



SUCCESS STORY

No More Fights Over Water

Thanks to USAID, Uzbek farmers no longer have to fight over irrigation water



Tursun Jonikulov is one of many farmers in Samarkand Oblast who have benefited from USAID assistance. Photo: WUASP

“Due to construction of new water structure, all I have to do is to submit a request to the water users association’s office and they do the rest. There are no quarrels or fights for water, and no need to guard the water all the time.”

***—Tursun Jonikulov
Samarkand Oblast
Uzbekistan***

Tursun Jonikulov, an 81-year-old farmer in Samarkand Oblast, was among the first to receive water from a newly built water distribution point. The structure, made possible by the USAID-funded Water Users Associations Support Program, allows for easier irrigation as well as a guaranteed water supply for 824 hectares of farm land owned by 800 people.

More than two-thirds of the Uzbekistan population depend on irrigated agriculture. Old and inefficient pumps, water logging, salinization, silted canals, and mismanagement have all led to a decrease in irrigated land and crop yields. Water supply is unreliable or completely nonexistent in many areas. Consequently, farm incomes have dropped precipitously. The USAID-funded Water Users Associations Support Program is helping farmers increase their incomes through the improved management of their water systems.

The irrigation system in Jonikulov’s community was broken for many years, making it impossible for other farmers and small garden owners like Jonikulov to irrigate land and produce good yields. To irrigate their fields, farmers used to divert the water manually by barricading the canal with bushes, bags of dirt, and anything else they could find. They also had to sit and guard their temporary structures, sometimes even through the night, so that others would not divert it to other locations. The farmers frequently argued and even fought over the water flow, especially during peak times. “Only the most powerful were able to get the necessary amount of water, but the price we paid to the water utility was very high,” says Jonikulov. “We had constant conflicts that were time, money, and energy consuming.”

The USAID-funded Water Users Associations Support Program helped the farmers in Jonikulov’s community install a new irrigation water distribution equipment, renovate the canals, and organize a new way to disperse water among the users. The water user association members were trained how to manage irrigation water and the association’s finances, resolve conflicts, and run their organization. “Now all I have to do is submit a request to the water users’ association office and they do the rest,” says Jonikulov. “There are no quarrels for water, and there is no need to guard the water all the time.”