



# A Source of Peace – Transboundary Water Management in Central Asia

Joint management of Isfara and Khodzha-Bakirgan river basins

## Context

The Isfara and Khodzha-Bakirgan rivers and their catchments are located in northern Tajikistan and south-western Kyrgyzstan respectively. Both rivers originate on the northern slopes of the Turkestan Range and flow northwards through the Fergana valley towards the Syrdarya.

Partners: Kyrgyz-Tajik Inter-Ministerial Working Group including representatives from the Ministry of Amelioration and Water Resources of the Republic of Tajikistan and State Committee for Water Economy and Amelioration of the Kyrgyz Republic

Project term: Apr. 2009 – Dec. 2011

Budget: 250,000 Euro

The two catchments belong to Sughd Oblast in Tajikistan and to Batken Oblast in Kyrgyzstan. The population of Batken is mainly ethnic Kyrgyz, with a large Tajik and a smaller Uzbek minority. Batken's relationship with the Tajikistan border is a particular

issue with several Tajik and Uzbek enclaves located inside the Kyrgyz Oblast's territory. This has led to villages being bisected by the Tajikistan-Kyrgyzstan border and to Kyrgyz ethnic majorities in Tajik villages.

Water resources are vital for all upstream and downstream countries in the region. The integrated and coordinated management of this transboundary resource affects the lives of millions of people beyond Kyrgyz and Tajik national boundaries. For this reason, these countries' governments must establish sustainable transboundary river basin management structures based on the physical borders of water catchment areas rather than national borders.

Since 2007, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have been working to improve cooperation generally and the transboundary river basins of Isfara and Khodzha-Bakirgan have been particular areas of collaboration. Consequently, an inter-ministerial working group was set up bringing together government heads of water resources and heads of oblast and rayon (administrative division) water management organisations. The working group meets periodically to discuss issues around transboundary river basin cooperation. GIZ cooperates very closely with the national Kyrgyz and Tajik partners, supporting the working group in its efforts to improve transboundary river basin cooperation.



Isfara river headwork

## Objective

The objective of this project is to improve the institutional capacity of Kyrgyz and Tajik partners to manage the transboundary river basins of Isfara and Khodzha-Bakirgan. Given that the Isfara also partly flows through Uzbek territory, the project is also open to Uzbek partners.



Khodzha-Bakirgan river

## Measures

As a first step towards meeting the project objective, the water management organisations for Batken and Sugdh oblasts were assisted in setting up comprehensive river basin database systems. Following the basin assessment, national and local partners received help in defining basin objectives and drafting complex basin plans. In parallel, the inter-ministerial working group was supported in drafting an interstate framework agreement on transboundary river basin management. Once adopted, this framework agreement will be the legal basis for establishing the Joint River Basins Commission. Furthermore, the initiative promotes the ongoing participation of civil society organisations in joint administrative structures. To that end, an outreach programme is seeking to build public support for transboundary river basin cooperation and its institutional development. The local population, and farmers in particular, are

not simply consultees in the public outreach programme, they are also the people who will ultimately benefit from the initiative. They will benefit from improved transboundary water planning as well as improved cooperation and coordination of local water management organisations.

In addition to the above institutional measures, the programme helps Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan build or restore hydroposts and meteorostations. These are particularly important for gathering the information required to devise adaptation strategies for climate change and its impact on water availability.

The programme coordinates its activities in the Isfara and Khodzha-Bakirgan river basins with other international organisations and programmes, in particular the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, the United Nations Development Programme and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe.



Meeting of the Kyrgyz-Tajik Inter-Ministerial Working Group

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