

An Approach to Social Mobilization for Effective Stakeholder Participation in Integrated Water Resource Management in the Aral Sea Basinⁱ

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ABSTRACT

Stakeholder participation is one of the most crucial factors for introducing Integrated Water Resources Management successfully. The central Asian experience in involving stakeholders is rather mixed due to use of top-down approaches. Stakeholders can only be effectively involved through a concerted effort and sustained social mobilization, without which the stakeholders fail to understand and effectively participate in decision-making and management of the water resources. Most development projects usually pay inadequate attention to social mobilization, and thus, suffer from second-generation problems. This paper builds on the work of an on-going project named "Integrated Water Resources Management in the Fergana Valley" on social mobilization for establishing effective water users associations, and presents a framework for involving stakeholders effectively in the conception, design, implementation and evaluation of the approaches, projects and programs for implementing Integrated Water Resources Management.

KEY WORDS: Social Mobilization, Stakeholders, participation, community, water delivery service, Integrated Water Resources Management

1. WHAT IS SOCIAL MOBILIZATION AND WHY IT IS NEEDED?

The management of water resources in an integrated manner requires that all the stakeholders, including the users, participate in planning, governing, financing and managing the resource. A general observation about Central Asia is that the programs, projects, and plans for introducing integrated water resources management (IWRM) are planned at the highest levels of decision making by the governmental policy makers and lending agencies, excluding the concerns and needs of many key stakeholders, and they are, at best, involved during the implementation stage by the traditional top-down approach of "incentive groups". This approach essentially results into quick identification of key influential people, who do not represent vast majority of stakeholders, from amongst the stakeholders and usersⁱⁱ. All the key decisions about water resource management and governance ultimately end up in few hands, leaving the ordinary and powerless majority helpless and unconcerned, and ultimately lack of ownership of the initiatives, that are aimed at benefiting the vast majority.

Social mobilization refers to the articulation of the concerned stakeholders in such a manner that their problems and concerns are incorporated into the planning, design, implementation and

monitoring and evaluation of the programs, and the resource managing organizations manage the resource on behalf of the stakeholders and are accountable to them. Thus, social mobilization, if rightly carried out, has the potential to lead to a greater ownership and effectiveness of the programs and projects, making these interventions pro-poor. Social mobilization is not an event, whereby the stakeholders are invited to a meeting or a group discussion and decisions are taken there; rather it is a continuous process of participatory service delivery analysis, information sharing, consultation, negotiation, dialogue, decision-making, capacity-building, monitoring and evaluation. IWRM may not happen without an effective participation of the ultimate users of water, i.e. the farming communities. Farmers are supposed to play an important role in the integrated water resources management at the on-farm and inter-farm levels through their effective participation in developing, managing, governing and financing the water users organizations, where most of the mismanagement of water takes place.

The central Asian experience shows that in the past, the only organized forums of stakeholders have been the Water Users Associations (WUAs), most of which have been established through top-down approaches, where the ordinary farmers have neither been consulted nor been informed that they are members of the WUAs, what would be their role, and how they would benefit from WUAs. Rather, a group of knowledgeable people (usually called the founding members or the incentive group) initiated the process of establishing WUA, got it registered with the justice department, and then the initiators became the council of WUA. In addition, most of these WUAs have been established following territorial principles of farms boundaries, whereby each association draws water from a number of crisscrossing water sources, which makes the association business too complicated and sub-optimal. Besides, all the interest groups (cooperative farms, private farms, kitchen gardens, brick makers, etc.) have not been included into the membership; rather the most dominant stakeholders have been declared members and others as non-members. In many cases, such WUAs have failed or are unable to even recover the costs of water and operation and maintenance of the irrigation and drainage facilities from the farmers, because the ordinary farmers do not feel ownership and tend to avoid fee payment.

This experience suggests that if the stakeholder organizations are established using top-down approaches, and excluding minority interests, they are weak and have a high risk of failure. Such organizations should rather be established through a bottom-up consultative approach, which requires concerted and strategic attempts to work with the ordinary grassroots level stakeholders / water users to establish their organizations so that they understand why they need an organized collective action, and how they will benefit from it. As a matter of fact, the stakeholders should be the creators, owners, and beneficiaries of such organizations.

Since water management was not the task of ordinary farmers in Central Asia till recently, many of the water users hardly know how it reaches their fields, why it is scarce, why some receive more and others less, why it is not always on time, what essential tasks and functions need to be performed to convey water to their fields, and so on. Thus, there is a need that someone professionally trained should broaden farmer's understanding of water management and their stake in its effective management.

This paper presents an approach to social mobilization for stockholder's effective participation for IWRM in Central Asian countries based on the earlier field knowledge of the situation gained through the IWRM-Fergana Project. This approach has been, though in part, tested while developing three pilot WUAsⁱⁱⁱ, and three pilot main canal water committees, one each in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, and can easily be adopted to the higher levels of the water infrastructure.

2. OBJECTIVES, FUNCTIONS AND TRAITS OF SOCIAL MOBILIZERS^{iv}

The person or the group of persons, who carry out social mobilization are called social mobilizers, community organizers, social organizers, institutional organizers, etc. In this paper, we use the term **Social Mobilizers**.

a) Objectives of Social Mobilization:

- Help stakeholders to form a group and establish the self-reliant organization that can plan, design, construct, operate, maintain, manage, govern and finance their water delivery and disposal systems optimizing various interests of stakeholders
- Facilitate assessment and prioritization of needs and resources mobilization
- Promote communication and train stakeholders in problem – solving, decision making, conflict resolution
- Built community's capabilities in organization and system management
- Smooth relationships between community and service/ water providing agency
- Coordinate with technical staff to facilitate community participation in the project
- Process documentation, evaluation, and development.

b) Functions of Social Mobilizers

- Facilitator & Enabler: organization of the users, awareness building, motivates people to express their ideas, guidance the community to realize its potential in collective action
- Consultant & Adviser: ideas, experience, technical expertise, resource material, evaluation of the process of collective action
- Catalyst: help to establish means to achieve goals, formulate the direction by encouraging local initiatives
- Mobilizer and Stimulator: helps community to realize the need for change, facilitates farmers' decisions on problems, action planning, and implementation of plans, makes provisions to sustain the changes adopted)
- Project identifier & Information collector
- Link between the community and the rest of the world

c) Knowledge needed for Social Mobilizers

- Sociology (knows the community set-up and its levers)
- Internal and External Institutional matters (financial, by-laws and other regulations, business relationships between community and water service provider
- Irrigation and agricultural techniques, water application use efficiency, allocation, distribution and measurement, etc; infrastructure maintenance, crop growing, soil productivity

d) Skills needed for Social Mobilizers

- Ability to encourage, listen, negotiate and persuade
- Analyze and reason abstractly and creatively
- Assess mgt performance
- Group organizing methods
- Monitoring and evaluation methods
- Training needs assessment methods
- Direct and clear expression of ideas
- Design irrigation system improvements in a participatory fashion
- Common sense

e) Attitudes needed for Social Mobilizers

- Willingness to consider and adjust to new ideas and solutions
- Broadmindedness
- Capacity to work hard and persistence
- Does not give up easily
- Experiences of different stakeholders are an important resource
- Down - to - earth

f) Things that Social Mobilizers should avoid

- Egocentrism: self centered in ideas and opinions
- Bureaucratic and procedure oriented attitude
- Verbal diarrhea, inability to listen, and dishonesty
- Disrespect to communities and criticism and being biased
- Discrimination inside the community and distance towards the community
- Being under pressure and domination of a few influential people
- Inconsistency and impatience
- Laziness, lack of energy, and inability to work overtime

3. HOW TO CARRY OUT SOCIAL MOBILIZATION FOR ORGANIZING STAKEHOLDERS?

Social mobilization builds stakeholder community's knowledge, confidence on collective action and ultimately leads to the maximum possible participation of the stakeholders in conceiving, designing, developing and managing the organization that has to manage the water resource on their behalf. Following steps are useful while carrying out social mobilization for establishing a functional stakeholders' organization that has to locally manage the resource, and has to interact with other stakeholders, or upstream and downstream management organizations, such as a WUA. It is important to note that the stakeholder's organizations are most effective if organized along the river basin or hydrologic boundaries, rather than territorial or administrative boundaries. Thus, such organizations might even be inter-state organizations, for example for water systems that cross national boundaries.

Step 1: Awareness creation and service delivery analysis

This step is aimed at building rapport and friendly relationships with key stakeholders, analyzing service delivery, creating awareness about the benefits of collective action, options for structure of the organization, its role, functions and how it is organized with community members, their leaders, representatives of the water managing organizations (WMOs), and other key actors involved in the service area of the organization; and collecting initial information about water users and farmers, types, sizes, key water-related problems, etc. The mobilizers should collect data about the water delivery systems (surface, groundwater, return flows) in the service area of proposed organization and the number of water users by type on each of this hydraulic infrastructure; prepare layouts of the service area with conveyance and disposal networks.

The mobilizers should meet community members in small informal groups to create friendly relations, discuss with them the problems they face in receiving water, and how through a stakeholder's organization they could resolve the identified problems. As an essential part of this meeting, the Mobilizers should help the participants of the meeting to carry out a diagnostic analysis. Depending on the number of participants, groups of should be assisted to list the problems, and then each group should be requested to present the problem analysis and possible

solutions with identifying who should do that, and then the groups discuss each other's point of view.

To help understand more about the stake holder's organizations, its objectives, and benefits, meetings can be conducted with community members in small groups at village/ farm / watercourse level, as it might suit the local situation. The mobilizers should provide the participants a brief overview of the project and its intentions in the service areas in as simple words as possible, explaining how the future would look like and how it will affect them. They should also discuss key problems in water management that can be resolved by such an organization.

Step 2: Identify essential components of water service plan

During the second set of meetings, the Mobilizers should present the findings of the earlier diagnostic analysis. After the presentation, the discussion should lead to "how establishing an organization would lead to addressing some or all problems identified" and "how the service should look like" under a stake holder's management". Address the questions like: "What are the essential tasks? Who should perform those tasks and to whom should those performing the tasks be accountable to? Who would pay for that? How to monitor that the objectives are achieved?" Thus, this discussion would lead to some more in-depth discussion and understanding of users organizations on one hand and to the definition of the objectives of the water delivery service and identification of a draft service plan, on the other.

Step 3: Consult the Stakeholders on Appropriate Organizational Design, characteristics of the elected representatives, and the way they would like to choose their representatives for forming the General/ Representative Assembly

During this stage, decisions about the structure and organs of the organization, membership criteria, tenure of representatives, election procedure, rules and by-laws for effective functioning of the organization at different level of the system should be discussed. The mobilizers should present different examples of structures, by-laws, and membership systems to the participants of the consultation meetings.

The Mobilizer should hold meetings in each village or hydraulic unit, as appropriate, to consult water users on tentative plans for establishing the organization. The mobilizers should invite all the community members served by the system and residing in that village by sending hand written messages, local announcements through other local communication means. It should be ensured by the mobilizers that all people receiving water know that there is a meeting about organizing the stakeholders (when and where, to do what). The mobilizers should also paste written notices of information on the public places where stakeholders pay regular visits (for example door of the mosque, community center, grocery shops, etc). The teams should target to inform all stakeholders/ users. After a brief overview of the benefits of collective action, purpose, structure, etc. and other clarifications by the mobilizers if needed, the meeting participants should then be encouraged to discuss and agree on the following:

- Do the participants think that a formal organization, such as a WUA, would be beneficial for all water users, or each category of stakeholders would like to form separate organization (for example, cooperative and lease-holding farm members, private farms and home garden plots owners)?
- Who should be the potential members of the organization? (All types of users having right to take water should be proposed as equal members by the mobilizers, to start the discussion)
- How many representatives should be elected from each hydraulic unit/ community, watercourse into the representative assembly? When they should be elected? How? Who elects them?

Step 5: Introductory Meetings of the Representative Assembly:

After the WUG representatives for representative assembly of the organization are elected, they should then be invited to attend an introductory meeting. This will give them the opportunity to meet and get to know one another well. The agenda for discussion in these introductory meetings should be to refresh the minds of the representatives about the purpose of their organization, to consult on the selection procedure for the Council, and special commissions, and date, time and venue of selection meeting.

The participants of introductory meetings should also be briefed again about the basic objectives of: 1) an organized and participatory effort in water management, 2) decentralization of management responsibilities and authority to organization level 3) greater equity in distribution of water, 4) reliable water supply, 5) better access to government and private sector facilities/inputs and other services as organized group, 6) self governance, and 7) self - reliance.

Afterwards, the Representative Assembly decides on date, time and place for next selection meeting. Ideally the venue of the selection meeting should be at some community center, local body office, school, a training hall or any common place in village where no individual or group has any reservation to participate.

Step 6: Selection of Council, Chairperson, and Special Commission Members

It is always useful to start with a brief presentation of what has happened till now and where do the stakeholders go from now on. Then the mobilizers should help the members of the Representative Assembly to carry out a group analysis of water related problems and identify suggested solutions for the system for which the organization is meant. This discussion should identify the essential management functions associated with the solutions. This will serve as the definition of water service and identification of water service plan.

A short presentation of the characteristics of good leadership, identified by most of them during earlier meetings will help. Also mobilizers should discuss with the participants the importance of selection that will affect the quality of the services they intend to receive from their organization, and then providing them sufficient opportunity for negotiation among themselves, develop consensus. Mobilizers again should brief the participants about the basic objectives of their organization and highlight the envisaged benefits of organized behavior through their own efforts. They should explain that dealing with water problems, as a group would lead to better service than individual efforts of water users. The group should be allowed sufficient time for negotiation to nominate their candidates with consensus. The important point here to be considered is the sustainability of the organization, which will largely depend upon 1) degree of political interference, 2) consensus among the members, 3) provision of equal opportunity for all in decision making, and 4) equal representation of all the basic organizational units in the Council.

The Representative Assembly can decide to elect persons for various positions using a secret ballot or open voting or consensus.

Similar process should be followed to elect the members to the special commissions and their Chairpersons.

Step 7: Preparing and adopting the Founding Documents

For formal organizations, a set of founding documents will be required. These documents include: model charter and bylaws, various maps, service area, inventory of assets, draft ss plan, and other

similar documents specific to each system and country. The Mobilizers need to guide the organized stakeholders and help prepare these documents. They should also explain various steps needed to register and assist in registering the organization.

The first task of the council will be to act as the founding committee (responsible for applying for registration on behalf of the members), review the founding documents (charter, by-laws, draft plans) and adapt these to their local conditions. The by-laws of an organization are dynamic instruments used to enforce, regulate and promote disciplined action in an organization. They are referred to as a dynamic instrument because the by-laws are not static or permanent, and can be changed by the general/ representative assembly. No organization can function properly or be sustained for longer time unless the organization has some basic and clearly defined set rules to abide by.

The Mobilizers should provide technical assistance in this regard in shape of providing the model by-laws already farmed by the state legislation or by the projects (depending upon site specific situations). The main areas which are generally covered in the by-laws are: 1) cropping plans, water demand, limits, water allocation, and distribution and disposal procedures, and maintenance of the system, 2) duties and function of different office bearers, 3) meeting time and procedures, 4) eligibility for membership, 5) termination of membership or from office, 6) membership fee, 7) fund raising, 8) dispute resolution mechanisms, 9) sanctions; and 10) any other.

The mobilizers should help in explaining these documents to the Council, who should adopt these in the light of the objectives of their draft water service plans, keeping in view the legal provisions (if already approved by the government). The mobilizers should also assist the council in discussing the implications of the alternative choices the council has agreed to in the by-laws.

4. CONSOLIDATING STAKEHOLDER ORGANIZATIONS FOR IWRM

4.1 Capacity-Building

Water management in an organized and participatory manner through application of IWRM principles is often a new task for the stakeholders and their organizations. Thus, there is a felt need to build the capacity of stakeholders and their organizations in their new roles and rules. Often, capacity building is confused with running a set of training modules. There is a subtle difference between the two concepts. While training is an event, which ends once the event is carried out, the capacity building is a process that continues unless the stakeholders and their organizations gain enough knowledge and experience, as well as material resources to carry out their tasks confidently and adequately. This aspect is often ignored or at best taken too lightly. Capacity building requires needs assessment, together with the stakeholders after a fair degree of understanding amongst the stakeholders about the new setting and their role as well as the institutional setting and their relationship with other water and non-water managing entities.

4.2 Organizational Consolidation

Once the different set of stakeholders have organized, and their capacity is built, their organizations can be consolidated in a common forum for a water service delivery system (Main Canal, River Basin), that will represent the interests of key stakeholders in the water resources management. The representatives from different set of stakeholders (formal and informal) can be invited to attend briefing and working meetings, discussion and working groups, etc. to work out the framework of interaction among the stakeholder representative bodies, between stakeholder bodies and the water resources management organizations (if different from stakeholders' organizations), an illustration of the process is present

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Figure 1:

- REGULATORY BODIES**
- Ministry of Agriculture & Water
 - Ministry of Reclamation
 - Ministry of Hydropower
 - Ministry of Mineral Resources

System / Canal / River's WATER GOVERNANCE COUNCIL

System / Canal / River MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION

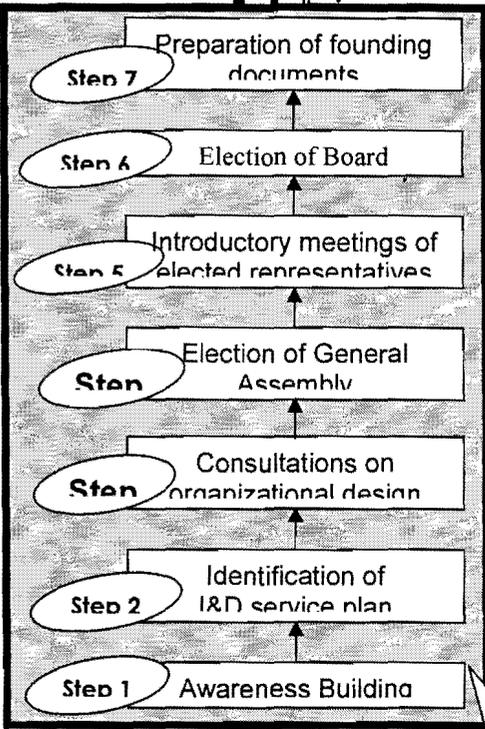
Farmer Water Users FEDERATION

Canal 1 WATER USERS ORGANIZATION

Canal 4 WUO

Canal 3 WUO

Canal 2 WUO



- Other interest groups**
- Environmental Stakeholders
 - Canal Navigators Associations
 - Brick Making Associations
 - Industries
 - Fishermen's Associations
 - Drinking Water Supply Associations
 - Dacha (Kitchen Garden) Associations*



Canal 4 WATER USERS

Canal 3 WATER USERS

Canal 2 WATER USERS

Canal 1 WATER USERS

Main system / canal / river

→ - Governance

⇒ - Financing

This forum will have an overall governance responsibility for the water management organization for that water service delivery system. The water management organization has different roles than the water governance forum. The water management organization should be accountable to the governance forum. The governance and management roles and responsibilities of these two entities can be adopted from elsewhere. Some of these roles and responsibilities have been outlined in the approved concept for integrated water resources management for central Asia prepared by SIC and IWMI in 2003 under the IWRM-Fergana Project^{vi}.

End Notes

ⁱ The framework reported here derives from the documentation and experiences gained under the SDC funded "Integrated Water Resources Management in the Fergana Valley Project (IWRM-Fergana), which is implemented by the association comprising the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) and the Scientific Information Center of the Interstate Commission on Water Coordination (SIC-ICWC) of Central Asia.

ⁱⁱ International Water Management Institute & Scientific Information Center of the Interstate Commission on Water Coordination (IWMI & SIC-ICWC). How to establish a Water Users Association: Practical Steps for Social Mobilizers. Integrated Water Resources Management in The Fergana Valley Project. 2003 also available at <http://www.iwmi.cgiar.org/centralasiawaterusers/>

ⁱⁱⁱ The lessons learned through the social mobilization have been documented in UI Hassan, M. et. al. 2004. "Establishing Sustainable Water Users Associations in Transition Economies: Lessons from Social Mobilization of IWRM-Fergana Project in Central Asia. Draft Paper.

^{iv} For details, see Manor, S.; S. Patamatamkul, and M. Olin 1990. Role of Social Organizers in Assisting Farmer-Managed Irrigation Systems. International Irrigation Management Institute, Colombo, Sri Lanka.

^v The steps presented here have been adopted from IWMI&SIC, 2003. How to establish a Water Users Association. Also available at <http://www.iwmi.cgiar.org/centralasiawaterusers/>

^{vi} "A framework for transition to integrated water resources management in the Fergana Valley of Central Asia" available at www.icwc-aral.uz