

Questions and Answers

Day 1: River Basin Case 1 – (China - Tarim Basin Management)

Speaker: Dr. Mei Xie (World Bank Institute)

Q What types of loans were made by the WB for the Tarim Projects?

A. IDA credit for the Tarim Phase-I followed by, as a result of China's graduation from IDA country to IBRD country, a blend of IBRD loan and IDA credit for Tarim Phase-II.

Q. Was there resistance when decisions were made to route more water downstream from the upper watershed areas to the terminal lake?

A. At first people did not like the idea and the quotas and for the first two years most prefectures did pay much attention to the quotas. But as a result of quota enforcement with reward and punishment measures in place, all prefectures are now observing the quotas (in 2005, all met the quota requirements).

Q. Given the experiences in China, wouldn't it be better if a river basin commission be established immediately for the Alborz Basin instead of going through a committee first?

A. Each country has its own conditions. For the Tarim, the set up of a committee was the right thing for that historical period and for the then local conditions, as people and leaders did not have as well a deep understanding about their ecosystems and their requirements as they do today. Thus, the establishment of the Tarim committee was a natural thing to do as a first step. For Iran, the establishment of any new entity should follow the local conditions and the needs for the basin and how people here perceive their basin issues. The general lesson learnt from IWRM implementation is that it is not a good idea to make major institutional changes in one step.

Q Does the Tarim commission have financial autonomy ?

A. The TBMB is publicly funded agency. It gets main funds (administrative funds) from the provincial government budget allocation. It collects a water resources fee as part of their income (40%). It is thinking about financial sustainability currently and tries to move towards financial autonomy. But public functions should be clearly separated from those of service provision in nature. For the latter, a fee should be collected to cover the cost. For the former, it is within the public domain to fund those functions.

Q. How were the WUAs established?

A This is a big topic that will be covered by a presentation on Day 2 of the workshop and during the second regional workshop on WUA.

Q. Wasn't there resistance to the changing the basis for charging for water from area to volumetric?

A. Farmer loved the volumetric measurements and charging systems, because they can pay less if they save water. The measures are in general made at the turnout of a WUA rather than at individual farm fields. But in some areas in Tarim, farmers in the WUA were actually demanding measurements be put at the individual field levels.