

Implementation of Integrated Water Resources Management in Lower Levels of Water Users

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In Pastdargom rayon of Samarkand province, there was only one Water user associations on the irrigated area of 54 thousand hectares until 2009, while water management was performed on top-down basis, without taking into account actual situation of water users. The latter, mostly farmers, undertook their activities without coordination with the Water Users Association (WUA). To irrigate homestead lands the population used water at their own discretion without any obligations. Farmers and other water users were not interested in problems and other aspects of WUA's activities. Such relationship between WUA and farmers negatively affected their activities.

The tensions in the rayon due to the lack of water have necessitated development of measures for improvement of water management based on the integrated water resources management (IWRM).

Having studied the existing pattern of irrigation systems, it was decided to establish seven WUAs based on hydrographic principle instead of one large one. The project has prepared a set of necessary documents for registration of WUAs in light of new law on water and water use, whereas proper efforts to explain to local authorities the provisions and requirements of the law have facilitated the re-registration of WUAs as NGOs.

Establishment of WUAs on hydrographic principle will be done gradually. The initiative group, mobilizers will work on formation of friendly relations and raising awareness about WUAs, their benefits, structure, role, responsibilities and ways of their establishment among farmers, their leaders, aksakals and other key stakeholders. It will be followed by collection of data on farmers, main water problems, mapping of command areas of the irrigation and drainage network.

During meetings with farmers in small groups at the levels of village and laterals, the essence of the project, its objectives and main water management problems that can be solved quickly with the help of WUAs are explained.

The next step is establishment of WUAs. The supreme body of WUA is the general meeting of WUA's members. All water users might become equal members of the WUA. The general meeting delegates elect groups of water users or laterals. The electees will represent the interests of members of WUGs or laterals, while makhalla committees will represent interests of population.

After that Representative meeting is organized. At the kick-off meeting the following main objectives will be presented: 1) organized and collective approach to management of irrigation and drainage systems; 2) decentralization of authority and responsibility of management by handing over to WUAs; 3) provision of equitability in water distribution; 4) reliability of water supply; 5) self-governance; 6) order of financial provision for WUAs from water users and the public. The meeting is followed by a general meeting of WUA, where the Council is created to fulfill WUA governance. The Chairman of the Council shall be a reputable manager with leadership abilities, a respected aksakal or people who know the area and capable of persuading. The meeting elects the executive director, as well as examines other regulatory documents of NGO stipulated by the legislation of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

The Council approves and controls the distribution of water according to rules applicable to local conditions and integrated water resources management principles, besides settling of conflicts between users and strengthening of trust between them.