

Summary Notes of the Amu Darya Basin Network Conference Call 6 22 June 2011, 12:00-13:30, EastWest Institute (EWI), Brussels

22 June 2011

Introduction

The sixth conference call of the members of the Amu Darya Basin Network was held on 22 June 2011. This document briefly highlights the main points discussed during the call, including the Project Document, the website, and major strengths and weaknesses of the Policy Brief on Developing Capacities and Empowering Local Experts.

Summary of discussed points:

A) THE PROJECT DOCUMENT OF THE ADBN:

Participants expressed their views on the groups targeted as part of the Network's activities. In particular, there are less local/young researchers, but rather European/US researchers and experts in the network, which should be added. One participant also suggested engaging the hydrometeorological organizations of the riparian countries as well as the Basin Water Organizations in the Network's work.

There is also a need in a common understanding on what we want to work on and what we need to agree upon and how to operationalize that (practical steps), including fundraising, expansion of the Network, and advocacy strategy. Thus, it was agreed that the project document is to be regarded as a document in progress that can be reviewed every 6 months, as needed.

B) THE WEBSITE: FEEDBACK AND SUGGESTIONS

The website continues to remain an essential part of the Network for knowledge and information sharing, as well as a vital and effective coordination tool for Amu Darya River Basin related activities. The participants were informed that the website is being updated currently, and the website should be active in the coming 2 weeks time.

- Dissemination of information

Dissemination of the information from members can be possible in two ways. Once the website is up and running, the members may have the possibility of logging in to the website by the use of their login and password, and uploading the necessary information themselves. At present, this is possible through the Secretariat.

- Use of social media

In order to make the website more interactive, encourage discussions and enhance visibility, the use of social media (such as Facebook, Twitter, etc.) was suggested by some members. The topics of discussion in those social networks could include comments on the published material, and not necessarily the work in progress. Other ways of interactivity could include SharePoint and Intranet. The ADBN website itself stays as an important way for knowledge sharing and interactive dialogue exchange.

- Russian translation

Russian translation is an essential part for the activities of the Amu Darya Basin Network. For now, the website's major parts will be translated into Russian by the Network Secretariat, as well as some of the major publications, such as the consultation report and the policy briefs. In addition, abstracts of research papers and reports can also be translated. In future, translation of more papers and material will require funding, which should be sought both by the members and the secretariat.

C) POLICY BRIEF ON CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT: COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

In general terms, the Policy Brief received good feedback from the members. However, some statements in the Brief could still be strengthened by adding more specific details, examples, analysis and concrete recommendations.

- The methodological part of the document could be expanded to include concepts of capacity, knowledge transfer and knowledge building. For example, capacity is not only about education, but it also includes collaborative creation, access and use of the information systems.
- The circulated document is too long for a Policy Brief. A summarized version of it, once completed, should be published as a policy brief, and this document should be regarded as a working paper. The language in the circulating document is technical and needs to be backed by examples from the region to make it accessible for policymakers.
- Discussion on the lack of capacity highlights only limits and deficits of the capacity in the region. However, one must acknowledge that local expertise is there, and there is a need to build on it. There is a necessity to identify key skills that are needed to be promoted, and skills needed across different levels.
- New title has been suggested "Developing integrated water management capacity", which was agreed by all the participants.
- An important question for the members: Are the messages, challenges and policies presented in this document, the ones we want to develop and advocate with? It is important to identify the right approach for using this paper as a policy document to be used for advocacy.
- Addressing nontransparent education system, in particular, corruption as part of the problems related to capacity development. Different views were expressed concerning the discussion on corruption. Corruption should be highlighted in the background of the challenges, yet it is not the mandate of the Network to treat the capacity deficit from an anti-corruption angle.

D) INFORMATION POINTS

- Next meeting

It was proposed that the next meeting of the Amu Darya Basin Network take place in the fourth week of July (exact date and time to be confirmed).

- De-brief on the Follow-up Meeting of the 2010 SPECA Economic

Members who have participated in the Follow up meeting of the 2010 UN SPECA Economic Forum Forum “Launching a Plan of Action to Strengthen Stability and Sustainable Development of Afghanistan through Regional Economic Cooperation in Central Asia” held on 7-8 June 2011 in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan have briefed the participants of the call on the outcomes of the forum. One of the outcomes of the meeting is that Afghanistan is ready to cooperate with the riparian countries on technical level and on capacity building initiatives. This indicates the importance of the policy document of the network on capacity building, and its relevance to improving regional cooperation.

In addition, the participants were informed that new ideas and proposals are being sought for organization of the side event that was planned to be carried out as part of international conference “Towards the 6th World Water Forum – Cooperative Actions for Water Security” and was expected to bring together Afghan and Central Asian experts.