

Panel Discussions and Questions & Answers

Panelists: Dr. Gholami (PIU, MOJA), Eng. Abbaspour, Eng. Baghari (PIU, MWRC), Eng. Ebrahimnejad (PIU, MOJA), Mr. Ueda (World Bank)

Eng. Abbaspour

- Very diverse comments have been made during the workshop. Also a wide range of terminologies has been used.
- Maybe people think this workshop is taking place too early in the project but experience from the Tajan Project shows that the timing is correct, coming before construction.
- There will be a Farsi version of the proceedings that will be distributed to farmers.
- The China presentation (Tarim Basin Case Study) was very interesting. But in Mazandaran conditions are very different and farmers have different demands and interests.
- On Day 2, other projects in Iran were referred to, where farmer participation and farmers' goals were not 100% achieved.
- Training and capacity development should aim to empower people.
- It is too early to finalise details of the institutional roles and responsibilities of a Basin Land and Water Committee. We cannot say yet how water should be allocated.
- The Gol is currently working on new water legislation. There is a national document on water development in which a participatory process is favoured. It is too early to go ahead with some aspects of the project until this is finalised.

Dr Gholami

- Many valuable comments have been made during the workshop.
- This workshop is primarily about water and not land. We should concentrate our comments on water.
- Concerning the establishment of water committees in Iran, farmers' reactions are different depending on whether or not they are going to be charged for something
- In the conference, I have heard little about stakeholder reaction to change. Behavioural responses are very important. Given the nature of the proposed changes to water management in the Alborz Basin, I suggest that a referendum is held, which local committees will themselves organise.
- There are differences between rural and urban people that must be recognised so that rural stakeholders can participate in the water management process. Literacy levels are low in the rural areas. Rural people are intelligent but they are functionally illiterate. Awareness raising should be the priority, then talk of water committees.
- Given that many young people are moving from rural areas to urban areas, the project needs to consider ways of improving rural job opportunities. Unfortunately, the conference did not pay adequate attention to this issue of rural – urban migration
- Committees must be sanctioned by law to be sustainable. To function effectively, enforcement of the law is essential.
- Experiences from other countries are very useful and valuable. However, we need to give weight to our own ideas.

Comments/Questions from other participants

Farmers' representative. We need water. Water has been wasted to the sea and yet 2000 ha have suffered from drought during this last Spring. These structures and institutions that we have been discussing are important, but what we need is water. Farmers are ready to give. They are very cooperative. But officials should pay more

attention to farmers. We hear all the time about the Alborz dam but we do not how the work is progressing. Mr Abbaspour please respond?

Mr Ismail (Hydrosult): In project concept, the BWC has to do many things. Maybe too many things? It is almost like a ministry! There is a problem of the links with existing institutions. I suggest that the BWC starts with a well-defined mandate that tackles urgent issues first, and which may increase over a period of time.

Ms Shahriari (WB): Social issues have been mentioned again and again during the workshop. We must take account of the issues raised. One far-reaching pre-project study took account of the behaviour of farmers, levels of literacy and also what media methods should be used by the project when disseminating information.

A.N.Other 1: Those studies are not bad. However they are not comprehensive and do not meet the needs for setting up WUAs. More studies are needed.

Dr Najafi (CAPIC): We must identify those components of WUA plans that are consistent with existing legislation. We should follow through components that comply and are achievable; where they are not, we need to find solutions. Overseas experiences and studies are good but are different and not that helpful. Comprehensive "local" studies are needed - literacy and employment rates have been covered but fully analysed. Workshops are good but must be careful not to leave things hanging in the air before the next one. I suggest that we establish an experts and stakeholder platform to give food for thought for the next workshop, and also to highlight and address issues. Farmers know their products well. Lack of literacy does not mean that they do not know how to grow crops - they are the experts.

Mr Sandoz (WB): Problems of water allocation arise when demand exceeds supply. Management systems need to be in place for allocation under drought conditions - who gets what, and where. The time has come for working with farmers and providing awareness, rather than more studies. I feel farmers would prefer that we start now.

Mr Kremer (WB): I have been very quiet during workshop. It has been good to listen and learn. Right at the centre of the process of river basin water management, are the ways that the BWC resolves conflicts between parties. The BWC has to be able to resolve conflict. I am still wondering what will be the powers of the BWC to resolve conflict, and how they can be enforced. What powers will be given to it by the parent departments? So far it sounds a like a discussion forum but does it have ambitions to go beyond this?

A.N.Other 2: Officials involved in a project must go to the farmers - for example, a dam may be built but there may still not be enough water for the farmers' paddy fields, and the farmers will leave.

Government Officer: Dams and networks are changing the lives of people. An issue missing here has been the maintenance of the network and handover of O&M to farmers. Farmers do not yet have the technical expertise. But maybe this is not important. Maybe the message needs to be that the project will change livelihoods. We must use a simple, common language that village-level stakeholders will understand but that can put across complex economic issues.

Mr Maherani (Mahab Ghodss): There is a big gap between government and the users. We all agree that more responsibility should be given to farmers but is this possible? Experts have lots of information but is this really relevant to this area? Economic

experiences are certainly not transferable. We should establish a bridge (or network) to overcome this problem.

Dr van Steenberg (PMSC): Water for agricultural is very important, but we should not forget urban water users and the lack of water treatment capacity in the basin. Rivers runs through urban areas and, as a result, environmental pollution is an issue.

Mr Ueda

- I would like to express my sincere appreciation and respect for all the workshop participants for their very calm discussion of hugely important subjects. This is a first participative step for the project. There is a long way to go but we have made a good start.
- Clearly there is no perfect model that can be copied by the Alborz Basin
- It is important to start the process of developing an approach that meets the specific needs and characteristics of the Alborz Basin, for example as Tarim Phase-I leading to Phase-II.
- The BWC must achieve to participation of all stakeholders - from government to the community. When working with stakeholders we must translate scientific information into layman's language that is easy to understand by everyone.
- Systems of water management in the Alborz need to deal with inter-sectoral issues. This is very challenging but we have an opportunity to achieve something important.
- The project's target or purpose is achievable but maybe we should aim first at the low hanging fruit.
- Although there are many legislative issues to be tackled we should make a start.
- Social issues also need to be addressed. We need to adopt an interactive approach. Social studies have been carried out and the ESMP can now be started.
- The project should search for win-win solutions.
- The next workshop will focus on WUAs. The agenda for this workshop will be agreed by the end of this mission.
- The spirit of project is learning by doing. We get feedback and we find solutions. By working together we can achieve the targets. This is an important process.
- With regard to needs assessment and capacity building, there will be an increased emphasis on national experiences in coming days.
- Physical structures are important and they must be completed on schedule
- The workshop proceedings will be translated into Farsi and disseminated to participants.

Dr Gholami

- I was a farmer myself. In Elam Province, there was a project to mechanise cultivation of rice by drilling seeds rather than transplanting. I lived and worked with farmers so I know that farmers are sharp. .
- The social studies that have been carried out are insufficient . More are needed.
- When referring to water users, we are not talking exclusively about farmers. Livestock, fisheries, municipal areas are also water users. Let's make sure they are all included!
- Mr Ueda has said we should start but we must have a sound basis on which to start our work.

Eng Abbaspour

- There is still a debate and I am ready to answer questions from farmers concerning the Alborz Dam. They can come and see me
- New municipal water supply infrastructure is planned to supply 8 cities totally 500,000 population, as well as the rural areas. We must pay attention to all users.

- Radio and TV have proved to be a good means of disseminating information. However, as the literacy rate amongst farmers is more than 70%, we must also make use of this.
- There is a long tradition of irrigation in this area, and we must draw on the experience from the 80,000 ha under traditional irrigation.
- The rights of Mazandaran people must be taken into account. In Tajan not enough account was taken of views of stakeholders, and we must avoid making the same mistakes in Alborz.
- We do not want to start too quickly
- Experience from the Haraz project has shown that we should not use hydraulic boundaries when setting up water user groups. Stakeholders must be given priority.