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Major results of the project “Transition to Integrated Water Resources Management in Lower Reaches of the Amudarya and Syrdarya Rivers”

The pilot project was implemented by Scientific-Information Center at the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination (SIC ICWC) of Central Asia together with partners from Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan under the support of the U.S. State Department, Regional Office for Environment in 2004. The main objective was to select pilot sites in the lower reaches of the Amudarya and the Syrdarya for justification of transition to integrated water resource management (IWRM).

Major results presented in the project analytical report are as follows:

- assessed current situation and specificities of the Amudarya and Syrdarya downstream zones as compared to other ones (i.e. complex natural conditions, low GDP per capita, acute shortage of irrigation and drinking water resources, availability of interconnected and interdependent environmental, economical, social, and transboundary problems);
- identified problems related to management of water and other natural resources and ways to overcome them through introduction of IWRM principles;
- analyzed political, legal, and institutional frameworks for application of IWRM and developed proposals on their improvement;
- developed proposals on adjustment of principles and justification of the key provisions for transition to IWRM in each pilot site;
- determined stages of IWRM implementation and approximate cost of works;
- justified selection of pilot sites in all three republics, etc.

Pilot sites were selected according to priority criteria, of which determination of local government, of water users and farmers was considered as the key criterion for implementation of water reforms. Other criteria were representativeness of pilot sites. As a result, pilot sites were selected at different water use levels, such as large irrigation system – water user association - farm in each of 4 zones (Turkmenistan - Dashgovuz province; Uzbekistan - Horezm province and Karakalpakstan; Kazakhstan – Kzyl-Orda province). Developers of the report have also studied transboundary issues of IWRM, i.e. separately for the Amudarya river basin and for the Syrdarya river basin. This made it possible to address all water management hierarchies – from interstate down to farm level - in the region.

The results are presented as a project proposal for development of IWRM principles, including transboundary aspects in the pilot sites. Similar project, but without consideration of transboundary water management, is being implemented in the Fergana Valley (Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan) under financial support of the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC).

Implementation of the project proposal developed by SIC ICWC within the framework of the U.S. State Department project will allow involvement of all Central Asian countries in development of IWRM principles in the pilot sites. Approbation of IWRM principles in the pilot sites in Amudarya and Syrdarya downstream would create prerequisites for further extension of IWRM to provincial, national, and regional scales.

SIC ICWC is looking for sponsors for implementation of this project proposal.

The proposal could be supported both as a whole and separately in its specific directions

1. Transboundary basin level;
2. Large irrigation system level;
3. Water user association level;
4. Farm level.

Each direction is oriented towards hydrographic boundary (basin) based water management.