal.org/>).
- Coordinating, on behalf of the United Nations University (UNU), the Global Mountain Partnership Programme (<http://www.unu.edu/env/mountains/>), a network of like-minded mountain research and development projects.
- Compiling, on behalf of the Mountain Agenda and the Moun-

tain Forum (<http://www.mountainforum.org/>), annual status reports on issues relating to the world's mountains, which have been submitted to the annual conferences of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) since 1997.

- Organizing and facilitating an international symposium with the theme "Mountains of the World: Community Development Between Subsidy, Subsidiarity, and Sustainability" in Interlaken (Switzerland) from 30 September to 4 October 2001 on behalf of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) (<http://www.wms2001.ch>).

## Working modes

CDE consists of multidisciplinary teams of specialists with different backgrounds and areas of expertise, employing transdisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and disciplinary approaches and methods. CDE supports the principles of subsidiarity, empowerment, and partnership while acknowledging the importance of planning and decision-making at higher levels. In addition to activities in the framework of local, regional, national, and international programs, CDE and its partners develop concepts and tools to support decision-making from the field level to the policy level.

## Services

CDE offers a wide range of services to international and bilateral development agencies, research institutions, national governments, national and international NGOs, and

local partners. These services are primarily concerned with the management of renewable natural resources at multiple levels and consist of

- Development of concepts and tools for natural resource management.
- Consultancy and development support service.
- Education (training, awareness raising, capacity building and strengthening, initiating social learning processes).
- Specific training on request (eg, in environmental monitoring and evaluation, Geographical Information Systems (GIS), and database management).
- Information and documentation services.
- Editing and publication services.
- Collaboration in research and networking.

CDE assists in developing

- Monitoring procedures related to resource dynamics and resource use.
- Integral and participatory local and regional analysis of sustainable resource management.
- Site-specific technologies and actor-specific approaches to resource management.
- Planning approaches and tools for resource management.

#### Partners and programs

CDE works in partnership with international, regional, and local organizations. It carries out programs and mandates with partners in East Africa (Kenya, Madagascar, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Tanzania), West Africa (Mali), Asia (Mekong Basin, Thailand, Nepal, India, and Pakistan), CIS/Central Asia (Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan), and Latin America (Bolivia, Nicaragua). It also has mandates concerned with the Swiss Alps.

## CDE in a nutshell

**Staff:** Approximately 40 people at CDE headquarters and local secretariats.

**Expertise:** Systems science, geography, soil science, geoinformatics, hydrology, forestry, agriculture, agricultural economics, social anthropology, cultural studies, history, pedagogy.

**Geographical focus:** Rural development in mountains, highland–lowland interactive systems, and semiarid regions in transition.

**Regional programs:** Eastern and Southern Africa Partnership Programme (ESAPP), Central Asia Mountain Programme (CAMP), Lower Mekong Watershed Classification Project.

**Global networks:** World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies (WOCAT), Autodidactic Learning for Sustainability (ALS), Mountain Agenda (MA), *Mountain Research and Development* (MRD editorial office).

**SDC advisory mandates:** Natural resource management, sustainable soil management.

**Annual turnover (1999):** CHF 4.9 million (ca US\$3 million).

**Major donors:** Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), Swiss National Science Foundation (SNF), Novartis Foundation for Sustainable Development, UNEP, FAO, United Nations University (UNU), Gesellschaft für technische Zusammenarbeit (GtZ), DANIDA, Rockefeller Foundation, Swedish Agency for Research Cooperation with Developing Countries (SAREC), Mekong River Commission Secretariat (MRCS), Gerling Foundation, and others. CDE receives a contribution from the University of Berne in return for its university services (academic courses, supervision of Masters and PhD students, etc).

One of the global programs coordinated by CDE is the World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies (WOCAT), which operates through partnership institutions in over 30 countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Publication of the international journal *Mountain Research and Development* (MRD), which is distributed in over 50 countries worldwide, comprises another program at the global level. A third global program is ALS (Autodidactic Learning for Sustainability), which is being tested in various countries in Africa, Latin America, and Asia. Finally, the Mountain Agenda working group, which is coordinated by CDE, collaborates with mountain institutions on all continents, including North America and Australia.

#### Organization and funding

As an interdisciplinary department of the Institute of Geography at the

University of Berne, Switzerland, CDE is a nonprofit center. It is financially self-supporting and does not engage in fundraising. Its operating expenses are covered by the fees it receives for the work it performs. The University provides some funding as well as management and expertise through its academic staff and infrastructural support in return for CDE's university functions (academic courses, tutorials, supervision of theses and dissertations).

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