

Promoting Sustainable Mountain Development for Global Change (SMD4GC)

Nadine Salzmann¹, Christian Huggel², Samuel Nussbaumer², Thomas Kohler³, André Wehrli⁴, Eric Nanchen⁵

¹University of Fribourg, Fribourg, Switzerland, ²University of Zurich, Zurich, Switzerland, ³University of Bern, Bern, Switzerland, ⁴Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, Bern, Switzerland, ⁵Fondation pour le développement durable des régions de montagne, Sion, Switzerland

Mountain regions are key contexts for sustainable global development because of their provision of critical and indispensable goods and services to a significant proportion of humankind (Kohler et al., 2014). They supply large portions of fresh water for domestic use and lowland irrigation and play an important role in the production of hydropower. Mountains are moreover centers of cultural and biological diversity, sources of raw materials, and important tourist destinations. Alone, mountains are still among the most disadvantaged regions in a global perspective, with the highest poverty rates and some of the greatest vulnerability to global climatic, environmental, and socioeconomic change and related risks.

This exacerbates already existing challenges and increases the pressure on mountain people and resources.

Switzerland has a long tradition and knowledge in supporting sustainable mountain development (SMD). In order to continue this support, a new international cooperation programme “Sustainable Mountain Development for Global Change” (SMD4GC) was initiated in 2014 under SDC’s (Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation) Global Programme Climate Change (GPCC) (Wehrli, 2014).

The overall goal of SMD4GC is to essentially contribute to SMD under uncertain changes in climatic, environmental and socio-economic conditions, focusing on poverty and risk reduction. The objectives are to launch (policy) instruments for SMD at different levels by local, national and international stakeholders and decision makers, and to implement knowledge-based SMD activities. In order to be most effective at the local, regional and international scale, SMD4GC is cooperating with experienced SMD partners in four major mountain regions in the world, so called mountain hubs, including the Albertine Rift Conservation Society (ARCOS) in Africa, the Consortium for the Sustainable Development of the Andean Ecoregion (CONDESAN) in Latin America, the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) in the Hindu Kush–Himalaya and Asia Pacific regions, and the University of Central Asia (UCA) in Central Asia. SMD4GC aims at strengthening these four regional partners and enhances (North)–South–South exchange and cooperation between mountain regions. The network furthermore includes partners in the global North, namely FDDM (Fondation pour le développement durable des régions de montagne), UZH and UFR (Universities of Zurich and Fribourg) and CDE (Centre for Development and Environment, University of Bern). The programme directly responds to key recommendations of the Rio+20 outcome document (United Nations, 2012) and contributes to the inclusion of the mountain context in global policy frames for sustainable development and poverty eradication.

It is expected that the local, national and international policymakers will be enabled to design and implement sustainable policies in mountain areas, and as such, they are direct beneficiaries of SMD4GC. Mountain stakeholders and communities as indirect beneficiaries will be empowered through knowledge sharing and capacity building.

In our contributions, we present the SMD4GC programme and highlight first activities and achievements as well as planned future activities.

References:

Kohler, Th., Wehrli, A., Jurek, M. (eds) 2014: Mountains and climate change - A global concern. Centre for Development and Environment (CDE), Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, and Geographica Bernensia.