

REGIONAL CONSULTATION WORKSHOP
—
**COOPERATION IN SHARED WATER RESOURCES IN
CENTRAL ASIA: PAST EXPERIENCE AND FUTURE CHALLENGES**
—

**Recommendations of National Focal Points and
Non-Governmental Organization Representatives**

Process Followed in Developing Recommendations

As a result of analyses and discussions were held by country “Focal Points” from each of the five Central Asian Republics, representatives of ICWC as well as representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on the main subjects of the Asian Development Bank Regional Consultation Workshop “Cooperation in Shared Water Resources in Central Asia: Past Experience and Future Challenges,” 26 - 28 September 2002. In all ten reports were prepared, and these may be found in Part II of the Regional Consultation Workshop Brochure.

Main Recommendations

This document presents a summary of the recommendations made by these Focal Point and NGO resource persons organized according to three priority themes:

- I. Improve Water Management Capacity in the Aral Sea Basin with Special Emphasis on the Amu Darya Basin;**
- II. Improve Water Management in the Upper Catchment Areas of the Aral Sea Basin; and**
- III. Introduce Policies, Practices and Instruments to Increase Water Use Efficiency in the Aral Sea Basin.**

The following synthesis attempts to capture the main points made in the presentations. It is to summarize key issues that need to be addressed in the region and to serve as the basis for further discussion among regional stakeholders and donors interested in water resources management.

I. Improve Water Management Capacity in the Aral Sea Basin with Special Emphasis on the Amu Darya Basin

A. Promoting and Developing an Integrated Approach to Water Resources Management

The following improvements are suggested in the regional management of water resources in the Aral Sea basin:

- Develop an integrated approach to address water management and ecological problems in the basin, especially on the national level through giving priorities to pilot projects in the downstream regions;
- Enhance the legal framework regulating water relations between Central Asian states including development of long-term agreements on water and energy use covering both the Amu Darya and Syr Darya basins;

- Develop transparent water resources information systems together with simultaneous communications systems at all levels (water management agencies, BVOs, and basin organizations) to support improved decision making;
- Taking in to consideration that the riparian states have accepted the Aral Sea as an independent user of water in the basin, determine a set of measures with linkages to national and regional water strategies to ensure implementation of decisions taken by the states in this direction, including the contribution of each state in terms of water share going to the Aral Sea.
- Review and enhance the mandate of regional and national water management organizations to strengthen their roles in implementing an integrated approach to basin management;
- Improve the human resources and technical capacity of BVO Amu Darya and BVO Syr Darya to contribute to Aral Sea basin water resources management; and
- Develop a “Regional Water Partnership” for Central Asia taking in to account the social, economic, and ecological importance of water.

B. Address Additional Specific Improvements Necessary for Management of the Amu Darya Basin

The riparian countries of the Amu Darya basin have experienced the effects of water scarcity in recent years due to drought and poor water regulation. To help alleviate these problems, the following activities are necessary:

- Establish a system of water quantity and quality monitoring along the river;
- Improve the hydrometeorological network to ensure accurate forecasting of runoff and other parameters in the Amu Darya basin;
- Strengthen BVO “Amu Darya” in terms of its financial and management capacity to more effectively monitor and regulate water quantity and quality;
- Develop automated system of management and control of flow in the basin (SCADA);
- Establish mutually satisfactory arrangements to manage return flow in the middle and lower reaches of the Amu Darya basin.

II. Enhance Water Management in the Upper Catchment Areas of the Aral Sea Basin

Cooperation between Central Asian countries should be strongly encouraged to address land and water management problems faced by the countries located in the upper catchment areas, including the need to:

- Address concerns relating to a desired expansion of irrigated agriculture as a response to economic decline and a perceived lack of food security in the countries of the upper catchment areas;
- Assure access to high quality drinking water;
- Develop solutions, with basin-wide commitments to and responsibilities for planning and implementing, related to problems of land and water management in upper catchment areas (e.g., soil erosion, deforestation, mountain pasture degradation and landslides/mudflows) exacerbated by unfavorable topographic conditions; and
- Requirements of upper catchment countries as to compensation by neighboring countries the costs of such services as operation, maintenance and reconstruction of water-energy facilities of inter-state significance, activities related to water resources monitoring, prevention of desiccation, and elimination of adverse impacts exerted by water in the run-off formation zones should be settled through long-term inter-state agreements.

III. Introduce Policies, Practices and Instruments to Increase Water Use Efficiency in the Aral Sea Basin

The water resources of the Aral Sea basin are finite and water conservation is critical to satisfying long-term water demands. Improving water availability by reducing losses will require long-term and large-scale investments and water conservation measures also should be carried out while observing agreed interstate water allocations. High priority policy and practice reforms include the need to:

- Develop economic and legal instruments to promote effective water resources use;
- Develop an extension service and demonstration plots which serve as a principal tool for promotion of water saving and water conservation for Water User Associations, water management organizations and water users;
- Implement water monitoring and measurement with provision for broad public participation;
- Promote introduction of new technologies and improvement of existing technologies to reduce water waste and pollution;
- Give high priority attention to improving on-farm water management;
- Conduct public awareness campaigns to improve education of the population and advancement of an appropriate culture of water use; and
- Promote a multisectoral and multistakeholder approach to water resources management with a special emphasis on integrating policy and institutional reforms in the agriculture sector with those addressing improved water resources management.