



Project Preparation Workshop

(Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan)

Enabling countries of the transboundary Syr Darya Basin to make sustainable use of their groundwater potential and subsurface space with consideration to climate variability and change

UNESCO Headquarters Paris

3-4 February 2014

Overview of the Meeting

The project Preparation **Workshop** marks the formal start up of project preparation activities (PPG), following three preliminary national level consultations in the project countries (September 2013). Its objective is to reach, through a series of presentations and group discussions, a full understanding among all participants of the project rationale, expected outcomes and activities, and of the preparation process, execution modalities and roles.

Project Objectives

The objective of the project – funded by the Global Environment Facility, implemented by UNDP, and executed by UNESCO-IHP – is to fill a gap in the present approach to water management in the region by launching a full-fledged initiative to integrate groundwater, including transboundary groundwater, into water management practices and policies in the Syr Darya Basin. The project will also represent a globally relevant demonstration of the important role of groundwater and subsurface space in coping with increased climate variability and change, balancing water uses, and improving overall sustainability and cooperation in complex transboundary contexts.

Technical Overview

The Syr Darya River, part of the Aral Sea Basin, is one of the largest and most important water arteries in former Soviet Central Asia. It runs along territories of four new states – Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kazakhstan, and supplies water to a large part of the population of the region. In particular it flows along the well-known Fergana valley, which is the most populated area in Central Asia. Growing climatic variability and change, with rapidly shrinking glaciers and increased frequency of extreme events, is further complicating the already complex situation of land and water degradation, as well as of the key environmental services provided by the freshwater ecosystems of the basin. The exacerbating extreme water-related events and climate change require us to reach a consensus on appropriate and effective management strategies at regional level. Serious questions must also be raised as to whether proposing solutions that focus almost exclusively on the equitable allocation of surface water flows are destined to fail unless groundwater studies and management are fully considered. *It is argued that any strategy for the management of water resources in Central Asia must have appropriate regard for the huge and so far largely disregarded groundwater resources present in the basin, and of their significant role in the overall water budget.*

Moreover, UNESCO-IHP, within the framework of its ISARM programme, has mapped the transboundary aquifers of the region and highlighted the importance of these in the sustainable

management of the region's water resources. In this context it becomes crucial to outline the importance of strengthening cooperation amongst countries in order to arrive at a sustainable management of such resources.

The Program of the Workshop:

1. Project preparation

Discuss and agree upon, based on drafts presented at the meeting:

- The **Strategic Results Framework** of the project, containing the project's Expected Outcomes, Indicators of Achievement, Baseline Situation, Targets and Project Design Assumptions.
- The **Project Framework**, indicating the Outputs needed to reach the Outcomes, and the Activities that will produce the Outputs.
- The organizational structure and **Execution Arrangements** proposed for the project, and the roles of the various actors and meeting participants in the execution of PPG activities.

2. Process and objectives of the preparation phase

- Present the project preparation process, including the tasks of the National Consultants, selection of pilot demonstrations, and the steps leading to the Preparation of the Project Document and of the documentation required for GEF CEO Endorsement.
- Present a summary of the results and issues emerging from the National Consultations.
- Discuss the validity of Project Design Assumptions in the light of the expertise of participants and of the results of the national consultations.

3. Synergies, Co-financing and Partnerships

- Present ongoing activities relevant to the project, and interactions:
 - *ISARM Programme (UNESCO)*
 - *Global Groundwater Assessments: The GEF Transboundary Waters Assessment Programme (TWAP) - Groundwater component executed by UNESCO*
 - *Groundwater Governance: A Global Framework for Action (GEF, FAO, UNESCO)*
- Presentations from Observers: The workshop will be open to the participation of and inputs from observers from other countries of the region, and from ODA providers and international experts active in water resources management in Central Asia.
- Discussion on commitments by the countries, co-financing needs, possible partnerships.