

Questions and Answers

Day 1: River Basin Case 3 – (Iran) IWRM in Urumya Basin

Speakers: Dr. J. Attari (Water & Power Industry University) and Eng. Fani-Hagh (Water Research Institute)

Q. Achieving a water use efficiency of 50% is not very easy. Is this a realistic target?

A. Puyol, the local consulting engineers, say that this is doable, but it is as yet only a proposal

Q. Please can you elaborate on the concept of provincial water committees?

A. This is just an idea that is being floated that may have relevance to the Alborz, but may not be a basin approach. The GoI is trying to give more independence to provincial officials and, of course, water utility companies exist at the provincial level. As the Urumya Basin falls in two provinces, there might be advantages if basin management is organised via two provincial water committees.

Q. We have a national water committee, and if we have a provincial water committee, why do we need another body?

A. This will be debated, but the issue is whether to have a basin approach or a provincial approach.

Q. A goal behind this project is to increase flows in to Urumya Lake and the wetlands. Do you think that water use efficiency/productivity experiments on 2 ha pilot plots are going to contribute to this goal?

A. A sectoral approach would be to build a new dam to meet water needs. This would damage the lake, causing levels to drop and everyone will be affected. Our main goal is to protect and manage fragile ecosystems and to achieve this by developing software systems that can evaluate the impact of new infrastructure. The model can also show that applying different techniques can have a beneficial effect.

Q. (van Steenberg) What is your experience of working with stakeholders?

A. All stakeholders have been involved, and people began to think multi-sectorally, including at the decision-making level.

Q. What are the causes of the falling water levels in Urumya Lake? The speaker said it was due to drought, but dams and agriculture must have been major players. When the drought eased 5 years ago, the situation did not improve.

A. We investigated the extent that Urumya's problems are associated with development and with rainfall variability. The conclusion from the modelling studies is that the situation would not be so bad if there had not been a drought in recent years. However, we should not blame everything on the drought.

Q. Is the ELWIS software available to everyone and can this modelling approach be used in other basins?

A. The approach can be used anywhere and WRI has a key for this software. However, the results will depend on the inputs provided.

Q. Given the literacy levels of farmers, do you think that they will be able to replicate or scale up the approaches used on the pilot farms?

- A I think that farmers are very intelligent and skilled and can come up with solutions themselves. An action research was used on the pilot farms. Consequently, we believe that the approach can be replicated throughout the Urumya Basin