

Amu Darya Basin Network

Project Document

Regional Security Program

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Abstract:

The Amu Darya Basin Network is a hub of local and international experts, practitioners, scientists, researchers, policymakers, donors and implementing organizations working in or interested in the Amu Darya Basin. Adopting a basin-wide vision, it acts as a platform for interaction and communication among respective members with the objective to generate and spread knowledge and policy tools, exchange of experiences and perspectives about pillar water governance issues in the Amu Darya Basin.

History:

In 2010 the EastWest Institute and the Irrigation and Water Engineering Group of the Wageningen University have jointly launched a project entitled '*Afghan-Central Asian water cooperation on management of the Amu Darya: connecting experts and policymakers in the low lands*'. This one year process was carried out within the framework of the Development Policy Review Network and focused on cross-border cooperation between Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan on the management of the Amu Darya basin's shared water resources.

The Amu Darya Basin Network was created in the framework of this project. The network currently has around thirty five members and includes policymakers, scientists, researchers, practitioners, and experts from Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, France, Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands, United Kingdom, and the United States of America.

The Amu Darya Basin Network is an innovative pool of collaboration among experts and practitioners of riparian states of the Amu Darya Basin, together with foreign experts, where constructive and complementary approaches to cooperation are advocated.

The Amu Darya Basin Network highlights the need for local ownership and input in the management of shared waters, and for engagement in the region in more concrete ways. Although In this regard, the Amu Darya Basin Network is a platform for linking local and international experts with the goal to generate knowledge and constructive policy tools for local policy makers as well as the donor community. It also generates and spreads knowledge for researchers and practitioners in the Amu Darya Basin.

Vision:

Progressing regional cooperation over shared resources in the Amu Darya river basin, in which we envision that (1) **Afghanistan is part of the Amu Darya river basin in legal, institutional, technical and scientific terms**; (2) there is a **technical and scientific collaboration in agriculture, energy, and water sectors** between the riparian countries; (3) the Universities and research institutes in the Amu Darya basin have **interstate regional mobility programs** where future specialists acquire specialized and interdisciplinary knowledge and skills;

Mission and goals:

To contribute to the above-mentioned vision, the Amu Darya Basin Network aims **to provide a space to interact in a productive platform among international and local policymakers, scientists, researchers, practitioners, and experts**, in order to:

- Facilitate connection, exchange experiences and perspectives, generate lessons learned and best practices,

- Generate knowledge and constructive policy tools through the development of common and sustainable approaches to crucial issues of water security in the region, where national interests are transcended and aligned with a Basin wide approach.
- Generate information tools to contribute to coordination of ongoing research activities, as well as regional, national and donor policies.

The target groups from the Network's work are:

1. **Local / young researchers in the Amu Darya Basin**
2. **Practitioners and researchers in the Amu Darya Basin.**

Pillar subjects of interest in the Network are:

- Transboundary water governance
- Water, energy and food interlinkages
- Integrated Water Resources Management
- Capacity development for enhancing water cooperation
- Water use efficiency, irrigation and water sector reform
- Research and agricultural innovations

Methodology:

Membership: Amu Darya Basin Network will deliver on its objective by including members from:

- Government and non government experts
- International and local experts and practitioners,
- Scientists and researchers of foreign and local universities and research organizations
- Experts from interstate organizations and International donor community.

The Amu Darya Basin Network can become the go-to point for regional and international policymakers, scientific researchers and other interested individuals aiming to be connected with local experts and practitioners on projects related to the pillar subjects identified.

The Network will use **four main tools** for achievement of intended goals:

1) **Conference Calls/Meetings:** The conference calls represent the main implementation tool for the Network, whereas discussions will generate information on discussed topics, and build connections among attending members. **Each conference call**

has a **particular thematic topic** and members with expertise and interest in the identified theme attend and discuss as a group to address practical questions and suggest concrete recommendations to be used as a policy tool.

The themes identified to be discussed in the conference calls of 2011 are:

- **Capacity development**

Enhancing cooperation over shared resources in the Amu Darya Basin requires strategic development of capacities in different areas related to data generation and analysis, application of international law, water and energy use efficiency, adaptation to climate change, and others. Capacities of local/young researchers are in need to be strengthened for the regional cooperation.

- **Energy and water use**

Energy and water sectors need to be looked at simultaneously with a perspective that takes into account both national interests and regional cooperation. Efficient use of water and energy resources and benefit sharing are essential.

- **Innovations in agriculture and water sector**

Reducing dependency on agricultural sector, especially on water intensive crops, investigating new and less water-intensive crops, and advancing sustainable agricultural development and water use efficiency.

- **Climate change adaptation**

Mitigation and adaptation to climate change must be a key priority in the region and interstate communication and cooperation is an important factor. The interventions must start at all levels starting from local to regional.

Each theme will be discussed in a series of 2-3 conference calls. Before the conference call, different members of the network who are experienced in the respective topic prepare discussion/position papers in order to guide the discussion. The result of these discussions will be a **policy paper** with concrete recommendations that would be used as a **policy tool for members to use in their respective institutions and communities**. Members will be part of the preparations for thematic discussions. Members can assign themselves to their preferred themes in the attached table.

2) **Website/The hub:** The website is an interactive platform for members to spread their knowledge and make it available to practitioners, students and organizations. Members are invited to make their research and publications available on the web for use and dissemination to visitors.

It is also a networking tool for members, and effective tool for connection with audience at local and international level, especially researchers, practitioners and students.

3) **Research:** The network will also aim at generating knowledge through **empowering researchers in the Amu Darya Basin**. Through its members and its website, the network will outsource research proposals from practitioners and researchers in the Amu Darya Basin:

- The research must be a result of collaboration in the Amu Darya Basin (between local-local or local-international researchers or institutions).
- The network members act as a voluntary editorial board that will review research papers to be then posted on the website.
- With the availability of funds, these papers would be translated into local languages to make it available and empower local experts.

4) **Fundraising:** The Network will aim at raising funds for translation of research papers for empowerment of local researchers and in the future expanding this activity of the Network to entail meetings in Central Asia and Afghanistan for the Network members.

The role of the Members of the Amu Darya Basin Network:

The Members of the Network will:

- **Take the initiative on network expansion** inviting stakeholders to join.
- **Engage actively** in the discussions through conference calls, email and website forums by providing their input.
- Before the conference calls, members who assigned themselves in the respective topics prepare discussion/position papers to guide the discussion.
- **Provide their input** to the policy documents generated as a result of knowledge exchange between members.
- **Together with EWI staff, participate** on proposal development and fundraising for the Network's activities
- **Contribute to the research component** of the network by producing papers and assisting in the outsourcing, reviewing and editing of collaborative research papers in the Amu Darya Basin.
- Experienced researchers within the Network will act as a "voluntary editorial board" to **review papers of local / young researchers**, improve them and make them competitive for existing **peer-reviewed international journals** to connect their research to the wider academic community. With the availability of funds, these papers would be translated into local languages to make it available and empower local experts.
- The members of the network should **use the policy tools** generated during the process to influence policy makers, stakeholders and the donor community.

The role of the EastWest Institute:

- EWI will act as a secretariat for organization and facilitation of communication, gathering and exchange of the network's members.
- EWI will analyze the information generated and the noted discussions in the conference calls into an action oriented policy paper. The outcome is a policy tool based on the exchange among members.
- Staff members from EWI can take part in the reviewing process of submitted research papers.
- Staff from EWI will be taking the lead in the management of the website
- EWI will **coordinate with members** to take the lead on network expansion and inviting members
- EWI will **collaborate with members** on developing proposals and fundraising for the Network's activities.