



Groundwater Management Project in Sughd, Tajikistan

Phase 1: 2025-2028



BACKGROUND

As an indispensable primary source for water supply or reserve for seasonal variability of surface water, groundwater is an important element of climate change adaptation strategies. However, quantity and quality of groundwater is strongly impacted by human activities, including groundwater depletion and pollution, legal and regulatory frameworks are not applied, responsible institutions lack resources and capacities, coordination is weak and water use efficiency remains low due to poor irrigation practices. While Tajikistan has abundant water resources, these are increasingly under pressure due to high population growth and the advancing impacts of climate change. In Sughd Oblast, groundwater is an absolutely vital resource, especially given the shortage of irrigation water. With aging, underperforming Soviet-era irrigation infrastructure, groundwater serves as a critical alternative for irrigating agricultural lands. This is essential for maintaining the region's agricultural productivity, ensuring food security, and supporting the livelihoods of farmers dependent on irrigated crops. Beyond irrigation, groundwater is a key drinking water source and according to the Tajik Water Code drinking water supply has a priority in using groundwater. As climate change exacerbates water scarcity, groundwater's role as a climate-resilient source of water becomes even more important to compensate for surface water. However, unsustainable extraction practices, contamination from agricultural activities, and inadequate monitoring pose significant threats to Sughd's groundwater reserves. Prioritizing sustainable management through upgraded monitoring systems, regulated abstraction, pollution control, and strengthened groundwater governance is crucial to safeguard groundwater's essential contribution to Sughd Oblast's economic stability and climate resilience.

GOAL AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

The goal of the new project financed by the Swiss Government — The Groundwater Management Project in Sughd, Tajikistan is formulated as follows: *The national and sub-national state institutions ensure a sustainable and equitable use of groundwater resources while safeguarding ecosystem health and enhancing climate resilience through conjunctive water management and participatory governance in the Tajik Syr Darya Basin Zone.*

This desired impact will be achieved through the implementation of the project's planned activities at the national, basin, and aquifer levels.

National level: Support to development of groundwater conducive policy and legal framework for conjunctive water management as a basis for sustainable groundwater management and governance.

Basin level: Assistance in institutional capacity building, basin groundwater governance, upgrading groundwater monitoring and data management, and enhancing groundwater educational and research capacities.

Aquifer level: Improvement of groundwater knowledge base, piloting priority groundwater management improvement measures, development of the drilling industry sector, and raising water users' awareness of efficient, sustainable, and equitable groundwater use.



PROJECT IN A NUTSHELL

Target Group and Beneficiaries: The population of the Sughd Oblast, the population of the groundwater pilot areas, farmers, Water Users Associations (WUAs), Oblast and Rayon Departments of ALRI, and operators of Water Supply Systems.

Project Key Partners: The Ministry of Energy and Water Resources, the River Basin Organisations and the River Basin Council of Tajik Syr Darya Basin Zone, the Main Department of Geology and the Kairakum Complex Geological Expedition in Sughd, the Committee of Environment Protection and its Sughd Oblast Department.

Stakeholders: The Agency of Land Reclamation and Irrigation, the Sughd Oblast and District Local Government, the District Irrigation Agencies, the Water User Associations and Farmers, the Water Utilities and Drinking Water Community Based Organisations, Drilling Companies, Educational Institutions.

Project area, main location: The Sughd Province, the Tajik Syr Darya Basin Zone, the Kamishkurgan and Nau-Ispisar aquifers.

Implementation Agency: The Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation in partnership with IGRAC and IHE Delft.

Duration Phase 1: January 2025 – December 2028

Budget Phase I: 4,877,190 CHF

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