



**University of
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Competing and Complimentary Framings in the National Irrigation Policy in Kyrgyzstan. A Critical Discourse Analysis of the Helvetas TIRIP project

GEO 511 Master's Thesis

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Abstract

Kyrgyzstan is a semi-arid country, which mainly depends on the agricultural sector. Hence, irrigation services mark an essential foundation of their most important source of income. Water User Associations (WUAs) have regulated the on-farm irrigation sector since the fall of the former Soviet Union (FSU) in the late nineties. As the condition of the irrigation canals have deteriorated significantly over the last decades, a reform of the on-going system has been sought. A policy reform of the Water Code was initiated by Helvetas Intercooperation together with local stakeholders such as farmers, government officials, members of the state water department and lawyers, which has enabled local self-governance bodies (LSG) to take over property of the WUAs, if both parties agreed.

For this research, a three-month field trip to four (4) regions of Kyrgyzstan was undertaken, where 28 semi-structured interviews were analysed with qualitative methods. Research findings are analysed pursuant to Amartya Sen's theories of "Development as Freedom" and "Capability Approach".

The scope of this thesis assesses the first short-term results found in the regions of Jalal-Abad, Osh and Karakol, by understanding how the model is being implemented in each site, framing the attitudes of the stakeholders towards the reform, and how this can be implemented in the scope of development.

The results have shown that each region had a different form of implementation, where either WUAs remained sovereign, LSG bodies supported WUAs via funding and technical equipment or took over the canals under their property. Attitudes framed indicated that the combination of both a strong LSG body and weak, but not indebted WUA favoured the model of the municipality to support or take over the irrigation system. The vast majority of attitudes towards the new legal framework were framed positively, as a direct improvement towards the irrigation system was visible, in the form of canal cementation and thorough cleaning and maintenance works. The newly won support of the LSG body indicated an increase in professional and organisational capacity, stronger cooperation amongst a variety of stakeholders on both local and national level, access to a larger variety of resources, such as heavy machinery and funding, more rigid irrigation fee collection rates, applied methods for conflict resolution, and long-term amelioration plans for the future. Lastly, these findings are similar to other on-farm irrigation systems worldwide, and can be used as a comparative study for on-farm irrigation on a larger scale of development.

As LSG bodies gain freedom of development in the irrigation sector, future capacity-building projects are vital for both local communities as well as irrigation to become more sustainable and improve.

Contents

Abstract	1
Glossary	5
1. Introduction	6
2. Literature Review	9
2.1 International Development Work in Kyrgyzstan	9
2.2 Definition of Concepts	9
2.2.1 Development as Freedom	9
2.2.2 Capability Approach	11
2.3 Introduction of Stakeholders	13
2.3.1 Water User Associations (WUA)	14
2.3.2 Rayon Water Management Department (RWMD)	16
2.3.3 Local Self Governance Bodies (LSG)	17
2.3.4 Village Head	19
2.3.5 Farmers	19
2.3.6 Land reform in the agricultural sector	19
2.3.7 On-Farm Irrigation and Current Struggles	20
2.4 Irrigation Policy Reform in Kyrgyzstan	20
2.4.1 Sources: literature, reports, & interviews	21
2.4.2 The Necessity of a Policy Reform	21
2.4.3 Irrigation Water Integrity Project, IWIP (2018 – 2022)	21
2.4.4 Amendments to the Water Code of Kyrgyz Republic	22
2.4.5 Turning Irrigation Into Practice, TIRIP (2023 – 2025)	23
2.5 Case Study and Research Questions	24
2.5.1 Case Study	24
2.5.2 Research Questions	24
2.5.3 Digression: On-going Territorial Reform, ATR	27
3. Methodology	28
3.1 Research Framework and Methodology	28
3.2 Preparation and Access to the Field	28
3.3 Sampling	30
3.4 Data Collection	32
3.4.1 Semi-Structured Interviews	32
3.4.2 Participant Observation	33
3.5 Data Analysis	34

3.6	Positionality and Ethics	35
4.	Results and Discussion	37
4.1	Results: Type of Model	37
4.1.1	Results Rayon Nooken.....	37
4.1.2	Results Masy (Pilot).....	38
4.1.3	Results Bazar-Korgon (Non-Pilot)	40
4.1.4	Results Kengesh (Non-Pilot)	41
4.1.5	Results Kyrgyz-Ata (Pilot)	42
4.1.6	Results Aravan (Transition from Non-Pilot to Pilot)	44
4.1.7	Results Teploklyuchenka (Pilot).....	45
4.2	Results and Discussion	47
4.2.1	Choice of Model.....	47
4.2.2	Professional Capacity	50
4.2.3	Access	58
4.2.4	Cooperation	61
4.2.5	Corruption and Transparency.....	62
4.2.6	Irrigation Fees	64
4.2.7	Conflict Resolution	66
4.2.8	Long-term effects.....	70
4.2.9	Summary.....	70
4.3	Digression on Territorial Reform ATR.....	71
5.	Conclusion and Recommendations	73
5.1	Conclusion	73
5.2	Limitations.....	74
5.3	Recommendations.....	74
	Acknowledgements.....	75
6.	Appendix.....	76
6.1	Documents	76
6.2	Appendix	79
6.3	Bibliography.....	258

Table of Figures

Figure 1: Picture of Kyrgyz landscape.	7
Figure 2: Graph of hierarchies of key stakeholders	14
Figure 3: Irrigation map of an interviewed WUA.....	15
Figure 4: Excavator of the RWMD.....	17
Figure 5: The local council in Kengesh	19
Figure 6: Model Thesis Question 1.	25
Figure 7: Model Thesis Question 2.	26
Left Figure 8: Latok.....	38
Right Figure 9: Muddy canal.....	38
Figure 10: New Model Implementation in Masy	40
Figure 11: Relationships between stakeholders in a typical old model	41
Figure 12: Implementeation of the new model in Kyrgyz-Ata.	43
Figure 13: Results Table	47
Figure 14: Repaired canal.....	60
Figure 15: Excavator cleans broken canal	60
Figure 16: Latoks	65
Figure 17: newly cemented canal	65
Figure 18: old sealing on canal of RWMD	67
Figure 19: Water control device	67

Glossary

ABAD	Civil Society Organisation based in Jalal-Abad and Osh Region
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AK	Aiyl Kenesh (Village or Local Council)
AO	Aiyl Okmotu (Village Executive Council)
FSU	Former Soviet Union
IWIP	Irrigation Water Integrity Project
KOICA	Korean International Cooperation Agency
ME	Municipal Enterprise
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
RayVodKhoz	Rayonnoe upravlenie vodnogo khozyaystvo I melioratsii (District Water Administration)
RWMD	Rayon Water Management Department (District Water Administration)
SECO	Staatssekretariat für Wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung
TIRIP	Turning Irrigation into Practice
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WB	World Bank
WUA	Water User Association

1. Introduction

Up until the 1990s, the Kyrgyz Soviet Socialist Republic formed one of the constituent Soviet Republics of the Soviet Union. It was during this time that a majority of irrigation infrastructure were established, many of which have not been properly maintained since the 1990s. With the fall of the USSR in 1991, the formerly state-owned kolkhozes and sovkhoses (farms) became dissolved in the newly formed Kyrgyz Republic, but without an operational body or sense of responsibility to keep them operated and maintained efficiently. To fill the organisational void, the newly formed democracy together with other actors launched an institutional reform in 1995, to re-shape the irrigation sector on a national level. Farmers were now organized in Water User Associations (WUAs), where they individually collected user fees and managed the maintenance of the private irrigation infrastructure and organisation themselves. By this means, Kyrgyz farmers were supposed to be able to manage a self-regulating farming system such as shaped by the many other successful WUA role models found worldwide (Sehring 2005).

However, this has not been the case. By 2004, half of the oblasts were managed under the WUAs yet only 37 of the 353 WUAs were able to execute the basic standard criteria. Instead, WUAs proved to be both highly indebted to the state, as they were not able to pay fees, as well as to the World Bank, from which they loaned credits at a high interest rate (Sehring 2005).

In 2017, the NGO Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation launched the IWIP project to understand why fiscal measures did not function, and concluded that multiple reasons lead to this complex issue, but that low collection fees of ca. 50 % marked the main issue of the dysfunctionality of the system. Helvetas thus took the opportunity to launch various developmental projects in order to improve on-farm irrigation systems by including the LSG (local self-governance) bodies in the infrastructural process. WUAs are free to hand over water canals to the local municipalities, which are now legally capable of supporting irrigation infrastructure maintenance with funds and administrative support.

Kyrgyzstan is a mountainous country in Central Asia with a mostly arid climate. An originally nomadic culture, it has transformed into a country whose economy largely depends on agricultural services. With low precipitation rates, especially during the summers, it is highly dependent on the irrigation services of the state water department as well as the water users' associations, which have solely been responsible for delivering water to the farms up until this day. Availability of regular water supply is one of the main crucial factors that has the potential to make entire livelihoods of smallholder communities destabilize or collapse (Manero et al. 2020). As climate change is shaping the present and future of the farmers towards hotter and drier summers, an adequate infrastructure remains crucial to ensure the future of the people. Kyrgyzstan has a total land mass of 199'950 km², with a population of over 6.5 Mio. inhabitants (2020), and of which 57 % is rural (The Council of Europe and the Kyrgyz Republic 2022). Thus, irrigation services need constant and high level maintenance in order to keep up with the standards.



Figure 1: Picture and representation of Kyrgyz landscape - mountains, arid pastures and vegetation close to irrigated land and rivers. Picture taken by Author (August 2023).

Both academia and Helvetas' predecessor projects "On-farm Management Project" (2010-2013) and "Efficient Use of Water Project SEP II" (2014-2017) have shown through thorough assessments of the infrastructures that the irrigation canals are in an unsatisfactory condition. From muddy canals which are prone to lose 50 – 100 % of water before it reaches the field, to canals which have not been repaired since the days of when Kyrgyzstan was still part of the Soviet Union over 30 years ago, the current state of the irrigation infrastructure fails to water Kyrgyzstans' crops sufficiently (Abdullaev and Mollinga 2010b; Abdyllaeva and Steimann 2022; Horinkova and Abdullaev 2003; Mochalova, Oytur, and Uktam 2014; Sehring 2005; Veldwisch and Mollinga 2013).

As a result, Helvetas supported "Irrigation Water Integrity Project" (IWIP, 2017-2021), a locally-led campaign that together with the international organisation ABAD and key local stakeholders aimed to find ways to support on-farm irrigation system via empowerment in bottom-up processes in order to shape legal processes and gain political agency. As a result, an amendment of the Water Code was accepted on 10th December 2022 by the Kyrgyz parliament and enables the LSG bodies to support the private organisations WUAs from a legal perspective. The newly won possibilities entail giving out funds, taking over ownership of WUAs property (i.e. irrigation canals, employees), all tasks that were prohibited before. In return, the LSG body is obliged to take legal responsibility for the restoration of on-farm irrigation as well as the tariff system.

The embodiment of law in the Water Code, the Law on WUAs (Water User Associations), and the Code on Legal Violations marks a crucial step towards a policy reform. However, it remains crucial to understand how the new legislation is adopted by stakeholders and put into practice. For this sake, Helvetas' consecutive project "Turning Irrigation Reform Into Practice" (TIRIP) aims to support local municipalities in properly applying the new law and rules. The project initiated in January 2023, and is expected to terminate by December 2025. (Abdyllaeva and Steimann 2022).

This thesis makes up a small part of the assessment of policy put into practice, by conducting the first types of implementation in five (Interview 5, 15.9.2023) different regions, understanding patterns and attitudes of key stakeholders and how these findings can be put under the scholarly scope of development. Research objectives are to analyse how local stakeholders understand, interpret, apply and negotiate the different legal frameworks for local irrigation.

Moreover, in the course of development research, plenty of development studies have evaluated development on a micro-scale, where poverty, inequality and growth have been studied via classic economic measurements, such as GDP, change in income growth rates or other. This thesis however examines development on a small-scale level, where public policies ideally have the potential to transform freedoms and capabilities of agents, in order to reach specific objectives which in turn translate into a form of development.

This research is based upon a field trip supervised and supported both by the University of Zurich and the NGO Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation. The research goals aim to make a short-term assessment on the attitudes, type of model implemented and how these results can be viewed in the scholarly eyes of development. The chosen research questions aim to understand how the new legislature and implementation of it is generally perceived by the core stakeholders of the initiative group. This in turn gives insight into the strengths and weaknesses of the policy reform, as well as how the various changes fit into the scope of development. Furthermore, it adds value to research on a local level, and tries to pinpoint small-scale dynamics, which also need to be understood in order to receive a full macro-scale picture (Manero et al. 2020). Moreover, this research draws a connection of policy and legislature with the concept of Amartya Sen's "Development of Freedom" and "Capability Approach", two scholarly methods applied in the field of development studies.

This thesis is divided into six (6) chapters, starting off with the various concepts, delving into the case study and field trip, and then explores results and analyses them with the help of the concepts. The second chapter is Literature Review, and dives into the scholarly concepts of freedom of development and capability approach by Amartya Sen (1999 & 1993), as well as the progression and closer elaboration of these concepts by understanding collective and organisational capabilities. Moreover, key stakeholders are presented with a focus on current situation of WUAs in Kyrgyzstan. Next, the case study is explained in more detail together with the objectives of this research. Chapter 3 delves into the methodology of the thesis, which consists of a three month field work in four different regions of Kyrgyzstan and qualitative semi-structured interviews.

Results and discussion of the field research are merged into a combined chapter 4, where data acquired from the field trip is analysed within the aforementioned concepts of development, in order to find answers to the research questions.

2. Literature Review

This section starts off with the definition of concepts, which will be used to evaluate results and discussion. The literature review will start from a theoretical point of view and build up towards the case study.

2.1 International Development Work in Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyzstan is the focus of development of various regions and countries, such as the SECO (Staatssekretariat für Wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung), or the GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit), or KOICA (Korean International Cooperation Agency) which share a strong cooperation work with Kyrgyzstan (SECO 2023).

Especially Switzerland shares a long tradition of development work with Kyrgyzstan, where apart from a focus on water, infrastructure and climate change matters, investments are made towards a more efficient administration and finance as well as economic competitiveness. Even though Kyrgyzstan is part of a Central Asian trade agreement, the Kyrgyz economy fails to profit adequately, as external investments fail to materialize, and the main income source remains the agricultural sector. Even more, the Kyrgyz state is highly indebted, making it highly vulnerable to shocks and incapable of larger investments (Norton 2017; SECO 2023). This was also confirmed to be the case via two personal and informal talks with locals, who claimed that the people in Kyrgyzstan are rich, but that the state is poor. With this, they implied that people in general do not suffer from severe hunger and that they have basic necessities to live, but that the state lacks financial means to invest in the development of the state¹.

Moreover, border conflicts impact the security of Kyrgyzstan. All these factors inhibit external investors to invest in Kyrgyzstan, leaving it strongly dependent on the agricultural and gold mining sector as a main source of income, as well as its economic bonds to Russia. Democratic institutions suffer, and diversifying Kyrgyzstans' economic opportunities and capability-building thus is an essential aim of many organisations and investors. The "Auswärtiges Amt" of Germany for example states to improve regional cooperation and to invest into the country. Another organisation, KOICA, aims to strengthen Kyrgyz governance by introducing electronic management systems to increase transparency and strengthen management capacity (Development Partners' Coordination Council Council n.d.; Norton 2017; SECO 2023).

Supporting the implementation of reforms belongs to one of the set development goals for many of the development institutions, in order to support cooperation amongst Kyrgyz agents and local, national and international macro- and micro-economic investors.

2.2 Definition of Concepts

2.2.1 Development as Freedom

Defining human development solely over economic factors does not capture the wide variety of complex ways on how development can show itself. From freedom, fulfillment, to gaining power, human development as a concept is a crucial part in both academia as well as international development programmes and policy makings (Fukuda-Parr 2005).

¹ Source: Personal conversation with local

This thesis draws upon other theories in order to understand how the policy reform has shaped the various realities of stakeholders, and to put them into the context of development. First, to even understand what development actually is, is to understand that different variations of the definition exist.

Amartya Sen famously developed the concept of “Development as Freedom”, which describes the expansion of freedom in order to grow and reach goals, which benefit the overall development (Sen 1999). The term “development” can be seen as “a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy” (Sen 2003, 1). Freedoms are essential to live a good life, where individual objectives can be achieved in order to improve the entire situation. This is in contrast to simply strive to be alive, by fulfilling basic needs such as minimal income, food, or protection. Freedom and wealth are not simply there to cover the basic needs but should enable and enhance agents to achieve specific objectives. For instance, measurement of growth of incomes via the Gross National Product (GNP) are a common method of assessing the economic strength of a country or a region, since income is an essential tool for society to grow, evolve and expand. Another type of freedom are technological advancements, which shape societies and introduce them into new technological eras (Sen 1999).

Freedom of development takes a different approach to measure these typical types of development structures, and delves into other influences that go beyond measurements of GNP, economic power and degree of technological advancement. Sen described five different types of freedoms: political freedom, social opportunities, economic freedom, transparency, and protective security (O’Hearn 2009; Sen 1999, 19).

Development is viewed as expanding freedoms, of an overarching objective rather than on some particular means or chosen items. Expansion of freedoms are seen as a means to not only simply improve the situation, by eradicating the simple factors of poverty, but instead to equip the framework of agents, so that they can by their own means improve their situation in many different ways. These measures can include a greater access to political participation, strengthening of social institutions, or civil rights. As freedom is generated by a multitude and complex arrangement of various powers, capabilities and access to opportunities, different types of freedoms are treated as basic building blocks of development. Moreover, freedoms are essential for the evaluation and effectiveness of policy reforms, as they are seen as effective (Sen 1999).

Increasing the power of agents makes a crucial contribution to decrease their unfreedom, making them less vulnerable and helpless towards inconsistencies and variabilities towards infringements of other types of freedoms. For example, analysis of economic unfreedom is a crucial tool for the assessment of poverty and development, because economic unfreedom can breed other unfreedoms, as it makes people helpless and thus prey for violation of other kinds. An increase of economic freedom could for example show in the form of the expansion of economic transactions, which in turn could result in decreasing levels of corruption, which in turn would increase levels of trust in social and political relationships. Thus, economic freedom can be re-fostered in the scope of actions by agents themselves (Sen 1999).

When talking about the concepts of Sen, the term “agency” is used to describe an individual or entity which brings progressive changes and achievements towards a specific development objective. Agency freedom refers to persons who achieve freedom by pursuing goals, thriving rather than simply surviving by basic needs being fulfilled. According to Sen’s theories, agents are used in the sense of individuals, with their own values and criteria. This is crucial to limit the conceptual framework of the case study, as theoretically many different aspects can be used to define the expansion of freedoms (O’Hearn 2009; Sen 1999; Thiessen 2015). This thesis however focuses on capabilities which can be used to describe public policies.

Public policies are a way of enhancing freedoms, as seen by various studies (Manero et al. 2020; Miletzki 2017; O’Hearn 2009). Policies have the potential to shift public attention from exclusive concentration on income poverty to more inclusive ideas of capability deprivation, to better understand poverty of human lives and freedoms in terms of a different informational base, by shifting responsibilities and power structures. It will be essential to understand how stakeholders will be affected by their newly won freedoms. As the sole responsibility of on-farm irrigation can now be supported by external actors, possibilities have increased to shape the irrigation system by a multitude of stakeholders. In practice, this will show that on the one hand, financial resources will extend and thus function in the conventional poverty eradication of external financial support, which in turn will shape the freedoms of stakeholders and the overall system. On the other hand, it is essential to understand how these changes shape the system beyond the mere increase of possibilities (Miletzki 2017; Sen 1999, 2003). Thus, development of freedom emphasizes change in local structures, which is especially useful for bottom-up movements and lies in contrast to discussions that evolve around the discrepancies between the Global South and Global North (O’Hearn 2009).

2.2.2 Capability Approach

The capability approach is founded on the philosophical base of Immanuel Kant in his “Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten», that human beings cannot simply be viewed as a means to a goal, as a life-less robot which fulfills its given tasks without questioning it. Instead, humans are simultaneously beneficiaries and agents towards their own tasks, and can seek fulfillment in executing so. In “Development as Capability Expansion”, Sen starts off with the philosophical question of the contrast between great things and things that are done, which meet the bare minimum. Quality of life and set of “doings and beings” are not solely essential to fulfill basic human needs, but to find purpose in one’s work so that humans find room to evolve and are satisfied with their everyday lives (Sen 2003).

As a support, so-called “lubricants” of the capabilities enable stakeholders their way towards a more self-sustaining future of various capitals (Ibrahim 2006). The agency nature of capabilities makes them dependent on social capital, which is defined as “networks of relationships among people who live and work in a particular society, enabling that society to function effectively” (Social Capital n.d.). Human capital puts a monetary value on education and professional skill set of stakeholders, and measures how their capabilities can translate into an economic value (Human Capital n.d.). This indicates that capabilities can be measured both in monetary as well as non-monetary currencies.

One critique of Sen's approach to capabilities and freedoms is that even though its strength lies in supporting the assessment of the Human Development Index (HDI), which has brought a wide attention to the well-being of agents, it is not defined on how parameters of freedom and capabilities are exactly measured. Thus, it remains undecided on what set of skills are meant and what the parameters of measuring freedom and capabilities are. The conceptual framework of the capability approach holds many ambiguities, and human capabilities for this thesis need to be defined separately, in order for them to be assessed (Gasper 2002; Ibrahim 2006). Thus, for this thesis, the framework is being narrowed down to organisational and collaborative capabilities.

Organisational capabilities

"Organisational capability" is the ability of rural societies to make and manage organisations. In short, organisation is the process of solving problems, and the approach for its implementation. The term is defined by the managerial skill set of stakeholders and how they can implement it. This includes the level of professionalism of stakeholders, indicating whether they are trained to execute their job tasks correctly. Other factors include levels of transparency amongst expenditures and investments, as well as contrary issues of corruption. Organisational capabilities have specific characteristics which highly influence them. Firstly, they depend on locality, indicating that organisational capabilities of rural communities can't be compared with urban ones. Secondly, structures of the organisation directly impact the outcome and social relationships of its' users, meaning that thorough organisation is crucial for strong capabilities. Last, local administrative bodies and other stakeholders affect the capabilities of societies as they provide the framework for agents (Shigetomi 2006).

Considering organisation capabilities of rural communities need to be looked at from the scope of social factors which influence their form and performances. Rural societies are often more organic than hierarchical, meaning that state-induced laws do not have that much power. Instead, bottom-down processes are much more present in the form of informal laws and customs (Shigetomi 2006).

For this research, formation of organisations can be divided between WUAs, water users, RWMD, AO, international organisations and the state. Especially WUAs, water users and AO are closely tied upon each other. In the old model, WUAs were not formally linked to the AO. With the policy reform, an entirely new bond between WUA and AO has been embedded by law.

In practice, we expect WUAs with different methods in different villages to have different impacts and outcomes on the irrigation system, other than in a centralised state where the same tactic and methods are applied on all users. All capabilities are considered under the social factors of Central Asian rural communities (Shigetomi 2006).

Collaborative Action

Ibrahim (2006) has criticized the focus on the individualistic aspects of the capability approach, and that it does not capture the social context and collective setting within which actors participate and of which they are dependent. Instead of simply looking at capabilities in an economic and political context of the individual, Ibrahim argues that Sens' concept can

be broadened amongst the self-help of communities. Community unities develop so-called “collective capabilities”, which expand their collective freedoms towards expanding their human agency from individual towards collective action. Thus, it makes more sense to measure the human agency via collective capabilities than upon individual ones (Ibrahim 2006).

With this approach, Ibrahim wants to exemplify the necessity and evaluation of self-help for local communities with limited resources. Self-help is linked to Sen’s approach of “well-being” and “agency” and defines the ability to actively shape ones’ own path and desired outcome. Self-help is a way of achieving communal goals, which thus go beyond their individual concerns (Ibrahim 2006). It is essential to note that all of Sens’ concepts overlap with each other.

Drawing the link upon this case study, as state and NGOs eventually withdraw their influence after project termination, stakeholders are left with their own beings and doings, and time shows whether their human and physical capital suffices to grasp the moment over a longer period of time. Thus, from a political point of view, bottom-up and grassroots initiatives often encourage successes of collective action to directly lead their way into their desired lives (De et al. 2023; Ibrahim 2006). Applying these principles in a policy, the question arises firstly on how the capabilities of stakeholders are defined, and secondly how they are embedded amongst the old and new model. This thesis will try to explore where the capability approach works, and where it reaches its limits on key stakeholders.

2.3 Introduction of Stakeholders

This section describes key stakeholders for the case study. All stakeholders were interviewed on the field trip and make up a crucial part of the new amendment in legislation. Figure 2 shows an overview of the hierarchy of stakeholders. The *Oblast* (Region; Oblast Jalal-Abad, Osh and Issyk-Kul) entails many different *Rayons* (District; Nookan, Bazar-Korgon, Nookat, Aravan, Ak-Suu), which in turn overrides *Aiyi Okmotus* (Municipality; Masy, Bazar-Korgon, Kengesh, Kyrgyz-Ata, Nookat, Aravan, Teploklyuchenka).

WUAs are private and local organisations and are thus found on the level of the LSG body. RayVodhKoz, or as in this thesis referred to as “Rayon Water Management Department” (RWMD), is an extension of the state body and operates intra-regionally amongst different AOs and Rayons.

The national government, or also referred to as the state government, has enacted the new legislation, and provides funding to Rayons and AOs when needed or upon the acceptance of a project proposal (Interview 12, 20.9.2023). The state government is not directly involved with WUAs, but WUAs interact both with AOs and RWMDs.

Local administrative bodies and stakeholders

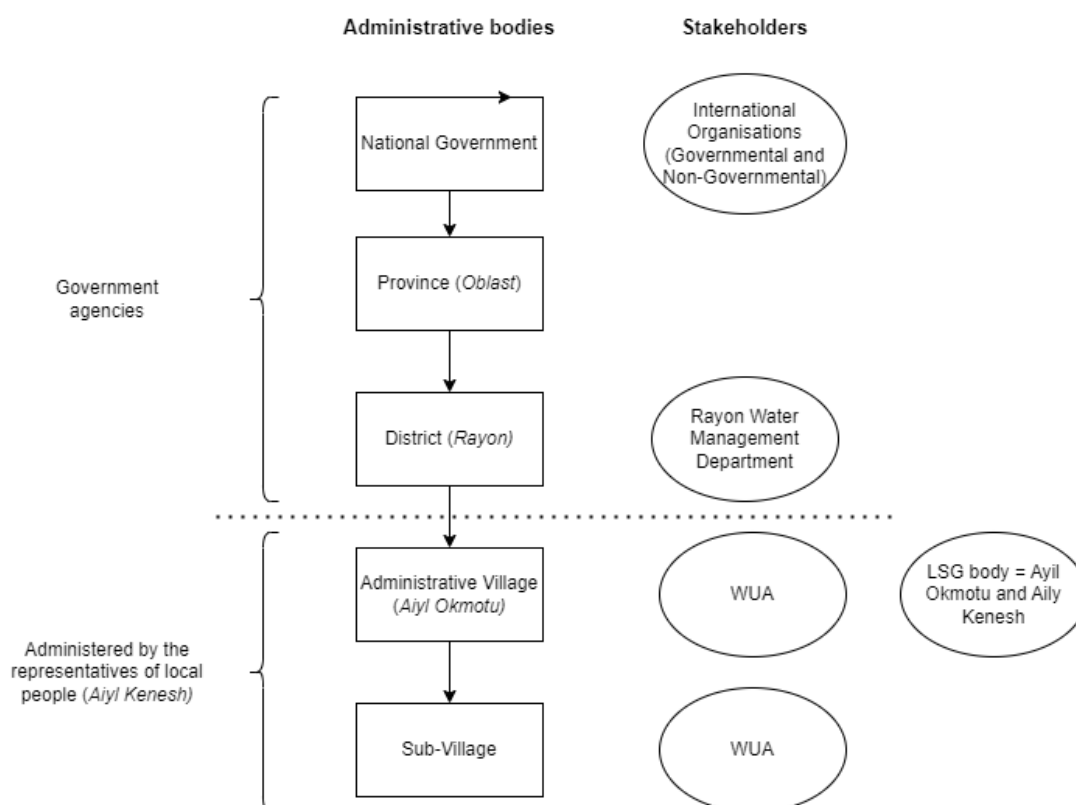


Figure 2: Graph of hierarchies of key stakeholders

2.3.1 Water User Associations (WUA)

WUAs are private organisations, consisting of a chairman or chairwoman, an elected council and its' members. Employees can vary from murabs (water distributors), farmers, hydro-technicians, accountants or other professionals. Murabs often do a lot of on-farm work, and are responsible to distribute the water amongst the farmers both physically and organisationally via discussions with the water users. Apart from that, they often collect irrigation fees and are the first person to address in case of issues or conflicts (Sehring 2005). WUAs usually count around 10 employees. The number of WUAs per municipality can vary from 1 to 16 or even more. During the formation of the WUAs in the second half of the 1990s, on-farm irrigation canals were specifically assigned to WUAs, making them owner and responsible for the maintenance, operation and restoration of their property (Abdyllaeva and Steimann 2022)(Interview 26, 9.10.2023).

During the former Soviet Union (FSU), land management including farming and irrigation was organised by state and collective farms. This meant that a large proportion of irrigation management lay in the centralized hands of the state in combination with large-scale, semi-private farms. After the collapse of the FSU, farmers and land users were left with an organisational void. Accountabilities and responsibilities had to be re-distributed, and

financial means were oozed away. Post-Soviet collapse lead to droughts and famines throughout the country, and left people suffering severely (Hvidt 1996; Sehring 2005).

As a reaction to the fragmentation and privatisation of farms, the World Bank initiated the establishment of local, small-scale and private water user associations (WUAs), organisations made up of farmers, hydro-technicians, murabs and other professionals who should be responsible for the distribution and maintenance of the irrigation system (Sehring 2005).

The so-called “WUA Approach” by the World Bank was to mainly secure irrigation for farmers and institutionalize the relationship between water users and private bureaucracy. WUAs were thought to operate, design and execute water distribution and individualisation into the needs of the local rural community. This approach was intended as a counterreaction to the former centralized large-scale solutions which originated top-down by the state government and left out local needs in order to fulfill the entire well-being of the Soviet state. Irrigation from Kyrgyzstan flows into the Aral Sea Basin, where cotton farms used large amounts of water. Where profits from cotton production were distributed amongst the FSU for irrigation maintenance and operation, none of these profits flow into the hands Kyrgyzstan today. The baseline of the WUAs however was to integrate farmers’ knowledge and skill set into customized irrigation techniques and system in order to fulfill local purposes (Sehring 2005). This in turn means that instead of higher instances regulating and involving in irrigation management, WUAs are given full responsibility and self-governance to regulate and improve irrigation system over a long period of time. These characteristics are both praised and criticized.

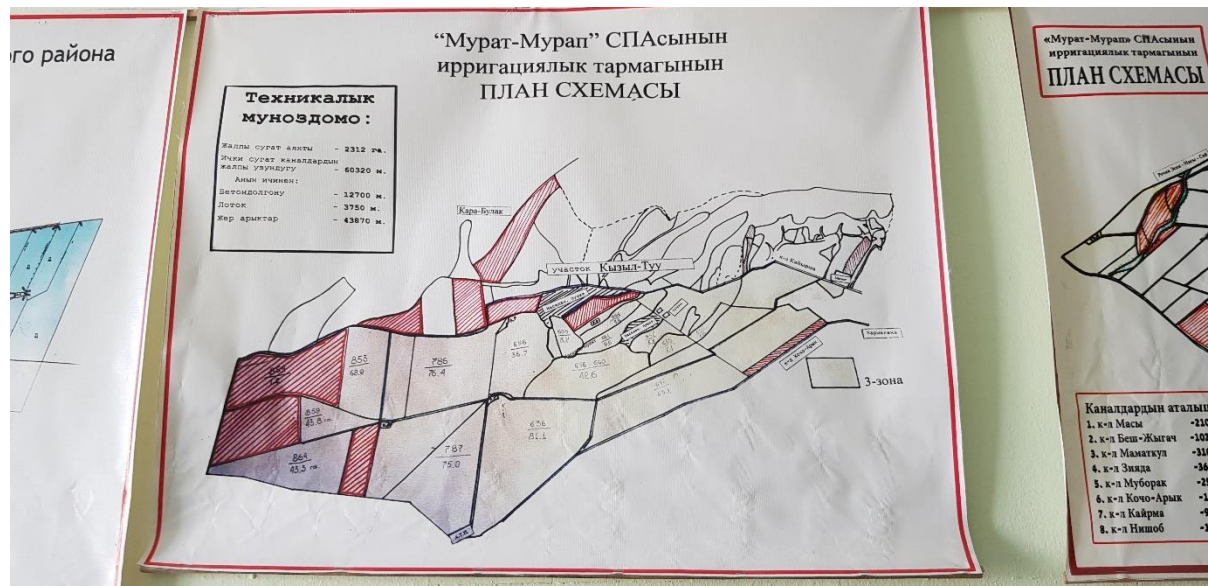


Figure 3: Irrigation map of an interviewed WUA (in Russian: "SPA"). Picture taken by Author

The benefits of the WUA approach mainly include the fact that WUAs are involved in the initiation of self-participatory processes, which in turn would also lead to an irrigation system especially adapted for the region. This should happen by participants becoming actively shaping and taking control over bureaucratic processes, and shape management structures and procedures (Sehring 2005). In the case of Kyrgyzstan, this means that WUAs receive

irrigation water from the Rayon Water Management Departments' (RWMD) off-farm canals, and lead them onto on-farm canals in the different Ayil Okmotus and villages. WUAs essential tasks comprise of water distribution, financial control by budgeting and collection of irrigation fees, election of WUAs committee, and more. (Abdyllaeva and Steimann 2022; Helvetas Intercooperation 2022).

Initially, this bottom-up approach was praised as transferring irrigation management towards private organisations in the form of WUAs, meaning that user participation and self-empowerment was strengthened. As Kyrgyzstan has a strong informal institution, where informal rules and regulations play a large role, the transition from state driven management towards local participation seemed a logical step. Transfer of irrigation management towards private organisation WUAs was meant to make irrigation market-oriented, by being responsible for fee collection which would apply towards supply and demand services, as well as less state interference through sovkhoses and kolkhozes. This was initially perceived as a positive privatisation impact that would not only strengthen the irrigation system financially, but also, make water users transition from the "soviet mentality" towards the recognition that farmers will have to manage and pay for the irrigation system independently. Thus, WUAs were perceived as a tool to shift from a communal towards a more privatised world.

The problem, however, lies in the fact that WUAs took over an irrigation system that was in a bad state from the beginning onwards, thus making it difficult for them to act in the first place. This is shown by, for example, that restoration work is carried out by Ashar as a communal and unpaid work, as WUAs lack the capabilities to clean all of the canals by themselves (Sehring 2005).

One criticism of this approach is that even though it is sold as an integrative grassroots approach, it is in fact more of a top-down approach where all of the responsibilities and expected results are simply handed over to a smaller unit, but without providing the technical, financial and human support and benefits of an official administrative state unit or department. Instead of creating new incentives for the WUAs to develop and re-define themselves in a particular direction towards a more refined system of irrigation, WUAs are expected to follow a specific technocratic top-down approach, where water deliverance is the sole outcome. This expectancy neither provides incentives for the WUAs nor for other state departments, organisations or stakeholders to invest in the development of the irrigation system (Sehring 2005; Wegerich 2008).

This shows that in Kyrgyzstan, the majority of WUAs are indebted and not capable of financing themselves. As of 2003, WUAs were already indebted in the sum of 42 Mio. soms to the government (RWMD) (Wegerich 2008). Thus, with the acceptance of the new legislation, WUAs will take a little step back towards more state influence and control.

2.3.2 Rayon Water Management Department (RWMD)

The Rayon Water Management Department (RWMD), otherwise known as District State Department or *RayVodhKozh*, is a state-run institution that manages off-farm canals. Off-farm canals of the RWMD are on average in a significantly better condition than the on-farm canals owned by the WUAs.

On-farm canals are owned by the WUAs, whereas off-farm irrigation infrastructure is owned and operated by the RWMD. This means that they take care of all of the irrigation canals which connect the villages with each other, transporting water from the mountains towards the villages and then handing it over to the WUAs. WUAs in return pay an irrigation fee to the RWMD. It lies in the responsibility of the WUAs to collect these fees from the farmers, and if they do not manage to pay, they have debts with the RWMD. By law, the RWMD is not allowed to support the WUAs with funding, as they are a private organisation. The RWMD on both Oblast and Rayon level works with the WUA management together. These tasks include technical, ecological and economical support, in order to help them with the operation and maintenance of the canals and to calculate their costs (Sehring 2005). Since the RWMD thus has direct insights into on-farm irrigation work, they were also interviewed for this case study.



Figure 4: newly acquired excavator of the RWMD, where a canal that was difficult to maintain was finally fixed in Teploklyuchenka. Picture taken by author, 20.10.2023

2.3.3 Local Self Governance Bodies (LSG)

As one of the first former Soviet countries to do so, Kyrgyzstan implemented an administrative reform to decentralize the public administration from a centralized state into smaller, local units. These local self-governance bodies (LSG) are divided into representative and executive bodies. The *Aiyl* (Village) *Kenesh* (Council) is the local council and consists of representatives voted into it either by the local village council (*Aiyl Kenesh*) or on the Rayon level (*Rayon Kenesh*).

In 2022, Kyrgyzstan counted 453 *Aiyl* districts, dispersed over 40 rayons which are in turn divided into eight (8) regional levels. It is thus divided into three main levels of local governance, and receive their budget approvals from their respective AKs (*Kengeshs*) (The Council of Europe and the Kyrgyz Republic 2022). It is essential not to confuse the *Aiyl Kenesh* (village council) with one research site visited named *Kengesh*, which for a non-native speaker may sound very similar, though are not the same.

Local self-governance is guaranteed the right by the Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic for independently and actively engaging in and resolving local issues. They are guaranteed to act in their own responsibilities and interests. Concerning development of the LSG body, their capacity can be measured ascertaining their means to achieve goals, and independently resolve local issues. To a large extent, capabilities and freedoms of the LSG body are dependent on external resources, such as neighbour conflicts, laws and regulations, top-down reforms, and state and regional budget. As the Kyrgyz state is only 30 years old, it has undergone constant and uncertain changes, which resulted in a variety of internal conflicts (UNDP 2012).

The Ayil Okmotu (AO) is the executive body of the municipality, and is responsible for administrative issues (The Council of Europe and the Kyrgyz Republic 2022). The AO is also the point of contact for the citizens, where they can present their issues. Villagers travel to the council and present their issues in front of the body heads (The Council of Europe and the Kyrgyz Republic 2022).

These responsibilities and notions have been taught and acquired in several teachings and development projects. The UNDP for instance demonstrated a case study where they supported LSG bodies and helped to increase their capabilities by introducing them to the concept of a “local budget”, which is regulated amongst all administrative levels. This in turn strengthened financial autonomy, as LSG bodies became better aware of using the budget for specific purposes and transparent ways of assigning it to these (UNDP 2012).

With the implementation of the new legislation, it is possible for the LSG body to form their home-own WUA, which is referred to as *Municipal Enterprise* (ME) in this case. The Municipal Enterprise has full control over its’ assigned irrigation infrastructure, and is responsible for its’ management. MEs can decide whether they take over employees from the WUA, or if they assign new employees themselves. Without an ME, the AO operates in collaboration with the WUAs (Abdyllaeva and Steimann 2022).

The strengths of this reform are that the LSG bodies have been given the possibility to self-regulate themselves and thus to gain autonomy from the state. (The Council of Europe and the Kyrgyz Republic 2022).

To further strengthen local self-governance, the state government initiated a territorial reform (ATR) at the time of my arrival in Kyrgyzstan, where several AOs will be merged together and which will make the implementation of the new policy reform obligatory.



Figure 5: The local council in Kengesh, Rayon Bazar-Korgon. Here interviews with the Head of the AO and the Head of the AK took place. Picture taken by Author (Sept 2024).

2.3.4 Village Head

The Village Head (in Kyrgyz: *At-Bashi*) forms a contact point between villagers and the community. Village Heads are elected via democratic vote, and can remain in their position for several years. Thus, interviewing Village Heads has the potential to give an overview of the current state of many farmers at once (Interview 4, 15.9.2023, Interview 6, 16.9.2023).

2.3.5 Farmers

The most common crops produced are cotton, alfalfa (a type of legume which is fed to cattle), potatoes and watermelons. Each type of crop needs a different amount of water with cotton being the most water-intensive. Farmers are oftentimes also referred to as “water users” in this thesis, as they are the end users of the irrigation flow. Of the interviewed farmers, many had concurrently other positions in the government, WUA or RWMD. As the average wage is very low in Kyrgyzstan, a large percentage of workers diversify their livelihoods by taking on more than one job (Interview 6, 16.9.2023).

2.3.6 Land reform in the agricultural sector

In the 1990s, agricultural land from kolkhozes and sovkhoses was redistributed amongst the local population (75%) and state (25%). Every citizen had the right of a specific amount of land and home gardens remained as private property. As a result, farming is fragmented into several thousand individual farms (Sehring 2005). WUAs have been established by both the state of Kyrgyzstan and supported by the World Bank, ADB, FAO and Japanese Government. The first five (5) WUAs were pilot projects and were founded between 1995-1998 by the ADB. The first goals of the WUAs were to primarily rehabilitate the irrigation system amidst the disruptions following the fall of the FSU and abandonment of sovkhoses and kolkhozes.

2.3.7 On-Farm Irrigation and Current Struggles

Each type of crop needs a different amount of irrigation. The most water-intensive crops are alfalfa and cotton. Less water-intensive crops are vegetables like potatoes. Oftentimes, one field may consist of more than one type of crop where thus the irrigation amount and frequency will vary (7). Though water-intensive, alfalfa is a popular type of grass which can be used as fodder for cattle. Cotton on the other hand is economically one of the more lucrative crops to grow. These factors come into play for the organisation of the water distribution. The general monitoring is executed by the murabs, who have the responsibility of making sure that each water user receives their promised amount of water on the scheduled day. They are responsible for visiting the fields and determining the current state of the crops. For instance, if one maize field is in a critical condition, it lies in the responsibility of the murab to irrigate that field first. Different types of crops next to each other thus make the task of water distribution more challenging for the WUAs (Interview 5, 16.9.2023).

Kyrgyzstan, however, suffers from water scarcity. As assessed by Helvetas via their project IWIP, on-farm irrigation infrastructure in Kyrgyzstan has experienced a significant deterioration of the irrigation canals since the establishment of the WUAs in 1995 – 1996. One of the main reasons is a lack of funding, since irrigation fees alone were collected without any additional investments or profits generated. Even more, the majority of WUAs are not capable of financing themselves, and many are indebted. The average irrigation fee collection rate is very low in Kyrgyzstan, with an average of 50 – 60 % as assessed by Helvetas (Abdyllaeva and Steimann 2022; Helvetas 2021; Helvetas Intercooperation 2022; Sehring 2005). In comparison, Uzbekistan has WUAs where on average 80 – 90 % of irrigation fees are collected by the WUAs (Sehring 2005). Another issue indicated was that farmers often did not develop a feeling of ownership towards their WUAs. This showed as farmers in most cases addressing their issues towards deputies of the municipality, even though they are not involved or responsible for the issues (Abdyllaeva and Steimann 2022).

Farmers and WUA members often lack a respective education in their field; many are educated teachers or other profession unrelated to or lacking proper knowledge of efficient farming techniques and resourceful water usage. As many farmers then do not know how much to irrigate, they used more water than needed and as much as they could rather than the technically correct amount (Sehring 2005).

Another crucial downside of small-scale farming is that crops are often too small to become profitable, so the acquisition of large technical equipment such as tractors or excavators are usually financially not possible (Sehring 2005). When available, these are also often used for irrigation purposes, as canal maintenance needs require heavy equipment for difficult cleaning and repairs.

2.4 Irrigation Policy Reform in Kyrgyzstan

This section elaborates on the policy reform and case study which sets the basis of this thesis. First, predecessor studies are elaborated, giving an insight into how the case study evolved.

Afterwards, the case study upon which the thesis is built is elaborated, explaining the baseline, motivation of the stakeholders to act, and how they acted.

2.4.1 Sources: literature, reports, & interviews

The key point of discussion were the semi-structured interviews, which I had conducted on my field trip. Concepts and results are supported by academic research papers, which I gathered online. Concerning non-academic research, one difficulty I had to face was that I do not speak any Russian or Kyrgyz. Thus, intense internet research on local websites was not feasible. Instead, I focused on the documents provided to me by Helvetas and notes I made during two conferences. Both conferences were two days long, and gave me an insight on the status quo of the on-going discussions of the process. The first meetings were about two topics: one on the irrigation fees in Jalal-Abad and one on the current state of the policy reform in Bishkek. I received a good insight on the current plans of changing the irrigation tariff, but I was asked not to publish any details on the tariff change since they are confidential. Thus, these interviews are not published within this thesis, but were instead used as guidance to better understand the tariff policy which I then embedded in my interview questions.

In Bishkek, a thorough Powerpoint Presentation on IWIP was provided by Helvetas project coordinator Jyldyz and included information on the legal amendments, which I would have had difficulties to find online all by myself.

2.4.2 The Necessity of a Policy Reform

Projects which have been shaped by policy reforms with a strong focus on advocacy often terminate as soon as the policy has been accepted by law, and project initiators draw back from their project, in order to leave it on its own. This is often a result when target stakeholders do not properly understand or fully engage in the project's goals from the beginning, thus leaving a new regulation or project to wither (Abdyllaeva and Steimann 2022).

Policy advocacy is complex, as advocacy inputs often differ substantially from intended outcomes. Strategies which have proven to work are based on a clearly defined conceptual framework, where various aspects of policy expectations, strategies, outcomes and limitations are defined and discussed. Advocacy policy strategies can have different focal points. On the one hand, a policy reform can be built by engaging people with the public via information campaigns and coalition building, with the aim to shift public opinions which then in turn influences policymakers. Another way of implementation is to directly influence key stakeholders and decision makers through varied advocacy activities, but without necessarily altering public opinions. No matter what way is chosen, a strong focal point and implementation change often requires large amounts of knowledge of bureaucratic and legal processes (Gen and Wright 2013), in order for a project to continue long-term after the withdrawal of project initiators (Abdyllaeva and Steimann 2022).

2.4.3 Irrigation Water Integrity Project, IWIP (2018 – 2022)

TRIP is a consecutive project of both "On-farm Management Project" (2010 – 2013), "Efficient Use of Water Project SEP II" (2014 – 2017) and "Irrigation Water Integrity Project" (2017 –

2021). The first two projects assessed the current irrigation situation in Kyrgyzstan, and tried to pinpoint causes.

The main conclusion found was the bad condition of the canals – for almost thirty (30) years, the majority of canals were not properly maintained. Even though the WUAs existed, not much work had been done overall. The most extreme cases were canals which were fifty (50) years old and last maintained during the reign of the FSU. According to their assessment, if nothing was imminently done the entire on-farm irrigation system would collapse within the next five (5) to six (6) years' time (Helvetas 2021)(Interview 21, 20.9.2023).

The main aim was to improve the on-farm irrigation system by making it more effective and sustainable, and to enact a new law on the Water Code. For this, key actors involved in on-farm irrigation were defined, and who should receive and have extended their scope of action in on-farm irrigation. Defined stakeholders ranged from local to regional and national level, and interconnections between them were strengthened. Helvetas Intercooperation together with the foundation of ABAD were the leading international organisations of this project, together with the three pilot AOs in Rayon Nooken, Rayon Bazar-Korgon and Rayon Ak-Suu (Helvetas 2021)(Interview 21, 20.9.2023).

They had two general discussion rounds, the first one with each type of stakeholder separately, and the second one in a plenum. From these findings, they defined the target audience, the so-called Initiative Group, and stakeholders, which are directly involved in the issue, and who are not only defined via the conceptual framework but who should actively take part in the reform process. Several pilot municipalities were chosen, who would first apply these new regulations (Helvetas 2021)(Interview 21, 20.9.2023).

Lawyers and other experts were consulted, where the legislature was analysed and a set of amendments to the Water Code were suggested. With the support of deputies of the parliament, especially from the agricultural sector, they were able to address their suggestions to the parliament via the ministry of agriculture. The success also has roots in the close collaboration and various meetings and round tables with a variety of ministries, who in the end had to accept the amendments individually (Helvetas 2021)(Interview 21, 20.9.2023).

2.4.4 Amendments to the Water Code of Kyrgyz Republic

The policy reform is shown by a change in legislation. The amendments of the Water Code of the Kyrgyz Republic were accepted on December 10th, 2021 in Bishkek, and re-defined three main articles. The following amendments are the product of the predecessor projects of On-farm irrigation management and IWIP, and set the baseline to the following case study.

Article 84 of the Water Code concerns property issues of on-farm irrigation infrastructures, to which has been added (in bold) “Irrigation, drainage systems and water facilities can be in state, **municipal** and private ownership” (Helvetas Intercooperation 2022). With this, canals are now newly allowed to be owned by the municipality. Ownership of private organisations are not affected. Moreover, point 5 clearly defines that Water User Associations transfer irrigation, drainage systems and other water facilities on a **voluntary** basis to the municipality.

In practice this means that neither the state nor municipality has the power to expropriate WUAs (Helvetas Intercooperation 2022).

The second point altered in the Water Code concerns management of internal irrigation supply services. Article 19 was altered and redefines the water management program as now being obliged to include construction, restoration and development of the municipality owned irrigation infrastructure (Helvetas Intercooperation 2022). This amendment thus extends the responsibilities from the regular LSG body tasks with state irrigation responsibilities, a task that was before assigned to separate and specifically designed state departments. Moreover, the municipality has to assess the financial needs of the irrigation system together in combination with the irrigation fees. All rules for water usage, operation, maintenance and budgeting needs to be approved by the Aiyl Kenesh (Local council).

The third main point of amendments regards the tariffs, and states that irrigation needs to be treated as an “issue of local importance”, meaning that the local budget of the LSG body is obliged to address and solve the issues of the irrigation supply system. This also includes a penalty system, where fines are handed out in the case of non-payment. These measures can take the form of either addressing existing private organisations, such as the responsible WUAs or external investors, or providing an own entity which takes care of these services in the case of the absence of the WUAs (Helvetas Intercooperation 2022). These municipality services are referred to as “Municipal enterprise” (ME) in this thesis.

2.4.5 Turning Irrigation Into Practice, TIRIP (2023 – 2025)

The on-going, consecutive project of Helvetas was initiated in January 2023 and is expected to terminate by December 2025. It is the continuation project of IWIP, and explores the implementation of the policy reform, and how the changes of the legal framework affect the stakeholders in total. A special focus is put on the local municipalities, and explores how they are. The policy reform is a never seen reform in combination with WUAs and is brand new in Kyrgyzstan. Up until this day, no similar case studies have been found, thus there are no other points of references to compare it with other cases.

Key objectives of TIRIP are threefold: raising of awareness, piloting, and policy dialogue. Awareness raising refers to the goal of stakeholders being well informed about the new legislation, and aims to support and promote correctly for a widespread application. The second outcome focuses on piloting municipalities and how the framework has improved certain aspects regarding on-farm irrigation. The third outcome is policy dialogue, where investments, a new tariff policy and other financial funding methods are reflected upon in order to strengthen state governance (Abdyllaeva and Steimann 2022).

The impacts are assessed via institutional, political, economic, environmental and social objectives. The aim is to impact the irrigation system via a strong ownership of legal framework, making it clear where responsibilities lie and how power leverage can be used for direct improvements. The funding of the irrigation system needs to be transformed to make it sustainable for current operation and maintenance as well as enable future investments. This shall be achieved via improved bonds between all stakeholders, strengthening collaboration and ownership. And last, increasing droughts due to climate change will have to make irrigation more sustainable and frugal (Abdyllaeva and Steimann 2022).

Helvetas does this by embedding their approaches in information campaigns, where key stakeholders are defined in an Initiative Group, and legal changes with their direct implementations are discussed in meetings, round tables, seminars, visits, social media, and other. Pilot municipalities are AOs which actively engage in this new legal framework and who are willing to take on the additional activities which come with project implementation. A key method of policy implementation lies with a strong dialogue between various stakeholders: lobbying and advocacy play a crucial role in exchanging knowledge and resources (Abdyllaeva and Steimann 2022).

Main partners of the project are ABAD, an organisation based in regions Jalal-Abad and Osh and which is specialised in civil society issues. Abad consultants supported this research, and sent a consultant who accompanied me during my interviews in regions Jalal-Abad and Osh. Moreover, the LSG Union is a national network of municipalities, and provided suitable piloting AOs (Abdyllaeva and Steimann 2022).

2.5 Case Study and Research Questions

2.5.1 Case Study

The case study for this thesis is based upon TIRIP, and will simultaneously support a fraction of its' research in combination with academic research in the field of Development Studies, which is located in the field of Political Geography at the University of Zurich.

This thesis research is based on a small collaboration between the Political Geography Department of the University of Zurich and the Helvetas Project TIRIP in Kyrgyzstan. As an independent Masters' researcher from the university, I arranged my research questions with my two supervisors Mr Asebe Debelo and Mr Bernd Steimann, in order for them to fit the research scopes of both Helvetas' TIRIP project with an academic relevance to it. As a result, I formulated three thesis questions which on the one hand aim to support Helvetas understanding of the current attitudes towards the reform, together with the first visible results that have been generated, whilst simultaneously taking a scholarly approach towards its analysis. For this purpose, the goal was to do field research in three different regions of the country, conduct semi-structured interviews and to support the claim and to analyse interviews according to the standards of the university.

2.5.2 Research Questions

One of the main objectives of the case study is to investigate how the policy reform is being implemented in the first place. Due to its voluntary nature, there is no exact guideline on how LSG bodies, WUAs and other stakeholders are obliged to set the reform into practice. It is left to the stakeholders on how they aim to use their resources. In a country with a highly developed bureaucracy, the implementation of a political law is clearly regulated. However, as Kyrgyzstan counts as a young nation with a weak bureaucratic infrastructure, it is to be expected that each stakeholder will have a larger scope of action when it comes to the implementation of the new model. The first thesis question thus aims to understand how the mix of on-farm irrigation law and individual practices will form various implementations of the new model. Moreover, implementation of the new model is expected to show traits of the old model as well, since perennial practices have shaped stakeholders for decades and

are not entirely forgotten from one day to another. Figure 6 illustrates the various implementations expected and emphasizes its influence from the old model.

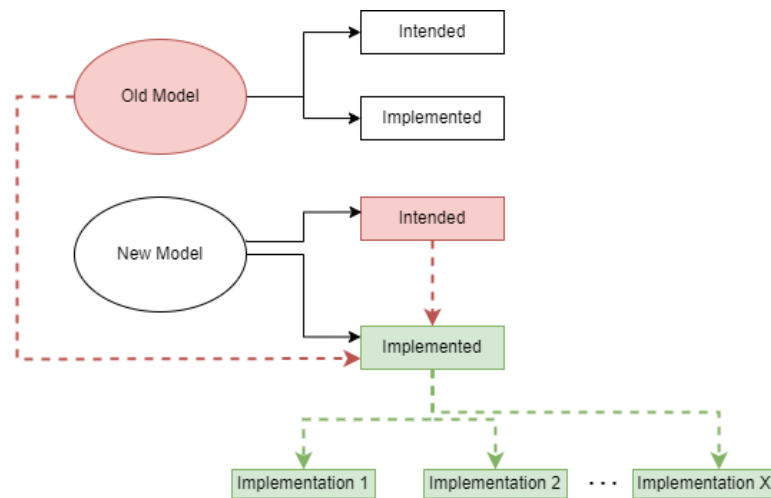


Figure 6: Thesis question one, the new model is expected to show a variety of implementation.

Research Question 1:

How does the newly implemented model differ from the intended policy model and in what ways do the new and old policy framings compete and complement each other?

The hypothesis is that the implementation of the policy reform will vary amongst the various research sites, varying from full responsibility of the LSG body, to a shared model between both WUA and municipality, as well as WUAs remaining with their full responsibility. Moreover, it is expected to spot specific regional differences, such as between the North (Karakol) and the South (Jalal-Abad and Osh), as they have different climates and agricultural focusses (North: focus on pasture, South: focus on crops).

The second research question evolves around the perception of the various stakeholders towards the policy reform. The assessment of stakeholders' roles in the process will give insight into their direct and indirect contributions, what kind of benefits and disadvantages they gained and lost, and how they frame their responsibilities in their position. The evaluation of perception of interviewed stakeholders of the new and old legal frameworks will give insights on a social, economic, and institutional level as well as any other aspect of both policy models.

Apart from framing the active roles of stakeholders, the assessment of their political attitudes will assist to frame the various strengths and weaknesses which are perceived from both models and the policy transition, and which processes are viewed as inefficient and could use a certain level of adjustment. This will give an overall evaluation of the current situation and will provide an important indicator of the success of IWIP in practice on a short-term level.

Moreover, it is crucial to pinpoint stakeholders' gaps in knowledge to evaluate which attitudes are legitimate and how well the model works in practice. This evaluation will illustrate in which points the project has been a success and where further improvement is needed.

As shown in Figure 1, the new and old policy model is divided into intention and implementation, as practice shows specific discrepancies compared to the written law. Thus, it is essential to differentiate between the attitudes of laws and the policy reform and the actual implementation, which is expected to vary between individual stakeholders.

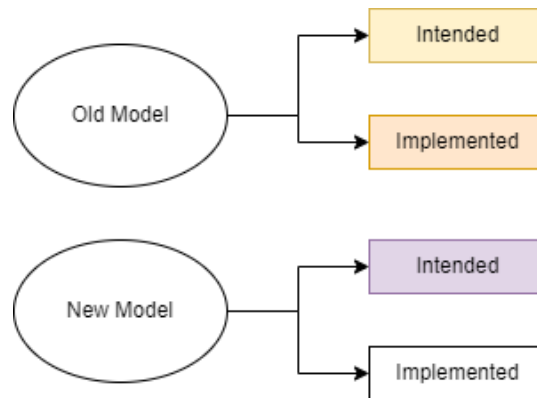


Figure 7: Thesis question two, both old and new policy models are divided into intention and implementation to better differentiate between policy and practice. The first thesis question aims to understand the attitudes of stakeholders towards each model branch.

To conclude, the first thesis question makes a general comparison of both models with the aim to present the main differences. This will assess the first points of success and set the baseline of evaluating the policy reform in the context of development.

Between the stakeholders as mentioned in Methodology, the way of implementation will affect stakeholders differently, and they will share their views on it. In order to understand the various attitudes, the second research question is formulated as follows:

Research Question 2:

How do stakeholders frame their role in the change of national irrigation policy, and what are their attitudes towards the old and the new model?

The hypothesis is that attitudes will vary amongst stakeholders, and that both positive as well as negative aspects will be mentioned. Moreover, patterns are expected to be observed from stakeholders, depending on how their scope of action, power, set of responsibilities and benefits have shifted. Moreover, it aims to understand the level of acceptance. These findings support TIRIP by providing an indication of where their on-going project is strong, and where adjustments in the form of more participation, lobbying or other is needed.

The third research question aims to put findings of research questions number one and two in the scholarly context of development.

The policy reform aims to bring about a significant change amongst water users. This thesis question at first aims to summarise the visible changes the reform brought to water users, and how they can be grasped. Secondly, the question aims on understanding how the changes can be set in the context of “development”. Concepts of development are used by scholars to find ways of conceptualising results of development case studies. For this approach, Amartya Sen’s concepts of “Development as Freedom” and “Capability Approach” is used as a tool to analyse findings, in order to apply them in a broader context of development.

Research Question 3:

How can the irrigation policy reform be applied as a tool for development?

Expected results range from visible findings, such as an increase in irrigation on farms, more harvest, higher financial liquidity, towards an increase in freedoms and capabilities for specific stakeholders. From a critical point of view, not all stakeholders will equally be involved in the aspired practices, as levels of resources vary strongly amongst different places and stakeholders.

2.5.3 Digression: On-going Territorial Reform, ATR

Upon my arrival in Kyrgyzstan, rumours of a change in the constitution were being discussed, which also affect the policy reform. The territorial reform ATR plans on merging several municipalities with each other. Some of the reasons mentioned included reduction of bureaucracy and cost-saving by minimising staff. Moreover, the reform intends to make the new policy reform obligatory, meaning that all LSG bodies would have to take over the canals. When I arrived in Kyrgyzstan, it was not clear on how this would impact the new legislation, as one specific characteristic of it lies in its’ voluntary nature, enabling both LSG bodies as well as WUAs to decide whether irrigation property shall be transferred or not. The ATR however will strongly shape the policy reform in two main ways: internal dynamics of AOs will shift, as merging different municipalities with each other will affect variables such as household budget, administration levels, territories, and more. On the other hand, LSG bodies who lack the capacity to take care of the irrigation system could be further weakened, thus affecting the overall well-being of the entire municipality as a whole.

Initially a fourth research question was presented during the MA colloquium to capture how the ATR would affect the scope of action. However, during field research it became quickly clear that the rumour was too new to use as a research question, since knowledge of the impact of ATR were unknown and attitudes thus a mere speculation. However, since the question was asked during the first half of the field trip, a short digression of first attitudes towards the ATR is assessed, since it will have a direct impact on the policy reform and its’ implementation.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Framework and Methodology

For the purpose of this master thesis, qualitative field research was conducted in order to understand the social realities and their context for the stakeholders interviewed. The outer framework of the thesis was already given by predecessor projects of Helvetas, and my thesis leans on the current Helvetas ongoing project “TIRIP” as an additional component for both on-going field work as well as scholarly research in the field of development studies in Human Geography.

The three hypotheses were formulated upon discussion with my supervisors, and on the one hand adapted towards the current state of the Helvetas Intercooperation state of knowledge as well as current discussions in the field of development studies.

This thesis relies on qualitative methodology, a method that is comprised of qualitative interviewing techniques combined with participatory observation in the field. Qualitative research aims to understand different social realities, together with their social context. By engaging in various discourses and various opinions, the attitudes and ideas of different actors are trying to be understood. By collecting these, multiple and partial versions of reality in the course of a specific topic are being collected and put into context. Moreover, the worlds of marginalized “others” are included to critically engage with various views, in order to get the larger picture (Mattisek, Pfaffenbach, and Reuber 2013).

In order to fully understand the objectives of the thesis questions, field work and on-site interviews are necessary as methods to conduct knowledge (Mattisek, Pfaffenbach, and Reuber 2013). For this, I visited the various sites and conducted qualitative interviews in order to find my answers to my research questions.

3.2 Preparation and Access to the Field

Before entering the field, I prepared six (6) different sets of interview questions, each one for one of the type of stakeholders of the AO, AK, RWMD, farmer, NGO and state employee. The interview questions provided a structured guideline to help me master through the interviews. It was evident that the interviews could take unexpected turns and twists, which could alter findings and motivate to make adjustments to the questions sheet.

A rough schedule was organised with Mr Bernd Steimann, where it was determined to visit each research site for three weeks, plus three weeks in Bishkek in the beginning of and end of the trip. The first three weeks in Bishkek were meant to get to know the project coordinator Jyldyz, who supported me strongly in my field research. The last three weeks were meant to conduct interviews with national stakeholders of the parliament.

Before entering my field trip, I prepared a declaration of consent for my interview partners according to the guidelines of GIUZ and organised a friend to translate it for me in Russian.

The field trip was planned for three months from 18th August to 18th November 2023. The first month I spent in Bishkek, where I got introduced to my local supervisor Jyldyz and the Helvetas office. Throughout all research sites, I was invited to spend time at the local Helvetas offices and to conduct my work there, which I gladly accepted.

Jyldyz supported me strongly in organising interview partners and provided all of the contacts of the local stakeholders needed. Jyldyz supported me during my research in Jalal-Abad, Osh and Bishkek, whereas Helvetas' project manager Nazira helped me organise interview partners in Ak-Suu. As the case study itself involved stakeholders who are already in some way embedded in TIRIP, all stakeholders and contacts knew each other since they were all in some ways involved in the project. In the end, too many interview partners agreed to be interviewed. Thus, access to the field site was a bit too easy, as it in the end backfired as I conducted more interviews – around forty-five in total - than I could reasonably handle for the purpose of this thesis.

At times, some stakeholders spontaneously cancelled an interview as they were busy. Meanwhile, other interviewees agreed to be interviewed, which sometimes meant that I had to improvise a bit. In the end, all planned interviews with stakeholders were organised.

Between interviews and field study, local specialities were examined, so that questions were adjusted and put into context. As my research progressed throughout the three months I was in Kyrgyzstan, I constantly adapted my interview guide towards more targeted answers, as I grew to understand more about what issues interviewees had something to say about and what questions did not generate much information of value for my hypotheses.

In Jalal-Abad and Osh, I was supported by the local civil society group of ABAD. Moreover, ABAD consultant Kanybek attended all of the interviews, and supervised during sequences of ambiguity.

In Teploklyuchenka, I was supported by Helvetas project manager Nazira, who helped me organize contacts and interview schedules with local stakeholders. Moreover, she provided additional information during the meetings, as she was well aware of fine details.

Interviews would not have been possible without my three translators, who translated from Kyrgyz and Russian to English. Levels of translation experience varied a bit, resulting in some interviews containing more details than others at times. Moreover, they provided me extra guidance and knowledge of the local context and spent some time with me outside work. When asked how I could get to a specific place on a day off, Kyrgyz would usually reply with "Ok, let's go together!". A translator from Jalal-Abad offered me to stay with their family in Yntymak, a suburb of Jalal-Abad. They brought me closer to Kyrgyz culture and provided me with general knowledge of potable water and irrigation of the gardens. In Osh, I stayed at a friendly hostel located in the city centre. In Karakol (for Rayon Ak-Suu) I lodged in an international hotel. In Bishkek, I remained at two hotels and changed the first hotel to another one after my room became infested with bed bugs (thanks again to the logistics support provided by Jyldyz).

3.3 Sampling



Figure 8: Map of Kyrgyzstan with all 4 visited sites (UNDP 2012).

The stakeholders chosen were all directly involved in the irrigation issues, and bring insight into my research questions. Farmers are the end-users and their harvest is directly affected by water scarcity. The AO is the main stakeholder of this field research, as they are the ones who experience a large set of changes, and their capabilities need to be assessed in the process. The budget is enacted by the local parliament (Aiyl Kenesh), where members are voted in and democratically decided. Both together form the local self-governance body, of which the new policy is affected (Abdyllaeva and Steimann 2022).

In some AOs, a municipal enterprise was founded, an entity controlled by the LSG body and which functions as a WUA alternative.

The Water User Associations (WUAs) are public membership organisations, which have been responsible for on-farm irrigation. Up until the policy reform, they were fully reliant on funding via irrigation fees from their water users, since it was legally prohibited to fund WUAs via state budget. With the introduction of the new model, new funding and organisational possibilities have opened up for the WUAs (Abdyllaeva and Steimann 2022).

Rayon Water Management Departments are responsible for off-farm irrigation management, meaning that they take care of intraregional canals. Water thus is provided by the RWMD, before it reaches the canals of the WUAs. They are funded by both the state as well as via irrigation fees they receive from the WUAs. It lies in the responsibility of the WUAs that they collect sufficient fees for the RWMD. As WUAs are closely connected to the RWMD, they are aware of the strengths and weaknesses and can provide support.

Other stakeholders interviewed include members of the Department of Agriculture, under which matters of irrigation run and who provide attitudes from top-down a state level. Choice

of participants was discussed beforehand with supervisor Bernd Steinmann, and on-site with Helvetas project manager Jyldyz.

Local (Aiyyl)	District (Rayon & Oblast)	National
Farmers	Rayon Water Management Department	Ministry of Affairs
Aiyyl Okmotu	Oblast Representative Office	SDC
Municipal Enterprise		ABAD
WUAs (i.e. Murabs, Engineers, Head, etc.)		

Table 1: Sampled Stakeholders

Site	What	Duration
Bishkek	Field Preparation	3 Weeks
Region Jalal-Abad	Interviews Seminar about Change in Tariff	3 Weeks
Region Osh	Interview	3 Weeks
Region Karakol	Interviews	2 Weeks
Bishkek	Interviews Seminar about Policy Reform Results	2 Weeks

Table 2: Time Schedule of Field Research

Detailed Information on Research Sites

Oblast	Rayon	Ayil Okmotu (AO)	Villages	Pilot
Jalal-Abad	Nooken	Masy	Apyrtan Shaydan	x
	Bazar-Korgon	Bazar-Korgon	Bazar-Korgon Kengesh	
Osh	Nookat	Nookat Kyrgyz-Ata		x
	Aravan	Aravan		
Issyk-Kul	Ak-Suu	Teploklyuchenka		x

Table 3: An overview of all research sites conducted during my field trip. At this point, Aravan was still considered a non-pilot region.

3.4 Data Collection

3.4.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

Conducting semi-structured interviews was the core method to gather primary data for this thesis. Semi-structured interviews are a non-numerical method to research a pre-defined area of research via open questions. Semi-structured interviews leave it open for the interviewee to further elaborate on the topic, and for them to express a variety of opinions and views on how they perceive the topic (Crabtree 2006).

In total, around forty-five interviews were conducted amongst the sampled group. The average length of interviews varied between 30 – 90 minutes, whereas the shortest interview was 15 minutes and the longest 1 hour and 45 minutes. The majority of interviews were held in Kyrgyz, partially mixed with Russian accents and translated into English.

For the four different sites I had various translators. For the regions Jalal-Abad, Osh and Karakol I employed three translators. The first translator from Jalal-Abad was a trained translator, the other two were students with good English skills and who did it for the first time. In Bishkek, I received support from various people, who were ready to translate for me.

The interview plan scheduled two (2) interviews a day, one in the morning and one around noon. However, usually the second interview partner attended the interview from the beginning together with the first partner, thus creating more of a mixed group interview.

The strengths of this interview method was that interviewees would at times intervene or add useful information. At times, interview partners started discussions by themselves which would give useful insight on how they perceived the situation, and which could have possibly helped participants in their elaboration. Overall, the merged interviews also enabled me to interview a larger number of participants in total, giving me more volume for my research.

Potential downsides of the merged interviewing technique could have been that participants' answers would have been influenced by statements made by each other, and perhaps shortening the answers of participants.

Interviews usually started off by asking them about their attitudes towards the old model, and how the status quo of the irrigation system and WUA performance was rated. Afterwards, I moved on towards the policy reform, and what spoke for and against it. I then always tried to dig deeper on their attitudes and find out what shaped their mindset towards the way that they were.

From there on, I kept an open mind and adjusted my questions according to what I thought would they know an answer to.

The core questions of my interview schedule remained the same over the course of interviewing stakeholders, whereas follow-up questions were changed. The main questions evolved opening the discussion were their attitudes towards the old and new model, and what exactly shaped their opinions. As I entered the research site, I realised that farmers and employees usually would answer according to direct impacts they experience, and their attitudes towards the irrigation system were strongly shaped by the status quo. LSG body members tended to have more critical opinions towards WUAs performances in general, and they were able to pinpoint issues with them. WUAs and the RWMD on the other hand brought a more critical view, and exemplified the difficulty and necessity of professionalised stakeholders, and showed how much they have actually achieved in the years, and that many issues are not necessarily related to the WUAs. Interregional stakeholders had a more distanced view of the policy reform, but at the same time often digressed towards other topics which did not directly relate to my research questions. However, these claims are very generalised, as the quality of interview findings strongly varied amongst individuals.

Each day and each partner brought new experiences. Some interview partners were very talkative and pro-active and gave me a sense of ease during the interview. I had positive feelings when interview partners gave me unusual information, which I knew would directly fill gaps of knowledge for my research. I perceived an interview situation as difficult when my interviewee only brought monosyllabic answers, and when I felt that I was not gaining any new information.

The interviews were recorded via my smartphone Samsung Galaxy S8 and backed up by my translators and their smartphone. In my second stop in Osh, I added two microphones to the interview to be able to also record interviewees who talked a bit more quietly. During each interview, I took hand notes as well in order to keep track, and in case my phone would possibly lose data before uploading the interviews on the cloud.

3.4.2 Participant Observation

Participatory Observation is a method as an outsider to immerse oneself into the settings and observe the various patterns of behaviours and practices of the participants.

One part of my participatory observation was being shown the field with the irrigation canals. In every location, I was invited to look at freshly constructed canals by the AO and RWMD. There, representatives from the LSG body, farmers and the RWMD showed me the sites of where new canals were being built. These short sight-seeing tours were always conducted after the interview with the respective person.

One interviewed farmer in Masy proudly presented their field, which is attached to the irrigation and uses a mixed harvest of cotton, watermelons and potatoes. As their guest, I was highly welcomed and appreciated. Also AO members from Kyrgyz-Ata and the Head of RWMD in Teploklyuchenka proudly demonstrated their newly built latok (a ready-made cement canal) or newly acquired tractors. However, sometimes I felt I was perceived as a Swiss development worker, who would have direct linkages to development funding. This could also be a false perception by me, as I stated my positionality as a University Masters' student very clearly and could also be a result of the strongly embedded culture of hospitality.

I recorded my data oftentimes by voice recordings. These were rather short and ranged from 3 to 5 minutes. Pictures on each research site helped me gain an insight of on-farm irrigation.

3.5 Data Analysis

For this thesis, semi-structured interviews were analysed via thematic analysis. Interview transcriptions enable thematic and content analysis, which captures all different sorts of details which would not be possible by sampling analysing notes made during and post interview (Mattissek, Pfaffenbach, and Reuber 2013).

Content analysis aims to find out different units of meanings in interviews and how they translate into messages, purposes and effects of communication. Moreover, patterns in communication can be found, thus indicating overarching topics, attitudes or happenings which then in turn can be critically analysed and used for further implications (Mattissek, Pfaffenbach, and Reuber 2013).

Back home, I transcribed the majority of interviews with Microsoft Word, which took me on average one day per interview. To save time, I sometimes left out redundant information and summarised it into paragraphs instead of exact words as agreed with my two supervisors. This usually entailed information that had been repeated several times before and that did not refer to my research questions but were meant for general understanding instead. Other summarised information usually contained information on magnitudes and scales of canals.

After transcribing the interviews, primary data was analysed in the transcription program MAXQDA (Version 24.4.0). There, I applied different thematic codes that I chose in order to mark and arrange the essential text snippets. This way, I could select any topic when needed and re-read text segments. It was an iterative process as I chose one topic, and read through all of the transcriptions for each code.

Moreover, seeing the marking gave me an overview of how often certain attitudes and topics were mentioned. After that, the collection of highlighted parts was used to categorise into the results section. After going through all of the information, themes will be iteratively adjusted and re-evaluated accordingly to fit the newly gathered information.

The downside of content analysis is that it is very time consuming, meaning that it is not possible to analyse a large amount of data in a short time period. Thus, otherwise more uncommon units of meaning can be overrepresented in a study.

Moreover, units of meaning can be misinterpreted, since opinions and meanings always are carried out individually by a sender and receiver.

3.6 Positionality and Ethics

Understanding one's own positionality is crucial for quantitative research, since my own habitus and knowledge shapes the way I interpret other peoples' beings and doings, as well as my perception of the different realities. As a researcher, I am an "outsider" which brings me simultaneously advantages and disadvantages (Mattissek, Pfaffenbach, and Reuber 2013).

I would describe my positionality as being a Swiss citizen, Swiss University Master's student, and female.

Being Swiss has come both with its advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, Switzerland has a history of development work with Kyrgyzstan, where multiple projects have been funded. This was visible in every local council, where there was a plaque that marked a former project with Swiss cooperation. As Switzerland has already and still continues to do a lot of work in the sector of development, stakeholders perhaps sometimes overestimated my power as a (simple) Masters' student when they asked me to forward the wish for different Swiss cooperation to invest more money in the Kyrgyz sector of irrigation. On the other hand, this positive attitude perhaps helped me a lot to be taken seriously, since nearly each stakeholder took a lot of time for my interviews.

I however did not necessarily experience situations where I felt that my gender as a female would have played a crucial role. This is however not possible to fully say, since at the end of the day I will never really know if I would have been treated differently as a man or not.

As a Swiss person, I was aware that I would lack general knowledge and a feeling for how hierarchies and farmers work in Kyrgyzstan. It also took me a while to grasp how informal rules are crucial in Kyrgyzstan – as in Switzerland, practices and rules are often clearly defined in some sort of rule book. In Kyrgyzstan, farmers are lacking as a result from severe droughts, and thus come and directly complain to all sorts of stakeholders from the WUAs, Village Heads, or the RWMD. Understanding the customs, and how living from pay-check to pay-check without having any proper savings in a bank shapes the habitus of the stakeholders differently than in Switzerland. These were things that I knew before my arrival, but that I only started to develop a deeper "feeling" for amidst my stay, accumulating a lot of new information during my interviews and by experiencing everyday Kyrgyz life.

I followed the ethical standards provided by the University of Zurich. Before the interviews started, I introduced myself and research purpose, and asked participants for permission before turning on the voice recorder. For this purpose, my translators were briefed with the exact wording on how they should interview me, in order to clearly state my positionality as an independent Master's student researcher from the University of Zurich, Switzerland.

Fortunately, every single interviewee agreed upon being recorded, so that I never had to solely rely on interview notes.

Names of all interview partners are anonymised, in order to protect their privacy. In the published table with all of my interviews the inexact position of the interviewee is given, whilst their names are known to me. Permission was always granted for published pictures, meaning that all people found within published pictures have explicitly given their permission for me to publish their picture in my thesis.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Results: Type of Model

The first research question aims to understand how the current irrigation legislation is implemented amongst the various research sites. Moreover, new model is being implemented in the first place, and tries to determine what the “new model” actually is.

The expected results from this research question assumes that each research site will show at least one significant difference in implementation and motivation to do so. This is expected due to the fact that in Kyrgyzstan, administrative power of the state is too small to control policy implementations on an exact level. Moreover, customary law replaces actions and law obedience to a specific extent (Shigetomi 2006). Additionally, there are regional differences to be expected between the different localities.

4.1.1 Results Rayon Nooken

Rayon Nooken is located in the region of Jalal-Abad, in the south of Kyrgyzstan and bordering right towards Uzbekistan. It is an especially dry region, with low precipitation rates and hot summers. As in most Kyrgyz regions, the main source of income is in the agricultural sector, making irrigation a crucial part (Interview 8, 18.9.2023).

In Rayon Nooken, one larger village Masy has implemented the policy reform. Many other villages still rely on the old model, where WUAs have full responsibility of the canals without extra support from the municipality.

Rayon Nooken is home to one of the pioneer WUAs, which was established in Rayon Nooken by a respondent who worked as the WUA chief engineer. From a technical perspective, they built 4.5 kms of on-farm canals and cleaned the majority of the 60 kms which are under their supervision. 900 metres of the cemented canals were built with the new technology called “Latok”, ready-made molded cement canal sections which are lowered into the ground instead of being directly cemented into the muddy canal. Moreover, 36 so-called hydro-postages, measuring devices used to calculate the water amount, were installed (Interview 5, 15.9.2023). The former WUA Head gave an example of a successful operation back in the day:

One real-life example that I experienced is that in one village, they decided to cement the canal, and that canal goes through another village, and it almost takes around 2.5 hours until the water reaches the farmers. And I proposed to build another new canal in their village. We managed to do that and we cemented around 2.2 kilometres of new canal in their village. And after we completed this task, the water takes 22 minutes to flow to the farmers. We decreased the time. And the canal was named after me [chuckles]. It was my own project (Interview 5, 15.9.2023)

The interviewed WUA in Rayon Nooken was considered by the Rayon and Oblast agricultural deputies as one of the more successful WUAs in country. The WUA respondent held a national seminar on the best WUA techniques in 2005, in order to educate the WUAs in Kyrgyzstan and pass on their knowledge (Interview 5, 15.9.2023).



Left Figure 9: A ready-made latok on research site. Picture was taken by the author



Right Figure 10: A muddy canal leading to a cotton farm. Picture taken by Author.

However, WUA performance today was rated badly. According to the Chief Engineer of the Department of WUA Support there was a total of 14 different WUAs, out of which around 8 – 9 were considered to work successfully, whereas the remaining WUAs were not capable of fulfilling their tasks. This showed as only a maximum of 5 % of the canals were cemented (8). The former WUA Head explained that these investments were made thanks to a 6.6 Mio. soms credit the WUA applied for from the World Bank from 2003 to 2005. With a 25 % interest rate, the WUAs were obliged to pay it back until 2012, but had to prolong the credit and were currently planning on paying it back until 2024 (Interview 5, 15.9.2023).

4.1.2 Results Masy (Pilot)

The first research site visited was Masy and is the seat of Nookan district. It had nearly 27'000 inhabitants, which made it one of the larger municipalities of the region. It administrates 5 villages, with a total of 4'331 households. It occupies 2'500 ha of land, of which 530 ha are under the administration of the AO, and the rest is divided amongst private land plots (Interview 2, 14.9.2023).

The AO of Masy conducted the irrigation state, and concluded that it was in a terrible condition. This motivated them to take control of the irrigation state, where they convinced WUAs to hand over irrigation to their property. The first step of the canal transition ended in a protocol between the WUA and AO, and defined which canals shall be transferred to the AO. This procedure was supported by ABAD, and the acceptance of the first protocol, a second decree was issued in order to again study the overall state of the canals. Together with lawyers, the local council launched a “handing-over” commission with the primary goal of making the procedure as smooth as possible. The commission concluded that the canals were

in an overall terrible state, with the majority of the sections having last been repaired during the times of the FSU (Interview 2, 14.9.2023).

The LSG body quickly concluded that all of the muddy canals needed to be cemented as quickly as possible, and they applied a project proposal to the state government for financial support of building initially 6 kms of Bögöt canal. Their proposal got accepted for a funding of 2.4 kms, and the AO of Masy received a grant of 33 Mio. soms. In the start of 2023, the AO worked on the construction of Bögöt canal, but were able to cement only 450 metres instead of the granted 2.4 kms. More was not possible, since there was a construction ban during the irrigation season, and construction is not possible during the winter, so that they were able to work on the canal construction during the time span 2 months in autumn. This meant that they were only able to cement 4 % of the in total 11 kms of Bögöt canal and led to a discontent amongst the LSG body, even though they wanted to cement more (Interview 2, 14.9.2023).

The LSG body of Masy established their municipal enterprise in 2022, and took a total of 23 kms under their responsibility. From these 23 kms, 12 kms stem from Bögöt and 11 kms from Sapotkan, two smaller villages located in the municipality of Masy, and were originally under the supervision of two poor and incapable WUAs (Interview 2, 14.9.2023, Interview 4, 15.9.2023), 4). The neighbouring village Apyrtan transferred 3 kms of canals to the AO. Thus, Masy introduced the new model, eliminated some of the WUAs in Masy and use their ME as irrigation executors, where some of the WUA members were incorporated (Interview 2, 14.9.2023, Interview 3, 14.9.2023).

The remaining WUAs in the sub-villages of Masy still existed in their original form, and will now be supported by the AO via their municipal enterprise (Interview 2, 14.9.2023, Interview 3, 14.9.2023). The AO did not intend to incorporate any murabs from Bögöt village into their ME, since they already had their own staff which they preferred (Interview 4, 15.9.2023).

Unlike the WUAs, the ME is in charge of tractors and excavators, which they also lend to the remaining WUAs on request (Interview 2, 14.9.2023, Interview 3, 14.9.2023). Moreover, Apyrtan, a village of Masy located a bit further away, was completely neglected by the WUAs. As they were not easily accessible, they just ignored their duties instead. With the ME as new executor, Apyrtan received a large canal maintenance for the first time since the FSU.

The ultimate goal of the LSG body is as formulated by the AO head to “take back” all of the 80 kms of canals under the sovereignty of the government. The consecutive step would be to introduce a fining system to punish water users who do not pay their water fees, in order to stabilize the household budget (Interview 3, 14.9.2023).

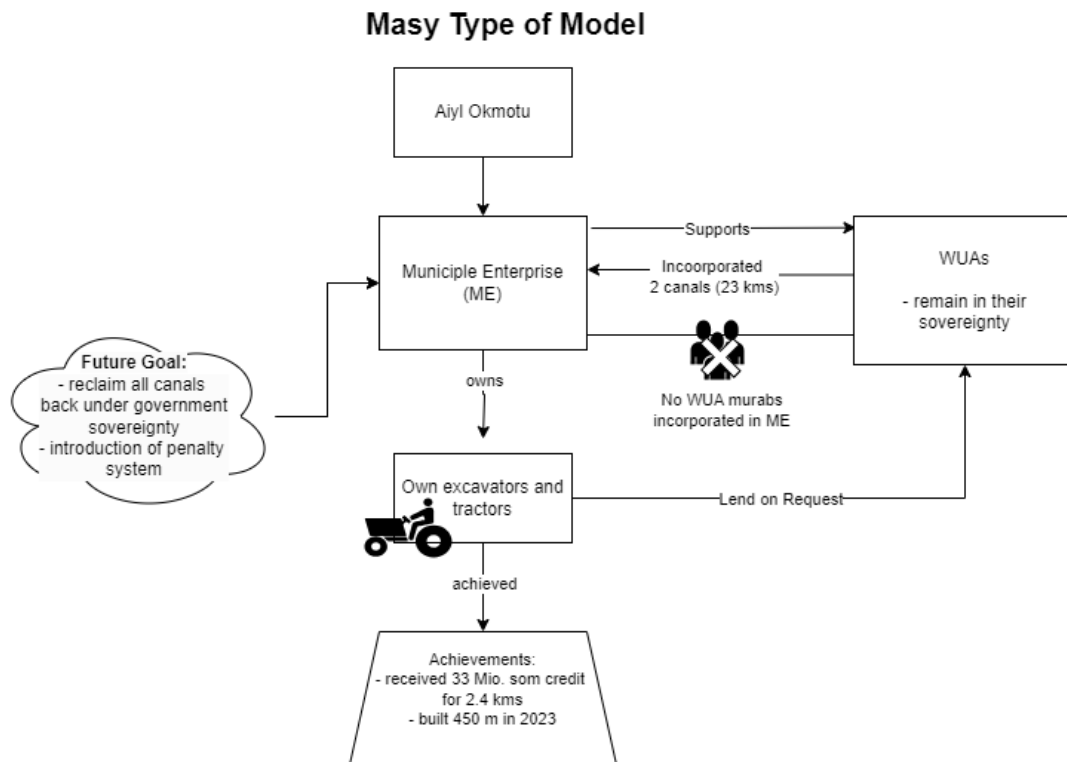


Figure 11: New Model Implementation in Masy

4.1.3 Results Bazar-Korgon (Non-Pilot)

In Bazar-Korgon, the policy reform has not been implemented. The 8 WUAs work in close collaboration with the RWMD and the Rayon Department of WUA Support. In total there are 8 WUAs which take care of 100 kms of on-farm canals. Throughout their existence, 140 to 150 Mio. soms of credit have been received from the World Bank for cementation, repairs and other things such as purchase of office equipment (Interview 14, 21.9.2023).

2 of the 8 WUAs however did not receive any credit as one was considered too small (smaller than 1000 ha) and the other located too close to the Uzbek border and thus, were not considered by international organisations in their funding scheme (Interview 14, 21.9.2023). One speciality of Bazar-Korgon includes 1 canal of 10 kms, which had not been allocated to a WUA amidst their establishments. This canal is in a particularly poor condition since, even though 6 kms of it are cemented, it is extremely muddy and carries a lot of rubbish. However, the Head of the RWMD explained that the RWMD has applied for a 40 Mio. som grant to clean it (Interview 14, 21.9.2023).

Old Model

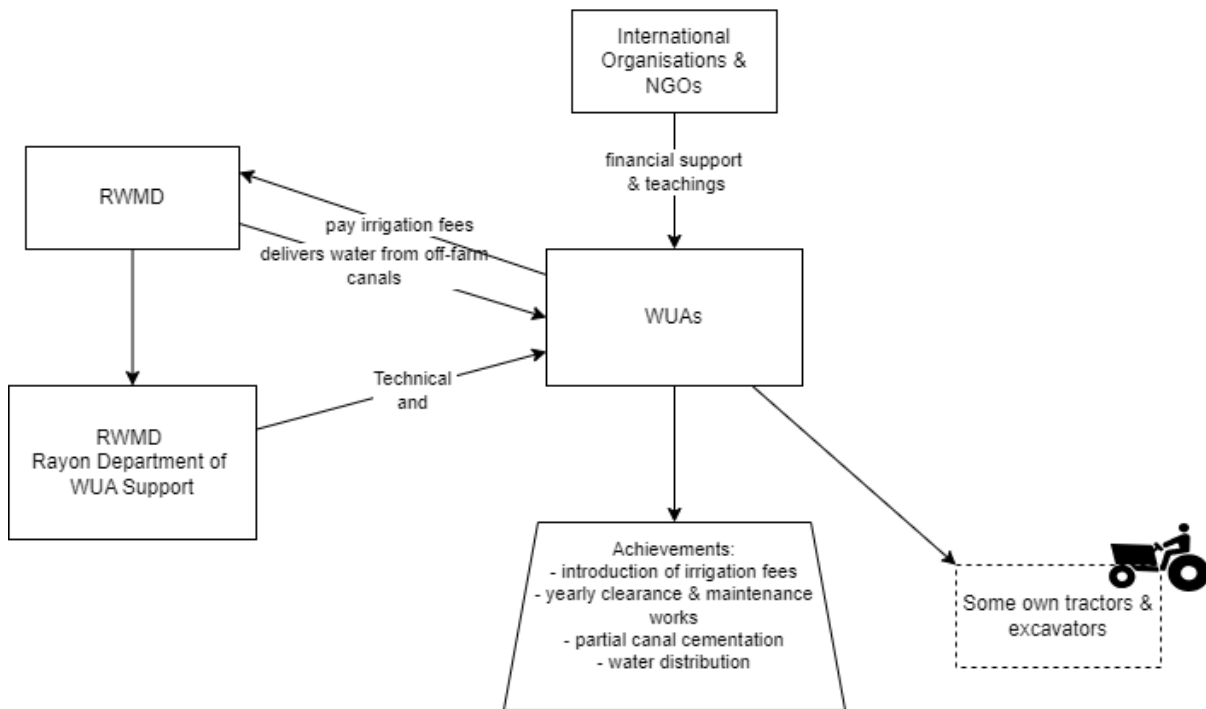


Figure 12: Relationships between stakeholders in a typical old model

The AO is not involved in the irrigation issues of the WUAs. According to the Head of the District Department, the implementation of the new model would be a great benefit for the WUAs, as they then would be able to receive extra financial support from the government (Interview 19, 28.9.2023).

Apart from Kengesh, 3 other WUAs were mentioned during the interviews. One of them was Saydykum AO, which served as an example of a WUA with a close collaboration with the Rayon Department of WUA Support. They received a 55 Mio. som credit from the World Bank for repairs. Talduu-Bulak AO is a mountainous village which did not have any farming because there were no rivers or canals which could have reached them. They organised external support in the form of the Turkish Red Cross, water pump stations have been financed for sites where now crops can grow (Interview 14, 21.9.2023).

Positive change has been seen in 2023, the WUAs of Mogul AO received a grant from the Turkish Red Cross and repaired a pump station, which can now irrigate an additional 120 ha of land. Even though neither the WUA nor any other governmental institution has to repay this grant, the installation of the pumps had to be executed via manual labour from the farmers and other villagers ((Interview 14, 21.9.2023).

4.1.4 Results Kengesh (Non-Pilot)

Kengesh Aiyl Okmotu together with its' WUAs was established in 1996 and grew from 28'000 inhabitants to 36'500 today. The entire irrigation system remains under the responsibility of the WUAs. The general state of canals is not good; only around 6 to 7 % of the canals are cemented, the rest are muddy. Some canals have not been assigned to any WUA back in 1996,

and are thus taken care of individual farmers. Some of the cemented canals have been worked by the WUAs thanks to a credit they received from the ADB. They however till this day have difficulties repaying these credits (Interview 16, 25.9.2023).

One example that illustrates this is a 11.8 kms long canal segment that was cemented via credit and grants that the WUA received thanks to the cooperation with international organisation ADB. The WUA was still indebted with 1.26 Mio. soms that legally should have been paid off until 2024, but according to the murab was not feasible (Interview 16, 25.9.2023).

The largest credit taken from the WUA was in 2006 and 2007, when they took a credit of about 6 Mio. soms. According to the contractual terms, they had a 4-year debt moratorium, during which time repayments were put on hold. However, this moratorium evoked a false sense of relief amongst many water users of a newly won freedom, thinking that the credit was eliminated. After the 4 year debt moratorium had passed it had proven to be especially difficult to claim credit fees due from water users who had forgotten about the credit in the meantime (Interview 16, 25.9.2023).

Kengesh AO has also been involved in the matters of Kengesh WUA. When the WUA took their larger credit worth 6 Mio. soms the AO vouched for them. As the WUAs were not capable of re-paying their credit on time, the AOs bank account got frozen and they in turn had to deposit small amounts in order to re-open their accounts. This procedure repeated itself multiple times (Interview 16, 25.9.2023).

Another issues mentioned by the Vice Head of the AO concerned responsibilities amongst farmers and RWMD. One issue the WUA had to struggle with entailed the fact that WUAs were stuck in between the obligation of paying irrigation fees to the RWMD, and simultaneously being forced to collect irrigation fees from farmers, without having any power of leverage in form of fines or penalties for non-paying users (Interview 10, 19.9.2023).

4.1.5 Results Kyrgyz-Ata (Pilot)

Kyrgyz-Ata is a pilot village in Rayon Nookat, which introduced their own municipal enterprise that took over the work of the one WUA in town. In Kyrgyz-Ata there are a total of 501 kms of on-farm canals (aryks), and 35 people work in the AK, of which 5 are specialized in the irrigation sector (Interview 22, 5.10.2023).

The new model in Kyrgyz-Ata was initiated by the LSG body and international organisations, which discussed the underlying issues in the irrigation sector. In the beginning the WUA resisted to give their canals to the AO, but after several meetings the AO was able to show them the underlying issues and convince them to hand over the canals to them (Interview 22, 5.10.2023). Towards the end of the consultations, except for the WUA committee all 44 WUA employees expressed the wish to hand over the canals to the AO (Interview 23, 6.10.2023). The AO thus took over the responsibilities and properties of 1 WUA, and transferred their 5 murabs under the ME as well. Other WUA employees were however not transferred, since according to the head of the AO and head of the AK, there were tensions and conflicts between them and members of the LSG body (Interview 22, 5.10.2023).

The AO of Kyrgyz-Ata founded their municipal enterprise in 2022, which is responsible for 44 kms of on-farm canals, of which 21 kms are cemented. The ME is a subordinate of the AO,

and thus has to follow their instructions. The ME consists of 24 employees in total, of which 6 are murabs. Their technical equipment consists of 2 excavators and 1 Hyundai Porter car, which they use to reach the water users in the case of an emergency (Interview 23, 6.10.2023).

As one of the first tasks, the AO of Kyrgyz-Ata supported the sub-village Karatash, and cleaned 11 kms of canals and cemented 3 kms (Interview 22, 5.10.2023).

One speciality of Kyrgyz-Ata is that they took over one WUA despite their high debts of 200'000 soms. These resulted from a credit that they used to buy 2 excavators each, and which were both paid off by the AO when they took over the responsibilities and canals (Interview 22, 5.10.2023).

Apart from on-going debts, the LSG body still proceeds to progress. The first work of the ME in 2022 consisted of a general cleaning and maintenance work, where several leakages and holes were fixed with new covers. In 2023 they cemented 750 metres. These works were possible thanks to a grant of 2 Mio. soms from the Korean International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) and 600'000 soms from the AK (23). During a field visit, the interviewed council members proudly presented the newly constructed canals, and even more cement sections were lying on the field, ready to be dug into the ground ((Interview 22, 5.10.2023, Interview 23, 6.10.2023).

Kyrgyz-Ata New Model

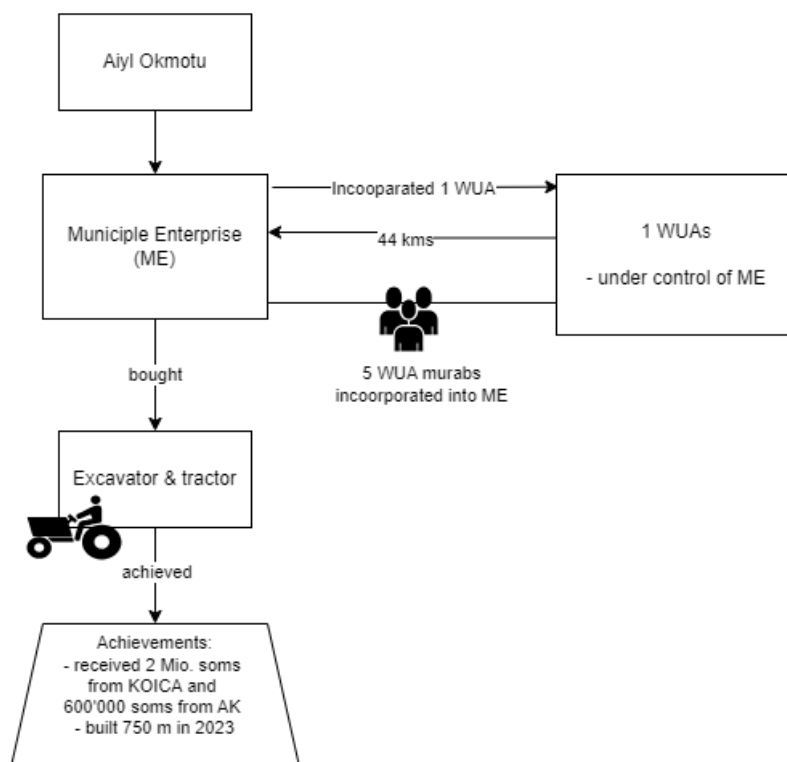


Figure 13: Implementation of the new model in Kyrgyz-Ata.

Concerning the work of the murabs, the head of AO and AK explained that they trusted and were content with the work of their murabs since they had their own controllers, who checked upon their work (Interview 22, 5.10.2023).

4.1.6 Results Aravan (Transition from Non-Pilot to Pilot)

Aravan is located in the South-West of Kyrgyzstan, in a valley that dips into Uzbekistan. Aravan receives its water resources from a variety of resources; apart from their own local source, Aravan is also dependent on irrigation from water reservoirs in Uzbekistan.

Rayon Aravan consists of 8 villages with a total of 12 WUAs and one municipal enterprise. In another AO in Rayon Aravan, which name I did not catch during the interviewing process, they combined all 6 WUAs with each other under one ME. The WUA employees remained, but are now controlled by the AO. The Head of WUA Support from the RWMD and one WUA Head explained that this fusion was initiated by the state government, which perceived the WUAs inefficient and which wanted to maximize their output by eliminating redundant bureaucracy (Interview 31, 12.10.2023).

Before arriving at the research site, the AO of Aravan was supposed to be a non-pilot region according to the knowledge of the local counsellor. Upon arrival, it turned out that Aravan was in the transitional phase between initiating an ME, and with the WUAs still remaining in their independence. The new model was being implemented as the successes of Kyrgyz-Ata were spread by word, and motivated several stakeholders to transform Aravan into the new model (Interview 27, 10.10.2023, Interview 30, 11.10.2023).

The mixed model is formed that the LSG body currently has taken over the canals of some WUAs, but not all. WUAs however still remain in their sovereignty and operate independently. This showed when in a mixed interview with 3 WUA Heads, who elaborated on how many canals they were responsible for, which is illustrated in Table 4. These WUAs are called Tebat, Abu Hayat and Kara-Korgon, and the canals are in various conditions. The WUAs operate in the same mode as pre-reform, and share their responsibilities with the AO. From a legal perspective, the canals of Tebat and Abu Hayat fully belong to the AO, but are managed by the WUAs (Interview 27, 10.10.2023, Interview 30, 11.10.2023).

Name of WUA	Founded in	Head since	No. kms total	No. kms cemented	Handed over to AO	Cemented by whom	No. of kms cleaned
Abu Hayat	1996	2017	42	1.8 km total, 700m by FSU, 550m by AO, 0 km by WUA	all	FSU & AO	1.5 Mio. Soms from AO to cement 550 m
Tebat	2009	2011	11	0	all	-	1.5 kms cleaned with excavators, rest Ashar
Kara-Korgon	2001	2018	22	1 km by WUA	20 km (95 %)	AO	200 metres cemented in 2023

Table 4: Information on three interviewed WUA Heads in Aravan

The new model was initiated by the government, as positive results were perceived from the neighbouring village Kyrgyz-Ata. Moreover, the RWMD wanted to support the AO by giving them funding. The Head of WUA Support in Aravan stressed the necessity of an ME supporting the WUAs, as they are otherwise completely on their own (Interview 31, 12.10.2023).

The Vice Head of the AO explained that the AO was currently planning on taking over the WUAs completely. However, the one condition that WUAs needed to fulfill is that they needed to pay off their 55'000 soms debt first. Moreover, the AO were currently working on the introduction of an ME, which they would introduce later on (Interview 26, 9.10.2023)

Concerning the tasks that the WUAs fulfill, the WUA Heads confirmed that in spring and autumn, they do their annual spring cleaning and basic repairs (Interview 30, 11.10.2023). Aravan AO financially supports the WUAs and distributed a total of 2.5 Mio. soms to the three Aravan WUAs 500'000 soms each to both Tebat and Kara-Korgon, and 1.5 Mio. soms to Abu-Hayat. Abu Hayat received significantly more funding as they owned a part of the main canal, which most urgently needed some repairs. Thus, the WUAs together with the AO cemented 550 metres of the main canal of Abu Hayat in 2023. (Interview 27, 10.10.2023, Interview 30, 11.10.2023, Interview 31, 12.10.2023).

Concerning the collection of irrigation fees, the success is mixed. Whilst Kara-Korgon and Abu Hayat collected 96 % of the fees in 2022, Tebat only collected 60 % in total. The head of Tebat WUA explained that this was a result of Tebat having the least amount of cemented canals (Interview 30, 11.10.2023).

4.1.7 Results Teploklyuchenka (Pilot)

The district of Ak-Suu has around 48'100 ha of arable land, of which 3642 ha are irrigable. The remaining lands are not connected to the irrigation system (Interview 42, 20.10.2023). The district Ak-Suu is a part of the region of Karakol, located in the north of Kyrgyzstan. The climate differs considerably compared to the other three research sites, as it is cooler and rainier. The seat of Rayon Ak-Suu is the village Teploklyuchenka, which was one of the pilot villages to develop and implement the policy model as one of the first villages in the country (Interview 42, 20.10.2023).

Teploklyuchenka as one of the initiators of the project did not have an ME or the AO who controlled the canals, but operated via their own WUAs. They used them as an extension of power, and had control over them. The AO of Teploklyuchenka did not just start supporting the WUAs with the rise of the new model. Already before, they finished unresolved duties of the AO related to agricultural matters, by fixing closed irrigation canals, as well as canal clearances and maintenance. As the AO was not allowed to directly fund the WUAs with an irrigation budget, they supported them via their agricultural funding instead (Interview 38, 26.10.2023).

The Responsible Secretary of the local council explained that before the policy reform, water users would often address their issues to the AO, and that they then re-directed them towards the WUAs.

From the 70 kms of canals that are under the RWMD, the vast majority were dug and cemented in the 1950s. But from that moment on they hardly underwent any repairs or maintenance works, leaving them in a bad condition. They did a top-up service by adding a top layer of cement on the canals (Interview 42, 20.10.2023).

From an organisational perspective, the RWMD made a time schedule for the WUAs, in order to prevent conflicts amongst the workers. They were needed especially during the hottest month, and calmed down tensions between water users, since downstream users afterwards received significantly more water (Interview 42, 20.10.2023).

In 2015, a WUA was founded in order to improve the agricultural situation in Teploklyuchenka. The WUA was able to do the basic repairs and clearances, but their work was limited by their own budget. The WUA improved the situation, but was not able to completely repair or revolutionize it. The WUA was thus supported by AO. They soon accepted the new model as so-called “matter of local importance”, meaning that irrigation issues now receive significant attention for financial issues or during audits. This also includes a three-party deal between the WUA, AO and RWMD, where certain responsibilities and obligations are handled out, and thus it is clearer what to do (Interview 39, 26.10.2023).

4.2 Results and Discussion

The first section of this chapter is a mere results section, where the different types of models are presented in order to visualize how the irrigation system of each AO is managed. The goal is to present an overview on how the new legislation is implemented in a variety of ways.

The second section merges results and discussion into one sub chapter. Dealing with qualitative data, this is a common method to support a claim, as results and interpretation oftentimes overlap (Mattissek, Pfaffenbach, and Reuber 2013).

Thematic analysis resulted in eight (8) different thematic codes, which are summarised as choice of model, professional capacity, access, cooperation, corruption and transparency, irrigation fees, and long-term effects, upon which this chapter is divided into. In the end, a short digression on the results of ATR are mentioned, which will strongly shape the policy reform in the future.

4.2.1 Choice of Model

Results showed that four (4) research sites (in Masy, Kyrgyz-Ata and Aravan) have transferred property to the AO. Out of these, two AOs have established a ME (Masy and Kyrgyz-Ata), and one AO is in the planning phase of the establishment of a ME (Aravan). AO of Teploklychenka established their own WUA in 2015, under which they operated. Both AOs Bazar-Korgon and Kengesh did not transfer any irrigation property to the AO (Figure 13).

Oblast	Rayon	Ayil Okmotu (AO)	Villages	Pilot	Municipal Enterprise (ME)
Jalal-Abad	Nookan	Masy	Apyrtan Shaydan	x	x
	Bazar-Korgon	Bazar-Korgon	Bazar-Korgon Kengesh		
Osh	Nookat	Kyrgyz-Ata		x	x
	Aravan	Aravan		x	
Issyk-Kul	Ak-Suu	Teploklyuchenka		x	

Figure 14: Aiyl Okmotus which have implemented a municipal enterprise (ME)

One pattern found to switch towards the new model was the combination of a strong LSG body with strong financial and managerial resources which would take over or support a weak

performing WUA, preferably without debts. This showed in all research sites where the AO had a strong household budget, meaning that they did not receive any donation from the state government. Moreover, each AO was able to immediately invest in some sort of canal rehabilitation as soon as the legislature was approved. Simultaneously, WUAs with high debts were usually not considered for the transition towards the reform, as the AOs oftentimes could or did not want to pay these off.

As RWMDs were also an integral part of the WUA support system, research indicates that they can act as a crucial third party support system of the WUA, remain essential for their support as well as demand fees from them. (Interview 15, 22.9.2023, Interview 26, 9.10.2023, Interview).

As Bazar-Korgon and Aravan show, well-working WUAs which had their own on-going projects with exterior organisations were not imbedded in the AO. This indicates an on-going wish of WUAs to still keep their sovereignty if possible (Interview 14, 21.9.2023, Interview 30, 11.10.2023).

Spill-over effects

As the implementation of the new model proceeded and first results became visible also to neighbouring villages, spill-over effects were identified in Rayon Nookan and Aravan, where stakeholders who were initially critical or showed a lack of interest in the new model changed their minds.

Spill-over effects were identified in Aravan, which was originally non-pilot, but which quickly decided to implement the model after it saw the successes of its neighbouring village Kyrgyz-Ata. This indicates that on the one hand, short-term successes are directly visible, and that the model also developed and spread on its own.

Spill-over effects are visible, since Aravan implemented the new model as soon as it saw the positive results of its' neighbouring village Kyrgyz-Ata. Moreover, this indicates trans-boundary exchange between WUAs and AOs, showing that neither WUAs nor AOs are working on an individual level. Instead, knowledge, tactics and practices are being shared and copied amongst different villages.

Masys' success also convinced the Head of District Administration in Rayon Nookan, so that the said respondent made a suggestion to the state parliamentary committee in Bishkek that the entire Rayon Nookan should be officially made a pilot region, as the respondent is quite sure that this policy reform will work out for the best. They believed that incorporating WUAs in the ME under the AO would prove as an optimal solution, as this way, WUAs can receive support in the form of funding and professional expertise. They explained that the AO in Nookan possessed the competence and willingness to achieve it. Moreover, the respondent claimed that the villagers anyway already sought the AO in the case of needing support, indicating that the local government is already closely tied with the residents and are aware of their problems and needs. Regarding whether or not WUAs should remain, they expressed their distrust in them and argued that the WUAs would need to be entirely supervised and controlled by the LSG anyway (Interview 19, 28.9.2023).

The Chief Specialist of the Department of WUA Support in Rayon Nooken mentioned that in the beginning, there were many stakeholders who only started to believe in the success of the policy reform when they started to see the first results (Interview 8, 18.9.2023).

North-South Pattern

However, despite initial discussions with my supervisor Bernd Steimann, a North-South divide was not found during my research. Even though this question was asked during multiple interviews, the answer towards the difference between North and South was mainly answered with the South being dryer, hotter, and more developed towards the agricultural sector. The Northern part of Kyrgyzstan is till this day home to pastoralism, which is the number one source of employment, income and food (Kulov 2007). Cultural effects were also difficult to identify.

Motivation to keep old model

One pattern found amongst non-pilot WUAs was a certain degree of self-sufficiency. The WUAs of Bazar-Korgon and Kengesh had independently organised grants from international organisations. Moreover, Bazar-Korgon already worked in close collaboration with the RWMD, thus they did not see the need for extended support. These findings support the indication that collaborative action is a key factor in the determination of the motivation to adopt the model.

However, WUAs which are not able to pay back credits on time, such as Kengesh, are in turn dependent on external support. Kengesh for example did this by incorporating the AO into vouching for them at the bank. These findings indicate that external support of WUAs sufficed for them to remain in their sovereignty.

Polycentric Model

One specific characteristic observed was that the successful models actively involved more than one stakeholder responsible for various irrigation matters with a polycentric type of governance. Scholarly voices have already suggested that polycentricity may be one aspect of sustainable governance. The concept of “polycentricity” refers to an approach of multiple, autonomous stakeholders which share overlapping responsibilities of a communal governance within a specific area of policy (Baldwin et al. 2018). This characteristic has been both part of the Initiative Group, and has still remained after the acceptance of legislation. Being able to interact with various stakeholders requires skills and resources, and can thus also be viewed as an organisational capability (Abdyllaeva and Steimann 2022; Baldwin et al. 2018; Sen 2003). As a counter-example, the WUAs of Kyrgyz-Ata, who did not interact with any other type of bodies, were in the end dissolved due to bad practices (Interview 22, 5.10.2023).

A case study in Upper Ewaso Ng’iro Basin, Kenya strengthens this thesis, and was able to illustrate that more than one decision-maker with overlapping authorities are crucial for collective action in irrigation governance. There, irrigation responsibilities were shared amongst different stakeholders, which benefitted the irrigation system by encouraging and strengthening cooperation amongst its members (Baldwin et al. 2018).

The strengths of a polycentric approach entail that it is especially useful for a governance of a natural resource. Rather than dividing tasks and responsibilities amongst various stakeholders, multiple parties are responsible for a communal resource, and manage it that way. Duplication of tasks has the advantage that tasks are taken care of by more than one stakeholder. This is seen when WUAs for example had strong relationships with the RWMD and benefited from their knowhow in both on-farm irrigation methods as well as administrative tasks. In the new model, the AO as an additional source has the potential to support the extra work, by organising or financing technical equipment. This may not be an issue for financial matters, since multiple funding incomes are beneficial (Baldwin et al. 2018).

Concerning organisational capabilities, duplication is sometimes considered as inefficient or obsolete, since multiple stakeholders organise a matter which could arguably be organised better by one stakeholder. This attitude has also been expressed by some stakeholders, who argued that the ATR would be beneficial as it cuts unnecessary administrative power. But with the duplication, the LSG body can engage and either double-check tasks such as administration, or time schedule, and thus provide an extra set of resources, and make governance more resilient to changing or challenging conditions. Moreover, duplication enables multilayered contact points of access across different levels (local, regional, national), meaning that now all the complaints addressed towards the LSG body and RWMD can be better mitigated and create an inclusive system to influence governance processes in both formal and informal structures. This way, the new model strengthens collective actions (Baldwin et al. 2018).

4.2.2 Professional Capacity

Old model:

Attitudes concerning WUA performances varied amongst each WUA: some WUAs were regarded as competent and rather successful, whereas others were claimed to have not achieved any progress since the FSU. One claim that supported the WUAs capabilities was that they made up an essential part of re-building the irrigation system after the fall of the FSU, when chaos broke out and people hungered. WUAs played an essential role in the re-establishment of the Kyrgyz Republic, as they started to organise themselves and took care of the canals. (Abdullaev and Mollinga 2010a).

These deeds were highlighted by multiple interviewees, such as the WUA Chief Engineer from Rayon Nookan, who explained that their WUA was established at the same time as the AO in 1996. Other than many WUAs, they did not receive any external support, such as from the World Bank, and were pioneers back in the day. They paved the way for irrigation system in total, since it took a lot of convincing of the farmers to make them understand the necessity of paying irrigation fees. Farmers' first reaction to this switch was quite negative, since they previously never had to pay for the water in their lives and argued that it was a God-given resource from the mountains. The WUA establishment included a broad elucidation of the new ground rules, and the WUA engineer determined that users should pay per hectare, and had to convince them of the necessity of a water fee. With this statement, the Chief Engineer of WUA underlined the reason for why WUAs shall remain despite reform, as they bring indispensable knowledge and experience, and have been constantly evolving by learning

different irrigation and farming methods, either by self-training and sometimes with the support of other WUAs or international organisations and stakeholders (Interview 5, 15.9.2023, Interview 16, 25.9.2023)

In Aravan, attitudes amongst WUAs were conflicting. the Vice Head of the AO and the Head of the AK claimed that the WUAs in general performed well due to their good managerial skills. This showed as they were able to pay 98 % of their irrigation fees to the RWMD, which marks an excellent fee collection rate. Even more, they increased the irrigation fee to 2300 soms per hectare per year, making it by far the highest irrigation fee of all research sites. As a result, they were able to raise the salary of their employees (Interview 26, 9.10.2023).

The Vice Head of the AO however claimed that the general condition of the canals was very bad, and estimated that around 15 % of all water is lost in on-farm irrigation canals. The vice head explained that they themselves had difficulties explaining this terrible condition despite some repairs they had undertaken in the last couple of years, also since the AO themselves had donated some cement over the last couple of years. They speculated that this could possibly be a negative result of cheap cement that the WUA had used which they received from donations but were not sure whether this explained the entire situation (Interview 27, 10.10.2023).

Attitudes between the LSG body of Aravan and the LSG body of Masy (Rayon Nooken) showed a couple of significant differences. In Masy, the LSG body explained how they visited the Balkans in order to learn about the garbage system. Post-interview, they expressed the wish to come to Switzerland for a teaching in order to learn the best practices, so that they could further develop their skills².

In Aravan, attitudes were framed by a slight passiveness, as the LSG body expressed an inexperience on why the canals were in a bad shape. This was shown as they could not directly pinpoint possible reasons on why the irrigation system was suffering under the WUAs. Moreover, in a personal conversation post-interview, the Head of the AO expressed the wish for more funding from international organisations³.

These attitudes do not fit into the concept of IWIP and TIRIP, as their aim is to strengthen the irrigation system by enabling more actors supporting the irrigation system whilst strengthening their capabilities, competences and relationships with each other. As the irrigation system is too expensive to be funded by grants of international stakeholders, sustainable irrigation relies on the competences of local and national agents (Abdyllaeva and Steimann 2022; Intercooperation 2022).

These findings could fit into the notion that Aravan is originally a non-pilot AO, and did thus not participate in the several trainings, seminars and other forms of bottom-up cooperations which have strongly shaped and introduced the pilot AOs into the practice of the new legislation. This is an indication that high fees and good managerial skills alone do not suffice

² Personal conversation during lunch, post-interview, 14.9.2023

³ Personal conversation, post-interview, 10.10.2023

to support the irrigation system, even though it is a limiting factor of a high WUA performance.

In Teploklyuchenka, the Head of the RWMD pointed out that vast differences of WUA competences are visible. They described one village as very competent, pro-active and efficient, and explained that these characteristics were proven as the WUA would gather their farmers together and discuss underlying water issues. They would always show up, no matter how tense a situation might be or if conflicts arose, they would still come and ask what was wrong and what they could do to support their water users. As a result, their canals were well maintained and fees paid on time to the RMWD.

Contrarily, a WUA from another village was absent most of the time, and would only show up when water was urgently needed during the hot season. Other times of the year, such as spring where general cleaning sessions take place they were nowhere to be found (Interview 42, 20.10.2023).

Thus, the Engineer of the Pilot WUA in Rayon Nookan explained, WUAs served as role models in their professional contribution, but at the same time stressed the necessity of actively engaging the dialogue with the water users, and to constantly self-develop the professional skills in order for the WUA to succeed (Interview 5, 15.9.2023).

In a 2004 study, Abdullaev and Horinkova showed that thanks to the pro-active work of WUAs, farmers re-developed their sense of collective actions and well-being of the community, and started to implement new rules and methods suited for local conditions. This showed as farmers increased their skills on repairs and maintenance, as well as irrigation efficiency throughout Central Asia. Moreover, fewer conflicts arose which was measured by less damage made upon canals and other infrastructure (Abdullaev and Horinkova 2004).

However, even though WUAs played a crucial role in the re-establishment of the irrigation system after the fall of the FSU, the overall WUA performance and state of irrigation canals was highly criticized amongst the majority of stakeholders.

Thus, even though initial efforts of the WUAs and governments in the early 2000s and 2010s developed skills such as organisation, irrigation know-how and other skills, these were neither maintained nor further developed into a coherent, self-sustainable system (Yakubov 2022).

This notion is supported by the argument that WUAs are grass-root organisations which are organised by family-like structures, which mainly have the interest of the upholding of the WUAs in mind, and not the overall benefits of the former WUA reform. Taken this argument further, one could argue that WUAs were never meant to function in the decision-making processes of the irrigation system, but that they were only meant to execute the basic irrigation duties. Because they are only making their money operational, they do not have an incentive to build up profit, which in turn lead to a long-term deterioration of the irrigation system (Wegerich 2008).

This is also visible as WUAs had difficulties in the implantation of formal rules and regulations, such as fee collection rate, documentation, or project applications. High regulation is not

always good for WUAs. WUAs in other regions were also reported with a lack of experience in operation and maintenance. Moreover, too many formal rules and levels of administration were difficult for WUAs to operate, letting them operate in more informal practices (De et al. 2023).

Comparing results with case study findings of irrigation development projects in other parts of the world, successful management of irrigation systems entail a strong managerial time scheduling, and extensive trainings to improve site information were found as crucial factors for the development of the irrigation system (Abdullaev and Horinkova 2004; Bembridge 1986; De et al. 2023).

The importance of an efficient management system has also been visualised in a case study of a failed irrigation scheme in Western Transkei in South Africa. Human factors which lead to the failure of the project are weak leadership structures and formal organisation on village level, which in turn deteriorates development in general. Farmers were found to lack knowledge and experience, as the vast majority had little to no contact with extension workers, thus not being informed of modern irrigation techniques. Extension workers themselves had little to no knowledge, and their experiences and competences were rated as deficient. Moreover, irrigation was regarded as a tool against drought, and not as a necessity which needed to be constantly maintained and developed (Bembridge 1986). As these findings coincide with irrigation in Kyrgyzstan, this implies that irrigation management and techniques can be inferred in a global context.

New model

As described in Chapter 4.1, rapid cleaning and cementation works have been achieved during the short time period of 1.5 years. This reflected upon the attitudes of the respondents, who highly praised the newly gained access to funding, technical equipment, as well as an efficient execution of work. Especially farmers approved the reform, since they profited directly from less water scarcity and their harvest increased (Interview 6, 16.9.2023, Interview 24, 6.10.2023, Interview 27, 10.10.2023). One farmer in Masy for instance explained that because they have more water, they can plant their crops more times per season, such as like himself, who now harvested two crops per year instead of one (Interview 6, 16.9.2023).

The Village Head of Apyrtan mentioned the newly won access of their village thanks to the AO. On the one hand, they did a massive clean-up and cementation. As they before did not receive any irrigation services at all, the AO constantly increased their involvement and slowly established their system into all of the villages. As a result, the importance of the role of the murab increased, a stakeholder which in particular carries the majority of responsibility of the irrigation network (Interview 4, 15.9.2023).

However, farmers still saw room for improvement. They explained that they suffered from fluctuating fuel prices, which affected them strongly. Fuel prices usually skyrocket during the hot season, as all farmers are in need of their tractors. This imposes a large difficulty upon them, thus expressed the wish of the AO to solve these issues as well by stabilizing the prices and buying and re-selling fuel to fair prices (Interview 4, 15.9.2023, Interview 6, 16.9.2023).

Comparisons of the LSG body with the management during the FSU also shaped the positive perception of stakeholders on the AO. Apyrtan Village Head (Pilot) for example inter alia wished for more state control of the crops, and used the example of how the alfalfa had been taken care of by the FSU back in the day. The sovkhoses and kolchosen provided the farmers with fertilizers and had state plans on crop rotation. These controlled measures lead to stable harvest, and since they have fallen away the pastures are in a messy shape (Interview 6, 16.9.2023). These concerns depict how the former agricultural system under the FSU has not yet been forgotten.

This claim was supported by one counsellor of Abad, who claimed that irrigation in Kyrgyzstan suffers from too little recognition by the state, even though it is on contrary one of the most important issues. This roots in the fact that irrigation is located under the department of Agriculture, which in turn is responsible for a variety of issues apart from irrigation. As a solution to the neglect of irrigation issues, ABAD counsellor advised that the irrigation issues are in need of a separate department, so that additional attention and funding is allocated towards them. Thus, a further investigation into the implications and implementations on state level would be of interest and necessity, in order to complete research⁴

In Kyrgyz-Ata and Masy, they explained how they managed to clean canals thanks to the support of state budget and international cooperations. Both Heads of the AO explained that they wrote project proposals, in order to gather funds for cementation, excavators, drip irrigation and water reservoirs (Interview 3, 14.9.2023, Interview 22, 5.10.2023).

In Aravan, the Vice Head of the AO shared the intention of the AO to take over the canals in Aravan due to water distribution conflicts. They believed that if the organisation would be under the AO, managerial processes would become more efficient as fewer people would be intervening. The AO would have a better overview and control over the complex situation, and could intervene without having to consult a myriad of other stakeholders (Interview 27, 10.10.2023). They justified their claim that they introduced the WUAs with a time schedule as a response to unfair water distribution. The other council members claimed that since this introduction, water delivery has improved for all of its members. (Interview 27, 10.10.2023, Interview 30, 11.10.2023). This, way, the AO supports the WUAs by giving them more structure, control and transparency. In 2023, they introduced a time schedule as a response to unfair water distribution (Interview 27, 10.10.2023).

In Teploklychenka, the Vice Head of the AK and Responsible Secretary of the AK explained that the main reason why members of the LSG body viewed themselves as a suitable candidate for taking over the canals was that after the AO started to support the WUAs, water loss drastically decreased. Farmers now receive a more steady supply of water during the hot season and suffer from less water scarcity (Interview 37, 25.10.2023, Interview 39, 26.10.2023).

This achievement is based on a cleaning of the entire irrigation system, where the AO organised and funded 500 kms of on-farm canals to have been properly cleaned up with the

⁴ Personal conversation, post-interview, 11.10.2023

support of technical machinery and community work. Moreover, the AO installed many water devices and cemented a couple of metres of canals. Different to other research sites, they did not introduce a time schedule (Interview 37, 25.10.2023, Interview 39, 26.10.2023).

The secretary of the AK explained that the most prominent positive aspect mentioned towards the new model is that the irrigation issues have now been officially defined as “a matter of local importance” (VMS), which indicates that the AO is now actively taking a role in the irrigation processes. The “matter of local importance” is defined by a three-party deal between the AO, WUAs, and RWMD, where the responsibilities of the various stakeholders are clearly defined. The reactions towards this legal change were perceived as highly positive amongst the local council and RWMD. This ensures that the responsibility of the irrigation system is not solely on the shoulders of one private enterprise anymore, but now can be supported by multiple stakeholders financially and on an organisational level instead, and it is not overlooked anymore in the management of the LSG (Interview 39, 26.10.2023).

One part of the 3-party deal includes a newly founded “rights violation commission”, which decided upon stricter penalties and fines for water users who break the law. Different than before, they now have the possibility to demand fines from the water users, and can use jurisdictional force if they don’t want to pay (Interview 39, 26.10.2023).

With the integration of the AO into the irrigation system, the local community is arguably more involved in the irrigation processes, and will thus include the overall well-being and interests of farmers. Moreover, as the level of privatisation decreases with the policy reform, the state has more potential to become involved. This has the potential to shift from on-farm irrigation as an exclusively local matter, towards a larger involvement of local and at parts state government. Strengths of this model could be that individualised procedures are preserved, without falling suit to centralized undertakings, which are standardized solutions and do not necessarily fit into the local context (Baldwin et al. 2018). As the municipality is highly aware of local matters, this is seen as a large potential.

The positive results of WUAs in Uzbekistan was also expressed by a respondent from the Head of the RWMD in Rayon Nookan. They claimed that the main reason WUAs work more sufficiently in Uzbekistan is because they are not privately owned but under the government instead, which in turn ensured the WUAs to pay their fees automatically due to more control. The government is stricter and thus they do not face the issue of stakeholders not paying their irrigation fees, which in turn leads to fewer problems overall (Interview 5, 15.9.2023).

The integration of the state into the irrigation issues, as especially seen in Teploklyuchenka, has certain similarities to the WUAs in Uzbekistan. Comparing Kyrgyz WUAs with Uzbeki WUAs, WUAs in Uzbekistan follow a different water management logic, with the WUA acting as an extension of state regulation even though they are by law privatized organisations. For instance, WUA chairmen regularly attend meetings of the RWMD and follow instructions given to them. RWMD on the other side is actively involved in management and crop activities. They visit the fields and interact with farmers to check the state of their crops, and directly intervene in activities which are by law the responsibilities of WUA (Veldwisch and Mollinga 2013). With the new reform, Pilot models showed traits that they could possibly function in the future more similarly to WUAs in Uzbekistan.

To take it further, the strong guardianship WUAs experience in Uzbekistan in form of state-regulated activities is a source of external resources which benefit WUAs (Veldwisch and Mollinga 2013), and in some terms is similar to the new model in Kyrgyzstan. It can be seen as an indication that perhaps WUAs are not entirely capable of taking care of the system themselves, and that support may be crucial for success.

However, it is essential to note that LSG bodies themselves have stark differences amongst their performances.

A former government agency employee who worked as a farmer explained that Shaydan AO (Rayon Nooken) for instance would not be able to take over this policy reform, as it is heavily dependent on the financial support of the state. This means that the AO is not capable of financing itself via taxes, and that it receives government funding instead. The farmer and former state worker argued that Shaydans' lack of competences were a result of a lack of motivation combined with laziness to work hard from the side of the AO, thus indicating that the success of the LSG body also heavily depends on its' professional capacity (Interview 6, 16.9.2023).

As seen by the results, the strengths of the interviewed AOs lie in their organizational capacity, their increasing capabilities, an evident willingness and motivation to participate, close relationships and mutual respect with each other, and respect towards the profession of farmers.

These findings are supported by reports of the United Nations Development Programme, which assessed and strengthened capabilities of the LSG bodies throughout Kyrgyzstan. Strengths of the Kyrgyz Republic mark its' decentralisation, where LSG bodies gained self-independence as municipal bodies, are shown to execute their tasks and by paying attention to matters of local importance. As LSG bodies have the capability to decide upon points of local significance, they have a certain range of freedom to implement the new legislation (UNDP 2012).

However, apart from the irrigation system, a multitude of issues require their attention. Other significant issues entail development of social infrastructure for villages and education system. As LSG bodies are also supported by international organisations, fundings and digitisation processes, they have the capabilities to develop themselves. Internal issues of LSG bodies are processes of political, financial, and administrative processes that are not yet synchronized, meaning that each sector experiences different speeds of development. Moreover, LSG bodies have a tendency to assign resigned district councils to the local ones. Another difficulty shown is that the force of the central governance is declining, meaning that large-scale projects lack a national concept for the overall administrative levels and organisations, making implementation and development of these difficult and prone to corruption. Hydrological projects such as overhaul of the irrigation system or water projects suffer under these conditions, as they require large funding and coordination (UNDP 2012).

Thus, the framed attitudes and results indicate LSG bodies with high organisational capabilities and who perform on collaborative action have the potential to support the WUAs.

Weak AOs on the other hand often need to be supported themselves, before they can take upon more responsibilities.

RWMD instead

Even though the attitudes were framed positively towards the new legislation, Heads of the RWMD from all four research sites believed that it would be better to transfer property to the RWMD instead.

The Heads of RWMD in Rayon Nookan, Bazar-Korgon, Rayon Nookat and Teploklyuchenka all rated the policy reform as a positive and necessary change. However, they argued that the RWMD brought a sophisticated technical expertise of the department, a larger budget than the AO and three decades of experience. As the RWMD is already established, taking care of off-farm canals and possessing the necessary infrastructure and technical equipment to expand their services, instead of building it from scratch, already exists. Thus, even though the new law was considered a necessary and right step into a more sustainable irrigation, incorporating the WUAs into the RWMD was perceived as a better solution (Interview 9, 18.9.2023, Interview 26, 9.10.2023). The Head of the RWMD in Rayon explained that they could incorporate both parties with each other and strengthen them simultaneously (Interview 9, 18.9.2023).

When it comes to whether the new model should be under the LSG body or the RWMD, the secretary of the AK argued that with the reform, it would be unrealistic that the RWMD will handle it, and that the AO is the best option to implement the new model. The reason is that the AO of Teploklyuchenka is the central village of the Ak-Suu district, and possesses a combination of a strong local administrative body together with a close bond to the villagers, who would anyway tell them their problems (Interview 39, 26.10.2023).

Even more, some members of the RWMD claimed the AOs were not capable of taking over the WUAs. The Head of RWMD in Rayon Nookan (Pilot) and Bazar-Korgon (Non-Pilot) said that their respective AOs (Masy and Bazar-Korgon) did not provide the necessary resources needed for the irrigation maintenance, and that they do not expect a change from this transformation. The Head of RWMD in Bazar-Korgon believed that a similar situation would occur as after the fall of the FSU, when the clear responsibilities of each task was not assigned and that it would end in chaos. They argued that the WUAs have proven their competence over the last 30 years, and that this know-how cannot be obtained overnight (Interview 14, 21.9.2023).

The Head of RWMD in Rayon Bazar-Korgon (non-pilot) explained that they viewed the policy reform very positively, but that the WUAs should nevertheless remain autonomous. They believed that the AO and WUAs definitely need to work in close cooperation with each other, in order for a well-functioning irrigation system. They should do this with the support of allocating funds, supporting the WUAs in paying off their debts and lending them equipment (Interview 14, 21.9.2023).

The Head of WUA Support and Head of RWMD argued that the local budget of the AO will not suffice for the large scale overhaul of the irrigation system, and that they should thus leave this to them (Interview 39, 26.10.2023).

Even more, the Head of RWMD in Kyrgyz-Ata claimed that WUAs should be completely eliminated, and that the responsibilities should go to the ME. They argued that there are 10 people in each WUA, and if each village has around 16 WUAs, that adds up to around 160 WUA employees. They saw this as a completely inefficient way to do irrigation, and that they should be minimised to cut costs (Interview 26, 9.10.2023).

The ABAD head in Jalal-Abad explained that the voluntary nature of the reform can cause conflicts, as some WUAs which work well do not want to hand over their canals to the AO, even though they want them to, and vice versa. They also expressed why the canals should be transferred to the LSG body, and not the RWMD. There was an incident where the RWMD of one AO in Rayon Nooken received one (1) Bio. Soms government fund to repair their off-farm canals. However, due to incompetence and negligence, they built the canal in the wrong angle (facing upwards), so that half of the population of their AO could not receive their water. As this incident was addressed during a general meeting in summer 2023, the head of the RWMD simply fled the meeting from all of the angry farmers (21). Moreover, even though they expressed the strengths of the AO, the LSG body will not be able to solve all of the issues in the end. Instead, farmers need to take more responsibilities in order for the irrigation system to succeed (21).

4.2.3 Access

In general, research patterns indicate that access to financial resources, technical equipment in the form of heavy machinery, organizational capabilities and professional expertise were limiting factors of performance levels in the irrigation sector. As WUAs are a private entity, they were not allowed to receive fundings from the government in the old model (Abdyllaeva and Steimann 2022). Now however, access to the aforementioned resources can be granted by the AO, by the RWMD, or like in the old model, by capacity building trainings of the WUAs themselves.

A lack of tractors and excavators was named as one of the main issues. As the communal work is usually carried out by Ashar in the spring time, this entails the majority of villagers to clean the canals by hand. As many parts of the canals are not accessible, this imposes difficulties and results in canals not being properly cleaned.

Aravan had issues with a lack of access towards a variety of resources, including technical equipment, access to canals, and access to water resources.

One problem of the WUAs in Aravan is a complete lack of heavy machinery. The Head of the WUA together with the Head of WUA Support explained that they did not own any sorts of tractors or excavators of their own, thus canal maintenance in general and during the annual spring cleaning are not efficient.

Moreover, heavy repair works and cementation prove to be a bit tricky in Aravan, as some houses are located very close to the canals. This is a result of a system which dates back to 2001, where homeowners had the chance to enlarge their property, which lead to families building a second house in their gardens for the younger generation to move in. This leaves little to no room for heavy tractors or excavators to work on the canals at certain points.

Moreover, as the village population is currently growing this issue is expected to worsen and to make maintenance works difficult. Moreover, it is difficult to argue over these matters on a legal basis, since the canals often flow through the property of other peoples' gardens (Interview 31, 12.10.2023).

The Head of WUA Support as well as a WUA head in Aravan further claimed that what remains is a general scarcity of water resources, and a lack of funding from the government. Aravan receives their water from five different places around Kyrgyzstan and from four different rayons in Uzbekistan, one of which is from the reservoir Nayman (located in Kyrgyzstan on the border to Uzbekistan) (Interview 31, 12.10.2023).

This resulted in the fact that even though the WUAs executed the general canal cleaning conscientiously twice a year in spring and autumn, the canal condition nevertheless deteriorated each year. Access can be prohibited by various forms of blockages or power, and can be a denominator of the equity of a shared resource amongst its users (Udas, Roth, and Zwarteveen 2014).

New model

One attitude which was positively framed around the introduction of the new model were the direct canal and maintenance successes, which lead to a direct increase of water availability. As already described in Chapter 4.1, AOs and MEs were able to implement a rapid cleaning and maintenance as soon as the new law became implemented.

The Village Head of Masy explained that the new model provides a positive change since with the support of tractors and excavators, the community service will become easier. This can be seen as one of the main issues concerning the canals, which is that the muddy sections are overgrown with a special type of grass, which hinders the water flow drastically. These need to be removed via either cementation or large repairs, thus the respondents explained that they are positive to see a change thanks to the new management (Interview 4, 15.9.2023).

The AO in Masy was addressed in an emergency, where a muddy canal had collapsed entirely. This led to the severe situation, where major parts of the village lost their entire water supply. The Village Head of Apyrtan explained that the ME acted quickly, and that it only took them one week to organize the technical equipment and 15 days to fully clean and repair the canal. As visible in Figures 14 and 15 (Interview 6, 16.9.2023).



Figure 15: on the right, the end result of the newly repaired canal is visible. Farmers now receive their water again

Figure 16: Excavator cleans and repairs the muddy canal in Apyrtan (Masy) village after a sudden collapse.

In Aravan, the three WUAs Abu-Hayat, Tebat and Kara-Korgon expressed a positive attitude towards the new model, as long as they provided them with support in terms of finances or technical equipment. The head of Tebat WUA claimed that before the policy reform, the AO did not support the WUAs; now, however, the AO has incorporated irrigation issues into their planning and they welcome the fact that the AO supports them financially and with excavators, tractors and other technical equipment which they urgently need. Not only did they receive more water, but the WUA Kara-Korgon, which was located last in line, now received nearly the same amount of irrigation as the other WUAs. As a result, fewer conflicts have been reported since then (Interview 30, 11.10.2023).

The Head of WUA Support in Aravan even went further and claimed after they saw the successes in neighbouring Rayon Nookat, where the new model significantly improved the entire irrigation system, they did not believe that the WUAs left on their own, without any governmental support, would be capable of making a difference (Interview 31, 12.10.2023).

Other studies, such as in the Ferghana Valley, Uzbekistan, WUAs showed different levels of performances just like in Kyrgyzstan. They showed that economic and technical conditions as well as organisational capabilities were directly linked to water supply. Even more, they served as a limiting factor of WUA performance levels, indicating that weak performances are linked to a lack of funds, managerial structures, and technical equipment, such as tractors, excavators, water pumps and other.

All stakeholders claimed that the increase in irrigation is a result of financial and technical assistance.

Decrease of water scarcity and conflicts in combination with an increase in harvest Water users who were attached to canals that profited from the changes from the new model,

received an increase in irrigation and harvest. These results indicate an increase in organisational and collective capabilities, provided that the AO is equipped with the financial and administrative resources to support a third party.

However, even though the new financing and access to heavy machinery increases the irrigation system, without strong management, leadership and irrigation know-how, these factors do not automatically guarantee an overhaul of the irrigation system.

They showed that low irrigation performances were linked with weak organisation and spreading of information and knowledge. Without strong organisation, technical equipment alone does not suffice, as it has to be allocated and controlled (Mochalova, Oytüre, and Uktam 2014). Results that have been assessed to support the irrigation system of the WUAs are also possibly applicable to the AO and ME.

4.2.4 Cooperation

Positive attitudes towards WUA performances often entailed close collaborations with either the RWMD or international organisations, which in turn supported WUAs with funds, technical equipment, or know-how.

In Bazar-Korgon (Non-pilot) for instance, WUAs were working independently and not planning on handing over property to the AO was mentioned. The Head of the RWMD had a positive attitude towards most WUAs in Bazar-Korgon, and named a close collaboration with the RWMD as the main reason for their success. The Head compared a situation back in 2012, where WUAs were not able to pay off their fees to the RWMD. As a result, the RWMD started to actively support them collecting their fees, which in turn made WUAs economically self-sustainable. Even more, WUAs are today eligible on taking larger credits (Interview 14, 21.9.2023).

Similar attitudes were found in Rayon Nookan, where the Head of the RWMD explained that not all WUAs had problems collecting irrigation fees, and estimated that around 8 to 9 out of 15 WUAs in Bazar-Korgon had close cooperations with international organisations, such as the World Bank or ADB, who would supply WUAs with seeds and fertilizers for more efficient farming techniques (Interview 14, 21.9.2023).

Thus, these results indicate a pattern amongst WUAs who would not hand over canals.

Attitudes amongst the LSG body in all five (5) research sites were mainly negative. LSG Heads and deputies in Rayon Nookan and Masy AO claimed that the WUAs worked poorly and that they needed support and supervision from the AO.

As the Head of Abad explained, WUAs often lacked professional capacity. Especially in Masy and Bazar-Korgon, WUAs did not employ well-educated staff such as hydro-technicians or lawyers, who could construct and maintain canals professionally, write project proposals to address new funds, or work with the computer. Moreover, they criticized murabs who only distributed water to the farmers, and seldom showed a more varied set of capacities (Interview 21, 20.9.2023).

These claims were supported by a WUA engineer in Rayon Nooken, who explained that some WUAs lacked the professional competence to execute and develop their WUAs. As an example, many WUA members regularly addressed the interviewed respondent for help, and that they supported them with teachings on how to make budget schemes, organise work plans or write project proposals. The respondent further explained that they possessed this competence by self-training as well as several teachings conducted during their course of their career. They concluded that continuous improvement is essential for WUA members to develop and widen their skill set (Interview 5, 15.9.2023).

4.2.5 Corruption and Transparency

In Kyrgyz-Ata, the main reasons named for the severe irrigation issues were related to corruption. Of all research sites examined, attitudes in Kyrgyz-Ata were rated the worst amongst the LSG body and farmers. Up until 2022, there was one WUA in the entire municipality which was responsible for its' five villages (Interview 22, 5.10.2023, Interview 23, 6.10.2023).

They explained that WUA officials collected irrigation fees on time, but other than that their impact was non-existent. Only a couple of murabs worked, who executed some partial cleaning, but that was minimal compared to the necessary work that needed to be done (Interview 22, 5.10.2023, Interview 23, 6.10.2023).

The farmers claimed that WUAs pretended to work, since they received fees and resources, but nobody really saw them do anything. On the contrary, there was an incident where the WUA received some cement from the Aiyl Okmotu to undergo some repair work, but a couple of WUA members were later on spotted using it for their own houses instead (Interview 24, 6.10.2023). Even more, the farmers didn't even know that murabs existed, as they never showed up on their field. Instead, the farmers took matters in their own hands and had always distributed the water independently (Interview 24, 6.10.2023).

Evidence of corruption was provided by the LSG body, who criticized the WUA of nepotism, a lack of professionalism, and non-transparent documentation. First of all, the Head of the WUA solely assigned their siblings into the committee, of whom no one brought any experience or know-how into the field. They argued that the committee had no idea what they were doing, and that they just signed every document submitted to them, without questioning anything (Interview 22, 5.10.2023, Interview 23, 6.10.2023).

Another major conflict amongst the WUAs was an incident where murabs did not receive their salary over the course of six months. Moreover, as the WUA was pervaded by nepotism, other WUA members were afraid of doing something wrong and upsetting the wrong members, as the head would then quickly replace them (Interview 22, 5.10.2023, Interview 23, 6.10.2023).

Corruption and lack of transparency is not uncommon amongst statements of WUAs performances. A similar case study in Kazakhstan argued that low WUA performance is linked with a lack of transparency in financial budgeting. Farmers were corrupted as they often paid their fees but never received the correct amount of water. They also did not receive a receipt for their irrigation fees, thus they couldn't prove how much had already been paid. Other

factors included low maintenance works and cementation rates. As a result, the farms in the end of the irrigation line gradually received less water as well, indicating that state of canals is so bad so that all water is lost before it reaches the end of the village (Wegerich 2008).

Since Kyrgyzstan is continuously gaining political stability since its' short modern history of around thirty years' time, the next biggest challenge that has been marked is corruption. Especially in the judicative and irrigation field, corrupt practices have prevailed in forms of nepotism, jurisdictional interferences, bribery and more (France and Kukutschka 2019).

Corruption is found to prevail throughout all hierarchy levels. In 2005, the newly elected and former president of the Kyrgyz Republic presented a party program, where he promised to fight corruption and strengthen national institutions. However, he was soon accused of institutionalising his private ambitions, and soon fled from Bishkek to Osh. Corruption is also common amongst individuals. For instance, in a survey conducted by the Global Corruption Barometer, 38 % of Kyrgyz citizens admitted bribing public services, such as during issuing public documents (France and Kukutschka 2019).

Similar to findings in Kyrgyz-Ata, irrigation bureaucracy is overall rated to have high levels of corruption in Kyrgyzstan. As irrigation fee collection rates and transparency are low, documentation of administrative procedures is difficult and incomplete (Interview 22, 5.10.2023, Interview 23, 6.10.2023).

This difficult aspect was also expressed by the LSG body, as their scope of action is limited by their dependency on the capabilities of the Kyrgyz government. They applied a project proposal to the Development Fund of Ecology for 6.5 Mio. soms for the installation of a drip irrigation system. However, even though they insisted on the urgent necessity of installing the drip irrigation as soon as possible, they had not received any feedback from the state, due to internal tensions and corruption amongst the state department (Interview 3, 19.9.2023).

So the point is that yes, they know that drip irrigation is necessary and it should be integrated. It should be introduced over time because there is this problem of drought season and stuff. So they are aware of that, they know how the tendencies are going on. They made the project proposal for 6.5 million soms and applied to that [Development Fund] of Ecology. But because about 4-5 employees have been arrested for a corruption scandal in that ministry they are still waiting. [...] Plus, building the infrastructure there, you know the fence around the farm... Yeah. And because there is water scarcity, out of 8000 apple trees about 500 trees died unfortunately, so they are still looking... (Interview 3, 14.9.2023)

This can be viewed as a weak point of the capabilities of the LSG body, as they themselves remain highly dependent on the state budget for larger investments.

One solution that promises the eradication of corruption is digitisation by making processes more transparent. First digitisation efforts have been made in 2013 amongst state bodies, but success rates were perceived as mixed. Up until today, most AO websites solely provide general information, with not many transactional activities possible.

Masy and Kyrgyz-Aravan LSG bodies have both initiated a digital e-banking system, which was nearly ready to launch. Both stakeholders ordered them from an independent IT service

provider, and wanted to first digitalize all of the land plots and general information, and in a second step collect fees via a digital e-banking system (Interview 2, 14.9.2023, Interview 3, 14.9.2023, Interview 22, 5.10.2023, Interview 23, 5.10.2023).

The Head of AO, AK and ME of Kyrgyz-Ata explained that thanks to the digitalisation of the data, administrative processes are easier to maintain and observe. This includes the overview of outstanding fees, debts and salaries. One significant improvement is that now, murabs finally received their salary on time via card (Interview 22, 5.10.2023, Interview 23, 5.10.2023). This way, they believe that not only will it be easier to collect and control fee payments, but that other issues related to the municipality, such as documentation, will be easier and more efficient to access. Moreover, citizens do not have to go to the local council in person anymore for every issue (Interview 3, 14.9.2023, Interview 23, 6.10.2023).

This claim is supported by a report from the United Nations Development Programme, which confirmed that e-banking systems facilitates services in rural areas. The implementation in Karool AO for instance resulted in a massive time reduction obtaining a document, certificate or payments from several hours to 2 minutes (UNDP 2021). As experienced by the Author, it is normal to have to queue several hours to acquire simple documents.

Successful digitisation implementation however requires high funding, as well as thorough commitment in the continuous application and maintenance from high-level decision-makers (France and Kukutschka 2019). Thus, supporting LSG bodies in transparency processes such as the application and maintenance of an electronic data bank could be a possible way of supporting LSG bodies in their freedom of development and collaborative action.

4.2.6 Irrigation Fees

Attitudes towards the old model framed most WUAs having low irrigation fee collection rates.

In Aravan for instance, the WUAs were still coping until this day with an unsteady fee collection rate. At the point when the interview took place, Abu Hayat had collected 60 – 70 %, Tebat 50 % and Kara-Korgon less than 50 % of the fees at that time. Most WUAs in the end managed to collect the remaining fees. The reason why they collected it differently was that some water users did not have much money on the side, so that they were not able to pay the fees immediately (Interview 31, 12.10.2023).

This issue showed as according to the Head of Abad, many water users did not develop the mentality to pay for irrigation. Even more, as there were no mechanical facilities to hinder the water to flow on the fields of non-paying water users, many farmers received their water either way. This facilitated a relaxed attitude amongst non-paying farmers and impeded the work of the WUA (Interview 21, 20.0.2023).

The Vice Head of AO in Kengesh explained that WUAs are stuck in the middle by being obliged to collect irrigation fees from farmers, and having to pay irrigation fees to the RWMD. The main issue is that if WUAs do not pay their fees to the RWMD, they sometimes get into trouble, by receiving penalties. However, when farmers do not pay their fees, WUAs are limited in their capacities into forcing penalising non-paying farmers, as they lack the physical

mechanisms to stop the water flowing onto the fields anyways. Thus, even though WUAs could impose fines on non-paying farmers, farmers would oftentimes refuse paying them. In the worst case, the police would interact as a mediator. The AO on the other hand has stronger administrative and executive power, as they are used to collecting money from villagers via taxes, and they have the possibility to send the police when villagers refuse to pay the fines (Interview 10, 19.9.2023).

Individuals attempting to receive benefits without contributing towards the costs is known as a free-riding problem, and can happen when the access towards the resource is not properly managed via collaborative action. This unequal access is not simply a product of a lack of installed water devices, but a sign of irrigation stakeholders not cooperating on an equal level. For collaborative action to take place, water users just need to take control of the irrigation on their field and support the system lying behind it for it to work (De et al. 2023).



Figure 17: Latoks ready to install in Kyrgyz-Ata. Supported by Fundings of KOICA. Picture taken by Author, 6.10.2023



Figure 18: on the left, newly installed Latok in Kyrgyz-Ata. Picture taken by Author, 6.10.2023

Economic mechanisms are crucial for the success of a sustainable irrigation system in the future. Water payment systems thus need to be revolutionized in the scope of a policy reform, as the financing of the irrigation system makes up a crucial part of the sustainability and endurance of the system. Making the irrigation system self-sufficient is one of the crucial points in the new model, and is now more easily achievable, since other than the WUAs, the AO has the legal power to fine non-paying water users directly (Nuralieva 2022).

Both MEs in Masy implemented an increase in irrigation tariff, as intended by the reform.

In Kyrgyz-Ata, the Head of the ME explained that they increased the irrigation fee from 800 soms per hectare up to 1000 soms per hectare (23). This enabled them to increase the salary

of their employees by 20 %; thus they did not have difficulties finding qualified staff for the ME and the LSG body in general. However, even though this marks a significant improvement, the fee still does not suffice to take care of the system (22).

At the same time, changes in tariffs are being constantly implemented. During my field research, I attended a seminar of the Initiative Group in Jalal-Abad, where the tariff system was discussed. The seminar concluded that an increase in tariffs is necessary, but will have to be increased in multiple steps, as otherwise farmers will lack the financial means to pay them and revolt. Moreover, the various aspects of the tariffs, such as salary, cleaning, operation, and so on needed to be defined more clearly. Especially important was the claim that a part of the tariff should be used for profits, a measure that up until then has not been gained via fees⁵.

Thus, AOs have overall shown that they are capable of implementing the tariffs. Even more, they are fully aware that a sudden large increase of fees would not be feasible, and would possibly lead to conflicts or even a decline in fee collection rates. Studies have shown that too high WUA irrigation fees are counterproductive, since fee collection rates will drastically decrease and be paid much later, and thus lead to a long-term deterioration of the system (De et al. 2023).

The fragmented responsibilities, no matter if directed by WUA or LSG bodies on the other hand, arguably still lack the administrative resources to manage the irrigation sustainably (Abdullaev and Horinkova 2004). One possible solution for this issue is that reforms need to include the act of reform on fees and taxation as an issue, in order to maintain the “water power” of Kyrgyz state. On the other hand, farmers often lack the necessary liquidity in order to pay fees on time, and they usually do so after they have sold their harvest, thus giving the AO autonomy in shaping the irrigation fee which could be seen as a strength (Horinkova and Abdullaev 2003).

Even though the situation under state-control had more resources and did more cleaning, this at the same time does not necessarily mean that the AO could replace the FSU in their competence. During the FSU, standardized procedures made by state planners with a high administrative power had clear visions and executive powers to direct irrigation towards designated goals. The state served several institutional ministries and departments to regulate the entire irrigation system. Moreover, profits generated downstream at the Aral-lake via cotton plantations were used to improve upstream infrastructure in their place of origin, Kyrgyzstan. The economic output aimed to benefit the entire Soviet Union (Abdullaev and Horinkova 2004).

4.2.7 Conflict Resolution

Conflicts amongst farmers usually occur during times of water scarcity in the hot season. There, water is urgently needed to water the farms.

⁵ 2 day seminar in Jalal-Abad, 4. & 5.9.2023

In Kyrgyz-Ata for instance, canal conditions were so terrible, that farmers suffered from severe water scarcity from June to August which triggered tensions and conflicts. All three Heads of the AO, AK and ME explained that this was a result of terrible canal neglect, where WUAs never properly introduced farmers to the irrigation system, or what were their rights, possibilities and who they should contact in a case of an emergency. Even worse, the interviewed farmers didn't even know that murabs existed, as they simply never showed up on the field; they always watered the field by themselves. As a result, farmers sought the AO for help during the hot season. There was one incident, where a farmer called the Head of the AO at 12 o'clock at night for emergency help, since they did not receive any water and suffered terribly (Interview 22, 5.10.2023, Interview 23, 6.10.2023, Interview 24, 6.10.2023).

These harsh conditions fuelled conflict amongst farmers. When tensions escalated, farmers started to fight and "hate each other", as mentioned by a farmer. In the worst case, violent conflicts arose where one person hit the other one on the head with a tool. Sometimes, farmers also quit their job due to the unbearable irrigation conditions (Interview 24, 6.10.2023).



Figure 19: left shows old sealing of canals of the RWMD in Teploklyuchenka. Picture taken by Author, 6.10.2023

Figure 20: right shows a water control device, operated by murabs. Picture taken by Author, 15.9.2023

In order to resolve the on-going conflicts in Aravan, the LSG body took direct measures by installing a camera, introducing a WhatsApp Group Chat, establishing an irrigation time schedule, and by raising awareness of how the irrigation system was intended to work.

After taking over the canals, the ME itself experienced problems with the RWMD. According to the Head of the AO and the Head of the AK, the RWMD did not supply them with sufficient and promised amounts of water during the irrigation season. The reason lies in the fact that the RWMD has to provide water to multiple villages all at once despite water scarcity. Moreover, the canals of the RWMD are not in a perfect condition either, resulting in some water losses. As a response, the LSG body installed a camera on the border of on- and off-farm irrigation property, and could thus control how much water the RWMD delivered. Moreover, some water-stealing culprits were found as well, who then in turn were penalised. These regulatory measures significantly decreased water scarcity during the hot season, and is praised as one of the main reasons why farmers do not emergency call the Head of the ME at night anymore (Interview 22, 5.10.2023, Interview 23, 6.10.2023, Interview 24, 6.10.2023).

In order to minimize the on-going conflicts, the Head of the ME introduced a water schedule for the farmers, which clearly defines amount, date, time, and duration of irrigation delivery. Farmers have the possibility to re-schedule if they like. The farmer praised the schedule explaining that it was punctual and made the entire irrigation process more transparent towards water users. Moreover, fewer conflicts arose as irrigation disparity between water user located upstream and downstream diminished, allowing all farmers finally receiving enough water (Interview 24, 6.10.2023).

The introduction of a WhatsApp Chat Group for all farmers and murabs by the Head of the ME had the intention to exchange know-how, report issues and updates on all sorts of matters. The chat was also used for information on the time schedule, informing people on what day which village has its turn, and exhorts water users not to use or steal any water on that particular day. Stealing water would mix up the entire water distribution in the time schedule, leading to tensions and conflicts the ME now actively tries to impede by explaining and clarifying the importance of following the time schedule (Interview 23, 6.10.2023, Interview 24, 6.10.2023).

The positive attitude of the farmer was framed by a strong sense of gratitude towards the Head of the ME, and the concept of the ME in general. They praised the head of the ME in Kyrgyz-Ata during the interviews, described them as pro-active, who took responsibility in their new role and who would show up when you would ask them for support. They argued that they now knew who the responsible person was for irrigation issues. Plus, they learned much more about the overall organisational structures. This helpfulness paired with the immediate results created a very positive attitude towards the policy reform in general (Interview 24, 6.10.2023).

Similar findings are recorded amongst WUAs in Egypt, where Hvidt (1996) also linked WUA success with strong organisational capabilities. In a study of mesquas, control mechanisms were installed on water pump devices, thus showing how much water was distributed, increasing control and transparency. As a result, more WUAs introduced a time schedule, and three years after their establishment over 98 % of the WUAs had one. Also, communication between water users and water distributors was higher. Apart from the water schedule, awareness of farmers to WUAs financial issues, such as the necessity of pumping and repair charges grew. This was achieved via increased communication: a minimum of four face-to-face meetings per month with water users, an act that was described as very helpful by water

users. The meetings were confirmed by the fact that a high percentage of water users knew the names of WUA officials, and could exactly name their functions (Hvidt 1996). These findings indicate that mechanisms are being applied by the AO which could prove to be successful.

Fee collection process and water scarcity during the irrigation season were situations with high conflict potentials.

Conflicts amongst farmers is not unusual. As Owen et al. (2000) depicted amongst farmers in Canada, conflicts arise during times of increased resource use, and can make different farmer groups pit against each other. As viewed in Kyrgyz-Ata, conflicts have the potential to escalate, when contentious interactions are steadily increasing and climax into a larger dispute. Escalated disputes have the potential to disrupt social capital as strong emotions of anger and personal attacks can inflict distrust and concern amongst water users. The level of difficulty in resolving conflicts increase, as disputes which could have been resolved via discussions before are now reliant on more delicate interventions by third parties, which in turn costs more time and money (Owen, Howard, and Waldron 2000).

Before the implementation of the ME, farmers oftentimes sought the AO for support and emergencies, who would thus act as a third-party.

An integrative conflict resolution approach is a principle-based negotiation approach, which relies on the mutual willingness of all parties to find a solution, that maximises the benefits and overall outcome. Other than so-called “settlement approaches”, which are based on rights, power and hierarchical structures, agreements are handled out via consent.

The head of the ME illustrates the execution of this type of approach, as they actively interact face-to-face and via regular Chat messages with the people. Moreover, by explaining and introducing them into the situation, they heighten level of transparency. This claim is supported by the positive attitude of the farmer was framed by gratitude towards the Head of the ME, as they brought a significant change compared to the old model. The farmer emphasized the strong pro-activeness of the Head, and praised them for saving them from a water crisis (Interview 24, 6.10.2023).

In this case, the Head of the ME in Kyrgyz-Ata, as well as other AO Heads take over the task of third party conflict resolution, and resolved conflicts by improving communication in the form of creating WhatsApp Chats and introducing a time schedule where all water distribution is clearly defined which in turn strengthened inter-group relationships (Owen, Howard, and Waldron 2000).

Moreover, a strong presence is needed for the ME to assert their management over the farmers, and to win their trust and acceptance. Thanks to the increased transparency, farmers have a better understanding of how responsibilities are being assigned, thus levels of accountability increases. As this method of conflict resolution amongst water users has shown positive results in other parts of the world, it can be applied as a tool of development for the enhancement of freedom (Owen, Howard, and Waldron 2000).

4.2.8 Long-term effects

During the vast majority of interviews conducted amongst all research sites, the need for a water reservoir was stressed. The vast majority of stakeholders stressed the need for water reservoirs as being the next most important step for irrigation in Kyrgyzstan, as the country and region Osh and Jalal-Abad especially suffer from severe water scarcity.

The vice Head of Aravan AO and the Head of WUA Support named water scarcity as the number one cause of irrigation issues in Aravan. They argued this was a result of the fact that they did not have control over their own water reservoir, and that they instead received their water from five different places around Kyrgyzstan and from four different rayons in Uzbekistan, one of which is from the reservoir Nayman, which was also located in the Osh region (Interview 31, 12.10.2023).

These patterns of claiming a large-scale and bottom-down solution for the irrigation crisis made up a counterpart of the otherwise bottom-up reform implementation.

Water reservoirs have the potential to store large amounts of water from the glaciers melting in spring, and which are then released in the hot summer months when irrigation is needed the most. However, these large-scale projects require a large amount of funding and organisation and are thus difficult to implement. From a more critical point of view, big environmental infrastructure projects are dependent on material capacities such as financing, organising and the mere occurrence of it. Water reservoirs can lead to uneven development and accumulation of dispossession, as only a specific group of users will profit from it, and others are left empty-handed (Birkenholtz 2023).

4.2.9 Summary

To summarize the findings of the three research questions: all three research sites showed individual adaptations of the model, indicating that AOs can both compete as well as complement the WUAs in their irrigation work. Attitudes amongst stakeholders were framed highly positively, since water scarcity and conflicts decreased. Adopting the framework into the scope of development, the new legislation sets a good short-term example of bottom-up development.

4.3 Digression on Territorial Reform ATR

The territorial reform will fuse AOs with each other and alter the voluntary character of the irrigation policy reform and make it mandatory for all AOs. (Abdyllaeva and Steimann 2022). Overall attitudes towards the territorial reform varied strongly. One common pattern observed amongst stakeholders was that they framed their attitudes with a significant degree of uncertainty, explaining that their attitudes were suggestions and speculations.

The majority of attitudes remained open towards its' implications, as a clear guideline of its' implementation is missing (Interview 37, 25.10.2023). A significant proportion of stakeholders remained open towards the reform, and did not know what would happen. As discussed with the Head of ABAD, they claimed that this reform has been taken on too soon, and that other countries, such as Estonia, did a similar reform but invested around 10 years beforehand in the implications (Interview 21, 20.9.2023).

Negative attitudes towards ATR especially occurred amongst stakeholders from villages which would have to take poorer villages into their balance. As many AOs in Kyrgyzstan are not self-financing, the richer AO will have higher expenditures whereas the poor LSG bodies will profit. A common figure of speech was used to describe the misery of the territorial reform, and compared the situation with a large family which would have to "adopt" even more children and which additional mouths had to be fed. This could show as the administrations would be fused with each other, and administrative resources such as staff or governmental funding would be downsized, yet the responsibility of resident numbers and land would double or triple (Interview 9, 18.9.2023). Even more, farmers and former state agency members from Apyrtan village showed a clear negative attitude towards the territorial reform, since Masy would be combined with the poor AO Shaydan, which they had called lazy (Interview 8, 18.9.2023).

Moreover, the number of councils would be reduced, which means that villagers from remote villages have to drive up to two hours to reach the AO for administrative work and concerns (Interview 10, 19.9.2023).

Even more, the Head of RWMD in Teploklyuchenka argued that with the territorial reform, the LSG body would not be able to take care of the irrigation canals at all, as they lack the managerial resources, technical knowledge, and experience (Interview 42, 20.10.2023).

Positive attitudes towards the ATR viewed it as an easy way for cutting redundant costs. As the Vice Head of the AO in Kengesh argued, strong AOs could take over and support weaker AOs. Moreover, with the implementation of an electronic database, large distances to the local council would not matter that much anymore. If the ATR came with a level of progression, stakeholders could profit from them (Interview 10, 2023).

Other positive attitudes towards the ATR were expressed by the head of the AO in Masy, and pointed out the success of Masy with the new model (Interview 3, 14.9.2023). However, it is essential to note that Masy is one of the richer and stronger AOs, thus having the resources of implementing the new model more successfully than other, poorer municipalities. Even more, the LSG body of Masy showed an overall exceptional eagerness towards changes, as they were especially well qualified.

As results have shown, both pilot and non-pilot WUAs had developed a clear guideline and motivation on why they would hand over to the AO or not. With the ATR, this voluntary characteristic trait would disappear, and weak AOs would have to take over indebted WUAs. This could possibly have negative consequences on the irrigation system, as then in turn more resources will be re-directed towards internal management of the LSG bodies.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

The case study of the critical assessment of the Helvetas TIRIP project has shown that stakeholders are actively engaging and developing their irrigation system according to the new amendments of the Water Code. The type of implementation varied amongst research sites; with the Aiyi Okmotu either supporting WUAs with allocation of funds and technical equipment, or by taking over the WUAs under their own managerial capacities in the form of a home-own municipal enterprise (ME). Patterns indicate that WUAs, who were capable of organising support via the RayVodhKoz or international organisations were more likely to remain in their sovereignty.

Attitudes framed were highly positive amongst the vast majority of stakeholders. The main reason for this were evident improvements in the irrigation system, which materialized in less water scarcity and more harvest amongst farmers. Indications on why these changes were possible were framed as an increase in professional, technical, and financial resources, which were enabled by increasing the pool of stakeholders. LSG bodies especially were praised by a multitude of stakeholders, as they were able to provide these capabilities so some extent.

Negative attitudes revolved around a critical point of view concerning the knowledge and capacity of LSG bodies taking over responsibilities of an entire field, and that it would be more logical to incorporate irrigation under the RayVodhKoz.

Findings further implicate that access to organisational, financial and technical capabilities have the potential to support the irrigation system as a whole, and may serve as limiting factors on their performance levels. Moreover, it indicates a certain level of necessity for multiple stakeholders to involve and take responsibilities and accountabilities in the field of irrigation, in order to improve. Even more, different models of implementation of the new legislation have been applied, bringing formal and informal rules and regulations together.

This case study can be used as an example of the implementation of capacity building amongst LSG bodies in the irrigation sector, and how Sens' concepts of "Development as Freedom" and "Capability Approach" are applicable tools for case studies with a focus on policy reformation. As the academic field of development studies started in the mid-20th century, it is constantly evolving, and expands with the application of new measures.

However, it is essential to note that the state level will remain a crucial part of long-term irrigation levels just as well as the local level. Moreover, farmers need to actively take accountability towards their assigned responsibilities, which include regular and punctual payment of fees and following the time schedule. As now the AO carries the responsibilities, there is a certain level of danger that now the LSG body will be perceived as the only responsible stakeholder of the irrigation, whereas in fact successful on-farm irrigation development is an interaction between stakeholders on the local and national level.

5.2 Limitations

This case study captured attitudes and types of models of various stakeholders and tried to assess the differences between old and new practices. However, attitudes and opinions remain highly subjective, and do not suffice for a complete assessment of the entire irrigation situation. It solely catches a glimpse of the current situation of my field research from August to November 2023 and is thus one little puzzle piece of a whole. For a more detailed and extensive analysis of the entire irrigation system, an extension with qualitative data, different regions or stakeholders would be possible.

One difficulty amongst this case study was to find critical aspects of the new legislation: as stakeholders experienced a rapid surge in irrigation, stakeholders expressed an attitude of excitement towards the new future. However, it is difficult to assess whether this surge of success has already reached its' limits, or whether a slight continuation in irrigation development will occur long-term as well.

Another large limitation to the assessment of this project was that I did not get to interview municipalities with weak managerial and financial resources. As the policy reform is probably going to become mandatory, it would have been interesting to hear first attitudes of what such a legislation would bring. Strong municipalities who are capable of taking care of themselves will generate different attitudes and capabilities as independent municipalities.

Moreover, even with strong LSG bodies it is not sure how this reform will affect them long-term. As the policy reform is brand new (only one to two years old), short-term and perhaps more "superficial" changes are visible whereas deeper rooting changes are not necessarily evident. Even though LSG bodies showed best practices, it remains questionable whether their capacity will go beyond simple rehabilitation works. In the end, climate change and increasing droughts will make the entire situation to become more complex than before, and thus require high-quality solutions.

5.3 Recommendations

Continuing capacity building processes of the LSG body are strongly necessary in order to strengthen rural communities as a whole. Capacity building can go beyond the irrigation sector, as once acquired, these skills have the potential to spill over to other areas as well. Capacity building can entail finances, digitisation, managerial and other skills. The acquisition of these skills were also expressed by interviewed stakeholders, who asked me to forward their wish for them to visit Switzerland, and to learn the best practices about how on-farm irrigation is managed by the municipality. This indicates that different practices can still be further evolved amongst stakeholders.

As a recommendation for project coordinators Helvetas and ABAD, similar projects could be conducted in other parts of the world. As WUAs are found worldwide, similar issues could entail a stronger involvement of third party stakeholders, especially LSG bodies, in order to support the overall irrigation system.

Acknowledgements

I wish to express my gratitude to all the people who have contributed to this thesis in various forms, and thank them for their support.

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Special thanks also go to my unofficial supervisors on site, Jyldyz and Nazira, who helped me organise interview partners, guided me on my way, and took great care of me during many occasions.

I want to thank my three translators Samara, Eleman and Beksultan, who translated and supported me in an excellent way, and who spent fun times with me during the breaks.

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I want to thank Helvetas people I met on my way, who highly supported me and guided me through Bishkek, Jalal-Abad, Karakol and Osh, and who explained Kyrgyz culture, traditions and norms to me in often delightful ways.

Finally, I want to thank Natali and Lukas, who gave me insightful tips on Thematic Coding and who studied hard with me, and all my other mental support animals, much appreciated.

6. Appendix

6.1 Documents

Габриэла Берглас



University of
Zurich^{UZH}

студентка географического факультета
Цюрихского университета

Привет.

Меня зовут Габриэла Берглас, мне 30 лет, я родом из Цюриха. Я изучаю географию в Цюрихском университете и пишу магистерскую диссертацию на тему **конкурирующих и дополняющих друг друга рамочных условий в национальной ирригационной политике в Кыргызстане**. Это критический дискурс-анализ проекта Хельветас TIRIP.

Эту работу контролирует д. Асебе Дебело Регасса и Бернд Штайманн на географическом факультете Цюрихского университета под руководством профессора доктора. Бенедикт Корф.

Я с нетерпением жду возможности сотрудничать с вами и, конечно же, буду обращаться с вашими конфиденциальными данными конфиденциально. Я хотел бы использовать информацию, которую вы мне даете, для создания дополнительной научной ценности для других и подобных проектов, таких как проект Хельветас TIRIP, и для лучшего понимания вашей ситуации.

Спасибо и с уважением,
Габриэла Берглас

имя:

дата:

место:

Я согласен с тем, что записанная беседа может быть использована в исследовательских целях:

Gabriela Berglas

Student at the University of Zurich



**University of
Zurich** ^{UZH}

Dear Madam or Sir

My name is Gabriela Berglas, I am 30 years old and from Zurich, Switzerland. I study Geography at the University of Zurich and I am currently writing my Masters Thesis on the topic **Competing and Complimentary Framings in Kyrgyzstan. A Critical Discourse Analysis on the new legislation on the amendment of the Water Code**. This is part of a critical analysis of Helvetas' and Abads TIRIP project.

This thesis is supervised by Dr. Asebe Debelo Regassa from the Department of Geography, Dr. Bernd Steimann, project coordinator of Helvetas, and faculty leader Prof. Dr. Benedikt Korf.

I look forward to working with you and will treat your sensitive data with confidentiality. I hope that the insight you give me will create scientific added value for further and similar projects, such as the Helvetas TIRIP project, and make your situation easier to understand.

Thank you and kind regards,
Gabriela Berglas

Name:

Date:

Place:

Ich understand and consent that this interview is anonymised and used for research purposes:

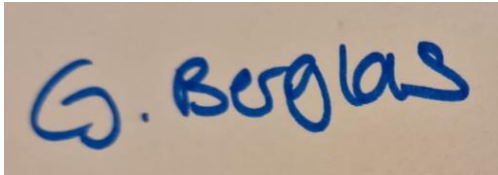
Personal Declaration

I hereby declare that the submitted thesis is the result of my own, independent work. All external sources are explicitly acknowledged in the thesis.

Name:

Date: 30. Sept. 2024

Place: Kindhausen ZH



G. Berglas

6.2 Appendix

Table of Transcribed Interviews

Citation	Who	Date	Place	What
Rayon Nooken				
Interview 2, 14.9.2023	Head AO, Head AK, Head ME	14.9.2023	Local Council of Masy (Rayon Nooken, Pilot)	Presentation
Interview 3, 14.9.2023	Head AO, Head AK, Head ME	14.9.2023	Local Council of Masy (Rayon Nooken, Pilot)	Merged Interview
Interview 4, 15.9.2023	Village Head of Masy	15.9.2023	Local Council of Masy (Rayon Nooken, Pilot)	Individual Interview
Interview 5, 15.9.2023	Head WUA and Murab of Rayon Nooken	15.9.2023	Local Council of Masy (Rayon Nooken, Pilot)	Individual Interview
Interview 6, 16.9.2023	Farmer, Masy	16.9.2023	Local Council of Masy (Rayon Nooken, Pilot)	Individual Interview
Interview 8, 18.9.2023	Chief Specialist of Department of WUA Support, Rayon Nooken	18.9.2023	RWMD Rayon Nooken	Individual Interview
Interview 9, 18.9.2023	Chief Engineer RWMD, Rayon Nooken	18.9.2023	RWMD Rayon Nooken	Individual Interview
Interview 12, 20.9.2023	Head of Department of Agriculture, Rayon Nooken	20.9.2023	Department of Agriculture, Rayon Nooken	Individual Interview
Interview 21, 20.9.2023	Head of ABAD, Jalal-Abad	20.9.2023	ABAD Office	Individual Interview
Interview 19, 28.9.2023	Head of District Administration, Head of Commission of Rayon Development Fund	28.9.2023	Head Office of RWMD, Rayon Nooken	Individual Interview

Rayon Bazar-Korgon				
Interview 14, 21.9.2023	Head of RWMD, Bazar-Korgon	21.9.2023	Head Office of RWMD, Bazar-Korgon	Individual Interview
Interview 15, 22.9.2023	Head of RWMD & WUA Support, Bazar-Korgon	22.9.2023	Car on field	Individual Interview
Interview 10, 19.9.2023	Vice Head AO, Kengesh	19.9.2023	Head Office of Local Council, Kengesh	Individual Interview
Interview 16, 25.9.2023	WUA employee (Murab & Farmer)	25.9.2023	WUA Office, Kengesh	Individual Interview
Interview 17, 25.9.2023	Deputy AK, Kengesh	25.9.2023	Head Office AK of Local Council, Kengesh	Individual Interview
Rayon Nookat				
Interview 22, 5.10.2023	Head of AO and Head of AK	5.10.2023	Head Office of AO, Kyrgyz-Ata	Merged Interview
Interview 23, 6.10.2023	Head of ME, Kyrgyz-Ata	6.10.2023	Office of Head of ME, Kyrgyz-Ata	Individual Interview
Interview 24, 6.10.2023	Farmer, Kyrgyz- Ata	6.10.2023	Office of Head of ME, Kyrgyz-Ata	Individual Interview
Interview 25, 9.10.2023	Vice Head AO, Nookat	9.10.2023	Head Office of Local Council, Nookat	Individual Interview
Interview 26, 9.10.2023	Head of RWMD, Engineer of RWMD, Nookat	9.10.2023	Head Office of RWMD, Nookat	Merged Interview
Interview 29, 11.10.2023	Head of Agricultural Department, Rayon Nookat	11.10.2023	Head Office of Agricultural Department	Individual Interview
Rayon Aravan				
Interview 27, 10.10.2023	Vice Head AO, Head AK	10.10.2023	Head Office of Local Council of Aravan	Merged Interview
Interview 30, 11.10.2023	3 WUA Heads, Aravan	11.10.2023	Head Office of Local Council of Aravan	Merged Interview

Interview 31, 12.10.2023	WUA Head & Head WUA Support, Aravan	12.10.2023	WUA Office, Aravan	Individual Interview
Rayon Ak-Suu				
Interview 37, 25.10.2023	Vice Head AK, Teploklyuchenka	25.10.2023	Head Office Local Council, Teploklyuchenka	Individual Interview
Interview 38, 26.10.2023	Vice Head AO, Teploklyuchenka	26.10.2023	Head Office Local Council, Teploklyuchenka	Individual Interview
Interview 39, 26.10.2023	Responsible Secretary AK, Teploklyuchenka	26.10.2023	Head Office Local Council, Teploklyuchenka	Individual Interview
Interview 42, 20.10.2023	Head RWMD, Teploklyuchenka	20.10.2023	Head Office RWMD, Teploklyuchenka	Individual Interview

Notes of Presentation

2. Masy Presentation AO

14th September 2023

no voice recording, based on presentation notes

Key points from 14.Sept.2023

Meeting in the municipal office of Massay

Interview Partner no. 1: Azamat Narmatov, Head of AO (used to be head of Demir Bank)

Interview Partner no. 2: Kultaev Mirbek, Head of AK

Interview Partner no. 3: Egemberdiev Demiyov, Head of Municipal enterprise

2 Parts:

Presentation of Azamat Narmatov on current irrigation situation

Group Interview with all 3 members, including Abad guy

Presentation

15 AOs made trip to Balkan to learn best practices from rubbish industry. (KG does not even recycle) Do not want to learn from Russia

AO of Masy, Kyrgyz: Масы:

Nearly 27'000 inhabitants, a large municipality!

5 villages, 4331 households, 12'000 men and 14'000 women

AO has 29 employees and AK 31

Massay is the central of Nookan district

With ATR, 4 LSGs combined into one

2500 ha land, of which 530 ha belongs to AO, the rest is divided into privately owned plots

Agriculture is most important sector of Масы: cotton, maize, vegetables such as watermelon. Cotton season starts now in middle of September

Irrigation water stems from two main rivers which flow into the Masy. Big and small canals divide the river water in the district and supply farmers with water. Big canals are

maintained by the government, whereas small canals are privately owned by either WUAs or now the AO.

In total 23km of canals

11 km Bulok

12 km Koro

After law adaptation: two more canals adopted from poor WUAs

Old model:

Under the old Water Code, Aos were not allowed to give funds to the WUAs, (or WUAs are not allowed to receive funds from Aos???) otherwise against the law. This was specifically stated by the World Bank

WUAs & AO

Abad supported the...

WUAs do not have high debts

Implementation of the New model:

Law got accepted by state. But afterwards, it is difficult to implement it quickly.

Meeting AO & WUA to write protocol of handing over canals Sapotkan & Bokan from a WUA. The interviewees were part of these conferences and thanks to help of ABAD.

2 canals of 11'000 metres (11km) were handed over to Massy.

After the adoption and first implementation of the reform, 2 (more?) canals were adopted from poor, incapable WUAs.

After the adoption, another decree was issued together with lawyers to study canals and define what kind of works need to be done. Launch of "handing-over" commission.

After the law adaptation, it is difficult to implement it quickly à WUA made meeting so that the 2 canals ... & ... could be handed over from the WUA to the AO as smoothly as possible. Abad supported this process by writing a protocol.

After this successful meeting, another decree was handed over in order to study the canals and find out what kind of work is needed to be done. The conclusion of this commission was that the technical condition of the canals were in a terrible state. In most parts, the last time repair works had been done was during the Soviet Union, as stated by the commission.

In general, irrigation is divided into 2 parts: farmers and private gardens.

Irrigation infrastructure:

- Bogot canal is 11 km long, and AO applied to the state to cement 6 km (out of the 11) for 33 Mio. soms
- After they applied their proposal, they were only allowed to work for 2 months on it because irrigation works are not possible during the hot (irrigation) season.
- 2400m were then approved last year, however, only ca. 450 m of the 11 km have been built last year (ca. 4 %) à due to construction limitations. During the winter time they can not build, and during the spring they have a construction ban because canals are then in usage. Thus the AO was only able to build for 2 months in October and November.
- They are waiting for the ATR to be implemented! He is in favour of ATR, as
- They showed major improvements of the canals: Before, they were mud, and have not been repaired since the Sovietunion.

WUAs in Masay

- In general, WUAs here are in a quite good condition. Not many are highly indebted. The AO does not have the problem of
- Some WUAs work poorly, others work better
- AO in Masay is rich -> they have a large bazar from which they receive many taxes, and which makes them a richer AO. They also have a competent functioning local council, which makes it easy to implement this policy reform compared to other AOs.

Additional Improvements

- They started their own database 2 years ago. They are currently taking in all of the data from all of the people no of farmers, area of lands, who has paid, who has not.
- Database includes a list of all people, no. of ha of land, the canal segments, who has paid what, debts, fees, GIS browser to map the canals, etc.
- As soon as they finished with the data base, they will begin their financing system together with their data base
- Abad supported them in the system as well
- 2 canals are handed over to municipal enterprise have already been recorded in the new data base
- Each canal of those two canals delivers to 140 ha, but after complete repairs potential to irrigate an estimated 500 ha

Learning key points:

They are highly interested to get to know other municipalities and how they work

Postscript

IP 1 held the presentation and dominated the overall talk. The other two were constantly nodding in agreement to what IP 1 said. As it was my second interview day, I was nervous and not well trained to the situation. Because all eyes were on me, I felt pressured to finish the interview fast and not let them waste their time. I also noticed that the people got a bit antsy with time; they started to talk a bit and got a bit less calm. The entire situation was very overwhelming and I had difficulties to think into the three different perspectives of the head of AO, AK and municipal enterprises. Also because they made me feel like a little president.

I was positively surprised over their competence – they were very well prepared. Moreover, they were a bit better informed about Switzerland than other participants. They asked about water situation in Switzerland, and I told them that with the policy reform, it will be a bit more similar to us in Switzerland, as there municipalities take care of irrigation.

Transcriptions

3. Head AO, Head AK & Head ME, Masy (Pilot)

14th September 2023

Rayon Nookan (Jalal-Abad)

Audio file

3_2 P MA Q&A Head AO_Head AK_Head ME 14_Sept.m4a

Transcript

00:00:11 GB	Thank you for the great presentation, it was really insightful. You've already answered many questions. So maybe the questions are a little bit repetitive, but maybe you have something extra to add. So maybe I've heard several opinions, but you maybe make a short recap of the irrigation system before the policy reform. Is there anything special the old system was responsible and they couldn't collect the money also.
00:03:45 Translator 1	He (Head AO) says that in the old system, it was the responsibility of the WUAs to deliver water to the farmers but they had many issues in the repair and in other things. They couldn't collect the money and they had difficulties with the people delivering water and these people would usually address these issues to the AO.
00:04:42 Translator 1	WUA has a limited capacity to make the people pay for their water. For instance if one farmer doesn't pay everything for the water, he can take the water anyways. Because there is no mechanism to switch off this water because this water comes for like 100 ha and then he can get this water together with other farmers. So he will take this water and then not pay for years. But with this new law, when this irrigation system is under the municipality, under AO, they have this mechanism to make them pay based on the code of violation of the law. There is a special code on this issue and they work with the lawyer. The lawyer reaches out to the farmers and gives them a special fine for not paying for the irrigation water. So they have more mechanisms for the farmers to pay for the water.
00:06:53 GB	And how is the payment of the fine going?
00:06:57 Translator 1	He (Head AO) says that they will start this process as soon as they get all of the property of the WUAs to the village municipality. There are about 80 kilometres of canals in total, and now they only have 23 kms in their property. They can start with these fines as soon as they have all of these channels under their municipality. Right now they only have 23 km which have been handed over to the municipality. But in total they have about 80 kilometres of canals. So when they will have all of these canals back under them, then they will start this process. They know how to do this by law and how it should go thanks to their lawyer and this payment process. Because they are already practicing that with other people for other things, you know not only in the irrigation sector.
00:08:44 Translator 1	He (Head AO) says that one problematic issue with the WUA was that they didn't have the professional capacity to do the work well. They didn't have their lawyers. They didn't have the employees because it was totally like a private public organisation. They could only pay for the murabs, the people who distribute the water, and even there there was no one who can work with the computer and who could write the project proposals and apply for additional funds somewhere. They needed this kind of professional capacity, but they didn't have that. And when for

	instance this canal was handed over to the AO balance, the success story of the AO showed right away. They managed to build 450 metres of canals and cemented it. People see the difference. There are already some new things visible, new professional capacity. There is a huge difference between WUA and management irrigation services of the AO.
00:09:57 GB	So do you feel like that the relationship between the farmers and the AOs has strengthened? Because the people see that you are actively engaging much more with the people since the policy reform?
00:11:05 Translator 1	Yeah, you're right, people. People already see the huge results while under the AO management and the work is going very well. And he doesn't think that people will be against handing over all of WUAs property to the AO. They will go for it and they are in favour of it. Because WUA doesn't have any of their equipment, you know like tractors, excavators and other things but AO has them. So they have more financial and administrative resources to develop well.
00:11:45 GB	Do they give them tractors and excavators sometimes?
00:11:49 Translator 1	Yes, he also mentioned that. He will of course not give them to the WUA at all, because he can't do that by law. Instead, he will cooperate with the WUA via municipal enterprise because it's easier and more comfortable for him and because the ME is under the AO. He then will work with the WUA together and share equipment with them.
00:12:18 GB	Is the WUA allowed to go to the enterprise?
00:12:20 Translator 1	What do you mean? To use their services?
00:12:24 GB	Yes
00:12:33 Translator 1	Oh, it's the.
00:12:58 Translator 1	Yeah by law WUAs cannot ask for help and cannot cooperate with them. They are two totally different organisations. If the WUA wants to use the services of the AO they should hand over everything that they have to the AO.
00:13:23 GB	Are there any negative aspects about the new policy reform? Are there any things that they don't like since the beginning, or maybe something that's not going as it should go?
00:14:11 Translator 1	None at all. Because it gives the AO the possibility to work together with the WUA and to work for the people to solve their water issues.
00:15:21 Translator 1	He (Head AO) says that one interesting key point of this law is that it should be on a voluntary basis. That means that if the people want the WUA to hand over the irrigation system to the AO then they can do it. But there are lots of AO who don't want to take over the WUAs irrigation system. Why? Because they have about 10-11 million soms of credit. That means that they are not able to pay this. They need to solve this issue first and then they can take over the irrigation system. But otherwise from the water resources they are going to pay these credits. And for his

	AO their management works quite well. And they only have a little amount of credit... you know. And he says that they will be able to pay this amount of credit in a short time period. And that is why he says that this key point of volunteering is very good because time will show how it will work.
00:16:37 GB	And with ATR, they all will have to take in all of the WUAs. And what does he think about this reform because AOs will have to take over WUAs with a very high debt.
00:18:44 Translator 1	Yeah, she says that this ATR reform could be an issue, but he is not sure how it will be. But he thinks that maybe first each AO should solve their own issues themselves. And then as a next step these two or three AO if they can join together it should be OK. But for now, it's hard to say how it will go.
00:19:51 Translator 1	So he says that even if two AO will join together under ATR... If one AO thinks that have too many debts and that it isn't profitable or possible to get all of this irrigation system from WUAs... Time will show.
00:20:52 GB	When it comes to the infrastructure, does he have any idea of how long it will take you to maintain all of the infrastructure to an appropriate level? What do they estimate is the time horizon?
00:21:53 Translator 1	Yeah, it all depends on the financial resources. Considering they will take over all of the canals and they will be able to provide constant financing, they will only be able to work for two months a year. Maybe even more, it depends. They will need to work hard. Be constant and they expect from you.
00:22:30 GB	How do they determine their current tariff?
00:23:01 Translator 1	They are still working with the old system. They didn't start the new one.
00:23:21 Translator 1	They will first finish their work with their new digital system, and then they will start calculating a new tariff together with the help of Abad. And then they will present their new tariff to AK.
00:23:51 GB	So the newest technologies will be the tariff system in the future, then they have the app where they are collecting all of the information, and they are cementing all of the canals. Are there any other technologies which they could think of in the future?
00:25:52 Translator 1	He (Head AO) says he forgot to mention their wells, they already have that. Last year, they managed to build 4 wells for clean [drinking?] water. And this year, they will build one more. But in the fourth season, they will also use that one for the irrigation water. For instance, here, if the farmer grows wheat, he then collects the wheat and then next time he will grow some vegetables. This is all thanks to the wells water during the hot season. Here is the documentation of this well system.
00:26:51 Translator 1	So this documentation shows for how many hectares of land each well works.
00:28:17 Translator 1	And when it comes to drip irrigation they have one story to tell. Last year, they made a project proposal on drip irrigation. They make the garden on the 10 hectares of land they grow their apples, you know other fruits and they divide this land to their schools and to their kindergartens. Why? Because these fruits can be used to make juice for the kindergarten kids the school children. And they made the project proposal and applied it to the Development Fund under the Ministry of Ecology. But

	they haven't received their answer yet because each fund already has their own problems.
00:30:07 Translator 1	So the point is that yes, they know that drip irrigation is necessary and it should be integrated. It should be introduced over time because there is this problem of drought season and stuff. So they are aware of that, they know how the tendencies are going on. They made the project proposal for 6.5 million soms and applied to that Ministry of Ecology. But because about 4-5 employees have been arrested for a corruption scandal in that ministry they are still waiting. So that 6.5 million is for the drip irrigation system. Plus, building the infrastructure there, you know the fence around the farm... Yeah. And because there is water scarcity, out of 8000 apple trees about 500 trees died unfortunately, so they are still looking...
00:31:39 Translator 1	Yeah, they have this perspective in mind. They know how important it is, in terms of future. But for that, they need to show real successful cases, to the farmers so that they will also be interested in that.
00:32:58 Translator 1	He says that drip irrigation is important but to start the drip irrigation, water is needed. And to provide this water, they should solve issues with these canals, with building the additional wells. And then this water will be available and then they can start to introduce more of the drip irrigation.
00:33:34 GB	You need to convince the people, convince the farmers to support the project, to pay the fees. And you are also in between the state and the public. How easy or how difficult is it to get funds from the state?
00:35:06 Translator 1	He says of course there are major issues. They think that the Republican government should pay more attention to the irrigation development. They should allocate more funds again to cement those canals. To improve certain conditions to deliver the water more efficiently and also to solve other issues. Of course AO itself cannot do that with their scarce resources.
00:36:31 Translator 1	Head AK: AK is aware of this problem, they agree with the head of the AO. Because Nookan region is the hottest region in Kyrgyzstan. And in the summer season, they have less water in the canals, so this is already a struggle. And he (Head AK) agrees that first of all, these canals should be cemented with the help of the National government because it costs lots of money. And another good point from him is that this newly planned water reservoir could collect water during the winter time and could be used during the summer. Because in the winter they don't need this water, and it automatically goes to the neighbouring state. We can't stop that.
00:37:43 GB	You have this vision to build this water reservoir. And how far is that in the making?
00:38:30 Translator 1	How many funds needed is another question. They should make a compilation of that. But anyways, they suggested this to the national government during this national level meetings, but they are currently still on the level of suggestion.
00:38:55 GB	Then when it comes to other financial processes, in what way is the paying off of the debt going of the AO?
00:40:31 Translator 1	Yeah, he says for instance, there are 450 AO in total. And only about 15 AO from Osh and Jalal-Abad region agreed to hand over this irrigation system from WUA to AO. And he thinks that there should be a political will, a political decision by the national government to pay all of these debts of the WUAs and then maybe all of the AO will be willing to take over the irrigation system. But otherwise it will be a problem. Not all AO are willing to take over.

00:41:26 GB	So when it comes to organisation and administration, how would they rate the overall quality of AO service supply at the moment? What can be improved and what are their weak points?
00:42:37 Translator 1	Yeah, they should employ more people, except for murabs. They will not take any murabs anymore. Because ME employees will be enough. They know how to use the computer, they know how to work, so they will be able to manage this digitalization. They know how to use this digital system of monitoring and controlling the user portal. But not murabs. Murabs are only responsible to deliver the water. They don't know how to write the paper or how to work on the computer.
00:44:35 GB	When was the ME founded?
00:44:58 Translator 1	2017.
00:45:05 GB	And how would you rate the quality of the service supply of the ME?
00:46:19 Translator 1	He says (Head ME) they should do their work based on their priority level. And the first priority for them now is to cement all of the canals in there and then they will do the next step of the priority of the list. But for now that's all.
00:46:54 Translator 1	It's easier to manage the water in general than to ????. In general, In figures they are quite good level.
00:47:24 GB	Can they explain to me why their canals are open and not closed or in the ground? Is it because it is much more expensive?
00:47:58 Translator 1	You are right, it's a huge, huge budget.
00:48:20 GB	It's probably too early to ask this, but when it comes to the capabilities and the livelihoods of the farmers, do they also have certain parameters in account, such as how is the wage of the farmers going to improve? Will they have higher yields, especially within this drought season? Less price fluctuations?
00:49:44 Translator 1	Yes, the livelihood and economic situation of the farmers will increase. Because they will get more harvest if they have constant water. For instance, if one farmer now has about 1-3 tons of cotton per hectare, with a constant water supply he will maybe have 5 tons of cotton per hectare, or even more. The harvest will increase, and even more in general the overall economic condition of the WUAs and the welfare of the farmers will increase as well. And here in this region, farmers can also get the harvest twice a year.
00:50:38 Translator 1	Now for instance the farmers will collect wheat first, and then they will grow vegetables.
00:50:44 GB	Is this new now?
00:50:56 Translator 1	Not in all places in the places. Those places which have constant water it is not new. But if this irrigation system will get better, then maybe more and more farmers will use this system.

00:51:20 GB	How important is the irrigation on the political agenda compared to other political issues?
00:52:01 Translator 1	Because most of the people here work in the agricultural sector, it is very important.
00:52:08 GB	Their policies aren't connected with other policies abroad? Like Uzbekistan? Like other water policies?
00:52:51 Translator 1	No issues so far. Uzbekistan gets water mainly from hydroelectric station.
00:53:51 GB	Is there anything they would like to add?
00:55:13 Translator 1	There are two points. They are quite supportive of this new policy. They should do their best to help this policy to go forward, to promote it by their own effort and by seeking additional resources, funds. But the national government should also be involved, should also pay great attention in terms of special funds to develop the sector in general.
00:56:27	Thank you.

4 Village Head, Masy, Rayon Nooken, Pilot

15th September, Local Council of Masy

4 P MA Village Head 15_Sept.m4a

Transcript

00:00:44 Translator 1

He (Village Head) says that during the Soviet Union the government was in charge of everything. There were collective farms and farmers don't think about those management things. The government was in charge of everything; they provided the fertilisers and other stuff and farmers never had problems with selling their products because the government took care of that too. They sold themselves too. During the Soviet Union, farmers usually got their salaries. And plus there was the so-called "Soviet plan" to implement these plans in one or five years. So they were more focused on that. But the other management part like providing fertilisers, irrigation and other stuff was all the headache of the government. But then in 90s when it all fell, now the farmers need to think about where to sell their products. As soon as they grow vegetables, for instance, what will be the price for the vegetable and where to sell them. In the 90s, there was a reform of privatisation where all this land divided to the farmers, and then they were responsible for their own land in terms of every process starting from flowing to irrigation and to growing things, to growing vegetables and crops and it ends with selling the products.

00:03:04 Translator 1

She (deputy of AO) said that during the Soviet Union, even the irrigation system was different. Before, like 1 field was only growing cotton, another field was only growing wheat, another field was only one crop only. So it was easier to provide the irrigation.

But now it's the choice of everyone to know what they want. So that's why it's also very difficult to distribute to them, to manage the watering.

00:03:34 Gabriela Berglas

Yeah, exactly because like you said that this new system of the World Bank... How well have the farmers been informed and taught about farming and other methods such as organisation and finance by the World Bank and the other partner organisations?

00:04:57 Translator 1

She says since the 90s, there is the so-called Agro Department in each Rayon under the Ministry of Agriculture. They're responsible for promoting, for doing this agricultural policy in the region. They have quite interesting projects and trainings for the farmers which are free of charge. On land management, on how to plough how to grow products and stuff. But they don't know anything about the World Bank at all. Maybe just they know that they provide kind of international projects, But who is the donor? Who is the partner? They have no idea.

00:06:11 Gabriela Berglas

There is this new policy reform. Has any of your farmers (*I meant farmers which are part of a WUA*) handed over their canals to the AO?

00:07:48 Translator 1

Yes he says that Bogot villaged handed over about 12 kilometres of canals to the AO. He says due to the migration to Russia and high rate of unemployment in the region... He says that with the new policy it will be better to manage, repair and cement the canals. Because it is very important to deliver the water when the canals are in a good condition. Mostly the young people are engaged in the repair works. So he thinks that it will be very positive for the for

the village people and for the village infrastructure and for the overall condition of these water canals.

00:08:34 Gabriela Berglas

Do you think that the new system is going to be better than the old system?

00:09:24 Translator 1

Yes, he says that it definitely will be better. Because the infrastructure for instance, if these canals will be cemented, the water loss will be reduced and plus won't suffer anymore from grasses in the canals which cause a lot of water to be lost. In general, there is a huge water loss in the irrigation system. All these problems could be solved by this new policy solemnly, he believes.

00:09:55 Gabriela Berglas

What do you mean with grasses?

00:10:02 Translator 1

You can see it when we go to the field, it's a special kind of grass which grows in the canals. It challenges the water flow, because it can stop the water on the way... I don't know how it's called in English. It's a special kind of grass. These things can only be solved by huge repair works in the future, by huge projects of cementing the canals. So he is sure that it will be better.

00:10:31 Gabriela Berglas

And before when they did the repair works, then usually would have taken out the weeds... the grasses out of the canals, right?

00:10:59 Translator 1

Yeah, they also tried to do that before, but it's a huge work and it's not possible to do it manually, with the help of the people. There are special techniques needed, special tractors needed, and then the professional expertise of the certain specialists that needed. It's not only by the defaults of the people. In these terms it will be in more professional hands with this new policy.

00:11:26 Gabriela Berglas

OK, good, good. You have the irrigation canals, do you also have other irrigation forms like wells?

00:12:34 Translator 1

Yeah, he pointed out once more that handing over canals to the AO was a good decision by the government because before, during the work of the WUA for instance, there was a queue of the farmers. For instance one farmer gets the water at this hour or the this day and the next day the next farmer. So they have the list of the farmers with this queue. But because of the problems with delivering the water, for instance if one farmer should get the water today, then in reality he gets the water like two days later.

00:13:17 Gabriela Berglas

Ohh OK, so there's a plan but it doesn't work.

00:13:19 Translator 1

It doesn't work and the farmers suffer a lot because when their time is over, he's out of the queue, you know. And then there is a fight between them until the water is delivered to them. And the water cannot be delivered on time due to this overall technical condition of the canals. And they don't have any wells. But he says it would be great if they had these wells in the future because it will solve many issues first.

And then he again pointed out that these water reservoirs should be installed and launched. To save the water in wintertime and to then use it in the summer time. This way, if there will be wells and water reservoirs, farmers will have less problems.

00:14:20 Gabriela Berglas

OK. So does he think that the water reservoir is maybe one of the next main investments they should make?

00:15:17 Translator 1

He says farmers need this water starting from June 1st until up to August 15th. So this is the critical season for the farmers when their crops are ready and especially in this season, they have scarcity of water because the canals and the hot weather and the water evaporates a lot. And plus when delivering the water by the canals, it's evaporated. And if we have this. And if we have this water reservoir and wells, it will help this situation a lot. These 2.5 months are very critical for the crops. If the crops get constant water without any stops during this time, then the farmers will have a chance to have a good harvest.

00:16:52 Translator 1

This water reservoir could impact the rate of the harvest as well especially in these 2.5 months when for instance the cotton will have this flower and will be ready, they have scarcity of water and this directly impacts the harvest.

00:17:15 Gabriela Berglas

Is that just for cotton?

00:17:18 Translator 1

It's for any crop.

00:17:26 Gabriela Berglas

As you mentioned before, the farmers it's very important that the farmers have a good relationship with each other, especially the ones with the neighbouring farms. How would you rate the relationships of the farmers in general? How well do the farmers get along with each other?

00:17:47 Translator 1

During the time of the WUAs or now?

00:17:51 Gabriela Berglas

He said that during the WUAs it was bad. But maybe now it has changed?

00:19:08 Translator 1

He says that it will definitely change. One example, for instance during the time of the WUAs some farmers could use more water and some farmers could use less, and some farmers even could steal the water without paying for it for years. And now when it's handed over to AO, there will be more control. They will be afraid of the possible fines for not paying. And they will follow the strict rules because there will be more monitoring and more control from the AO. Taking these factors into account, it will definitely change the perception of the farmers using water and their perception paying for it. So this will change.

00:20:00 Gabriela Berglas

It hasn't changed yet, but they are expecting it to change, right?

00:20:47 Translator 1

She says that these canals will be better managed under the AO, they already showed this case of cementing about 450 metres of canals (*Anm: Vortrag vom Tag zuvor*)

00:20:57 Gabriela Berglas

Because that was in Bogot, right? Those 450 metres.

00:20:59 Translator 1

Yes, yes, yes, 12 kilometres. So people already see the changes and if they manage to rebuild and repair all these canals, then the water loss will be very minimal and then these problems with delivering the water to the farmers will automatically not be eliminated but decreased.

00:21:24 Gabriela Berglas

How is the farmers perception towards this new reform?

00:23:11 Translator 1

Yeah, he says the perception... to say it in general is positive. People already understand that they need this water. For instance, if one farmer has the possibility to harvest five times as many crops from... do you know alpha-alpha?

00:23:28 Gabriela Berglas

Is that a grass?

00:23:31 Translator 1

Yes, it's a kind of grass that can be used as a fodder. So if there is good water, the farmer can harvest alpha-alpha five times. But at the moment they are only getting two harvests because of the water scarcity. So farmers are already aware that if they have constant regular water, they can harvest the fodder crop alfa-alfa five times. From this perspective they are ready to pay for the water if they have a regular constant water supply.

But there are some farmers who still need time to understand this and to agree with that because even during the WUA they thought: "Why should I pay for this water. It's the natural water, it comes from the mountains. It just flows anyways, why should I pay?"

00:24:31 Gabriela Berglas

It's a public commodity.

00:24:39 Translator 1

Yeah. So they have only a few farmers who think like that. And he thinks it will take time for them to understand this new policy reform. But in general, farmers are quite positive about this change. Because they already expect that the harvest will be better, that the harvest will be doubled.

00:24:54 Gabriela Berglas

Exactly because this is entity where it's the. The convincing work very well where they had. I mean, they did, like, very good. They had conversations with each of each farmer, right. And then they brought all of these right arguments together and that's why it worked. Is that what he would also agree with?

00:25:25 Translator 1

They communicate with the farmers almost on a daily basis and plus they discuss issues with them. They visit their fields. So he has a daily communication with them. He knows what people think.

00:25:45 Gabriela Berglas

When it comes to the more difficult part when they're going to introduce more fines, does he think that's going to work? What is his feeling? Because nobody likes to pay fines and it's always very difficult to introduce fines if you didn't have them before.

00:28:31 Translator 1

He believes that people are already ready for that and not all of the people will get those fines, only those who will violate the law, violate the rules. And most of the people are quite positive and quite understanding of this new policy because they have a positive motivation that they will get their harvest from the crops twice. So that's a lot if they get their crops two times from this alpha-alpha, for instance. And by this new law, if their water will be fine, if there will be a constant supply of water, they will get it five times, it's a lot. So that's a good

motivation for the people and they even have cases when the neighbours supply to them saying that: "OK, I will buy the plan (=?). I should have gotten water today, but my neighbour took the water for the whole day and I didn't get anything. So give me one more day to irrigate my land. You should fine my neighbour!" So these cases also exist.

People understand that if their neighbour violates the law they should be punished. This kind of understanding already exists. And he thinks that not all the people will get fined, only those who violate the law.

00:30:05 Gabriela Berglas

Before you had the WUAs and they've already handed over 12 kilometres. Do the WUAs in that perspective still exist or not? (Even though he says WUAs, he was actually talking about AO and ME. He later at 00:00:37 admits that he confused WUA with AO)

00:31:22 Translator 1

He says that although these 12 kilometres from Bogot village have been handed over to AO, WUA is still busy with their own work, you know, for the plan. They are busy with cleaning the canals with the help of the people doing some repair where they can if their capacity allows them to do that. And now some people built their houses along the canals, they built their gardens and fences very close to the canals which is also not right. So they are trying to explain to the people that they should move their fences a little bit.

00:32:28 Translator 1

These 12 km of canals is not in the field. It also goes through the village where the people live, where the people services are. And now they are calculating how much distance should be held from the canal up to the house, so that the equipment, the tractors, can come and do their work.

00:32:54 Gabriela Berglas

So the WUAs are still active?

00:33:14 Translator 1

Yeah, they're mostly working with these canals to make a kind of a work scheme. For instance, if the electricity station or some trees are next to this canal, they talk to the people who are challenged to repair works to the canals there. They are studying the overall situation.

And we'll start at the end of.

00:35:22 Translator 1

She says from the perspective of the AO, due to the fact that WUAs were not effective in terms of cementing the canals or preparing the stuff. That's why AO handed these canals to them and managed to build these 450 metres of cemented canals. WUAs are not doing anything there, she says. Yeah. It's all the perception of the village head that WUAs are doing something there. If they had done anything something, AO wouldn't interfere in this process due to the fact that nothing has been done for the past 30 years in terms of repairment. Then AO then handed the canals over to the ME.

00:36:08 Gabriela Berglas

He said that they are doing something and she said that they're not doing anything. Isn't he going to say anything? What is what is his response to that?

00:37:22 Translator 1

I think he was a little bit confused the WUAs with the AO. He says that... (*not comprehensible*)

00:37:41 Gabriela Berglas

Basically, he's saying that now with the new policy reform the WUAs are actually more active because...

00:37:48 Translator 1

Not WUAs, the AO and ME.

00:37:53 Gabriela Berglas

OK, he didn't mean the WUAs he meant the AO. So it's the municipal enterprise. Which, OK. Yeah. Makes more sense.

00:38:01 Translator 1

As soon as the AO handed over the canals, they have seen real work done.

00:39:45 Translator 1

Yeah, he was a little confused. He says that during the WUA, they couldn't see any change. People thought that was delivered in a bad manner due to the delivering issue. And now, with this new policy, people are already seeing the changes and they believe that this will be even better.

00:40:10 Gabriela Berglas

What is the future of the WUA? Are they just going to disappear?

00:41:14 Translator 1

For instance if the village wanted to, they could have been included into the WUA system, but they they were not included at all. No. Yeah. This this.

00:43:09 Translator 1

The Bogot village canals were in the legal balance of the WUA on paper. But people voluntarily chose their own people to work as WUA. And they said that they would not work with WUA and that they had their own people, like murabs.

So they used to work in this way, but now he says that if it's not working anymore... he didn't see anything of that... So it will be better just to be under AO.

00:43:41 Gabriela Berglas

They had basically some kind of decree where they said that this is our WUA, but in reality, everybody just went to those people who they just trusted the most, had the best relationship and had their own murabs. And then there was no organisation or whatsoever. And now they are very happy that they have their own... exactly. Because it's working.

00:44:05 Translator 1

Yes, yes, because they already have some testing some results, yes.

00:44:08 Gabriela Berglas

When it comes to the policy reform, were you involved in the making of it?

00:44:40 Translator 1

No, he didn't take part of the making. He has been working as the village head for six months.

00:45:17 Gabriela Berglas

What do you think of the ATR?

00:45:54 Speaker 3

That was.

00:46:11 Translator 1

He says that the ATR will be quite challenging. For instance, Masy AO and Shaidan AO will join together, but there are two points. First, Masy is much richer, they have more financial resources. And Shaidan is based on the so-called dotation. They are very dependent on the Republican budget money, they are not self-sufficient. And now if two AO s will be joined, Masy AO will take care of them as well. The bigger and richer one will have to cover the smaller one, feed them as well.

00:47:27 Gabriela Berglas

Ok. But that doesn't have to necessarily be bad?

00:48:38 Translator 1

The budget which should be used to repair the canals of one village will be distributed into two villages. Not to them, but to another village. It's like one family taking care of another family as well, you know, not only of yourself.

00:48:59 Gabriela Berglas

So he's concerned that... but technically then Masy then should have a bigger budget.

00:49:57 Translator 1

First, he thinks that this budget will be divided, and then for instance the budget which will be allocated to repair the road will be divided with Shaidan AO

00:50:19 Gabriela Berglas

In Switzerland, for example, they on purpose merge municipalities together to save money because you save administration fees and you have less people in the municipality because it's merged, right?

00:51:29 Translator 1

He says that for instance, if two AO will merge of course there will be a decrease of the administration fees and administration staff. It's good for the Republican budget to create the salaries. But from the perspective of the local budget, Masy for instance will have more expenses to repair the road of another AO, to build the electric stations, and other things. So, from the local budget, it will be more expensive.

If they have less budget, this will be bad for the irrigation infrastructure. The local budget will increase to cover two AO expenses, you know in terms of repair of the road and so on. But the Republican (state) budget will decrease because they are only paying one wage.

00:52:15 Gabriela Berglas

How will the ATR impact the irrigation system?

00:54:36 Translator 1

He says concerning the irrigation system, there won't be any kind of like huge impact of ATR. He believes this because the irrigation system of Shaidan will stay the same, and Shaidan gets its water from Bazar-Korgons' rivers, from the Bazar-Korgon region. And their irrigation system will also stay the same, so there won't be that much impact and change. And it's just a matter of feeding one more family from his point of view.

00:55:16 Gabriela Berglas

Does he think that the ATR is overall good for Kyrgyzstan?

00:56:31 Translator 1

Concerning ATR, he says that the only point that saves money for the government is that one of two administrations will be eliminated. He supposes that there will be issues with this. Maybe people will also will express their own views after this has been implemented, in terms of paperwork, in terms of documentation, and other things. There could be issues. But one positive thing is the of the administration staff salaries, so the government saves a little money. But besides that, there will be issues.

00:57:55 Translator 1

Concerning this electronic government database; It's good but its' introduction will take lots of time and it will be difficult to implent. But otherwise, for instance, if two AO will merge people will address the AO to get this specific certificate the so-called "... " (incomprehensible and in another language), poverty level, how much cattle they have in order to get the credit for otherstuff. So to get these paperworks, for instance, Shaidan residents should come to the Masy centre here, this will also be a kind of challenges for them too.

00:58:42 Gabriela Berglas

So basically... maybe I'm being too suggestive, but it sounds a bit like that the ATR is an easy fix for the government to save a bit of money, and because they saw that the policy reform works... It sounds quite good. But also that they're going to be a bit understaffed in the government, even though they actually need to do extra work right, they need to do the database. Is that true?

01:00:06 Translator 1

Yeah, the very simple perceptions is like this. And it's very good for the government to say: "Oh, we saved this much money, it's going well." But but for the same salary, for instance, you are used to do one thing and then your work is doubled you will get the same salary. I don't know how to say this and how they will manage.

01:01:03 Translator 1

He says maybe we we don't know this answer. Because maybe the government will give more specialists to that. But if the numbers will remain the same and if one administration is eliminated, this remaining administration will have double work for the same salary, so it's hard to say.

01:01:47 Gabriela Berglas

I mean this question is probably not answerable yet, but has he noticed any changes for farmers concerning their livelihoods? For example more income with this new policy?

01:02:57 Translator 1

He says the farmers already see the results because canals have been cemented last year and this season they have already seen... they didn't waste their time, you know, to make their own, like not canals, but they spend too much time, by going to the beginning of the on-farm water canal and to look at the entire water process in the whole field from the beginning onwards. Now with this cementing they have less water loss and they are getting water in short time. Yeah, they already see their results.

01:03:38 Gabriela Berglas

Already, even though this year was a bit of a bad year, right? It was a bit dry and hot, wasn't it?

01:04:46 Translator 1

Yeah, with these canals the time decreased to get the water.

01:04:53 Gabriela Berglas

OK, it's faster.

01:04:58 Translator 1

Yeah, for instance before one farmer got the water at around 3-4 PM, and then he had all day until tomorrow at 8:00 AM to water his field. And it wasn't enough water. But now they receive enough water, because it flows much quicker.

01:06:01 Translator 1

[Lady] Yes, this says these canals have been re-built and / or cemented by the end of 2022, and this 23 season they already see the results. The water flows quickly and less time is wasted, and that's why people are positive and more or less ready to hand over all these canals to AO because they have already seen the results.

01:06:33 Gabriela Berglas

And what about the time management? You said that they had this time management plots where everybody has their own time slot... has this also become better?

01:06:46 Translator 1

He mentioned that it gets better now. Within the same time period they receive more water now.

01:06:56 Gabriela Berglas

And then there are also probably less fights? \$Yes\$ Nice. Well, that's great. So did they also have more harvest?

01:08:05 Translator 1

He can say that they harvested almost twice as much. Last year, he was able to harvest this fodder named alpha-alpha twice. And this year they harvested it three times, some farmers even four times. They watered it four times and they harvested it four times. So the harvest has almost doubled.

01:08:33 Translator 1

And he can't say this for cotton because, it takes time to see it.

01:09:46 Gabriela Berglas

OK. Yeah, that's great. And what does he know about the household budgets of the farmers? The farmers have also earned more money, right?

01:10:33 Translator 1

He says that farmers mostly sell this fodder because due to the drought season, people harvest less grass from the mountains year by year. They usually buy this fodder from the farmers. So most of the farmers sell, so we we can say that their income level has doubled.

01:11:05 Translator 1

By having less rain each year, we are harvesting less and less grass from the mountains. People used to just cut the grass from the mountain and it was the fodder for the animals and now they are buying that from the farmers. The farmers can use a certain amount of the fodder for his own animals, and then the remaining part he will sell.

01:11:33 Gabriela Berglas

Ok, so that is a higher household budget. What about the debts from before? Before, the WUAs were indebted.

01:12:02 Translator 1

He doesn't know that because they are not that strongly involved with the WUAs.

01:12:05 Gabriela Berglas

OK, so household budgets have increased. Are the farmers able to invest this money. Are there any plans from the farmers? Like do they have dreams to perhaps buy a tractor or like to improve their farms?

01:13:33 Translator 1

They invest in different ways. Some people of course invest in buying tractors if their budget allows this. But most of them spend their money for everyday purposes, they buy clothes, they buy necessary things for their children, or other things...

01:14:12 Translator 1

It also depends on the land plot. For instance, one family can have 1 hectare, another family 1.5 hectares, another family can have 10 hectares. So it depends on the budget as well.

01:14:30 Translator 1

There are also families who would like to buy a tractor, to buy the technique for advancement of their fields. People use money to build the houses, to improve their housing infrastructure as well. But the main source of income for the people is the land.

01:14:57 Gabriela Berglas

So the perception is that the major investment, the perception is, is that of course first of all the canals, but then also the maybe the reservoir which has to be funded by the state, right?

01:15:48 Translator 1

Totally. Yeah. It will be a huge, like, important important in that one that we will be able to invest if the government will be able to invest to that, this water reservoir system, it will automatically solve many issues during the hot season. These wells, this water reservoir and plus he mentioned the drip irrigation. They should slowly start to use this drip irrigation as well because it gives the farmers the possibility to save the water. So that's also in the perspective.

01:16:59 Translator 1

[The Lady] The AO already managed to build about 5 wells. Four of them are for clean water and one of them will be used for irrigation water. And of course their plan is to start this water reservoir system in the future.

01:17:45 Translator 1

If you take Bogot village, it's located in the mountainous region, this well system will not work for them because they would have dig too deep to reach water. The second point is that there is not guarantee that this well will work during the hot season due to the large depth underground. But from another perspective, this water reservoir system will work better and be more effective.

01:18:33 Gabriela Berglas

In general with this new policy reform, how would you rate the future of the farmers here in Kyrgyzstan?

01:20:03 Translator 1

He is quite positive with the new policy reform. It will be good for the farmers future, because the things will get in order under the AO. Most repairs will be done, the farmers will be in order as well. They will learn to live in order, by paying for their water. In general, it should be good.

01:20:40 Translator 1

[Lady] It will be good for the AO to monitor and to control the situation. Plus AO has more infrastructure, they have their own tractors and stuff. And AO has more financial resources to work.

01:21:05 Gabriela Berglas

Is there anything important that you would like to add? Especially regarding his position as a village head.

Other reasons.

01:22:23 Translator 1

With this new policy this irrigation system will be in order. Under AO it will be better managed and if there will be constant water flow, the farmers will have more produce, they will have more crops and that will maybe change the situation of migration because many very young people migrate to other countries and leave their old parents here. Maybe they could return Kyrgyzstan, this is a hope. In general it should be good.

5) Head WUA (Murab), Rayon Nooken

15th September

Audio file

5 P MA Head WUA (Murab) Nooken District 15_Sept.m4a

WUA established in 1990 by Interviewee himself.

Transcript

00:01:35 Translator 1

00:01:05 Gabriela Berglas

OK, so with whom did you work together back then (in the 90s after the fall of Soviet Union) and begun to establish it?

00:01:50 Translator 1

He says back in 1996, when the lands started to be distributed amongst the farmers there was a reform and then for one year he worked by himself without any payment as a murab in a hydrotechnical well. Because the collective farms were all eliminated and then in 1999 he managed to establish... to launch this WUA. He launched it himself without any help of any project. As an association for the first time... I mean as one of the first founders in Kyrgyzstan who launched WUAs.

00:02:51 Gabriela Berglas

How many members does your WUA have at the moment?

00:03:08 Translator 1

From 1999 until 2010, he worked as the director of the WUA. In 2010, he was replaced by another person, but he worked for this Rayon Water Department. He was the head of this department. And now he is simultaneously working for this Rayon Water Management Department as well as for WUA. He's not the head of the WUA, he's more like an engineer.

00:04:22 Gabriela Berglas

Can you recall what kind of positive changes your WUA brought...?

00:05:32 Translator 1

He says that in 1996, when all of these lands were distributed under the reform and then there was a special law on launching the associations and then he introduced this law and decided to establish the WUA and he gathered the people and explained to them that the WUA will be getting the water from the Rayon department and then sell it to the people. So they made the... how to say... the fee for the irrigation system based on the number of hectares at that time.

00:06:36 Translator 1

He says at the beginning people reacted quite negatively. They said: "Why should we pay for the water? Water is a natural resource. It comes from the rivers and from the mountains. Why should we pay for that?" And then he explained to the people that they are paying for their services to deliver this water, not for the water per se.

00:07:08 Translator 1

So from 2003 to 2005, they managed to invest by working with the World Bank on the project of the repairment of these canals.

00:07:48 Translator 1

They made the whole project for 6.6 million soms at that time.

00:08:44 Translator 1

For these 6.6 million soms, they managed to repair the most of these 60 kilometres of these canals inside WUA. And they cemented 4.5 kilometres canals...

00:09:21 Translator 1

So it's called hydro-postage... they settled like 36 points of special measurement devices.

00:09:30 Gabriela Berglas

To count the water? What is it?

00:09:39 Translator 1

It's a kind of a way to calculate the water. A special water measurement device. Yeah, they installed this quite new cemented canals called Latok as well... 900 metres.

00:10:06 Gabriela Berglas

And that was where? In Bogot?

00:10:22 Translator 1

In Massy.

00:10:25 Gabriela Berglas

Yeah, I forgot to ask. So in which district did he form the WUA?

00:10:35 Translator 1

It's the for the total Massy area.

00:10:38 Gabriela Berglas

And where did he get the budget from?

00:11:17 Translator 1

So this 6.6 million some budget they got from the World Bank with 25% interest.

00:11:24 Gabriela Berglas

Ohh, that's even higher than I heard.

00:11:24 Translator 1

And for the total sum, they then had to pay it in seven years. But they were not able to pay it. Now they extended the process of paying back.

00:12:05 Translator 1

According to the contract they should have paid this credit back in 2012, but people were not able to pay that. And then World bank prolonged that process until 2024. So, by next year, they should pay the whole credit off.

00:12:23 Translator 1

There is a very little sum left. By next year, they will finish.

00:12:29 Gabriela Berglas

So they will be able to pay it back. OK.

00:13:03 Translator 1

He says that this WUA has showed best practises. For example for this project back in 2005, there was on a Rayon level, an Oblast level and on a National level a seminar to show their best practises, and other WUAs also visited it and he says that they had very good results out of this project.

00:13:28 Gabriela Berglas

Exactly because in the presentation (of Massy's president) they showed that the WUAs here in Massy are actually OK. They're not highly indebted. Maybe don't tell him that. He gave them the seminar to show them how they did it as an example?

00:14:07 Translator 1

Back in those times, there were about 360 WUAs in total in Kyrgyzstan. And out of those, 10 WUAs were Pilot WUAs. So they were one of those 10 Pilot WUAs.

00:14:36 Translator 1

Even the high officials, presidents came.

00:15:00 Translator 1

In 2007, because of the results of this project, he managed to visit Japan for two months. It was an exchange trip and he learned how the Japanese use the irrigation system.

00:15:23 Gabriela Berglas

Interesting. OK, but isn't Japan also rain fed?

00:15:34 Translator 1

Yeah, they have a humid climate.

00:15:51 Translator 1

Yeah, it's a vice versa situation there. Here we have a dry climate, we need water and they need to dry their plants. And the essence of the training was how to work with the farmers.

00:16:14 Gabriela Berglas

And what were the key points that you learned?

00:16:29 Translator 1

How to distribute water to the farmers, how the irrigation system works. They even taught them how to irrigate by distributing the water into smaller branches into the field.

00:17:21 Translator 1

We have KOICA. It's the Japanese agency working here in Kyrgyzstan. He managed to visit Japan with them.

00:17:33 Gabriela Berglas

So back to the Kyrgyz canals. What made his WUA works so well?

00:18:23 Translator 1

WUA will work well when it's managed by high professionals, preferably by hydro technicians. If the person is professionally trained then he will know how to use this irrigation system, how to manage it well. So maybe that was the point that why the WUAs worked well. And he's been working in this irrigation system for almost 52 years. So he knows how to do this.

00:19:09 Translator 1

Very good communication is also very important. The head of the WUA should have good communication skills with the farmers, in order to be able to establish and to continue a constructive dialogue. To know how they can solve problems, how they can do this and that.

00:19:30 Translator 1

He trained his murabs a lot. He trained them how to work with the people.

00:19:38 Translator 1

And then he appointed a new director who is also kind of a student of him, he taught him how to work with the people correctly.

00:19:51 Gabriela Berglas

What does he think is the main point why the other WUAs don't work? What are usually the main issues?

00:20:25 Translator 1

Because many WUAs addressed him with their issues, they didn't know how to make the budget, the schemes, how to make the work plans, etcetera. So they didn't know how to work.

00:20:45 Translator 1

And also the self-development and professional trainings are very important because he worked with many professional trainings from different organisations. To always learn new skills, he received many trainings over the course of his career. To be educated and self-trained and to constantly develop is very important.

00:21:24 Gabriela Berglas

Because most WUAs are usually made up of regular farmers, is the correct?

00:21:30 Translator 1

Yes

00:21:36 Gabriela Berglas

Yeah. OK. So that's one of the problems, because they are just regular farmers, but then they have this burden to do all of the administration and to have the technical know-how, yeah.

00:22:18 Translator 1

While working for the WUA to distribute the water in a correct way... if it's distributed in a correct and adequate way based on the principles and on the know-how, not many issues will occur. Plus, keeping and following the order is also essential. If this much water will be distributed, then it should be controlled and monitored very well.

00:23:00 Translator 1

The order is very important and you need to control it over the time. For instance, if the farmer has that water for one day, it should be controlled. He should only take it during the course of one day.

00:23:15 Gabriela Berglas

OK, so I assume that they monitor well, right?

00:23:21 Translator 1

Yes, good monitoring and controls. And with those who violated the law or violated the rules and who stole the water he dealt with through the local police. With this method, it became the order and people feel that there will be consequences for their actions and then they started to follow. Otherwise, you say OK and then they say OK and then they will continue with what they are used to do.

00:24:12 Gabriela Berglas

Did they have any penalty fees or fines?

00:24:14 Translator 1

Yes, penalty fees and fines.

00:24:18 Gabriela Berglas

Which went to the WUA or to the police?

00:24:29 Translator 1

Yes to WUA. They buy the receipt based on the receipt which goes to a compound. They have this special commission on this kind of violations. And they make their decisions and we follow these decisions.

00:24:54 Gabriela Berglas

And what do you know about the relationships of the farmers amongst each other? For instance the farmers share neighbouring plots?

00:25:58 Translator 1

He says of course, there are some of these cases as well, but they try to solve them right at that place. For instance, if the farmer should take water for one day but then in reality he actually needs it for two days instead, then he will try to explain: "I need this water for one more day", and then we counsel with the water commission. And then they decide to give it for one more day.

But if he steals the water without explanation, without saying anything, then he automatically receives a penalty. And he managed to train the people like this, no one steals the water now. After they punished some farmers once or twice, people then stopped.

00:26:45 Gabriela Berglas

Do you know how many km of canals are under your WUA?

00:26:58 Translator 1

He already pointed out that it's 60 kms.

00:27:15 Gabriela Berglas

How many of them are cemented?

00:27:23 Translator 1

About 12 kilometres. They have been replaced by the newer Russian technology.

00:27:26 Translator 1

By the new.

00:27:28 Translator 1

So called it's in Russian, it's called "Latok". It's not the canal itself, it's a newer version.

00:27:34 Gabriela Berglas

They are both cemented, but one is a newer version?

00:27:35 Translator 1

Yeah, absolutely, yeah.

00:27:39 Gabriela Berglas

OK.

00:27:58 Translator 1

Yeah, not land channels, you know. The canals that go on the ground.

00:28:12 Gabriela Berglas

In the mud?

00:28:11 Translator 1

Yeah, exactly it's in the mud. I will show them to you in the field.

00:28:17 Gabriela Berglas

Yeah, yeah, exactly. Of course. Yeah, that's sixteen. OK and.

00:28:24 Gabriela Berglas

There's this new policy reform. What do you think about that?

00:28:53 Translator 1

He established his WUA in 1999, and by 2002, this channel should be under AO. \$Ah!\$

Because the WUAs are not doing well. Because there are more rules and controlling mechanisms in AO.

00:29:55 Translator 1

Interesting... There is a kind of a board of directors under WUA, which consists of nine people. So when the policy came out this year, the support of this Court discussed the issue and they were against handing over to AO.

00:30:45 Translator 1

The argument was that the board decided not to hand over because they value their independence and under the AO they will have more management... how to say... above them. You know local AKs and deputies, AO head and vice head, etc.

00:31:18 Gabriela Berglas

They were scared that they would lose their independence and that they would have to follow rules.

Which is you can say a bit odd because those were the same people which were under Soviet Union, right? I mean they lived in the Soviet Union and that was the system back then, right?

00:32:51 Translator 1

He says you are right. For instance, they have a good WUA indicator on collecting the money. They collected almost 87% of the irrigation fees. So when you have money, it's OK to work with the people, you can do the repair work, you can rent the equipment and stuff. You can

do the work when you have a budget. Their collection rates are good. But other WUAs which failed to collect the money can hand over to the AO.

00:33:34 Gabriela Berglas

He actually thinks that the policy reform is very good, I assume?

00:34:13 Translator 1

He says under the government (AO) they will have more resources to control. Because there are some villages where people don't pay and they have about 1.7 Mio soms debt. If they will pay, then the WUA would be able to pay off their credit right away But they never pay, you know? And they come every year and under AO they will have more resources to pay this off. This is his personal view.

00:34:57 Translator 1

He also worked also as a local deputy of the AK. He came and sold (incomprehensible) three times. He knows how the whole system works.

00:35:25 Translator 1

With this new policy, WUA will be able to pay their credits 1st and then? For this huge repair works like cementing the kennels and other stuff, AO will have more financial resources. They could attract different investments, get additional funds...

00:35:49 Gabriela Berglas

Because when the AO supports the canals, they will improve and then they will get more money back in return. That's the idea, right?

00:36:03 Translator 1

And plus when it comes to investments, AO has more resources. They could make project proposals and apply for other fundings, such as all of these development funds, Republican budget to the public, from other donors...

00:36:26 Gabriela Berglas

How would he compare the differences between the organisation and administration of AO and the WUAs?

00:37:41 Translator 1

It depends, for instance, for those WUAs which are already working well, it would be good to do good cooperations with the AO and to solve the issues together.

00:38:11 Translator 1

With a good cooperation from both sides, the general goal is to supply the water to the farmers, and if the farmer get water constantly they will have a good harvest. When they have a good harvest, they can sell it for a better price and then they will pay all the taxes to the AO and not to the WUA. So it will be quite beneficial in a corporation if they manage to cooperate very well.

00:38:38 Gabriela Berglas

OK, the ideal situation for him is that the good WUAs should remain independent but work together with the AO and that the bad WUAs, the ones that don't work, should just hand it over.

00:39:14 Translator 1

[nods]

00:39:14 Gabriela Berglas

With the ATR, for example... What does he think will the future of the WUAs going to be?

00:39:50 Translator 1

You could say that WUAs are non-profitable organisations. They can't get rich, they can't develop too much. They will remain the same.

00:40:37 Translator 1

It depends. For instance, in in this region, Nookan region, there are two WUAs. One has a 1 Mio. and the other has a 10 Mio. budget, thanks to a good cooperation with their investors. The investors sell fertilizers and they support the WUA with the profit.

00:41:08 Translator 1

They will not hand over their irrigation system to the AO.

00:41:23 Translator 1

One good key point of this new policy is it's voluntary character.

00:42:02 Translator 1

There are some WUAs, not here but in general, which have almost about 12 to 14 million soms of credit payment debt. Because of inflation and of other stuff.

00:42:19 Gabriela Berglas

Exactly, that was my next question. Does he sometimes advise the WUAs to hand over to the AO?

00:42:20 Translator 1

Those bad WUAs you mean?

00:42:23 Gabriela Berglas

Yes

00:42:31 Translator 1

Yes, they should do that. Otherwise they won't be able to solve their problems.

00:42:44 Gabriela Berglas

At what point do you advise a WUA to hand over? What's the turning point for him when the WUA should hand over?

00:43:06 Translator 1

There are two points: If the WUA has lots of credit debts and plus if they are not able to do their work, that's all.

00:43:33 Translator 1

One example: He knows one WUA which was managed by a high professional hydro-technician. He was replaced by another guy and now they have failed to do their work.

00:44:01 Gabriela Berglas

What does he think of the ATR?

00:44:24 Translator 1

He is quite positive about the ATR because he thinks it will give the space with the platform to work better if the AOs will merge.

00:44:57 Translator 1

For instance, during the Soviet Union Nookan and Bazar-Korgon Rayon were one AO. Yeah, we did that and we lived like that, so it's possible.

00:45:11 Gabriela Berglas

It's possible. Yeah. Is he concerned that the output of the ATR will generate less budget? Because for example, the last interviewee said that there will be less budget on the local level.

00:45:51 Translator 1

Perhaps there could be some risks. He didn't work for the AO so he can't say that.

00:46:01 Translator 1

[Chuckling] For instance, if you are a family, you have your own children. Then you would add one more child, but not your biological one. [Laughing] Anyway, it will be different.

00:46:30 Translator 1

Any change is good, you know? We will get used to the new changes as well. Why not?

00:47:01 Translator 1

It was funny back then when the WUAs were established. During Soviet Union, people got used to getting everything for free. They didn't paid for anything. And then the WUA came and said: "You should pay for the water." And there were lots of people who said why should I pay? The water comes from the mountains, it should be free. So in five years time they managed to persuade the people that they should pay for the water. This new change will also take its time.

00:48:19 Translator 1

The money that they took, this 6.6 Mio. Som credit with a 25% interest rate... In Uzbekistan and Tajikistan for instance, this money didn't come as a credit and thus without an interest rate. But here our Kyrgyz government took this credit with the motive that they could use this money to develop other WUAs. But it didn't work that way, because they couldn't collect the money and not enough WUAs payed off their credits.

00:49:00 Gabriela Berglas

What kind of credit is this? This is now the credit from the Republic?

00:49:06 Translator 1

Not from the Republic but from the World Bank. For the other countries, it came without an interest rate. And maybe for ours it was also free. Who knows? We don't know that. But it was 25% interest rate and then it was a very difficult process for the people to pay it back.

00:49:30 Gabriela Berglas

In retrospective, would you have taken this credit from the World Bank again?

00:50:20 Translator 1

WUAs will not get credits again. But now people have a better understanding that they need this water. They should also do something by themselves to develop the water system. And for instance, they have good case where people were able to cement 3 kms of water irrigation canals by themselves thanks to their own effort.

00:50:55 Gabriela Berglas

Like compared to how they otherwise would do it when they would use machines or what do you mean by themselves?

00:51:09 Translator 1

No, not by hand, it's by tractors, by using equipment. Some materials were provided by WUAs, and then the rest was gathered by the people.

00:51:20 Gabriela Berglas

They gathered the equipment by themselves?

00:51:21 Translator 1

They get the money by themselves with their own initiative.

00:51:23 Gabriela Berglas

So they basically understood that they have to pay more fees and that they perhaps need to invest. So it's like investments without the interest rates.

00:51:24 Translator 1

Yes, yes.

00:52:13 Translator 1

The issue worsened, the people are now aware that they are also responsible for this situation and that they also need this water and which if the Village heads decides to do it by themselves, they can get cement from the WUA and other materials. And if they can provide things by themselves they will do it.

00:52:36 Gabriela Berglas

So that's why it's also working better now and they are probably not relying anymore on any other credits with interest rates in the future?

00:52:56 Translator 1

Yes, they're not interested in getting credits anymore. They are trying to find other ways, like know-how...

00:53:33 Translator 1

People are more interested in cementing the canals now because it's like a long term investment rather than collecting money for the repair work every year, or by working hard. Once they have cemented their canals, they will last longer.

00:53:56 Gabriela Berglas

You calculated and use your own fees, is that right?

00:54:29 Translator 1

There is a so-called board of directors, they decide how high their fines will be (she meant "fees").

00:54:48 Gabriela Berglas

Is it correct that those fees used to not include the calculation of paying off the debts?

00:55:08 Gabriela Berglas

In these fees. But it's not like they have not calculated to paying back the debts.

00:55:42 Translator 1

It's not included. Credit is usually paid from the collected money.

00:55:52 Gabriela Berglas

Do you think that maybe it will be like useful to like change how the fees are made of?

00:56:10 Translator 1

When they respond back to that, the more they decide to change according to the inflation rate. But they can't do anything without the support of the board of directors.

00:56:32 Gabriela Berglas

OK, and the board of directors is for the whole Massy or the entire country? The WUAs of whole of Kyrgyzstan?

00:56:48 Translator 1

Yes, each WUA has their own board of directors.

00:57:00 Gabriela Berglas

You have cemented your canals. Have seen any changes in the livelihoods of the farmers?

00:58:21 Translator 1

Yes, one real-life example that he experienced is that in one village, they decided to cement the canal, and that canal goes through another village, and it almost takes around 2.5 hours until the water reaches the farmers. And he proposed to build another new canal in their village. They managed to do that and they cemented around 2.2 kilometres of new canal in their village. And after they completed this task, the water takes 22 minutes to flow to the farmers. They decreased the time. And the canal was named after him [chuckles]. It was his own project.

00:59:39 Gabriela Berglas

Very good. How would you rate the overall well-being of your farmers?

01:00:24 Translator 1

In general, the farmer's well-being level is good, and it's increasing year by year. In these 2-3 years, farmers have been paying more attention to the seed quality. They try to grow more good quality crops good quality seeds and they get a good harvest from that.

01:01:09 Translator 1

The farmers are quite positive with this new policy reform. And they recently wrote and developed a project proposal to build a water reservoir and applied it to Bishkek. With this change, the farmers livelihoods will improve because they will be able to harvest their crops twice a year. In the village of Arslanbob (Rayon Nooken), there was another project proposal for a water reservoir. And if this project gets realized, around 30'000 hectares of land will be additionally irrigated.

01:02:43 Gabriela Berglas

I mean, this is a vision. How long does he think will it take this project to be realised?

01:03:12 Translator 1

It won't be quick. It will take even 10 years.

01:03:31 Translator 1

It's good now that the president himself started to pay attention to the irrigation system. So with this, he believes that more positive changes will come.

01:03:59 Translator 1

In Nooken Rayon, there are around 10'200 hectares of land. Around 7 AO get the water from Bazar-Korgon region.

01:04:44 Translator 1

If the water reservoir will be built, a lot of water will be saved, especially in July and August. In May and June for instance, we have water. But this water comes from the mountains. It just goes on and on. In the hot weather, the water evaporates and we are dependent on the mineral resource water that's coming from the water. So with this water reservoir, many issues will be solved. The farms will have the chance to harvest twice a year.

01:05:24 Gabriela Berglas

And that's at the moment it's the project proposal has been applied to to fishcake and now they're waiting.

01:05:36 Translator 1

But by the end of the year they will know if the project proposal has been approved or not.

01:06:22 Gabriela Berglas

I forgot to ask this before: With the ATR they will probably have new council members in the AO, right?

01:06:51 Translator 1

He doesn't know. If ATR will be in place, Rayon Water Department will also join with each other.

01:07:10 Gabriela Berglas

OK, now so him a lot of expertise with of course he's been working for so long and with so many changes and reforms. So let's say we will have a new board of people. What does he think will be the most important messages to sensibilise them for these water issues?

01:07:45 Translator 1

Again, repairing the canals and cementing the canals.

01:08:11 Translator 1

In the spring time, people repair and clean the canals and after two months time, they are dirty again. For the second cleaning, the WUAs don't have any money.

01:08:38 Translator 1

In order to develop the WUAs they need special equipment like excavators and tractors. Without that, it's difficult. One part of the WUA budget goes to the cleaning activities.

01:09:31 Translator 1

When he visited Japan, he asked what percentage of people pay for the water. He said 97% pay. Even in Japan, 3 % of the people don't pay [chuckles]. The rate of the water price is very low here and should be raised.

01:10:31 Gabriela Berglas

What do you think is the future long-term prospect of the WUAs?

01:10:54 Translator 1

If they will increase the fee for the irrigation services and plus if they have equipment like tractors and excavators, then they have a good perspective of developing.

01:11:25 Translator 1

One example: Three years ago, the fee per hectare was 1200 soms in the WUA. And the fee to plough the land was 5000 soms per hectare. Over the time period of three years, the fee per hectare increased to 9000 soms for a tractor to plough the land. But the price of the irrigation water has remained the same. That's why this fee should be increased.

01:12:04 Gabriela Berglas

OK, the fees should be increased and then everything will work out. And how does he rate the future as a farmer generally here in Kyrgyzstan?

01:12:55 Translator 1

In 1999, there were about 17 Farmer's Unions here in Kyrgyzstan. And today only one is left so it's time to reunite again. Especially when it comes to the water delivering issues. It is easier to distribute the peak amount of water to 1 mio. farmers than to distribute it amongst 100 farmers. So the farmers should be re-united under one union. Maybe it could be re-united under AO.

01:14:11 Gabriela Berglas

Is there anything important you'd like to add?

01:14:33 Translator 1

He is hopeful that with the new reform, things will work better. If the irrigation fees will be increased, if the AO will be willing to share their equipment with the WUA, things will hopefully get better.

01:15:31 Translator 1

He was in Uzbekistan and they also have WUAs but they are not private there. Instead, they are under the government, and they provide water to farmers the receipt, and they then automatically pay their bills to the government. And there is no headache of non-paying farmers or having to make fines. It is stricter and there is more control. There should be a good control mechanism.

6 Village Head of Apyrtan Village, Massy (Pilot)

16th September 2023

Rayon Nookan

Apyrtan Village: ca. 1500 inhabitants, ca. 250 households. Mainly agriculture; cotton, maize and alpha-alpha (fodder).

Interviewees:

- Consultant of Masy AO
- Consultant of ABAD

Consists of 4 smaller villages

Village Head since 2 years.

Increasing irrigation problems of cotton due to dryer climate → 30-40 % of farmers have turned to grow **wheat and alpha-alpha** instead (needs less water), although they get less profit

- e.g. cotton needs to be watered five times during the season, vs. wheat only needs to be watered twice.
- Profitability: cotton is more profitable but due to the water issues becoming more difficult

Alpha-alpha needs to be watered 8 times per season (even more than cotton) → but they can water twice, and then collect. Water twice, and then collect → the watering and collection rate also depends! → so they can adjust the alpha-alpha collection towards how much water is available during the season!

1 kg of cotton = 60 soms, 1kg of wheat = 30 soms → impacts the economic household level

Audio File: 6 P MA Village Head 16_Sept 1.m4a

Abbreviations:

[T-I]: Translator asks interviewee something mid-translation, and interviewee responds

[I]: Interviewee adds something mid-translation

[I-T]: Interviewee adds something mid-translation, and translator responds

Transcript

00:02:56 Gabriela Berglas

Is it correct that this Apyrtan village has been mainly managed by the WUAs?

00:03:38 Translator 1

They have not been involved in the work of the WUA at all. They never really saw them. And I asked him about the maintenance of the canals and he answered that the people did it by themselves with the help of the AO.

00:04:51 Translator 1

Last year these canals have transferred to the AO. As a result they started to actively work with the AO by cleaning the canals and doing small repair works. Around 3 kms of the canals have been cemented with the help of the AO in this village.

00:05:24 Gabriela Berglas

So Apyrtan didn't have any WUAs before, right? [Yeah] So they just organised themselves?

00:05:37 Translator 1

The WUAs covered the central villages, and Apyrtan is located quite far away. The WUAs covered the villages which are located close to the centre of the district.

00:06:50 Gabriela Berglas

How was the system before the policy reform?

00:07:25 Translator 1

He didn't see any of the WUAs *wraps* [incomprehensible]. They didn't have any interactions with the WUA. They mostly worked with the AO before this new policy came out.

00:07:36 Gabriela Berglas

And how would you rate the services of the AO?

00:07:57 Translator 1

It's more effective to work with the AO because they have more resources. For instance, if they have some issues with the canals, they can send trucks and other equipment, yk, to clean the canal or to repair the canal or to make the major minor repairments. So it's more effective. [Village Head continues talking]

00:08:49 Translator 1

Anyway, it's a good... tendency that AO will pay more attention to these canals and will transfer all of these canals to their account, I mean into their balance. Which is just better for the people, you know, to interact directly with AO.

00:09:09

OK, so does he see any disadvantages with the AO yet?

00:09:30 Translator 1

No issues so far because he's been interacting with AO since the last two years... since he started to work with them. AO managed to resolve most of the issues which he had addressed to them. So, so far, no issues.

00:10:21 Translator 1

Yeah, he says, since he started to work as the village head, he started at the how to say... repairment of the canals. Before, a tractor was needed and no one addressed this issue since AO. So, he started to address this issue and AO managed to allocate a special tractor for that and they managed to repair... to repair means to like clean the canals with the help of the tractor. Almost 14 kilometres were cleaned.

And then after that, people understood that they could address [the AO] if there were any issues and the AO will be able to help them.

[111]

00:11:21 Translator 1

Yeah, this is the default situation. See all the water is gone and water loss is high.

[Village Head shows pictures and videos. See below]

Pictures show before-and-after situation. how a pipe was broken

Before: all of the water is gone, the water loss is high

After: Samara points on the tractor, which was allocated by AO to help them and which repaired the muddy canal.

All finances were covered by AO.

00:12:01 Gabriela Berglas

How fast was this administrative process to address this emergency to AO?

00:12:22 Translator 1

Yeah, after he addressed this issue, it [took AO] one week. Yeah. It took only one week to allocate this tractor.

00:12:37 Translator 1

They were busy for 15 days to clean and repair the canal. There were three tractors working.

00:12:55 Gabriela Berglas

And how does the canal function now at the moment?

00:13:08 Translator 1

So these three tractors are working and this is a photo from the process.

00:13:26 Translator 1

This specific canal repair can only be done with the help of the tractors and people can't do it alone. And after this,

Gabriela Berglas

This is a very efficient process. Who pays for it?

00:14:51 Translator 1

All the finances were covered by AO.

00:14:59 Translator 1

And also, AO sent specialists who knew how to do the work. Specialists were also provided by AO. Because even though he gets a tractor, he still doesn't know... how to dig and where to dig and how to do it correctly.

00:15:34 Translator 1

Before, all this work has only been done by the people [referring to Ashar]... and the work is done in their ways. They did it in the best possible way as they could... It's like they dug in a certain way, and then... you know, the grass grew there again..., you know, all of these problems were that... they're not like a tractor, you know. Yeah, they could dig in the way that they can. He says "we did it in the way we could". But this is a huge change.

00:16:05 Gabriela Berglas

That is a massive change, yes.

00:16:06 Translator 1

That the people could see, and almost these 14 kilometres... It's a radical change which people can see the effectiveness of AO.

00:16:16 Gabriela Berglas

Wow, OK. So that is actually a rather big canal. How long will it roughly take until that canal will also be cemented?

00:16:50 Translator 1

He doesn't know for sure. OK, but maybe three months, maybe more. He doesn't know as a specialist. Yeah, it depends on the availability of specialists and equipment as well.

00:17:03 Gabriela Berglas

And is the work with the AO in general going towards the cementation of the future canals?

00:17:41 Translator 1

Well, he says AO will do their best to help the people. Of course they can't do it all at once. So maybe they will cement like 2-3 kilometres each year and then in the future, it will be done. But it will be very slow, step by step. They can't do all of the canals at once. But it's good that AO is aware of all these problems and that they are willing to change the situation and to help the people.

00:18:13 Gabriela Berglas

OK. And when it comes to the farmers... how are the relationship of the farmers who share a neighbouring plot with each other?

00:19:09 Translator 1

Well, he says the same problem, the same issue like the others had pointed out.

For instance, before, like two or three years ago, until these canals were cleaned, people, farmers used to fight with each other. There were some cases, where if one farmer for instance got the water for one day, then this one day is not enough for him or she to water their field.

Because the water comes to him more than for more than one day. You know, because of all these canals. And then he says it's not enough for me. And then another one is also not happy. But since last year, the situation is getting better. [not entirely clear what is meant]

Because people already see the changes. And by cleaning the canals, the water is delivered to the farmer quite quick compared to the previous years. And he says that if these canals will be cemented, then this process will go even faster

00:20:12 Gabriela Berglas

OK. That's excellent. Does he... Because of course also because the same because the water is also coming more quickly and more efficiently and there's less water loss, right?

00:20:25 Translator 1

Yes, yes.

00:20:29 Gabriela Berglas

Oh very good. And then how is actually your relationship with the other village heads?

00:20:50 Translator 1

Yeah, he communicates very well with the other village heads. They share their experiences, they visit each other you know, to see their best practises. [T-I] Yeah. To say they share their best practises and their experiences quite well with each other.

00:21:14 Gabriela Berglas

What are the major differences between the different villages?

00:21:51 Translator 1

He says it depends where the village is located because their village is located a little far away from the centre. [T-I]

It's only about 7 kilometres away from the centre, but still, their village is comfortably accessible for the cattle, you know, people are mostly engaged in agriculture and plus they have lots of cattle to take care of. Mh... so, they have more cattle, and their climate isn't as hot compared to the centre. So maybe from this type they differ from other villages.

[...]

Talked about irrigation practices

- Apyrtan village does not have any different, or specific irrigation tactics that differ from the other villages
- The only difference is that they don't have any wells in their territory
- They grow more vegetables (potatos and tomatos), because their land is suitable

The next step after irrigation

- Drip irrigation in the future

They are not thinking about the future that far, slowly step by step cementing all of the canals first

00:24:22 Gabriela Berglas

When it would come to future like investments. So after the channels, what does it think will be the next best investment?

00:25:32 Translator 1

Yeah, this is the perspective will be like to first clean all of the canals and then maybe slowly step by step cementing them. And then maybe this drip irrigation but in the future not now. Step by step and slowly. And he doesn't think that they need wells in their fields. He thinks this irrigation water is enough for them.

But even if they clean the canals and they cement the canals it should be fine. You know, to deliver the water in a quick time to the farmers and that will automatically impact to their economic level, improving their welfare, and other things.

00:26:24 Gabriela Berglas

So if he says like, he doesn't think that they need wells, does that mean that they actually have enough water in general?

00:26:58 Translator 1

Yeah, he says he doesn't.... Not that he doesn't think that, but he approves this idea, you know, to have more wells. Because from the Soviet Union there are some wells that remain from those times. But they are not cleaned. They are full and need to be cleaned and repaired. And again, if they will finance, why not renovate the wells and run them again. It will be only beneficial for the farmers to have additional water.

[...] Talking about Interviewees position in the policy reform

- Was directly engaged in the policy reform → was a member of the working group
- He was in the the special Commission which studied the situation of the canals (which ones were in a bad situation, which one should be transferred to AO
- Due to this, he has very tight bonds with AO

00:29:30 Gabriela Berglas

So what do you think of the ATR?

00:30:12 Translator 1

He heard about this ATR coming already. By joining these two AOs with each other. From one side it will be a good thing, there will be more territory to cover. But from another side, the richer AO will have to take in one more poorer AO and then they will have to take care of the, you know, of one more family member who is poorer... So it has like two sides. He is not against or for [the ATR], but it has two sides.

00:30:55 Gabriela Berglas

So that perhaps the whole policy issue... Does he think that maybe you have to overthink the whole budgeting system if the ATR will be implied?

00:31:44 Translator 1

Yeah, you are right, there will be more budget needed for more territory. And maybe more villages will be joined and added to his job. And maybe even his job will entail more work, you know, if he is now responsible for four villages. Maybe even more villages will be joined to his job.

So in that sense, they will see how it will go. As far as to say now. [I-T]

00:32:14 Translator 1

And plus here... although it's one region... like in Nookan region... but for instance in other AOs people have a little different mentality, you know.

00:32:27 Gabriela Berglas

Oh you can already feel it?

00:32:30 Translator 1

Yeah, because the villages here close to the centre... they have different approaches. So maybe it will take time to get used to it, but now it's like this.

00:32:40 Gabriela Berglas

What kind of different approaches do you mean?

00:33:19 Translator 1

There is kind of a difference between city people and village people. Because Masy village is closer to the centre and they have more like civilised, you know, more city type municipality. And then this new AO which is joining, they're quite rich people and maybe some rules will not work for them. Maybe it will work. Who knows? [Translator 1 chuckles]

Small talk

- I told the interviewer that I learned the term “balkonski”

00:34:58 Gabriela Berglas

OK so, with the ATR you'd have less budget, maybe overthinking the tariff systems, more work for a lot of people, because it's all merged. So that will probably mean that the farmers will have to probably pay more fees, is that possible?

00:36:01 Translator 1

Yeah, he says he doesn't know. I mean, it's hard to say beforehand. You are right with all of these points it could be. But maybe there will be new laws which will make our life easier. [chuckles] There are things to be expected, so we'll see what will be done and what will not be done.

00:36:22 Gabriela Berglas

What do you know about the financial situation of the farmers? Do they pay fines for example?

00:37:00 Translator 1

Yeah, there were some cases, not lot, but they have some cases with the fines [T-I]. They didn't have to impose fines at that time, it was more like explanation work. You know “you shouldn't do it again!”, like that. But they had some cases. [I] But now, if to take the current time, they don't have any farmers who will not pay. [T-I]

And they say that the perception... the mentality of the people towards payment for the water services... for irrigation services is increasing towards the positive side. They are slowly becoming aware that they need to pay for this, otherwise they will not get water. So it's changing.

00:38:22 Gabriela Berglas

If you'd increase the fees, how does he think will the farmers react?

[misunderstanding between Translator and me – she confused “fee” with “fine”. As I could hear her use the word “штраф”, “Strafe” in her question]

00:38:58 Translator 1

Yeah, he says it depends. If the fines will be increased twice or more times, there are some risks that people will react negatively.

[AO consultant talks]

00:39:28 Translator 1

And she thinks that if 2 AOs will join together, then there should be a strict schedule using this irrigation water and more people who monitor and control the situation, who use more water and what time so they should be more controlling mechanisms as well.

00:39:51 Gabriela Berglas

Has he also already entered the data of the farmers in this new database?

00:40:24 Translator 1

Yes, he is still providing data to this general database.

[AO consultant speaks]

00:40:47 Translator 1

She says from the AO for the garbage and for the clean water they have already inserted all the information to the database. But for the irrigation water it's still continuing, it's in the process.

00:41:06 Gabriela Berglas

And what do you think of this new database?

00:41:19 Translator 1

He is very positive about it. It should be done in this way. If all of the data will be in the database... on the electronic version, then it will be also easier for the people to get the information. To get some *stuff* [incomprehensible] from the AO on different things.

And plus, the payment should be... will be done through the bank. Which makes the whole process very transparent. And clean... without with any questions for the people.

00:41:58 Gabriela Berglas

OK. And so for the WUAs, for example, they're highly indebted to the World Bank. Do the farmers also have high debts?

[merged discussion with Village Head and AO consultant]

00:43:06 Translator 1

This village head is not so well connected with the WUAs work, so they don't really know.

Farmers don't have any debts. The WUAs should have some debts. But they don't know about it. And she says these WUAs of Masy AO have comparatively little debts compared to the WUAs of other AOs. This is what they learned from the seminars provided by the public foundation ABAD. For instance, as it was mentioned yesterday, some WUAs have 18 mio. soms, some have 15 mio. soms and they only have like 1,000,000 soms debt. And plus it's possible to be paid in a short time.

00:44:03 Gabriela Berglas

Ok. So he doesn't know of any farmer who would have any debts.

00:44:11 Translator 1

No.

00:44:23 Gabriela Berglas

In all of these, like processes, for example, with political and with the tariff policy, do you also know how so the farmers may have gotten higher yield? You've already told me that. Are you also aware of the direct budget changes of the farmers? Do they now have like a higher income or not because they have more water now for example, but because they changed

from cotton to wheat that of course then decreases their profits a bit. Is he aware of the overall financial situation of the farmers?

00:46:13 Translator 1

In general, the harvest of one season is more or less sufficient for them to solve the major issues of the household. For instance, if they want to repair the house, they can do that. If they want to send their kids, you know, to, I don't know, university or to some good school, they can do that. If to say in general, their situation, their overall like economic condition, is getting better and better every year, OK. [T-I]

00:47:07 Translator 1

With the seasonal harvest, they are also very much dependent on the remittances, on the money which comes from Russia and other countries from the migrants.

[T-I, AO consultant answers]

00:47:31 Translator 1

Because here in the region, including this village, each family has from 1 to 3 people working in Russia [or abroad in general]. They send money back to help their families and that is also a huge factor for them to survive. And we can't say that they can do their household solemnly from the only from the harvest.

If there won't be any money coming from Russia, then it's hard to say if they can survive with the harvest only. OK. They have additional funds coming from abroad.

00:48:21 Gabriela Berglas

And how would he in general now rate the future of the farmers here in his district?

00:49:14 Translator 1

The future will be should be, should be good. At least they hope so. And in the near future for instance, they will not change their crops. And they will not change their irrigation methods. The only focus will be repairing the canals, but the irrigation system will stay the same. So of course they hope for better. But in coming years there are no plans to change the variety of crops. What they used to grow, they will continue to grow.

[AO consultant speaks]

00:50:17 Translator 1

She [AO consultant] says in order to improve this irrigation system, because AO still needs a lot of investments also from international donors besides the government. Because if they manage to settle the order of the water in the irrigation system by cleaning up all the canals, by cementing and etcetera. Then it will directly affect the quality... the speed of the water supply towards the farmers.

If the farmer has two harvests, of course that will directly impact their household income. So it's all connected and it all depends on the availability of resources, external resources and funds from international donors.

00:52:17 Gabriela Berglas

Are your investments larger from the international NGO's than from the state?

[AO consultant speaks]

00:53:21 Translator 1

She says [AO consultant] when it comes to the implementation of projects, about 10-15% of the projects are covered by the AO, otherwise they apply for Rayon development fund, Oblast

development fund... and the Ministry of Ecology fund, which all of these are state-funded.

00:53:48 Gabriela Berglas

So due to this new policy reform, the majority of the money does come from the state in the end?

Translator 1 00:54:12

Yes.

00:54:22 Translator 1

And her [AO consultant] how to say... wish is to have besides this government funds more like international funding... it would be better for AO to improve their services. Even if the AOs will join together under the ATR, they will continue working the same way by buying two development funds.

00:56:55 Translator 1

Yeah, he is aware and the farmers are also aware of the drought situation, which is coming year by year. They are already feeling it and it impacts the harvest of the farmers as well.

And as a solution, he says. Maybe, for instance, during, before, during the Soviet Union, even this grass on the mountains was controlled by the government.

They grown the grass in, they have grown for, they suggest the new like right to suppress, to be grown. So he believes that this kind of system should return. And that AO should monitor more. You know this grass situation... it is very important in terms of fodder for the animals, for the farmers. So that farmers not only use the alpha-alpha as a fodder, but the mountain grass as well. [T-I]

Because year by year, the mountain grass is becoming less and less and farmers are more dependent on this alpha-alpha from the fields, from irrigated fields. Which is also an issue?

00:58:20 Gabriela Berglas

So in general, he wishes more state control?

00:58:43 Translator 1

Yes, more state control, more AO. Because the AO anyway knows the situation better on a local level. [I]

00:58:50 Translator 1

Because, he knows that during the Soviet Union, for instance, the mountain grass was taken care by the government. They fertilised it, they used additional things to make the grass grow better [probably referring to fertilizers] and they rotate grass growth yearly.

00:59:12 Gabriela Berglas

Different types of grass?

00:59:14 Translator 1

Yeah. By letting certain animals graze there for a certain period of time.

00:59:22 Translator 1

Yes like rotation control and that's why the level of the grass and the mountains and the pastures in a good shape in general.

But now this control has gone, so it's a little bit messy there. So he wishes that the AO will have more monitoring, will have more control and will solve issues on this level.

00:59:46 Gabriela Berglas

Can he explain how the mountain grass is managed today?

01:00:06 Translator 1

No control. Nothing done so far because AO has lots of issues besides that, so they didn't even have time to start with this. But it's a matter of time, he says, because situation is getting worse and worse every year.

01:00:25 Gabriela Berglas

So can you also recall the irrigation during the Soviet Union? I mean, I know that the cementation of the of the canal that, I mean that Soviet style and I think.

01:01:45 Translator 1

Yeah, he says. You're right. This whole tradition of cementing the canals comes from the Soviet Union. They are still using that [the same technique] and as a priority, he says, all of the canals should be cemented first because it will save the water. It will improve the quality of providing water to the farmers and then they will think about that. But for now, it will take years and years to do that. So, the priority is to repair, to clean all the canals and to cement them preferable.

01:02:31 Gabriela Berglas

I was wondering why they're using the cement? Because for example plastic canals are apparently cheaper and less water is lost because the water comes through the plastic. Have you heard of anything like that?

01:03:18 Translator 1

He didn't hear anything about plastic. I mean, he hears not so much. But anyways, plastic will be better because kids can play with the plastic, you know they can manipulate it, dig, make a fountain out of it... And even if people would manipulate it on purpose, you know they can steal the water... But with cement you can't do anything.

- When asked why they don't use plastic, Village Head responded that he
- Interviewee didn't want to add anything from his side

Postscript

- People anwesend: Village head, translator samara, AO consultant, ABAD consultant Kanyebek
- Very pleasant setting, everybody was agreeable
- AO consultant started to add useful information in the end, when it considered information about the AO
- Village head was very proud to show the pictures and videos
-

7) Farmer, Masy, Rayon Nooken (Pilot)

16th September 2023

Rayon Nooken

Farmers

- Not involved in the making of the policy reform

[...]

Explaining murabs work (of how they distribute the water):

- Farmer works in close collaboration with the murabs

7 P MA Farmer 16_Sept.m4a

Transcript

00:00:11 Translator 1	They work in close collaboration with each other. [I continues to talk]. Murabs' responsibility is to know which farmer has how much land, and then he distributes the water for, I don't know, one or two days. And then he tells the village head for example that they're going to distribute this water for two days to this farmer. Then they write in the WhatsApp group, and then it's more like joint work, controlling and monitoring the water. [T-I]
00:02:29 Translator 1	The whole picture is that they have this many farmers and they have this much land, and this amount of days are needed. And plus the priority depends on the crops. For instance, if cotton needs more water, they will give it to cotton fields first. And if for instance one land is less irrigated [has an irrigation defecit], they will give to this land first. So all of these factors are taken into account while making the schedule. If there is a cotton crop for instance, then the water should be delivered not once in 20 days, but once in 10 days instead... comparing to other crops. 10 days, yeah.
00:03:37 Translator 1	The murab is also responsible for making the general monitoring. He visits different fields and sees which crops need more water. If for instance he sees a maize field which is in a critical condition... they will irrigate this land first. So, he monitors the whole situation.
00:04:08 GB	Since when do you have this monitoring plan? Is this new or did you have it before?
00:05:53 Translator 1	They introduced this system slowly. About five years ago, there were more fights between the farmers. Because of the fact that farmers started to address more of their issues to the AO, then AO slowly started to pay more attention to these issues... in the general meetings of the people, like the weddings and other social events, people tried to raise this issue and they said OK, let's do it this way. Not only one person should benefit, but all of us should. Time by time slowly they established the system; By increasing the role of murab. And plus AO was also in charge... they also had control over this issue.
00:06:48 GB	Ok so it's a combination of a better internal organisation and then of course because they have now more water, they can also implement it. It's not just like a good plan, but they can also implement it.
00:07:03 Translator 1	Yes
00:07:07 GB	So what is your general attitude towards the new policy reform?
00:07:34 Translator 1	He totally approves this policy reform because, for instance, he got this fodder [referring to alpha-alpha] already twice. So he has already seen the results of this new reality.
00:07:55 GB	Are there any disadvantages that came with the new policy reform for him?

00:08:13 Translator 1	They [referring to farmer] hasn't noticed anything at all, so there shouldn't be any negative sides.
00:08:24 GB	Does he also have so he has the big canal does he also use other forms of technique? Like does he have any wells, or something similar to that?
00:08:51 Translator 1	No, they didn't even have any wells from the Soviet Union.
00:09:01 GB	Has his budget also increased... so that he could maybe in the future invest himself in a in some extra infrastructure [I meant to say things like tractors]?
00:10:02 Translator 1	Of course he has plans to invest in the future if he has more harvest and more money. But for now, he uses it just for daily expenses. For the house, he can buy a new animal, or he can buy other things like food, clothes, daily expenses usually.
00:10:25 GB	Was he also involved in the policy reform process?
00:10:42 Translator 1	No, he wasn't.
00:10:54 GB	Does he know anything about the ATR?
00:11:29 Translator 1	He says he used to work for government agencies before becoming a farmer. And from this point of view, he's against it. He's against the ATR, especially by joining two AO. Because the poorer one will be joined to the rich one and then this rich AO, which could be Masy for instance, will have to be responsible for the poorer AO and will have to solve their issues of another AO as well.
00:11:59 GB	How does he think will the ATR affect him directly?
00:12:33 Translator 1	There could be issues. For instance, if two AOs will join, the Shaidan AO has about 0.31 ha of land divided per person. [T-I] Masy has 0.12 hectares. If all of the lands will be united again, there will possibly be a re-distribution... an equal distribution and then situation could change and that could cause many issues. [I]
00:13:24 Translator 1	From this point of view, Shaidan AO could even live better than they [Masy] do. Because they have more land. They have more land, they have less people. But still, AO is on dotation, they are very much dependent on the Republican budget money. That means they are not working well and they are not willed to work well.
00:13:55 GB	Well, So what? They don't have a will to work well. He thinks that they're not as well organised...?
00:14:00 Translator 1	They don't have the wish. The don't have the intention to work well. [I continues to talk]
00:14:37 Translator 1	See the size of the land is bigger, he says. For instance, if there are 10 people in a family in Masy AO, people will get 1.2 hectares of land. That's 0.12 hectars per person. And in Shaidan it's twice as much. Moreover, they are closer to the water resources than this AO [pointing out on Shaidan]. They are located upstream. So, they have more water, more land, and logically they should live better than they do [Masy]. The reason is that they're lazy, or they don't know how to work, or they don't have the intention, the willingness to work at all.
00:15:27 GB	They should be better, but they're not. They're worse?
00:15:36 Translator 1	It's like the additional mouse, you know that should be fed.
00:15:43 GB	Ok, that could maybe lead to tensions in the organisation administration?
00:15:54 Translator 1	Yeah

00:15:55 GB	And then in turn, they would maybe get less budget, right? Is that also his concern?
00:16:00 Translator 1	Not less budget. The size of the land could change due to the re-distribution of land. That will also cause many problems.

- They have their land plots since 1992
- Private hands, the same

00:17:24 GB	What is his opinion on the fees that he's paying?
00:18:43 Translator 1	He's not against the fees. Of course farmers should pay for their irrigation service. But the fees shouldn't be increased. It should remain on the same level. [I] He thinks that the fees that they're paying today should be enough for the government, for the water supply.
00:19:13 GB	Does he know how the fees are made of?
00:19:46 Translator 1	These fees are made during this general People's meeting... general village meeting. They say OK, for water, we'll pay this for, you know, irrigation water, this sum and that's all. But he doesn't know what they discuss in these meeting. He only knows that during these general meetings, these fees are adopted. I mean these are discussed and approved by the people.
00:20:19 GB	So let's say theoretically, if they would increase the fees, how would he react?
00:21:08 Translator 1	If theoretically irrigation fees will be increased, then the price for the harvest should also increase. Otherwise, it will be difficult. If the price for the harvest will stay the same, the farmers will pay for the increased fee, and that will be difficult.

[...]

- If the harvest price will increase, the farmers will be fine with it.

00:23:39 GB	I don't know if this is a bit of a personal question, but can you ask him if he has any debts from a personal credit?
00:24:16 Translator 1	No debts, he doesn't like to deal with credits.
00:24:31 GB	Concerning the ATR, I heard that one problem is if you need to travel a longer ways to the AOs and to the deputies. How do you think would that affect you in that perspective?
00:25:33 Translator 1	From his perspective, he doesn't see the logic in merging the AOs. Because more people will be covered [by the AO] if they merge. And then maybe administration... we should have more personal resources, like staff. Then, all of these debts and other things of the Shaidan AO will be joined to the Masy AO. And then there will be more issues to solve. So this is his personal view.
00:26:15 GB	And would it be a problem for him if he would have to drive a longer way to the AO?
00:26:36 Translator 1	It's half an hour. [...]
00:27:24 Translator 1	And don't even know where the administration will be. If they merge, logically it could be in the centre, but who knows?
00:27:41 GB	Do you already know about the new database that they are introducing?
00:28:15 Translator 1	No, he's not involved [with it] at all. He's busy with his fields. And he says he addressed it one time all these years. He received a so-called certificate... from the staff guy in

	Russian that he is living here. [He received it] when he applied for his pension. So that was the only case when he addressed it to the AO. Because all of the other issues are addressed to the village head.
00:28:45 Translator 1	[ABAD consultant speaks] Hmm, yeah. And he [ABAD consultant] says that when the village head is working well, then nobody will approach the AO. They all address their issues to [incomprehensible, probably referring to the village head]. That means that the village head is working well. He tries to solve the issues on the local level. Or he addresses all of these issues himself to the AO.
00:29:34 GB	How would you rate your future as a farmer here in Kyrgyzstan?
00:30:04 Translator 1	He is only concerned about two points. He would like to have regular and constant water supply. And then the price for his harvest should be high by every year [not sure if meant that harvest price should be increased every or that it should be increased once to a much higher price]. If only these two things will be fulfilled, the future should be fine. [I and ABAD consultant continue talking]
00:30:33 Translator 1	They're very dependent on the price for the harvest. So he believes that if it increases year by year, it will be better for them.
00:30:55 GB	So how is the harvest price fluctuating? Does it just go up and down or is it gradually increasing or gradually decreasing?
00:32:40 Translator 1	Unfortunately, there is a policy of decreasing the price when the harvest is ready. Last year for instance, the plan [probably referring to the market where the farmers sell their goods] originally said OK, we're going to get by 0.90 som per kilogram for cotton. He had about 7 tonnes of cotton. And then when they transported everything to the plant, the final price in the end... they said: "We'll pay you 0.72 som per kilogram."
00:33:07 GB	So they first said one price and then a different one.
00:33:10 Translator 1	There is such a policy to decrease to the minimum price... for the harvest. At the same time, for instance, the village head is saying [referring to the interview with the village head that we just had conducted before] that now the wheat harvesting season is in the process. The price for the wheat decreased to the minimum, but the prices for the device... I mean the tractors which collect the wheat and plus for the drivers increased. And also the price for their fuel has increased so they wish that the government should be involved in such policies... you know to stabilise the price. Otherwise, it's market price... Yes, we understand that. But this market policy is very negative for the farmers.
00:34:08 GB	I understand that. So that would be something to address on the state level.
00:34:18 Translator 1	And the same happens in the springtime, when the ploughing season of the fields begin, the fuel price goes up, which brings additional challenges to the farmer.
00:34:36 GB	Because the fuel price goes up because everybody knows that they are farming now, is that right?
00:34:41 Translator 1	Yes, yes. When the farmer needs this fuel urgently and when their harvest is ready, the price goes down [chuckles].
00:34:49 GB	Ah ok.
00:34:53 Translator 1	It's very negative when the farmers are exposed to this instability and the government should do something about that, they think. [ABAD consultant's phone rings]
00:35:17 GB	Have you ever encountered any emergency situations where you then had to address the village head?
00:35:51 Translator 1	Well, he hasn't had that many acute emergency cases. The only case they had where when the animals entered the field with the fodder...

00:36:04 GB	[laughs] OK. And then they just ate a lot of the way.
00:36:05 Translator 1	... without permission... Yes. And they had to solve this. And in this case they address the village head and try to solve the issue together. But otherwise... no.
00:37:11 Translator 1	He says that the village residents are mostly related to each other. They are the reps [possibly referring to representatives] of one tribe. They live in a tribe system. So they try to solve all the issues on the local level, without a huge fight. Plus, they know each other, they communicate with each other during their weddings, funerals, other social events... That's why they try to eliminate, you know resolve all of their issues on the local level, they don't have very many emergency issues. [I adds something]
00:38:06 Translator 1	In general, the village residents descend from four brothers... let's say four fathers. And they [the village residents] are the ancestors of these four brothers. So they are like relatives to each other. And they know each other well. So, they are four tribes. [T-I]
00:38:37 GB	That means that there many discussions on the local level... informal resolutions... [T-I]
00:38:57 Translator 1	Yeah, there are little issues, and they try to solve it on the local level. [I talks]
00:39:08 Translator 1	He can't even remember the big issues [chuckles].
00:39:16 GB	Does he think that this is a good system? Or would he maybe wish to resolve more issues with the AO?
00:39:45 Translator 1	Yeah, he totally approves the existing system, because there is the so-called elders committee, who also help to solve these issues and they just don't want to bother the AO with their minor issues.
00:40:14 GB	Did he already?
00:40:15 GB	I forgot to ask this before. Did he say how many kilometres of his canals are cemented?
00:40:28 Translator 1	The one that you have seen yesterday; 450 metres.
00:40:44 Translator 1	If he if he says, and if another six kilometres will be cemented, that will increase the water supply a lot. They almost will be able to solve this irrigation crisis.
00:40:57 Translator 1	Irrigation water, irrigation water crisis.
00:41:24 Translator 1	Concerning clean water [referring to drinking water], each house uses a well to store the water.
00:41:32 GB	That's their drinking water?
00:41:34 Translator 1	Yeah, drinking water.

[...]

Concernign droughts in KG:

- Farmer is aware of increasing droughts, he also feels them
- Solution: First install and launch water reservoir system. So that water can be saved and used during irrigation season
- Second point: deliver water from other rivers. E.g. there is another large river Naryn. He suggests to build canals from that river. But as Naryn is 50 kms away, it would be a massive project, far away in the future. During Soviet times, there was this idea and plan to do it and started it, but then stopped. 1975, 70s

Yeah. So the times this project more or less started and then?

00:45:00 GB	Do you remember agriculture during the Soviet times?
00:46:01 Translator 1	Yes, he clearly remembers Soviet times. Of course, the management was better and plus they had more glaciers during that time. A water crisis didn't even exist. The weather was different, the climate, these glaciers were larger... and the infrastructure was better with all of the cemented canals. He can't remember experiencing these problems at all.
00:46:32 GB	He can't remember?
00:46:35 Translator 1	He can't remember that there were any issues, because the government took care of them all. [I continues speaking]
00:46:52 Translator 1	These collective farms [Kolchosen] were based on the state plan and there were specialists who controlled and who monitored the situation under the Communist Party.
00:47:14 Translator 1	And under the Soviet Kolchosen... I mean collective farms, there were specialists like agronomists, who did their own research... which crops needs what amount of water, where the different crops need to be grown in order to make more profit... And now, because the land is divided between the people and there are more people than there used to be... Water is becoming more scarce. And there is also an increase in population growth.

Discussing importance of water reservoir system

- In what places it could be done
- How it could solve many different issues
- Water reservoir system project has started during Soviet times, but then collapsed
- Discussion about the water reservoir

8) Chief Specialist of Department of WUA Support, Rayon Nooken (Pilot)

18th September 2023

Rayon Nooken

Worked on the making of the policy reform, based on invitation of ABAD. Worked on the discussion part of the draft version of the policy reform.

He is pro reform – it became clear that it will work.

Out of 15 WUAs, 8-9 of them worked with them with project activities

Rayon Nooken:

Rayon Department is preparing the ground of the new work.

8 P Nooken Chief Specialist WUA Support 18_Sept.m4a

- 14 WUAs in Nooken district
- Lots of work and effort has been put into this policy reform to prepare the ground for transferring canals to AO

Transcript

00:00:46 Translator 1

Maybe at the beginning there were different points [opinions] on this new law, and some people were against it. But with time, now that they see some results, people are more reluctant [probably meant to say “willing”] to believe that this new law will work.

00:01:09 Gabriela Berglas

OK, so then he's pro reform. Did he also participate in the policy making?

- Yes, invited by ABAD
- Took part in discussions and making of the first draft.

00:02:07 Gabriela Berglas

What was the best improvement that came with this policy reform?

00:02:52 Translator 1

He says during the discussion part they had clearly understood that this new law should work because it gives the WUAs and whole irrigation system to live a different life. Before this, only WUA was responsible for that. And they had limited financial resources. They had to work based on the budget that they had. They didn't have any other resources.

00:03:57 Translator 1

And again, thanks to the international support, the work of the project is here, for instance, out of 15 WUAs, about 8-9 of them were involved in project activities and they managed to know their work quite well.

- There are 14 WUAs in the Nooken District

00:05:22 Translator 1

He says the out of these WUAs there are some WUAs which work very actively with international projects and they develop their professional capacity as well. But there are also some WUA which have their own professional capacity already and they also manage work well.

00:06:17

These WUAs had funding from the World Bank. Out of this, they are distributing seeds to people, for fertilisers.

00:06:57 Translator 1

For instance, the WUA called [name is incomprehensible] has about 10 million soms budget. Thanks to the cooperation and working with international projects and their effective work as well.

- WUA named ??? has around 3 Mio. soms budget (
- Thanks to the third WUA, thanks to the work on the tariff policy, they managed it to collect funds, but in the future they are slowly planning to collect about 3 million soms.

00:09:18 Translator 1

Last two WUAs *Pey-Mongul and Aratseit*: Reserve fund of 10 mio. soms. Because they did a better job with the farmers; they provided them with seeds, with fertilisers. They didn't make so much profit from that. They just got money for their services for transportation, for keeping these.

Receive video.

00:11:11 Translator 1

The situation is like this. These two WUAs [referring to *Pey-Mongul and Aratseit*] for instance. They got the funds from the World Bank not as credits but as grants. And then they established so-called reserve funds under their laws. This reserve fund goal is to provide good quality seeds and good quality fertilisers for the farmers so that they will have a good harvest in the end.

Because when the farmers don't have a good harvest they usually blame the water supply. They say: Oh, we are not getting enough water. That's why have a poor harvest." So that's why they decided on this solution.

00:12:01 Translator 1

Besides that, they have their own budget these WUAs. This budget is formed out of the payment for irrigation. They have about 1.6 million Soms in their budget. [I adds] Ak-Jol WUA has about 1.8 Mio. Soms budget.

00:12:37 Gabriela Berglas

They invested in the irrigation. How would you describe the irrigation infrastructure for most of the WUAs?

[Translators phone rings. She picks it up and has a quick chat and ends the conversation quickly]

00:14:12 Translator 1

In the last 3-4 years, the tendencies are that WUAs are trying to slowly improve their work depending on the requirement of the demands of the farmers of the local people.

00:14:32 Gabriela Berglas

How many kilometres of canals are cemented?

00:16:49 Translator 1

Maybe about only 5 % maximum of the of canals are cemented.

00:17:30 Gabriela Berglas

Can you recall what kind of advancements the WUAs brought back in the days when they were first formed?

00:18:18 Translator 1

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 90s, most of the canals were broken and not taken care of. And when the WUAs were launched in 1998 they started to work. But just in 2003 they started to work actively.

00:19:24 Translator 1

You can say that in 2000, WUAs had the great support from the international community from international projects, and thanks to them they managed to start their work in the way where they can slowly introduce change.

00:20:01 Translator 1

For instance, Helvetas started working with WUAs almost from 2009.

00:20:15 Translator 1

And then the role of Helvetas and those other international projects and organisations which worked for better promotion, advancement of WUAs is great, is very good. Because most projects worked on developing the professional capacity of the WUAs administration staff, for instance.

00:20:52 Translator 1

And also lots of work has been done to deliver information to the farmers in term of providing on trainings on how WUAs should work, how it should work with the partners and etc.

00:21:22 Translator 1

And also there have been activities here to improve the infrastructure and the canals, what can be repaired and what can be done by the people.

00:22:02 Translator 1

With time, people already understood that without the involvement of the government, without the huge government support, WUAs will not advance any further. That's why this new policy... Initiative has been done by the people and this idea was on [*incomprehensible*]. Then it's implemented into discussion and then into law.

00:22:41 Gabriela Berglas

How would you rate the work with the WUAs work with the government, like the AO and the AK?

00:23:38 Translator 1

The WUAs have been working and they are still working with the AO and the AK as usual in the way they used to work. But how they will work with the new policy, the time will show.

00:24:06 Translator 1

In this region there are like 3 WUAs which transferred their infrastructure to the AO.

00:25:50 Translator 1

In this new law, there are some nuances, there is a key point that WUAs can transfer this irrigation system voluntarily. But he thinks that it shouldn't be voluntarily, it should be a must. In this way, the WUAs will have the chance to improve their work and plus most of the things can be done by AO. That is one thing. Another side is that there are some opinions that of the farmers, of the water users, that the WUAs should be transferred to the RWMD to advance their work. So that's why this new law should be clear, especially concerning volunteerism. If there should be any transferring it should be a must.

00:27:35 Translator 1

So your situation is like this; WUA now is still working. But people already know about these new policy and they say... Especially concerning the payment for the irrigation services, people say: "We hope that you are going to, you know transfer to the AO or RWMD, so we are not going to pay you because you are the organisation which is going to be closed. So this

kind of how to say... not very clear moments with the people makes their work even more difficult currently.

00:29:29 Translator 1

Even by transferring the property, I mean the irrigation system to AO he doesn't believe that the situation will change for the better. Because especially during the summer time, both AO and RWMD will not be able to find the water because it's very hot. You know, the weather.

00:30:25 Translator 1

Because they don't have any water reservoir system, the water goes like in the low spring. It's good, I mean, but it goes along [meaning that the water just flows away without any mechanisms to catch and store it]. It just goes on. But during the summer season, during the very hot season, they have very scarce water because there is no water reservoir.

00:30:49 Gabriela Berglas

He thinks that they won't be able to give the water, not because the AO is incompetent, but because of the drought?

00:30:58 Translator 1

Yes

00:31:03 Gabriela Berglas

Does he think that the water reservoir is a very essential issue, which should be done as soon as possible?

00:31:45 Translator 1

Launching, establishing and building this water reservoir is essential. Of course, it will take time, but he believes that with the competence, management, government, they will be able to build this in the nearest future, hopefully.

00:33:23 Translator 1

Building the water reservoir is very important but it will take time. It needs to be a strategic project with the help of the government and with the help of an international project. That's one point, another point is that he doesn't believe that they can improve this water irrigation system by cementing the canals. Because while cementing the canals, the fields will get water, but it will evaporate very fast. And he observes that in the last three years, less and less water is coming due to the drought. There are several AOs which use this well system. So cementing is good, but it will not solve all the issues.

00:34:16 Gabriela Berglas

OK, So what do you think is the next best alternative?

00:34:22 Translator 1

Instead of cementing the canals?

00:34:50 Translator 1

He believes that this water reservoir system will save this situation because then in the hot season the water will be available for the farmers.

[...]

- Short clarification: He is not against cementing the canals, they need to be cemented but cementation and non-muddy canals alone will not solve the issue. A reservoir system will be needed to solve the overall problem of water scarcity

[...]

00:36:34 Gabriela Berglas

What does he think of the wells? Because the wells use the groundwater, right?

00:37:15 Translator 1

In the last years, more attention has been paid to building, to repairing of these wells.

00:37:24 Translator 1

Because of the drought situation and because they're decreasing this water in general. And WUAs also applied to the rayon and oblast development funds, it's the state funded funds, to get the additional resources to repair the wells, to build the wells where it's necessary. So that we have more or less available water during the hot season.

00:38:10 Translator 1

Yeah, but with these wells, the payment for the water will be very expensive. For instance, if you get the water, if you are a farmer, you get the water from the grass, you pay 150 soms per hour. So, if you water your field for 10 hours, you should pay 1500 soms.

00:38:33 Translator 1

And if the farmer gets the water from the WUA by the canals, by traditional method, he pays 1500 soms per year, so it's quite cheap. So it's very, very expensive for the farmer. [probably means cheap] And it plus it depends on the crop. You know if there are crops which need to be irrigated between like 6 to 8 times, watering then it will be very expensive.

00:39:13 Gabriela Berglas

He said that roughly of the 5% of the canals have been cemented. Did this happen before or after the policy reform?

00:40:21 Translator 1

So from 2002, he says about 8 WUAs managed to cement their canals more or less, like little, little parts thanks to the support of the international projects and their own contribution as well. But it's a very little percentage. It was mostly they got their funds from international projects.

00:40:47 Gabriela Berglas

OK. But like before the policy reform, they didn't improve their infrastructure yet, right?

00:42:15 Translator 1

He hears that some WUAs are already transferring their property to AO, for instance Masy as an example, which we already have been introduced last week. By protocol they also managed to transfer. The whole irrigation system is under WUA, but the WUA was actually not actively involved with the problems of the people. [I continues] And he knows that also in Shaidan and Nookan AO, after transferring the property to AO, they started to write the projects, you know, to repair the canals. He hears some stories and some cases.

00:43:18 Gabriela Berglas

According to his opinion, what is the future of the WUAs? Will the WUAs with the new policy reform disappear?

00:43:56 Translator 1

It's a big question, they will see. But for instance, if all WUAs will transfer to the AO, then the AO should decide themselves if they will save the WUA in its current form or if they will just eliminate this, and will launch another organisation under AO. He doesn't know and they will see. Time will show.

00:44:30 Gabriela Berglas

What does he think of the ATR?

00:45:10 Translator 1

It's a good reform from the perspective of the government development. They will save funds for the administration. Maybe they will manage to do more volume of work with less people.

00:46:17 Translator 1

For instance, if two AOs will merge, maybe it will be a little difficult for the people to get their certificates, so-called "Sbrav" [word unknown] or other documents from the AO. Because if it will be located too far away, they will need to hire a taxi. They will have to spend some time to get their documents. From this perspective, maybe it will be difficult for the people.

[...]

Clearing misunderstandings

- Elaborating how you need to get to the AO and that it will be difficult for the people get to their paperwork. E.g. We also made the
- Before AO was reachable perhaps in 5 minutes, but now its in the centre of the region, so it can take longer.

00:47:50 Gabriela Berglas

OK. And what does he think of the new database implied?

00:48:14 Translator 1

He approves this idea because this is the necessity of time to digitalize all the information available. He totally approves it.

00:48:41 Gabriela Berglas

Some of the WUAs took credits. Are they still indebted?

00:49:17 Translator 1

Concerning credits, there are three types of credits. The first type of credit is given for the office station, meaning like computer, printer and other stuff. It should be paid back. Second type of credit is for the tractor, the office car and stuff like that. It's 50% payment back, so they should pay like 50 % of the sum of the funds that they received themselves. [1] All of these credits are taken until 2020. The third type of credit is given to cement the canals; it's 25% payment back. From 2020, some WUAs managed to receive not credits but also some grants as well.

00:51:32 Translator 1

About 50 to 60% of the WUAs didn't pay their credits yet.

00:51:42 Gabriela Berglas

Until when will they pay that back according to your estimation?

00:52:32 Translator 1

It's hard to say when they will pay everything back, but one of the factors is the professional staff capacity, the administration, the directors of this WUAs, they are not sustainable. They can work for one to two years but because of the hard work there, because of other factors, they don't work anymore for the WUAs. So the staff is not sustainable. Because the administration staff should manage this credit payments as well.

00:54:22 Translator 1

Interesting. He says The WUAs of the South of Kyrgyzstan made an application to the government, to the courts that, for instance... In the beginning these credits were given to the government as grants, but somehow the government managed to give them as credits to the farmers. So that's why the farmers have still difficulties to pay back. But their response for their application... was that in the documents it was written like this and the farmer signs, the WUAs signed and that's why they should pay back anyways because it's all confirmed in the papers.

00:55:44 Translator 1

They still have the benefits from this activity. Now for instance, Asian Development Bank is working with them. They also have given credit by 25 %. So they should pay back 25% of the total sum. But thanks to the negotiation they managed to reduce this percentage from 25 % down to 5 %. And now even this 5 % of the credit should be paid not in money but in the form of labour. So farmers will pay by working. The other thing is that WUA administration the people who work for WUA managed to learn all the laws which is related to WUA work during the process of making this application. They increased their staff capacity as well.

00:56:53 Gabriela Berglas

When did they increase their staff capacity?

00:57:09 Translator 1

In the process of writing this proposal to the government on the situation of WUAs. They managed to learn more about their laws and other, you know government acts which is related to the WUA work.

00:57:20 Gabriela Berglas

So during the whole policy making process they got a lot of know-how.

00:57:25 Translator 1

Yes

[...]

Would he advise to take up credits again in the future?

- Better maybe not to get the credits in the future, especially if there is a grant.
- But he wouldn't necessarily take credits in the fund form again.

00:58:35 Gabriela Berglas

What is his opinion about the fee collection at the moment?

00:59:16 Translator 1

So he says, yeah, they have some buyers who already managed to collect about 96-97 % of the payment from the people from the farmers. But they have some WUAs which collect about 55 to 60 % of their payment from the WUAs.

01:00:04 Translator 1

He says it still remains very hard for the marginalised people. Let's say layer of the people, those who are very poor, for households with a handicapped person, or the pensioner. So it's more a problem of the poor people, it's hard to collect.

[...]

About the marginalised people who can't pay

- Around 4 % of people should use a kind of act for the poor people who are not able to pay
- They help each other -> they don't just not give any water to the farmers. (Also because that's not really possible to withhold water)
- People who can pay but are not willing, their debts are added to their debts of next year.

01:03:22 Gabriela Berglas

Is it like anything else that he would like wish to receive from the state?

01:04:20 Translator 1

Besides water reservoir system, governments should be should activate their activity, for instance, technical equipment supply, in terms of providing more tractors, more equipment, to solve the issues on time.

01:04:49 Translator 1

And supply gasoline to use for the tractors, especially during the summer season.

01:04:58 Gabriela Berglas

Yeah, because it is too expensive then?

01:05:00 Translator 1

Yes, because it's too expensive and plus; farmers have little money to pay for the water. So in these cases the government should help.

01:05:55 Translator 1

More authority should be given to murabs [...]. So that issues can be solved on site more effectively. Because when they have violations concerning farmers who misuse the water, the murabs should have more resources, more mechanisms to control them. They should be given more authority.

01:06:35 Translator 1

And hydro-technician and other staff from the RWMD. They should be given more authority as well. [...] To control the water usage, to work with the farmers.

01:07:07 Gabriela Berglas

Who has the most authority at the moment?

01:07:10 Translator 1

This especially relates to murabs of this rayon. But the water is already used in another region, Bazar-Korgon region. If it's like two regions, then this murab can't do anything because it's [referring to an issue of any kind] in another region. That's why there should be some international [across regions] law... not international but universal law which is applied to all regions. For instance, murab is able to work in Nookan region and Bazar-Korgon region.

01:08:18 Translator 1

Because, for instance, here the farmers, I mean get the water from Bazar-Korgon region, the river comes all the way from Bazar-Korgon. And then farmers in Bazar-Korgon region usually violate this... They can stop the water or they can water their fields longer and the murabs can't really do anything about it. Their schedule is also burning, you know? So, that's why the murabs should have more authority.

01:08:53 Gabriela Berglas

So also more interregional laws and also communication?

01:09:19 Translator 1

That's the idea but he doesn't know how it can be implemented. But there should be some ways to solve it.

[...]

I told them about the federalism in Switzerland. No comment

- This implementation is an idea from his side.

01:10:58 Gabriela Berglas

What would you wish from the RWMD?

01:11:24 Translator 1

150 to 160 people work for this RWMD in this Nookan region. Still in the hot season, this number of employees is still not enough to cover all of the work.

01:12:02 Translator 1

There is a problem with the professionals working in this field.

01:12:27 Translator 1

High professionals all leave their work because of the low salary. The maximum salary in this management department is about 10,000 soms per month, that's why the young people are leaving this job.

01:13:11 Translator 1

For instance, his salary last year was about 5300 soms per month. [...] but his gas for the car is about 7000. It's very difficult to work for this kind of salary when it's very low and he manages to somehow survive to live because he has some additional animals, a garden and house, and plots in the field.

01:14:54 Translator 1

And she says it's kind of a hard point and wish of his, because every professional person has their own professional day. For instance, teachers have that, doctors have that. But for water services people, there is no such a day. The government doesn't even value their work. It doesn't award their work at all, and it's a little bit irritating. It's a little bit disappointing because they want to be praised by their work. Even with one paper, you know. [GB: Yes that is very ignorant]. You know not only by money but with good words, like a gratitude letter or whatever. You know, they don't get any of that. And plus the salary is very low. People are just leaving.

01:15:55 Gabriela Berglas

OK. But I mean, so, so the government is unaware of the water issue or are?

01:16:35 Translator 1

He doesn't know. He made a joke and said that if the President will be from the irrigation system, then they will have adequate attention, because now our President is a sportsman, and they have build the fancy stadium of FC Barcelona in Jalal-Abad.

Counsellor Kanyeбек enters the discussion

01:18:07 Translator 1 [counsellor]

Kanyeбек says that a special ministry on irrigation system should be opened. Because they already have their Research Institute and some other units as well. Because the water issues have become very, very important, the whole ministry should work on this issue.

01:18:35 Translator 1

Yeah, the whole water issue, water issues should be included into one and then this ministry should take care of both clean water and the irrigation water. Because both of them are slowly merging with the administrations of the LSGs.

01:18:59 Translator 1

So there are so-called research institutes under this RWMD. But their work is very slow and they are already closing down, and they should activate this.

01:19:15 Translator 1

Because the financing is decreasing year by year. For instance, the whole department is becoming the kind of a service unit. You know, it's becoming very less with it. And in terms of financing, they're getting less and less.

01:20:05 Translator 1

Because Kazakhstan, our neighbour, has already established an entire Ministry on water issues. Because they are already aware that the water is becoming a huge issue here in the region in general.

[...]

- Uzbekistan has a huge institute to study irrigation

01:21:04 Translator 1

So this special unit of irrigation system doesn't have any authority to address their issues to the government or to the Parliament or to the President because they are under the Ministry of Agriculture and their voices are not heard anymore. But if they would become a separate ministry could address their issues directly to the Parliament, to the government.

01:21:57 Gabriela Berglas

One question that I forgot to ask before. So for example, the farmers and WUAs, how well do they work with each other? The ones with the neighbouring plots.

01:22:46 Translator 1

Of course there are some cases with a little tension between the farmers, especially during this hot season. But they try to solve those issues all on the local level, like communicating with the farmers.

01:23:26 Translator 1

They even have the situations here, especially due to the very hot weather. But farmers had their issues with each other and then they addressed their issues to RWMD and they even made a demonstration in front of the RMWD, requesting to provide water.

01:24:09 Translator 1

That's why for almost for 1.5 to 2 months during this hot season, they managed to organise the Group of the people who monitored the water. Monitoring means to see who gets the water and they made a special list of the schedules of the farmers to see who gets the water on what day and stuff like that.

01:24:48 Translator 1

And this group consists of representatives of farmers and representatives of RWMD. [I continues] Together with the representatives of the WUAs and also the Village Head and AO. It was mostly from all of these sectors.

01:25:31 Translator 1

End it. Yeah. So the model was try to like control the situation by this because it was all like transparent career, there was a schedule of the, you know, all the waterings by the farmers and each farmer should follow that schedule. And then the this whole Commission control that schedule, you know, is it implemented well or not.

01:25:57 Gabriela Berglas

Do you think that you could sustain higher irrigation fees in the future?

01:25:51 Speaker 3

It depends on two factors. First, the water availability during the hot season. If the farmer will get constant and regular water supply, especially during the hot season when he needs the water the most, then increasing the tariff should work, even twice. But if there are problems with the water supply during the hot season and it directly impacts his harvest, then farmers will take this raise in tariffs with lots of questions.

[...]

- The perspective is that climate change will decrease the amount of water

- They also remind and inform the farmers that the water supply is decreasing each year.
- Point is that if farmer gets constant water supply, they are alright with increasing tariffs. Otherwise it will be difficult.
- They are talking about transferring to drip irrigation system
- He approves both of transferring canals to both AO and RWMD, but he approves it more to RWMD. Or to transform the WUAs in general.

[...]

01:35:06 Translator 1

1st is the Ryan Water Management Department was not willing to take was in their balance because of their debts, credits. They have big credits. And they also can't handle the extra volume of work. RWMD rejected the WUAs, as they had too many debts.

9 Chief Engineer RWMD, Rayon Nookan (Pilot)

18th September

Audio file

9 P Nookan Chief Engineer WMD 18_Sept 1.m4a

Transcript

Rayon Nookan:

(Masy is part of Rayon Nookan)

24'000 households

19'700 ha of irrigated agricultural land

Chief Engineer since 1.5 years, before he was director of WUA

00:03:24 Gabriela Berglas	What is his opinion on the old policy reform?
00:04:58 Translator 1	He thinks that with the new policy reform it should be transferred to the AO. But he doesn't approve that. He thinks it would be better to transfer this [the irrigation canals] to the Rayon Water Management Department.
00:4:49 Gabriela Berglas	Can he say why?
00:04:58 Translator 1	He doesn't see any difference compared to the old system if it will be transferred to AO. [T-I] Because he doesn't see any difference if they will be transferred to AO, then the WUAs themselves should do the work without transferring. But it would be better if the canals will be transferred to the Rayon Water Management Department. The reason for that is that for instance, only two, three AOs are financially self-sustainable, but other are dependent on government funding system. You know they are very much dependent on government money, on government budget, they're not self-sufficient.
00:06:40 Gabriela Berglas	What is your opinion on the municipality Masy, which has recently cemented 450 metres of canals?
00:07:33 Translator 1	Masy AO is very self-sustainable, not on government funding. They are quite powerful, financially stable AO. But other AOs are not like that. [I continues]
00:08:12 Translator 1	The situation is like this: This Rayon water management department is transferring about 12 kilometres of the canals from the Masy AO this year. Because they were not able to solve these issues.
00:09:08 Translator 1	These 12 kilometres of canals were in a very bad condition so that the AO decided to transfer them to to them. [GB: The one from Masy?] Yes, yes, the one from Masy.
00:09:29 Gabriela Berglas	What was the name of the canal?
00:09:31 Translator 1	It's in Apyrtan village [a village which belongs to the AO of Masy]. [There seems to be a light confusion and Translator discusses the question again with the Interviewee]

00:12:50 Translator 1	So in short, I was also a little confused... In short he's saying that these 12 kilometres from the AO will be transferred this year to them [RWMD] to manage it a better. The AO will not be able to handle all the canals. So, some of them they will be transferred to RWMD.
00:13:46 Translator 1	Because back in 1990s, 1994 or 1996, the oldest canals were transferred to the WUA. And now by law they are slowly transferring this to the AO. But his point is that they should look at the whole situation to check if they should hand it over to RWMD.
00:14:16 Gabriela Berglas	Does the RWMDA have then more financial resources?
00:14:44 Translator 1	They have more technical preferences [probably referring to know-how] and others... [I continues talking]. The calculations now are that the WUAs own 1200 soms per hectare there was has. So the WUAs have a total budget of 23.2 Mio. soms, of which 10 Mio. soms are for the salary and with the rest of the money they will buy additional tractors, etc. And they will be able to solve the internal issues... So they have this possibility, this capacity. They have 24 units of technical units. Out of those 3 excavators, one drop line, and some more stuff. And some of this technical should should be also a little bit improved, but otherwise they have all this capacity to work with the irrigation system. And they could also improve their techniques out of the money for irrigation services or irrigation supply. [GB: What do you exactly mean by that?] It means they could buy more tractors, more cars, more necessary things out of the money that they have. Not from the WUAs but from the [incomprehensible], to make their own water supply.
00:19:04 Translator 1	For instance, the deliver this water to the WUA, then the WUA collects money from the people and out of that budget about three things are allocated to the RWMD as a service for their water supply. They [RWMD] receives about 3.44 Mio soms per year from the WUAs. This is from the entire Rookoen region.
00:19:51 Gabriela Berglas	So he's actually quite satisfied with the work of the WUAs?
00:20:00 Translator 1	Yes, it's more comfortable for him.
00:20:20 Gabriela Berglas	How would he rate the corporation of the RWMD with the AO?
00:21:10 Translator 1	He says the communication is like this: For instance, the farmers who failed to get the water due to various reasons, because of the canals and other stuff, addressed their issues to AO. And then the AO addresses these issues to them [RWMD]. And then they try to find a solution. They send technical specialists to solve the situation on a local level. And they also have to develop the water schedule together with WUAs.
00:22:12 Gabriela Berglas	How would you rate so the corporation with the state level?
00:23:17 Translator 1	They communicate and work together with the national level. First, they develop their plan, then they submit it to them and then this plan is approved and then they get the budget for that. But otherwise, besides that, the government also has its' own plans and they do it on their own initiative. And if there is a kind of a local issue, concerning the canals or concerning the water supply, they also try to solve it as well.

00:23:58 Gabriela Berglas	Does he have an example of such a national plan for irrigation?
00:24:23 Translator 1	For instance, the last real example is when the government national government attempted to install a drip irrigation system of around 300 ha in [Dustyk?!] AO. Also in Sakadeyo in order to make repairments of 7 wells. And to transfer these wells into their balance. [I continues] So the 7 wells in Sakadeyo... they have already made the tender [not clear what is meant], and soon they will start to repair this work. [I continues]
00:26:07 Translator 1	The residents of Sakadeyo addressed this issue to the deputy of the Parliament, and the deputy addressed this issues to the government. And this is the additional work, of which besides what they do.
00:26:16 Translator 1	And then this deputy addressed this issue to the government. And this is the additional works of besides what they do.

- They received 19 Mio Soms for the wells.
- Osh-based company won , 26th-27th September they will start to repair the wells.
- Out of total of 300 ha; 200 ha of drip irrigation has been installed (by AO). Garden has grown there, and now it's 100 hectare left, which has been given to this Ryan Water Management Department. → They are doing it in any possible way

00:30:09 Gabriela Berglas	It seems a bit that when AO reaches its' limits then it hands it over to the RWMD.
00:30:13 Translator 1	Yeah, yeah.
00:30:41 Gabriela Berglas	What are the major issues that you encounter with the new policy?
00:31:35 Translator 1	Well, he says he doesn't see any like, big issues. At least their way of work will be the same as they used to do it. For instance, they addressed... I mean they have these issues with irrigation system after they transfer all of them from the WUAs. And then some of them could be have been able to solve [their issues] themselves, but most of them would address to them [RWMD]. Or they pay the AO for their services. He thinks the work will be done this way... if it will be transferred to AO.
00:32:21 Translator 1 [Kanyebek]	AO anyways has its' own resources and their own control mechanisms. or is this? For instance before the WUAs managed to collect about 3.5 million soms. Now AO will collect twice as much. Or maybe they will collect even 5 million more. So this is also very important. Depending on how much they will collect from the farmers they could do more the repair work, more of other things to improve the irrigation system.
00:32:57 Gabriela Berglas	I'm sorry I just couldn't follow, could you perhaps repeat what you just said? [laughs]
00:33:03 Translator 1	[laughs] I'm saying now, for instance, WUAs are able to collect about 3.5 million, some from the farmers for the water. And AO has more control mechanisms. So they're making this database, you know, entering all these names and stuff. So maybe after this new law, they will be able to collect maybe 5 million soms. Or maybe even more, you know, maybe even twice 7,000,000 soms. So with that money, of course they will

	be able to do more in terms of repairing the canals or building the water reservoir system. And he's saying that their style of work could maybe remain the same as it used to be. If AO has these issues, they will address them to them [RWMD]. For instance, "in this AO we need to repair this canal." Not "please help us" but how can I say... AO can pay for their services. In his [Kanyebeks] view, the work can be done in this way. And time will show, maybe it will be different but don't know.
00:34:29 Gabriela Berglas	Basically, the AO does the organisational work, collecting money and then they will remain with the expertise and they get paid for it.
00:34:35 Translator 1	Yes, yes. Expertise and more equipment... I mean this RWMD. That's why they are saying that they have more capacity to transfer all this to their [RWMD] balance, you know. But the law doesn't say that now.
00:34:55 Gabriela Berglas	OK, so I it sounds a bit like that he has a good opinion about the new database.
00:35:22 Translator 1	Or he approves this idea that it should be digitalized, that it should be in order. So that's a good idea. OK.
00:35:27 Speaker 3	Hmm.
00:35:30 Gabriela Berglas	It's good.
00:35:35 Gabriela Berglas	Only ask how many kilometres of?
00:35:40 Gabriela Berglas	My weight just doesn't own any camels.
00:35:47 Gabriela Berglas	Did you like ever encounter? We heard from the other farmer that once they had an emergency and then that he was able there was, then he then helped with the tractor. Is that right?

- Cementing canals helps to save almost 50% of the water
- ATR: in terms of financing: he doesn't know, big Q, e.g. AO head and AK head could be decreased. But the other people will remain the same. That's why he doesn't see the same.
- Will be difficult when richer AO has to cover expenses of poorer AO

00:40:55 Translator 1	[About the tariff policy] This sum could be increased and up 1'600 to 1'800 soms per hectare per year [current price is 1'200 soms per hectare per year]. All the factors taken into account such as increasing gasoline prices, and other services. [T-I]
00:41:29 Translator 1	Apart from cotton, farmers get more or less good profits out of their crops. Only cotton prices go up and down... are fluctuating. But for others such as alpha-alpha they receive a good profit. [I continues]
00:42:08 Translator 1	For instance, if the farmer has grown the fodder, he only pays 1 % out of his irrigation profit for the water.

00:42:56 Translator 1	Maybe it could just be the matter of habits, for instance we pay a minimum of like 450 soms per month for the phone. So over a year, it will be about 6000 soms to just talk on the phone. And here it's about the land, you are getting profit out of the that. They have just this habit of paying a very low sum and they got used to that. But apart from that they are able to pay for the water, it's only 1 %.
00:43:33 Gabriela Berglas	OK, interesting. So do you think that maybe there would have to be more convincing that they should pay more?
00:44:23 Translator 1	Yeah, he says farmers don't need any convincing, for almost 10 years they have done that, you know, with the help of Helvetas and other international organisations. It's just the necessity of time. And if they need water, they should pay. That's all.

- **Receives**

00:45:52 Translator 1	So last example, they managed to make right the project proposal and apply to the district development State Development fund and they got the tractor. [...] For 15 Mio. soms.
00:46:57 Translator 1	He says it was these canals. They will be able to repair and to clean the canals, you know. The previous season they had to write that [probably referring to the project proposal to receive funds for cleaning] from instructors from Uzbekistan. Because how to say?... The width of the canals was about 18 to 21 metres wide, and the tractor will be just enough to clean it up all at once. 18 metres. [T-I] This year they got this tractor.
00:48:15 Translator 1	Another project they are repairing the huge canal like for 118 Mio. soms. It's the funds from the Asian Development like. [I-T]
00:48:34 Translator 1	They are also cementing the canals. [Translator asks Interviewee how many kms of canals have been repaired] 5 kilometres will be cemented by this summer.
00:49:17 Translator 1	And also there are making how do you say... It's like an aqueduct in three places. And it helps the water to flow slowly but without any challenges.
00:49:33 Gabriela Berglas	How easy or difficult is it for you to get funding or help when you write a proposal to the state?
00:49:45 Translator 1	You mean if it's difficult?
00:49:58 Translator 1	Yeah, it's more or less OK.
00:50:21 Translator 1	When they apply with the project proposal, it takes about two months to approve and to send the money to their account, OK.
00:50:38 Gabriela Berglas	Ok, that's fast.
00:50:50 Gabriela Berglas	Is there any organisational change you wish would change with the cooperation with the state?
00:51:25 Translator 1	He's OK with the current style... I mean with the current system. They could maybe speed up a little bit, even a bit quicker so that they will be able to do more work. [I

	continues] And so that all of their plans could be approved by the national government without rejection.
00:51:50 Gabriela Berglas	After cleaning and cementing the canals, what is the next best investment?
00:52:33 Translator 1	After cleaning and repairing and cementing the canals, of course it will take lots of time. But still, when it's over, then the next step will be more strategical... building these water reservoirs. Yeah, it's very important. And now they're already starting one project on building the water reservoir. They applied that to Bishkek, to the national government. [T-I] They are in the process, they're calculating that. They are like studying the situation now.
00:53:23 Translator 1	Very soon, as soon as the AO will transfer these 12 kms of canals from Apyrtan village to them, then they will start the application process of building this water reservoir.
00:53:44 Gabriela Berglas	Ah, they haven't started it yet.
00:54:41 Translator 1	If they will manage to build more water reservoirs, it should be fine with the water. They would have less problems.
00:55:17 Translator 1	With these water reservoirs, 90 % of the irrigation system issues will be solved. Because in spring time, the water just goes away. You know, they can't catch this water at all. It just goes away.
00:55:52 Translator 1	They will to make the force to make very good efforts, maybe the next 10 years will be decisive years to solve all of these issues, including the water reservoirs.
00:56:21 Translator 1	And here in this region, the soil quality is very good. Even to build this water reservoir. I mean the chemical feature.
00:56:37 Gabriela Berglas	OK. Interesting. And how would you rate the future of the farmers here in general?
00:57:13 Translator 1	Comparing to 2000s, he says the overall condition, the general welfare of the farmers increased 50%.
00:57:49 Translator 1	They are living the middle type [probably referring to "middle class"] of life, in terms of economic conditions.
00:58:20 Translator 1	To become even e richer, you know, to increase their welfare even more, the farmers themselves are now aware that they need to learn more... To learn more about the drip irrigation, to learn more and to start growing various... strawberries, greenhouses, and other things. They already know that and some of them are starting that.
00:59:00 Speaker 4	Also come up below are down below.
00:59:06 Translator 1	He says before 2000, farmers usually for the sake of habit got used to growing cotton without thinking about any economic analysis. It's sold for a better price or it's sold for a much better price you know. And now they're more or less selling more economically... Like market economy; "What crop can be sold for a better price? How can I do that? Will I be richer?" They're already kind of conscious about that. They are studying, they're looking at the market.
00:59:46 Gabriela Berglas	So, cotton is becoming less and less popular. Is that true?

01:00:04 Translator 1	Yeah, it's decreasing more and more because farmers don't for what price they will sell their cotton. It's a huge puzzle. Yeah. It's difficult. That's why it's decreasing year by year.
01:00:24 Gabriela Berglas	Is there anything important you would like to add?
01:00:40 Translator 1	I think it's important for the communities, for the farmers now to pay more attention to the drip irrigation system, integration and production. [I continues] And it would be good to transfer the WUA's property... irrigation system not to the AO but to the RWMD. Or the WUAs should remain the same as they used to.
01:01:54 Translator 1	And also the tariff policy should be changed, should be increased. Fromm 1'200 to 1'500 somms in the first year, and then slowly increase. And with these tariffs, Rayon Water Management Department will be able to cover all of the services of the farmers in terms of irrigation.
01:02:35 Gabriela Berglas	What do you do then with those farmers who can't pay that price or once?
01:03:23 Translator 1	He says he's here. They should see this situation. You know, if the family is very poor, then they should create conditions to make partial payments. For instance, if this family anyway grows their crop, they use the water, they use the fertilisers, they buy the seeds, they buy the service tractor. If they buy all of this, then they should be able to also buy the water services. Maybe they could pay in parts, but they should pay. If they are able to buy other services, why not to pay for the water?
01:04:18 Translator 1	For instance, if he spends about 30 % of his profit as expenses, then out of that only 1 % is for irrigation. He doesn't believe that he can't pay it all.

Postscript

- I was ill that day and had difficulties

12 Head Department of Agriculture, Rayon Nooken (Pilot)

20th September 2023

12 Head Agric Dep Rayon Nooken 20_Sept.m4a

Head

- Works since January in this position
- New to this system

Nooken District

- 8 towns
- About 21,600 hectares of irrigated land
- Rayon Water Management Department

Ministry of Agriculture

- A representative body of the Ministry of Agriculture – it implements the policy
- Supported farmers with gas, seeds, and more
- Collaborate closely with RWMD due to increasing droughts. Especially during the hot season, and harvesting time in spring and autumn
- Work closely with AO; their main job is to provide all of the information of new things, new policies, new orders, new decrees etc.
- RWMD belongs to ministry of agriculture
- RWMD gives funds to repair canals etc., the ministry of agriculture just receives a salary
- Don't have any direct relationship with the Kyrgyz state

00:33:48 Gabriela Berglas

So what is their next step on how to improve the situation on their political agenda?

00:34:46 Translator 1

For the Ministry of Agriculture, it's very crucial to pay attention to the professional development and capacity of their staff. For instance, year by year the situation with their agronomists becomes more scarce each year. Young people don't want to study to become an agronomist because the state is not able to provide them with good jobs, the job is very low paid. That's why their department consists of 6 people now and almost 90% of them are 60 years old or older. They will work for roughly 10 more years and then who will replace them? Young people will not come for this salary. So that's why the national should pay more attention to professional development and in the improvement of their economical situation, of their salary and in the supply of other things.

00:36:16 Translator 1

[ABAD consultant adds]: He [ABAD consultant] thinks you can write as a suggestion to our government, you know... as a recommendation... that the head of the so-called RoAD (Rayon of Agricultural Department) should have the authority as the Vice Head of the district administration. In this way, he will have more authority, to run the policy of the Ministry of Agriculture and will have more possibilities to do implement more work. [...] If the government raises their status, they will have more responsibility and more resources and more space act.

00:37:25 Translator 1

[ABAD consultant continues]: As Kyrgyzstan is an agrarian country, that's why the Agrarian policy should rule in the country, and that's why the Head of the Department of Agriculture should be the second person after the Head of the District Administration who is responsible for the agricultural sector. Even if they exist as an organisation, they don't even have one car to just simply go to the fields. They have a very old car which doesn't run just and to see the situation.

00:39:44 Translator 1

If the government raised their status, then the whole RWMD, AO and other stakeholders will be located under them. So then the agricultural system will improve. You know, he would know about all of the issues and he could do something about it. But now they're kind of an advisory body. They can only advise something, but they don't have any resources to do their work.

Special Reserve Fund under the Ministry of Agriculture

- Main goal is to support the farmers
- They sold 52 tons of gasoline to the farmers; the price was 10 soms less per litre than the market price
- Seeds: government bought seeds from Russian Federation and sold it to farmers with 4% interest over the period of three years. The seeds are slightly more expensive than the market price, as they are the premium quality and thus shall bring more harvest
- Sold ca. 800 tons of fertilizers to lower price
- They try to have an impact on the market prices, so that they won't be doubled or tripled during the season
- ➔ Thanks to these measures, farmers gained ca. 5-10% more harvest compared to the previous years. They will see the results for cotton by the end of this season in november

RWMD

- Crucial work. They help to provide water to the farmers, they have their techniques and technical expertise to do the work.
- They support the RWMD by helping them writing project proposals, etc.
- Provide knowledge and information to the RWMD
- Is there sth RWMD could improve? ➔ they should improve their work in cementing their canals, as more funds will be allocated from the gov.
- If government will approve the water code soon, then they will have tools

AO

- Could improve their work both with the WUAs and farmers ➔ providing more information, especially concerning the water policy, water management. Because farmers need to save and pay for the water. AO should work on that!
- Should give more informational work

00:23:09 Gabriela Berglas

Is this something he wishes that the AO could improve?

00:23:59 Translator 1

AO could improve their work with WUAs and the farmers in terms of informing... disseminating more information on the water policy, on better water management. Because the farmers should learn to save the water, they should learn to pay for the water. AO should work on getting these payments [water fees] from the farmers and also on how to improve their work. [...] Farmers need to understand how important water is, what to do with the water, how to save the water where possible, and definitely pay for the water.

00:24:46 Gabriela Berglas

Do you feel that the farmers are lacking specific knowledge about the whole water issue?

00:25:00 Translator 1

Yes, you are right, farmers still need this type of information. With time, they should transfer to the drip irrigation system. For instance, they should learn the mechanisms of doing that, saving more water by using water more efficiently and how to get more harvest. So it's all very important.

- **But** it isn't specifically the AO who should take over this work, it could also be the RWMD or by the Ministry of Agriculture, in the form of a village fair [referring to the agricultural fair that I visited with my translator a couple of days earlier. Different kinds of vegetables, produce, etc. was showcased].
- Also in form of cooperation between different stakeholders which are more successful; e.g. successful can share their "best practices"

00:40:03 Translator 1

He could do something, but now they're kind of an advisory console, like an advisory body. They can only advise something, but they don't have any resources to do their work. And if AO head is a good guy, if he has a good relationship with him, he can say: "OK, we can organize some seminars for the farmers". But if he doesn't like him at all, he says: "It's not my job." It's closely tied to the personal relationships.

00:06:50 New Policy Reform

- He is very positive about the policy reform

00:07:30 Translator 1

He's quite positive about this new policy reform. There are two sides to it. One side is that they are some WUAs which are already doing their work very well. They're doing what they should do. And there are some WUAs which are highly indebted, which are not able to implement their work on a good level. For these cases, maybe AO will help them to solve their issues and to provide the water to the farmers in more efficient way.

[I continues]

Or the second idea is that WUAs canals should be directly transferred to RWMD. So that they could work together and that they could provide this water directly to the farmers.

00:08:34 Gabriela Berglas

Does he prefer it being transferred to the AO or the RWMD?

00:09:35 Translator 1

He would prefer to transfer these canals directly to the RWMD because it's already in the water system. And it will be easier for them to work... in terms of technical expertise, in terms

of equipment and with all of these things. It will be easier to organise the work, because even the canals will be transferred to AO and when it comes to technical expertise and other things, they will anyway address the RWMD. So why not include this water system right away?

From where does their know-how come from?

- They can provide this information. Good cooperation with village heads possible
- Exchange between more successful farmers who could share their best expertise.
- Agricultural fair.

Irrigation Infrastructure

- He rates the overall infrastructure of on-farm canals as slightly above average
- Only about 5-10 % of the canals are cemented
- RWMD together with the farmers managed to clean the canals and make minor repairs
- RWMD: 130 km of canals in total, ca. 55 km are cemented and 77 km are muddy
- Ca. 1/3 of the canals are cleaned and have received minor repairs

Farmers Well-being

- He thinks the fees need to be increased, but otherwise overall positive picture of the tariff. But thinks that if tariff increases, then the harvest price needs to be increased as well. Only if first harvest price is increased and the water is delivered on time, then they should increase price. Not radically increased, but step by step and the demands of the farmers need to be met first as well.
- In 2023, 1000 ha less cotton were grown (in where?), so that shows that farmers are moving into the direction of growing different kinds of crops.

Fiscal

- Tariff should be increased; but the price of the harvest should be included into the calculation of the fee. Farmers harvest price should be increased as well. And they should get the water in time; only then can they pay the increased price for the water.
- Step by step increase, not radically
- Agricultural Department is not allowed to write project proposal to international foundations
- Any investment is good, it doesn't matter if it comes from Rayon or international projects

ATR

Issue has 2 sides:

- If two AOs will join and if their population is less than 30,000, then the registration stuff will be increased will be decreased and the quality of the services will get better
- 00:26:58 Translator 1
- But if there are two AOs which are both large and which have more than 30,000 people, you should have more staff service. In this case, he doesn't see any logic because they anyways need to increase their stuff to be able to serve the people. Plus it will be more difficult for the people to travel to the centre because of the larger distances. People will have to sit there the whole day to get their papers filled in (as we experienced as well)

Future Prospects

- 1st) canals need to be repaired & cemented

- Water reservoir necessity and a very good idea
- Wells need to be built and repaired
- Drip irrigation produced and developed, especially for cotton as it needs more water

Postscript

- The questions were on my phone as I had to renew my visa shortly before and it took forever

21) Head of ABAD, Jalal-Abad (P & NP)

How Projected Started

Idea: to solve the entire irrigation infrastructure problem on a national level could be achieved by reaching a change in the law

- Abad was leading part of this project
- 3 Pilot AO in Nookan and Bazar-Korgon → they have discussed all of the issues

Issues:

- They identified a large amount of problems. → Chose two most important priority issues, and then all of the other minor issues will solve themselves
- Bad condition of canals, almost 30 years not maintained. Even though WUAs took them over, not much had been done. They didn't have any financial resources, thus they couldn't maintain the canals. Some canals are 50 years old, and haven't even been repaired during SV
- Throughout KG: 23'000km of canals in WUAs. Only 10% are rehabilitated with their money and funds of WB. If nothing is done, in 5-6 years water irrigation would stop
- History: government has never allocated any funds to irrigation infrastructure
-

2nd point: Management system and Tarif policy

- The tarif needs to be increased
- WUAs couldn't impose fines on farmers, because they are a private organisation → relaxed attitude by farmers. Didn't pay fines

How:

- 1st discussion round with stakeholders separately (WUAs, farmers, and
- 2nd discussion: plenum
- → Project proposal of policy

Project proposal:

1. Water code, code on violation on law
2. Initiative group established → AO, WUAs, public foundations and farmers. Water management department is government agency and cant
3. Public foundation: Lawyers and experts → analysis of law system and made a suggestion to initiative group, wrote a new law. Had to collect signatures for law. But they weren't able to collect enough, so they reached out to a deputy of the Kyrgyz Republic who then addressed the law in the parliament. Totobaiyak immediately agreed to address the new law because he also worked in the agriculture.
4. Public discussion over all country: reactions to new policy reform, feel if they are ready to work with new law.
5. Addressed policy reform to higher national government
6. After addressing to parliament, working closely with minister of agriculture. Discussed through ministry of agriculture. Every ministry needs to tell if they are pro or con policy. → Agreement of all ministries, including ministry of finance. Also because they worked closely with each ministry. Conferences, round tables, collective and individual meetings with members of the parliament to explain to them the policy. Without explanation it is difficult to find out. Agreement to policy →

Parliament:

- Different discussions, discussed in each committee → After three meetings in general parliament, Result: new policy was approved by 80 deputies in the parliament.
- It was a long difficult way, but then in the end approved.
- Law approved by president in dec 10th, 2021, worked in 2022

Meetings with national head of water in KG

- 5 meetings in Bishkek
- Took 1 bio. Soms to repair external canals.
- But WUAs were given 1.5 bio. Soms, but declined as they claimed they weren't capable of using this money → shows that they are not capable of doing the work

AO is aware that water management department is not capable of taking care of everything. 2021: drought in KG. Farmers demonstrated, reached out to white house in Bishkek. Demonstration under oblast administration, so that water can be delivered. The **national government** already then pointed out that AO should take care of this issue, even though they weren't involved yet. **Responsibility seen by AO by government**

What has changed

- Public foundation Abad with Ministry of Agriculture and partners started information campaigns to explain to people law, implementation, strengths
- Result → 59 AO from South, 39 AO from North started to use policy

1st: Form of municipal property. All internal canals have been transferred from private property to municipal property. Voluntary basis (written in law). Those WUAs which were not capable of dealing with canals anymore, could transfer them. AO have more resources → Rayon development fund, oblast development fund, stimulation grant of ministry of finance, and other finances. More can be done with the repairing of the canals. They also supported the process of transforming canals.

2nd: Tarif policy

WUAs will no longer have their general meetings in spring where they decide upon the budget. Calculation is now made on a methodological way, including economical analysis which includes profits, debts, maintenance, future investments.

Calculated by government, and worked together with WUA.

3rd point: responsibility of farmer

In the WUA Code it is written by law, that farmers have to pay fines if they don't pay their fees. Or if they "steal" the water, big fines. Fines have massively increased. There are 3 articles in the code which handle fining of farmers when they do not take their responsibility seriously. **As a farmer, what is your opinion to "steal" some water?**

Old Model

- WUAs did not work well
- There were different options on how to handle the situation
- In Nooken: water management department had large difficulties giving water to all of WUAs. **Q for Water management department: What worked well in delivering water to WUAs? What didn't work well?**

Example of why transferring canals to rayon water management department will not solve irrigation problem:

- o E.g. one simple example last year (2022), water rayon management department took 1 bio. soms from national government to repair the external

canals. E.g. in the repair of 1 canal, repaired only 1.5 km. They built the canal in the wrong angle -> they built the canal upwards instead of downwards. Lacking competence. As a **consequence, half of the population of AO couldn't get any water**. In summer 2023, in a general meeting, this problem was being addressed with farmers and water rayon department. Farmers were incredibly angry at the rayon water department, and expressed their angriness. The head of rayon water department then just fled the meeting. Abad was there and witnessed everything. This is one simple example of 8 AO s in Nooken. **If a large amount of money has been borrowed, but know what happened with this money?**

Reasons why AO s are better for transferring canals: AO has more resources!

- Are closer to the people -> people anyway address AO when issues arise. Plus they are anyways involved with the people. They have strong relationships with the people, where they talk with them. **Q for AO: do you have an other example other than water irrigation canal why you have a strong bond with your people?**
- They are able to mobilize the people when needed -> **example?**
- AO knows their territory very well
- > But even if they transfer everything to AO, they wont be able to solve all issues!
- > Plus: responsibility shouldn't only be with AO! Farmers also need to take responsibility.

Example of Allocating Funds

- In 2022, they asked the government 300 Mio. sums budget for their pilot Aos (15 AO in the South). But they will not immediately say yes, it takes a lot of lobbying. Agreement of agriculture. Individual meeting with prime minister. This August, they had planned to take about 150 Mio, but then ATR started and they didn't get the money. Hopefully will start again next year.

Responsibilities

- **Farmers:** Policy reform wants to raise responsibility, so that they take initiative to pay their fees and fines on time
- **AO** is now able to take more responsibilities, but not all! **What kind of responsibilities and competences should the AO take according to your point of view?**
 - o Support:
 - Financial: Allocate funds, also from their own funds. From Rayon and Oblast development Funds. Also making proposals to attract more investors
 - Technical: Share tractors and excavators
 - Attract investors
 - o Control
 - Financial: some issues can only be solved by the funds of the people. Because they have strong relationships with them, they can control and influence how they will use their budget.
 - Controls the use of resources.
 - Also know all of the problems of the people -> controls people
 - o Taking in all of the complaints

- → but AO is not as strong as during Soviet Union and needs support of the people
- AO s took the guarantee of many WUAs when they took their credit → that is why they are verwickelt into the debt payment. Abad says, they shouldn't do this anymore for private organisations! Is actually a violation of law during the 90s. How could this happen? Possibly because World Bank told them they have to take the guarantee, otherwise they wouldn't give them any money. And then Government couldn't make any better Verhandlungen and thus agreed to this. But Cholpon doesn't know this.
- Big Q: will accounts of ?? be frozen again because debts cant pay back?!
 - shouldn't anymore be the guarantee
- **WUAs**: possible to keep their authority and responsibility under the AO
 - In whole KG, WUAs should pay back 800 mio. soms. Farmers should pay this back. But as WUAs are not capable of collecting this money, the responsibility is shifting towards the AO. That is why AO is also taking over these canals.
- Some WUAs, which work well, don't want to give canals to AO and work under their supervision.
- Voluntarily → important for discussion.
 -
- **Municipal enterprise**: either newly formed or embeds WUAs with them, or private organisation. They will be closer to the canals than AO, but managed and controlled by AO. Mo
- **Government**: 2021: drought in KG. Farmers demonstrated, reached out to white house in Bishkek. Demonstration under oblast administration, so that water can be delivered. The **national government** already then pointed out that AO should take care of this issue, even though they weren't involved yet. And then AO had and did some work to solve situation (did some cementing and cleaning). → Here AO became aware that they should be responsible for this issue, and that is why they agreed to start this process. The time shows that they have to take responsibility, no matter how much they want to or not.
- Government (AO?!) should allocate a specific amount of money per year to the repairment of canals as a must!
- **Village Head (Ayl Bashi)**: will remain the same, perhaps more authority?

Tarif

- New tarif policy is based on economical measurements and not anymore on
- 0.3 – 0.5 % of whole harvest is paid on water. Other countries: 5 -7 % is paid on the water.
- E.g.: 500'000 profit per year for watermelon à 1 ha of land (=60'000 soms/yr), farmer pays 600 soms / year → this is even 0.1 % of entire profit per year!
- Should also get some profit. Huge interest of
- **Problem: not availability of money, question of availability!** WUAs have to pay fees to Water management department for their work, but then because their canals are really bad and they lose 50-100% of the water, farmers don't understand why they should pay money for not delivered water. Moreover, as WUAs are a private organisation they don't have the authority to collect fines. So farmers don't get punished to not pay for water.

- **Large percentage of water evaporates in the part of WUAs.** 500'000 profit per year for watermelon
-
- Debts
 - o AO s took the guarantee of many WUAs when they took their credit → that is why they are verwickelt into the debt payment. Abad says, they shouldn't do this anymore for private organisations! Is actually a violation of law during the 90s. How could this happen? Possibly because World Bank told them they have to take the guarantee, otherwise they wouldn't give them any money. And then Government couldn't make any better Verhandlungen and thus agreed to this. But Cholpon doesn't know this.
 - o Big Q: will accounts of ?? be frozen again because debts cant pay back?!
- Responsibility of debt payments: WUAs were not always aware of their responsibility to pay back the debts. They often got "holidays" in the first 4-7 years where they didn't have to pay any debts back, and many WUAs then weren't aware after this period that they have to pay know and this lead to conflicts. Difficult to convince WUAs to now pay back. Instead → Should have paid from the beginning, so that no misunderstanding would happen.

Pro or con reform?

- Some WUAs, which work well, don't want to give canals to AO and work under their supervision.

Some AO s want to take canals but WUAs don't. And vice versa.

AO s don't want to take WUAs which have too high debts. **Where does AO draw the line whether or not they will take a WUA? (How much debt are they allowed to have?) What happens with WUAs who are not taken into AO due to their high debts?**

ATR

- Cholpon says: ATR will change everything! Talking with Jyldyz and that they should have a strategy to find solution. ATR integration. Made 27 AO s out of 63. Most of it was transferred.
- Started in Naryn oblast-
- If two AO will join, possibly 1 will be a pilot and 1 a non-pilot → Problem of how money will be allocated. **E.g. if Shaidan and Masay will join, one head will be eliminated.**
- Will probably slow down the project for several years.
- → Will need a certain strategy to deal with everything.

Abad (Cholpon) visited Latvia and Estonia prepared 10 years for their ATR → here in KG there was no preparation. Just like that. They looked at Naryn Oblast for 4 months and then decided that that was enough. Lets do it for whole country → Protocol. But no decree of president yet, will probably arrive in November. No law basis on this. Naryn pilot should be presented and discussed in parliament. Then discussion in parliament. Then to cabinet, then president should do sth about law. But hasn't been done in this way. People are already excited, even though there is no excitement. This initiative put AO s in a strange situation → many members don't want to work anymore (suitcase mentality), as no one knows if they will still remain. And nobody knows what to do. Everything should be written in the law → should be written in law what kind of compensation they should get, but nothing is written in the law.

Improvements

- Digitalisation and Automatisation system: people don't have to come and collect the fees (and then perhaps somebody will argue why not to pay fees), instead it is automatized and everyone has to pay and that's it.

Suggestion:

Organise exchange visits, where ATR works well.

14) Head of RWMD, Bazar-Korgon (NP)

21th September 2023

RWMD in total 90 kms in balance

WUAs: take care of 100 kms

Respondent is Head of RWMD since 2012, almost 11 years

00:01:13 Since respondent took over this department in 2012, many WUAs had to pay off their debts to the RWMD. They managed to work successfully with the WUAs, and now they are quite financially stable, self-sustainable. They learnt with time to pay for the water; Now they pay the RWMD on time. Plus, WUAs now also try to collect the irrigation services from the people on time as well.

00:02:51 Apart from the RWMD and WUAs, there is also the Rayon Department of WUA Support, and they also successfully managed to work with the WUAs. In Saydykum AO there are two WUAs for example, Marza-Suu and Toychubek-Chek, these two WUAs worked in close cooperation with the Rayon Department of WUA Support. They received credits for 55 Mio. soms from the World Bank for the repairment of the canals. This 55 Mio. soms was taken with a credit; 25 % of the people should pay back and 75 % of the government should pay back.

00:04:09 Translator 1

There are 2 other WUAs which managed to get the credit from the World Bank for 28 Mio. som, also for repairment of the canals.

[...]

00:05:04 Translator 1

In total, about 140 to 150 million soms were taken as credits from the World Bank for 5 WUAs in Bazar-Korgon District. [...] Rehabilitation of the canals including the cementation of the canals, purchasing the office equipment, like printers, computers and stuff.

00:06:27 Translator 1

So all these credits were taken from 2005 up to 2022.

00:06:35 Translator 1

It was in close collaboration with Rayon Water Management Department, Rayon Department of WUA support, and then the WUAs themselves together with farmers. So it's always in close collaboration of the three bodies.

00:08:01 Translator 1

After all this experience WUAs learned to work themselves, to lift themselves, to pay their for their debts, you know to collect all of the money [...].

00:08:34 Gabriela Berglas

How is the paying back rate of the credits going?

00:09:00 Translator 1

Not so well. There are 2 WUAs who are paying very well. I will look at the figures.

[...]

00:09:42 Speaker

In general, the WUAs are paying, but not all of them are paying. About 2-3 WUAs are paying relatively well, but the others still need to work on this. [...] There are in total 8 WUAs in Bazar-Korgon. Out of these 8, 7 got services from this RWMD. And 1 WUA gets all of the services from the Oblast Department.

00:10:52 Translator 1

The reason why they receive their service, is because they are located far away from the other villages, but they are closer to the Rayon Department of WUA Support. That's why they receive services from them.

[00:12:07](#) Out of the 8 WUAs, 5 received credit, 2 of them couldn't because they were located on the border of Uzbekistan and the project organisation didn't pay any attention to them. And one WUA has less than 1000 ha of land, thus they're not eligible for the application of the grant.

[00:13:09](#) Concerning the work of RWMD: they fulfill their duties (regularly clean the canals).

[00:14:09](#) There is one canal, which has not been included into any WUA balance – This lead to the fact that it hadn't been cleaned for almost 30 years. The RWMD now took it into their balance. They cleaned it.

[00:15:21](#) From this 10 km, 6 – 7 kms have already been cemented during the FSU, but it has a lot of mud and rubbish and more. The RWMD asked to allocate 40 Mio. soms to clean it. If they can repair it, about an additional 1000 ha will be irrigated

[00:16:56](#) Another success story of the RWMD: They repaired the large water pump stations in Taldy-Bulak AO with the help of the Turkish Red Cross.

[00:17:51](#) In 2023 in Mogul, they repaired another water pump station via the government money

[00:18:35](#) Thanks to this, 120 ha of land is now being irrigated which has never been irrigated before. Because it's located up in the mountains, where there is neither rain nor irrigation possible. They received 100 % grant from the Turkish Red Cross. But all of the manual labour, like the digging, was executed by the farmers and co. The water pump pumps the water from the river.

[00:21:17](#) RWMD has in total 90 kms of canals in their balance, the WUAs have in total 100 kms of internal canals

Second Audio File 14 NP B-K 1.2 Head WMD.m4a

[00:01:20](#) 22 Mio. m³

[00:03:30](#) Water reservoir: about 3000 – 4000 ha of additional land will be irrigated. Kyrgyz government will need the support of international government to do this, international donors.

Talking about water reservoir and Rayon and Oblast Level of Work
[...]

[00:20:35](#) From April until September, WUAs should pay 3 tiens per m³ of water. During the other time of the year, the WUA should pay 1 tiens per m³. They give 60 – 70 m³ of water per year. This sum has been made by Bishkek especially for WUAs

[00:25:36](#) It took many years for the WUAs to pay for the water. In 2023, they almost got 100 % of the fees. Famers who don't pay are the headaches of the WUA.

[00:40:51](#): Agrees with policy reform. If canals will be transferred to AO, and if WUAs will remain working, maybe WUAs will get more support from the AO. Because WUAs are now self-

financing. If they are not transferred to the AO, the AO will have the capacity and possibility to help during the Spring when the canals should be repaired, with all of the techniques and other support. AOs could help in that too.

00:41:47 Gabriela Berglas

Isn't he a bit worried that maybe then the WUAs will lose all their authority?

00:42:04 Translator 1

WUAs shouldn't be eliminated? WUAs should stay the same. They just will have the possibility to get more help. And AO should help with getting payments from the people, with paying back those technical credits, you know. WUAs should continue working, otherwise it will be difficult to work with the system because they have already learned how to work here and they are doing their work. They just need more help. And both are already working for 20 years to almost 25 years. We have quite an experience in working with the farmers. So I don't think that WUAs will lose their authority. Maybe their management will be from the AO, but otherwise they will continue to work in the same way.

[00:45:18](#) If the both actors, AO and WUAs are ready to transfer this canal, then why not.

00:45:59 There are different cases; some AOs do not want to take the canals because WUAs have high debts. For instance in Bazar-Korgon, the Saydykum AO first transferred the canals of the WUA, but after seeing the large debts they returned the canals to the WUA.

00:47:39 Translator 1

Working for WUA is not easy. The person who is working for WUA should have very strong nerves, with the farmers, with the people. In general, the whole work of WUA is very difficult. I am not sure whether the AO will be able to do all of the work for WUA. And that is why WUA should stay and continue their work. AO should help WUA by cleaning the canals and giving out the techniques when needed, but WUA should stay.

[00:48:58](#) Soviet Union – After collapse, large chaos because people did not know what to do. Believes that this situation will repeat itself, and that AO instead of taking over should just support the WUAs with infrastructure. WUAs have more than 20 years of experience. ... repetition

[00:50:29](#) Even the bad WUAs should be supported by the AOs. With repayments of credits, with other things.

[00:51:06](#) In some places there is a different situation. Some WUAs have conflicts with AO. But both should work in close cooperation.

[00:54:40](#) RWMD works via AO with WUA. RWMD supports the WUAs by sometimes allocating tractors or fuel for tractors and stuff.

Postscript

During the beginning of the interview, the respondent entered a story telling flow and I did not want to disturb it. Then we were talking about general facts about the RWMD and differences of the Rayon Department of WUA Support. This information confirmed my knowledge about the WUAs I had studied before.

In the second part of the interview I got lost in questions about water pumps and I didn't realize how fast time was passing.

The RWMD Head wanted me to write down the suggestion that the Kyrgyz government needed extra funding for the rehabilitation of the irrigation system, as neither WUAs nor AO or RWMD could carry the costs on their own.

15.1 Head RWMD & WUA Support, Bazar-Korgon (NP)

22th September

Combined interview with both Head of RWMD and Head of Rayon WUA Support

- External canals: Total number of 90 kms of canals in their balance RWMD, 15 kms are cemented (of which ca. 10 kms were cemented during the Soviet Union, the rest afterwards)
- Internal canals: 700 kms (= on-farm canals in the balance of WUA); out of which ca. 20 kms are cemented with the help of the World Bank and government
- RWMD gives around 67 Mio. m³ water to Bazar-Korgon per year
- Bazar-Korgon needs 120 Mio. m³ of water; 22 Mio. of m³ water is needed per month
- Since 2012 Head of RWMD, almost 11 years
- The Rayon Department of WUA Support is a sub department of the RWMD

15 NP B-K 1.1 Head WMD & WUA Support 22_Sept.m4a

Transcript

00:00:24 Gabriela Berglas	In what condition did you take over the water management department?
00:01:08 Translator 1	When he took it on, there were lots of WUAs which had to pay the debts to the RWMD, because they are taking water from them. He managed to work with them quite successfully, and with time they learned to pay for the water. And now they are more or less financially stable, like self-sustainable. And they are paying water management department on time. And they're also trying to collect the payments for the irrigation services from the people also on time.
00:02:51 Translator 1	There is also the Rayon Department of WUA Support and they also successfully managed to work with WUAs in Saydykum AO there are two WUAs managed to... Bazar-Su [not sure if this is the right name] and Toychubek-Chek managed to... in close cooperation with this RWMD of WUA Support the credits for 55 Mio. soms from the World Bank for the repairment of the canals. [T-I]. This 55 Mio. soms was taken as a credit. 25% of it the people should pay back and 75 % the government should pay back.
00:04:09 Translator 1	There are two other WUAs which have also managed to get credits from World Bank for 28 million soms. Also to repair the canals. [short clearing of misunderstanding]
00:05:04 Translator 1	In total, about 135 million soms, were taken as a credit... no approximately between 100 to 150 million soms were taken from the World Bank as a credit for five WUAs in a... [T clarifies if she got the name of the WUAs right]. Five WUAs in the Bazar-Korgon district which to take these credits from the World Bank and then managed to make the repairments of the canals. [I-T] Yeah, rehabilitation of the canals including the cementation of the canals... yeah, cementation of the canals, purchasing the office equipment, like printers, computer and stuff.
00:06:27 Translator 1	All of these credits were taken from 2005 to 2022. It was in close collaboration with RWMD, Rayon Department of WUA Support, and then the WUAs themselves together with the farmers. The three bodies are always in close collaboration with each other.

00:08:01 Translator 1	After all of these experience WUAs learned to work independently, to live by themselves, to pay for their debts to the RWMD.
00:08:22 Gabriela Berglas	So you took credits between 2005 to 2020. I assume that the rate of paying back is going well?
00:09:00 Translator 1	It's not going very well... But there are two WUAs who are paying it back very well, but others are not. So he will look at the figures.
00:09:33 Translator 1	He says we can talk more about this with the Department of WUA Support. They will know exact figures.
00:09:42 Translator 1	But in general, they are paying, but not all of them are paying. Like about 2-3 WUAs are paying comparatively well, but others still need to work on this. OK in general.
00:09:42 Gabriela Berglas	So two of five WUAs are paying well?
00:10:03 Translator 1	In total there are 8 WUAs.
00:10:24 Translator 1	One WUA gets all of the services from the Oblast WMD.
00:10:52 Translator 1	The reason that the one WUA gets the service from Oblast RWMD is because they're located quite far away and they are on the interregional water distribution canal. The reason is that they are located close to that and that's why this Oblast WMD takes care of them. They're responsible for all of this Oblast level and Rayon level canals in general and this WUA is located close to them. [...]
00:11:35 Gabriela Berglas	In total there are 8 WUAs and five of them took a credit from the World Bank.
00:12:07 Translator 1	Out of his eight WUAs five got a credit and two of them couldn't get the credits because they are located on the border of Uzbekistan and the project didn't pay attention to them. They don't know why. And one WUA has less than 1000 hectares of land, so they are not eligible to apply for this credit.

00:13:09 Translator 1	Concerning the work of the RWMD, they are doing what they should do by law. They clean on a regular basis, the mechanical cleaning of the canals. [I continues]
00:14:05 Translator 1	There is one more canal which is about 10 kms [long] which did not undergo any repairments since the times of the Soviet Union, more than 30 years ago. And somehow this canal was not included into into the balance of any WUA. And this year the RWMD managed to get this canal into their balance and they started all this repairments and it should also be cemented. [T asks I something].
00:15:21 Translator 1	From this 10-kilometre canal, about 6-7 kilometres, have already been cemented during the Soviet Union. It just has lots of mud in it and other garbage and it should be cleaned. So, for next year they have asked the government to allocate about 40 million soms to the RWMD to make all of the repair works of this 10-kilometre canal.
00:15:57 Translator 1	If they manage to repair this canal, then about 1000 hectares of land will be additionally irrigated.
00:16:56 Translator 1	Another success story from them happened in 2017/18, they managed to make the repairments of the entire huge water pump station with the help of the Turkish Red Cross. They used their help and they also made their contribution.

00:17:51 Translator 1	This year in 2023 in Mogol AO [referring to Mogol-Korgon], they have managed to repair one more water pump station with the government money.
00:18:35 Translator 1	The previous example... because they did this about 120 hectares of land started to become irrigated. Because in those villages they don't have any irrigation water. It's only from the rain... he mentioned that yesterday it's all of these mountains.
00:18:50 Gabriela Berglas	So they got the funds from the Turkish Red Cross, right? Yes.
00:19:14 Translator 1	They got 100% support from the Turkish Red Cross. But all of this labour works, like digging and other stuff, they have involved the farmers and their employees as well.

- Water pump gets water from the river
- Pump is used for villages in a higher altitude

15.2 Head RWMD & WUA Support, Bazar-Korgon (NP)

15 NP B-K 1.2 Head WMD & WUA Support 22_Sept 1.m4a

Transcript

[...]

We are looking at the plan of the water canals. They are all nicely illustrated on a large map. Every single canal is carefully illustrated on the map and is correctly labelled.

- Water reservoir: If they manage to build it, about 90 Mio. m³ of water will be added; but this isn't a lot as Bazar-Korgon needs 120 Mio. m³, 4000 ha in total will be irrigated of which 3000 ha additional fields will be watered in Nooken District of which 1000 ha of additional land
- He thinks it should be done →
- They rely on the support of the help of international donors and he wants me to write that down
- Budget is 25-35 Mio. USD.; they already have submitted their proposal to the prime minister but they didn't respond yet due to budget constraints
- If this additional 4000 hectares will be additionally irrigated, it will make a huge contribution to the development of the agriculture, which will give more plots to the people because.

00:11:31 Gabriela Berglas	When you got the credit from the World Bank, did they also provide some know-how, trainings?
00:13:12 Translator 1	There is a Republic [national level] Department of Water Management. When they got this credit from the World Bank, first they opened this Rayon Department of WUA Support in each district of Kyrgyzstan. And then, under RWMD they trained all of the employees. Plus the employees of the WUA; how to work with the irrigation system, what is the irrigation system, ow to promote it, how to help it, how to work with that. And then they monitored the whole irrigation system. And then these credits came.
00:14:31 Translator 1	How to pay for the irrigation services, how much to pay for this, what kind of service they will get, and how to deal with water irrigation system and stuff like that.

00:15:13 Gabriela Berglas	How would you rate the different water departments? Are they all like equally well trained or did you see differences with these other departments in the region?
00:16:02 Translator 1	He doesn't know. But so far all of the departments got training.
00:16:12 Gabriela Berglas	How would you rate those trainings?
00:16:29 Translator 1	The problem will not be solved by only giving money, but the important thing is that they have been trained on how to provide this irrigation to the farmers. What factors should be taken into account. How to work with the farmers, how to get the payment for the irrigation water and so on and so forth. All of these points are very important. Learning to work with the irrigation system is very important because it was systematic work from the very beginning. From the basis to the implementation, like working with the farmers, getting payment from them, how all of the system should work. The employees and WUA people already have a very good understanding of that. Which was very important. And people already know what this money should be used for, what kind of results they will get from these funds and how the infrastructure of this water irrigation system will change. So they already know the answers to these kinds of questions and they know where to go and what the goal is. From that point of view they were very important trainings. [GB: Did these trainings cost anything?] They were free.
00:18:07 Gabriela Berglas	How high were the interest rates of the of the credits?
00:18:30 Translator 1	No interest rate it's just that people should pay back 25 % of the credit... I mean the WUA. And the government should pay back 75 % in seven years.
00:18:46 Gabriela Berglas	And are they able to manage to pay it back in seven years?
00:19:08 Translator 1	Another guy will tell you this in detail. But in general, out of this 5 WUAs, 2 WUAs are paying the credits back quite well. But 3 WUAs are having issues, so he doesn't know the exact percentages. But he can tell us something about the water fees.
00:20:08 Translator 1	When WUAs get the water from them from the RWMD, they should, they should pay 3 tyiyns [1 tyiyn equals one hundredth of a som] per cubic metre. [...]
00:21:00 Translator 1	From April until September, the WUAs should take three tyiyns per cubic metre of water and this is called vegetation period, it's like irrigation period. And in the non-vegetation period from September until April the WUAs should pay 1 tyiyn. [RWMD gives around 67 Mio. m ³ water to Bazar-Korgon per year and the water fee price is done by the Kyrgyz government]
00:24:30 Translator 1	According to their 2023 plan, they [RWMD] should collect 2.3 Mio. soms from the WUAs. Until today, collected about 67% of this sum.
00:25:05 Translator 1	Until December they have the time to collect this money. They will collect the rest and he's sure that they will collect 100%. In the recent, in 2-3 years they managed to collect almost 100%.
00:25:36 Translator 1	He says it took lots of time, many of years, to explain to the farmers that they should pay for the water and there are still some farmers

	who don't want to pay. They say: "Why I should pay for the God given water?" and stuff like that.
00:26:25 Translator 1	From the WUAs they managed to get almost 100% payment.
00:26:35 Translator 1	And concerning the farmers who don't pay for the water, it's the headache of WUA, not them.
00:26:51 Gabriela Berglas	Did I get this correct... Some farmers are dealt by the WUAs and some by them?
00:27:02 Translator 1	No, all the farmers are dealt by the RWMD. [...]
00:27:31 Translator 1	Because they have 15'000 ha hectares of land in the region [Bazar-Korgon] and it will be very difficult to deal with all of the farmers. Therefore WUAs deal with them. [They measure the water by the special device which we saw in the field. Moreover, they also have another device to measure, but its not clear what it exactly is]
00:30:07 Gabriela Berglas	What would you think about increasing the water fees? Do you think that would be feasible?
00:30:35 Translator 1	People will understand it. He's quite positive about increasing the tariffs because everything is increasing. You know, starting from products, ending with only the water price stays the same, so he thinks that people will understand that.
00:30:56 Gabriela Berglas	And do you think the WUAs would take on the job of convincing the people of the necessity of increasing the tariffs?
00:31:18 Translator 1	There will be definitely more work in that until they will convince the people and that they will deliver this message in a positive way so that people will get it positively and you know... positive reaction and will be ready to pay for that. It will be an additional work for them, but this is the necessity of time.
00:31:47 Translator 1	WUAs should not be eliminated. They should be improved, develop their staff capacity. They should get the technical credits, and other assistants to develop them.

- One water pump was built this year; mobile water pump station
- 2018: 1 water pump
- 1978 one water pump during Soviet Union, but after the collapse is was broken and then repaired it → didn't work for 18 years until it got repaired. Repairment cost 4 Mio. soms. It's a lot of money and they won't be able to build a new one. They are not capable of fixing the existing ones.
- New water pump would cost between 50-60 Mio. Soms
- Most of the lands there are not irrigated, so they can't argument

Water reservoir

- Got distracted with the water reservoir
- They again wish to build one, but are lacking the financial resources for it

00:40:13 Gabriela Berglas	What does he think of the policy reform?
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00:40:51 Translator 1	He agrees with this idea. If the canals will be transferred to AO and if WUAs will remain, maybe WUAs will get more support from the AO. [I continues] Because WUAs are now financing themselves. [I continues] If canals will be transferred to AO, would have the capacity and possibility and technique to allocate their help during Spring time, when the canals should be repaired, cleaned and other things need to be done. AOs could help with that too.
00:41:47 Gabriela Berglas	Isn't he a bit worried that maybe then the WUAs will lose all of their authority?
00:42:04 Translator 1	WUAs shouldn't be eliminated, WUAs should stay the same. They just will have the possibility to get more help, according to his view. [I continues] And AO should help to get the payment from the people, should help with paying back the technical credits [technical credits refers to credits which have been taken to buy equipment such as tractors].
00:42:17 Translator 1	And what we should hope was that getting payments from the people should help with paying back this technical credits, you know.
00:42:43 Translator 1	WUAs should continue working, otherwise it will be difficult to work with the system because they have already learned how to work here and they are doing their work. They just need more help. And WUAs have already been working for 25 years. They have quite a bit of experience working with the farmers, so that's why he doesn't think that WUAs will use the authority... maybe their management will be from the AO, but otherwise they will continue working in the same way.
00:43:28 Gabriela Berglas	Do you think it's perhaps receive help with the management and then they will have more time to focus on the more technical aspects?
00:44:27 Translator 1	Yes, he says, why not? They can develop their technical capacity as well. Because usually each WUA has their hydro technician, has their own murabs [...]. And they could work more on the development of the technical capacity.
00:45:18 Translator 1	According to the law if two actors... both AO and WUA are ready... they want to... it's on voluntary basis to transfer these canals, they should do that. It's difficult to see but they will see in the future. But in general he agrees with it.
00:45:59 Translator 1	There are various cases; some AOs do not want to take the canals under their balance because WUAs have lots of debts.
00:46:37 Translator 1	For instance here in Bazar-Korgon, here this Ak-Tyt AO... they first transferred these canals into their balance and then after seeing all of the credit debts, they decided to return this...
00:47:06 Translator 1	They first thought to transfer the canals and then they changed their [minds] and they didn't do it.
00:47:39 Translator 1	Working for WUA is not easy. The person who is working for a WUA should have very strong nerves, you know to work with the farmers, work with the people. So, the whole work of the WUAs is very difficult and he's not sure that AO will be able to do all of the work for the WUA, you know, and that's why WUA should stay and should continue their work.
00:48:15 Translator 1	AO should help the WUAs, by cleaning the canals and giving out the techniques [referring to technical equipment]. Why when it's needed, you know, like supporting WUAs. But WUAs should stay and work.

00:48:52 Translator 1	After the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 90s, they remember those times, there were no WUAs during that time. And it was quite a chaos, you know, the work of this irrigation system. If now AO will transfer all of the canals to them [RWMD], then this situation will just repeat. Without WUAs, it's not going to work. So WUAs should stay, they should develop their the professional capacity and AO should help them with the infrastructure, like cleaning the canals and giving out the techniques and stuff like that. But so far, WUAs have already more than 20 years of experience. They are more or less working OK with the people. They learned how to get the money for the water.
00:49:46 Gabriela Berglas	We've heard of a lot of WUAs which weren't able to get all of the money. Following this, would he say that his WUAs are actually working quite well?
00:50:29 Translator 1	Even with the bad WUAs, AO should still support them, the help them. They should help them with the payment of the credits. They should help with other things.
00:51:06 Translator 1	The situation is different. In some AOs, there is how to say... not conflict but misunderstandings between WUAs and AOs unfortunately. But both of them... both WUA and AO should work together in close cooperation... collaboration. Because they are working the same thing, you know, they should provide this irrigation water to the farmers and this water should be paid. But sometimes this work is very difficult, especially when they have these understandings between them.
00:51:40 Gabriela Berglas	Does he also work with the AO?
00:52:55 Translator 1	They're working with quite well with the AO. They work with the AO through the WUA, they don't directly work with AO.
00:53:39 Translator 1	They are only working with one WUA. You know, this is the one with this water water pump station together with the AO they work here. Because they don't have WUA there. But otherwise they work with AO through WUA.
00:54:11 Translator 1	Even when he has some issues to solve, he usually addressed it to WUA or through WUA.
00:54:40 Translator 1	He also supports, provides help to WUA in terms of, like allocating the gasoline for the tractors or allocating the technique like tractors and other stuff if they need to clean their canals.
00:55:11 Gabriela Berglas	Is there something that the AO could improve concerning the whole irrigation system?
00:56:02 Translator 1	First point, AO should help WUAs to help get the water fees from the farmers. [I continues] By using maybe some administrative mechanisms or something else. The AO should help the WUAs collecting the money because if the WUA will manage to collect 100% payment, they should be OK, you know, in doing their work.
00:57:13 Translator 1	The second point is that AO should help WUAs... they should help collecting money from the farmers. And he says concerning the point that WUAs should be transferred to the Rayon Water Management Department... he has only 62 employees and they won't be able to cover the whole Bazar-Korgon district, the whole region with this [number] of people. But if the WUAs will be transferred to AO, then there is a higher chance that they could work together. Because there is already in ??? [couldn't catch the name, referring to an AO located in Bazar-Korgon] AO, there are WUAs and people there. And plus the

	management and administration is provided by the AO, so they have a higher chance for good collaborations.
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[...]

Misunderstanding

What does he wish from the Kyrgyz state?

- First point: more budget and money for water reservoir system and pump stations
- Second point: Their tractors and excavators are getting old and need to be replaced.
- This year government is promising to give them 2 new excavators; one from Japanese grant and one from State savings. They will see by the end of 2023 if they will get it. And if not, perhaps next year.

01:01:47 Gabriela Berglas	What about your power and responsibilities? Do you wish to have more authority and power in this whole process?
01:02:23 Translator 1	It's OK for now, but of course he wishes that their authority will be increased so that they will work as the vice head of the district rayon administration. The point that Kanyeбек suggest, you know. [I continues]. He says they belong to the Ministry of Agriculture for now. But they would like to be separate, like the Ministry of Water [for example]. [...] Yeah, if they would separate like the Ministry of Water Management, they will have more authority, more uh possibilities to work in a different way. [Clearing misunderstandings; They used to exist during Soviet Union but stopped working afterwards]
01:04:58 Translator 1	He says it's necessary to establish the separate Ministry of Water Management because Kyrgyzstan is considered to country have very favourable water conditions as a country. And we should care more about the water, we should study this, we should work on this, he says. That's why the separate ministry is needed.
01:05:28 Gabriela Berglas	Yeah, more authority, more budget, and of course, better acknowledgement of the water.
01:05:51 Gabriela Berglas	What does he think of the ATR?
01:06:02 Translator 1	He agrees with it. It will decrease the government budget. It will reduce the administration staff. And if the government will reduce the cost of the administration staff, then the money will go for the development of agriculture. [Especially small AOs could profit from the merge. Moreover, he isn't scared that he will lose manpower if he reduces the staff. Maybe government will pay more to remaining staff, time will show]
01:09:40 Gabriela Berglas	Is there anything he'd like to add?
01:09:50 Translator 1	No, he doesn't.

Interviewee and Kanyebek start a vivid discussion.

Postscript

- I had difficulties following the questions – I forgot many facts & figures given to me and that's why I asked some questions multiple times
- I got distracted with the water pump and the water reservoir
- Head of RWMD, Head of WUA advisors, ABAD counsellor and translator.

18 Head of Department of Agriculture, Bazar-Korgon (NP)

28th September

18 BK Head Agric Dep 28_Sept.m4a

Transcript

00:00:25 Gabriela Berglas

What is your attitude to the current irrigation infrastructure?

00:01:12 Translator 1

The condition is on the average level, it's not that bad and not good either. On the average level. There is Karunko river, in Bazar-Korgon region. If they will be able to use 100 % of this Karunko river water, there will be no issues with irrigation at all.

00:02:04 Translator 1

From the Soviet Union there was a plan to give up almost 55 % of this water from Karunko river to Nookan region.

00:02:40 Translator 1

In Nookan region, there is the Naryn river They always managed to take water from that river.

00:03:05 Translator 1

He says that the Soviet Union, the big project started to take the water from the Naryn river to Nookan river. and the river to local region. But it started and then it stopped. So now they they didn't do anything, he says. If then we can region, we'll be able to.

00:03:22 Translator 1

Finish this project, then look at the region. Also will not have any problems with water issues.

00:03:30 Gabriela Berglas

Isn't the Naryn river really far away?

00:03:42 Translator 1

About 15 to 20 kms away.

There are two large irrigation projects which failed: First project started during Soviet Union, but failed with the collapse of the Soviet Union. Water from Naryn river should have been taken to Bazar-Korgon (15- 20kms); there are no plans of re-living it

- No plans of re-living this

The second issue concerns a project of a water reservoir in Bazar-Korgon region, developed in 2015. By plan it should have started in 2019 and finished in 2026. But due to lack of budget the project never started.

- Water reservoir: 6000 extra ha would be irrigated in Nookan region. It is in the state program
- About 22 billion soms, he is losing his hope that this project will ever be released due to lack of budget
- In total 15'000 ha of land managed to get a second crop per year

Attitude on new policy reform:

00:08:59 Translator 1

He is quite positive about that because there should be one supervisor and one management and AO has all the administrative resources and WUAs are not able to clean the canals, to do their work in a full scale.

00:09:44 Translator 1

He says even if the WUAs would be eliminated, there will be the kind of body under the Village AO like the WUA But it has all this irrigation, clean water, all in one. And then it will belong to the AO, and the AO will be in charge of the whole thing, including clean water, irrigation and other things.

00:10:25 Gabriela Berglas

What should the state improve?

- Besides water reservoir, canals cleaning and repairments need to be improved.
- 783 kms in total, of that 80 kms belong to RWMD

00:14:38 Gabriela Berglas

And does he think that the WUAs will then be like incorporated into the into the AO

Postscript

The interview only lasted for 15 minutes and took place outside in the car. Not ideal situation

19) Head of District Administration, Rayon Nooken (Pilot)

28th September

Head of Commission of Rayon Development Fund

Rayon Nooken is non-pilot, but this interviewee made the suggestion to the parliament in Bishkek to make Rayon Nooken a pilot region

Rayon Nooken

- 8 AO, 1 city
- Ca. 700 kms belong to WUA, mostly mud canals
- Current Irrigation Infrastructure is satisfactory ; Issues exist which need to be solved, but there will always be issues
- In the recent years thanks to the general policy of the current government, some innovations and improvements can be seen in the irrigation sector.
- Irrigation system is divided into 3 parts: RWMD (external canals), WUAs (internal), and farmers own some canals themselves
- As agriculture is most important sector in the region and in KG in general,
- 1 speciality of Nooken region: mainly grows cotton, whereas most other regions grow crops → cotton is especially water-intensive. Plus most AOs have 2 to 3 crops per year.
- Rayon Development Fund has ca. 1 Mio. soms budget per year
- In 2023, they built 30 wells from the Rayon Budget

Policy Reform

- Approves it, because AO has more possibilities and opportunities.
- WUAs have many issues; with equipment and additional stuff to provide a good service. Also collecting fees and paying off credits
- Ca. 700 kms belong to WUA, mostly mud canals → need lots of repairment
- AO can't help WUA due to legal issues
- If under the AO there would be a ME; they'd include the WUAs work and you'd have more additional specialists there and then it should be fine
- This WUA maybe should be eliminated by law and instead incorporated in the ME; and they then would have different norms.
- Why do AOs work better than WUAs? → AOs in general have more responsibilities because they are a government agency, the people anyway already go to the AO with their issues, they have more financial resources and equipment, and that's why they solve the issues more efficiently; more resources and opportunities in general.
- Even if WUAs remain, they should be totally supervised & controlled by the AO → Then they could get funds from the AO, and expertise. Because they can see the results of their work, e.g. in Masy; they allocate funds, the canals become cemented and other things.
- Even though Rayon Nooken is non-pilot, he personally made the suggestion to the parliament in Bishkek to make Rayon Nooken a pilot region
- He is quite sure that this policy reform will work out.

RWMD

- According to his opinion, they are not able to cover the entire work of the people. That's why it's right to transfer the canals to the AO.

AO

- Different reasons why AOs work differently; often depends on the HR (human resources). Some have more competent people than others. Also the attitudes to work are different, as well as financial resources (some AOs are on dotation from the government, they receive help)
- Each AO executes an assignment in their own way; they also help the AOs which are on dotation, as these need more financial as well as human support.
- He also cooperates with the Village Head, but usually with the AO Head. He thinks that with the implementation of the policy reform the authority of the Village Head will increase. Because firstly, then the AO would make that the village head will collect all of the issues first, and then present it to the AO, instead of everyone coming individually to the AO and complain. Secondly, minor issues can be directly solved by the village head, which will make the entire process more efficient. The Village Head is paid by the government.
- WUAs will be joined under the AO and thus also lose a bit of their authority.
- Problem: If AO takes over canals, they should be responsible for paying off the debts (ca. 600'000 soms)

National Government

- In the last two years, a lot of attention has been made towards the irrigation and allocated more budget
- Droughts: Hot season is in July. He sees the water reservoir as one of the number one problems to solve the irrigation issue, but it needs a massive budget
- He approves the idea that agricultural sector need more power, especially the separate sectors
- But he doesn't think that there is a need for a separate ministry for water, it's ok if it's embedded in the agricultural sector
- ATR: he approves the idea in general. Especially if small AOs merge with other AOs, so that you can save administrative resources. He just attended a meeting where they were discussing the issues of how to manage it.
- They get their budget from the Rayon Development Fund; the RDF gets their money from the Republican budget

Fees

- Fees be increased taking all of the costs into account
- But also the WUAs, the people have 600'000 soms irrigation debt; this needs to be paid off

Perspectives

- In general, people need more watering, but he thinks that they are issues that can be solved

Postscript

The interview took place in the office of the head.

10) Vice Head AO, Kenesh, Non-Pilot (Old model)

19th September

Interviewee

- Took part in special conferences organized by public foundation ABAD where this new law was discussed and they also provided their insights and suggestions
- Did not take part in any other working groups

Kenesh AO

- Kenesh AO was established in 1996 after the collapse of the FSU
- During that period, there were about 28'000 people consisting of 9 villages
- Ca. 36'500 people inhabitants today → more people than before
- The building of the local council of Kenesh is located in Bazar-Korgon city! Located in Bazar-Korgon District (kind of an exception, the real AO is in reality located far away) (00:24:00)
- **Beginning of 2023, 8 villages (not 9 anymore), 23'010 inhabitants today** (one village has been included into Bazar-Korgon city)

Irrigation Infrastructure

- All of the irrigation system is under the work of WUA
- WUA started their work also in 1996
- They are currently working on the irrigation system
- Only 6 to 7 % of the canals are cemented
- General state of the canals is not good, they are in a bad shape
- From the cemented canals, some of them have been cemented during the FSU
- Since 1990s: cemented a little part of them thanks to the credit by the ADB. And now the WUAs have problems with repaying these credits.
- Plus: some canals were not included in the WUA system. Nobody took care of them, just the farmers without the WUAs
- AO is neither obliged nor allowed to support the WUAs by law
- Out of the debt, 1.26 Mio. soms debt is left to be paid off
- So far, WUAs are paying off the debts
- The AO vouched for the WUAs for their debts (bürger). Kind of a funny situation: Because AO vouched for them, the ADB indicted the AO because the WUAs did not pay their debts. So they (not clear whether the AO or WUA) paid a little bit, and then their accounts opened up again. And this happened multiple times.
- 00:46:50: approves cementing canals because it will save 40 – 50 % of the water waster

RWMD

- Even though not all canals were under the balance of the WUA, they still had to pay those fees to the RWMD, because the farmers received the water anyways.
- The farmers don't need to pay any fees to the WUA, because the canal is not under the WUAs balance, but the WUA has to pay the RWMD, since the RWMD is still delivering that water

- (00:29:30): So far, WUAs are working in close cooperation with RWMD. But sometimes, they get a reminder letter from the RWMD that their debts need to be paid.

Farmers & WUAs

- There were also conflicts amongst farmers during irrigation time. Issues also addressed to the police and the court.
- But so far, no fines imposed on them
- Usually WUA is in charge of solving these issues; e.g. WUA is responsible for farmers to receive the correct amount of money, time schedule
- (00:31:20): Farmers who are not included in the WUA, usually address their issues to the AO. E.g. during the winter when the canals are frozen, the frozen water goes up the canal and fills the whole houses. They usually address this issue to the AO, and then they [AO] tries to solve this issue together with the RWMD. But otherwise, WUAs are responsible to work with the people themselves, and they do their work more or less well.
- (00:32:05): In those cases, WUAs provide their own help and technical assistance (tractors, excavators). Those WUAs who don't have their own technical equipment ask the RWMD for support, and then receive tractors from them.

Attitude

- Ca. 2 years ago, vice head AO already suggested in a seminar of a public foundation ABAD and to Kanyebek that the canals should be transferred to the AO
- They took part in multiple conferences in Bishkek to solve these issues, as suggested by ABAD

00:13:22 Translator 1

Now, they are ready to get all of these canals under the AO, but the only problem is paying of these debts. For instance, it's 1'260'000 soms. He [the AO] doesn't have this budget to pay that. And that is the huge challenge... to solve this issue.

00:14:12 Translator 1

Now the national government should solve this, or they should eliminate this debt, or the Republican budget should pay this [state and Republican budget are the same thing]. Because AO has no funds to pay this credit, and plus, if this kind, this kind of credit doesn't exist, they can freely take over all of this canals under the AO we'll work on the improvement of the system in general.

00:14:53 Translator 1

Yeah, yeah. I mean it's his view. Maybe there is some way to eliminate this debt via a special agreement between the ADB and the government, you know, something like that. Or the national government should it pay themselves because they [the LSG] didn't see the money at all. They didn't even used it. It doesn't belong to them at all, it was under the WUA, and WUA should solve their problems, and then join them without any issues.

00:16:42 Translator 1

It will be easier for them to work with the WUA if they will be joined with them, first. Then they will be one department, like an Agricultural Department or something like that under AO, so that it will be easier to allocate funds to them, to work with them.

00:17:01 Gabriela Berglas
So he's totally pro reform?
00:17:04 Translator 1
Yeah.

00:19:47 Translator 1
He says the AO has all of the possibility, you know, the capacity to work better with the irrigation system, internal canals because they have more funds. And plus, if this will be the municipal property, then they will have more capacity, uhm possibilities to do better work. Especially for instance, when donors reach AO, they are also interested in the fact that someone will take this guarantee. You know, to do the work and to be responsible. So he thinks it will be more sustainable.

Funds (00:20:30 –

00:21:26 Translator 1
There is a tendency here that, for instance, if they apply with the project application to the Rayon or to the Oblast Development Fund for repairments of the canals, they [Rayon and Oblast Development Fund] require that these canals should be under the AO, you know, should be under the municipal property. This is an issue. And last year they repaired the canals, they managed to get the gasoline from them. And...

00:22:40 Translator 1
They had to take over the canals, like a little section of them to into their [AO] balance via an act, make the repairment of the canals and then again gave them back to the WUA. But the one of the requirements, both of the Rayon and Oblast Development Funds, was that the property should be under the municipality. You know to give funds and to give any...

00:23:22 Translator 1
This AO is on dotation, it means that they are very much dependent on the national budget. That's why they are very much dependent on the additional resources, additional funds.

- He approves of the Masy's data base
- They have been working with GIZ since 2017 on automatization of lands → inventory of the lands. Also on the auction system of the lands.
- They also have a database thanks to GIZ -> will present their database on 27th September 2023.

ATR

00:33:49 Translator 2
There are 2 points. Kenesh will have to join with Taldy-Bulak, it's about a two hour drive from here. Kenesh is already on dotation, they're like very much dependent on the national government. Plus, -Taldy-Bulak is poorer than them. They are also on dotation, they are also dependent on the government money. He doesn't see the logic of joining two poor AOs. What more can be done to improve the work. But he says he was in that business trip with the public foundation about to Baltic countries, to Estonia and Latvia. Yeah. And he says if there will be electronic government, then this distance won't matter. As soon as they enter all of this information into this database, so that people can address their issues electronically, then maybe this distance will not matter.

- The two points are: Taldy-Bulak is poor and too far away.
- Taldy-Bulak is a mountain village
- More time will be needed to digitalize everything
- And in mountain villages they already have scarce electricity, not even talking about stable internet connection
- Taldy-Bulak doesn't have any irrigation system, they are dependent on rain (rain-fed) since they don't have any water. Drought land. There are no WUAs, no plots, no RWMD

Irrigation fees

- No major taxes issue, about 87 % of people pay their taxes
- Most taxes are for the land
- Taxes for land are only 414 soms per hectare, which equal two cups of coffee. So it's not a lot of money
- 00:42:00: agrees of increasing irrigation fees
- When fee tariff is calculated, it should include all of the expenses – and then also a little bit of profit. Because if not, then just one pipe needs to break and they can't replace it. And if two or more pipes break, they go bankrupt.
- 00:46:00: Project proposal is being prepared for water reservoir – are developing, but will take time until it has been implemented
- Water needs to be saved, because the drought this year showed how scarce water is
- 00:48:40: Irrigation system should be digitalized and automated to save time and make process more transparent. Very impressed by the Baltic countries, because they can address all of their issues from home, they don't have fights where people come and slam your doors. Better than coming all the way to AO and address their issues to them

16) Murab (part of the WUA) and Farmer, Kenesh, Non-Pilot

25th September

Kenesh AO, Farmer from Mogol-Korgon village. 283 ha of land

15th July – 5th September

Non-Pilot; currently discussing whether they should hand over their canals to the AO or RWMD

2 ha of land (both rented)

- 1 hectare he grows in the way he always used to, the other hectare is a demonstration field where he can compare the changes he has made with the ADB.
- He calculated that he will receive twice as much cotton next year, because cotton is a very water-intensive crop.
- Last season he collected 1.8 tons of cotton from his field and 2.68 tons from his demonstration field
- Received fertilizers and seeds from Asian Development Bank (ADB), as well as a training. This spring it started. And they will continue to work with them.
- Training on how to grow the cotton, what kind of seeds they should use.
- Before they got 30 cent per hectare, now they get 45 cent per hectare.
- They used to use fertilizers before, but it was only one type of them. Now they are using 4 different types.
- The soil quality was tested and then they gave them the matching fertilizers.

16 KE Farmer 25_Sept.m4a

Transcript

00:07:00 Translator 1	From 15 th July until 5 th September they integrated their so-called talon system. They give talons to the people, to the farmers, and each farmer has the right to use the irrigation water for one day only. So from July until September, they use that. They planned to get 15,000 m ³ of water and as a result they got about 14'000 m ³ . So they have more-or-less good water supply in general. And farmers here under the system, they have the right to use this irrigation water only for one day, like 24 hours. After he uses the water, he gives it to the next farmer who needs the water a lot. They monitor the situation on the field on a regular basis. Is it going dry or what? And then depending on this they distribute the water. During vegetation season, farmers get water 5 times per season. He, the farmer and murab also gets water five times per year.
00:10:32 Gabriela Berglas	How would he overall rate the work of his WUA?
00:11:23 Translator 1	He says he's responsible for the 38 kilometres of internal canals under his control and he says the main issues are the general state condition of the canals. Some canals should be cemented because they have lots of these long grasses. And they use this special fertilisers to get rid of these grasses [probably referring to pesticides]. So until the canals will be cemented, they are using that as well.
00:12:25 Gabriela Berglas	And how would you rate the organisation of the WUA, like the internal administration of the organisation?
00:13:08 Translator 1	In general, the WUA is Ok, is doing well with the administration staff, he doesn't have any complaints. But the WUAs need support from the side of the

	government, from the side of the AO in order to do their work well, especially in cleaning the canals, uh in doing this work.
00:13:41 Gabriela Berglas	Does everyone in the WUA think that they need support from the government and the AO?
00:14:04 Translator 1	They are mostly working on a self-financing basis because they're a private organisation. But anyways, for repairment and for cleaning the big canals they will need more support. Their own work and contribution is not enough.
00:14:26 Gabriela Berglas	Because those are very expensive and they usually need more man-power, is that right?
00:14:50 Translator 1	They're doing their work for 95%, they are doing what they should do. They are cleaning the canals, delivering the water to the farmers and making all this things [incomprehensible] on the way. They are doing their job to 95% but if there will be more support they will do their work even better.

[...]

- WUA owns 1 excavator and 1 tractor; dating back to the Soviet Union, they still work
- Used to work in the cinema as a mechanic, and in the market, and when they distributed land he decided to become a farmer
- Works in WUA since 2010

00:17:11 Gabriela Berglas	Can you recall how the farming has changed from the beginning to today, beginning from the 1990s?
00:17:41 Translator 1	The payments for water changed drastically towards... [T - I] They started to understand that they should pay for the water because they are having all this water supply and it needs to be paid otherwise they will not get [the water]. So this kind of consciousness is already there and it's changing.
00:18:11 Gabriela Berglas	Is there anything else except the change of consciousness for the water?
00:18:29 Translator 1	Also, the attitude towards land has changed. For instance, if before just they grew... not without interest, but with little knowledge. And now people are trying to study more, you know, to learn more about this crop. And the goal is to get the maximum harvest.
00:19:03 Gabriela Berglas	Did your WUA take any credit before?
00:20:09 Translator 1	In 2005 and 2007, they got about a 6,000,000 soms credit. He doesn't know from where they got it but it was a 6 million credit. And then according to the contractual terms, they had like a 4-year holiday [meaning that they didn't have to repay any credit in the first four years]. This 4-year holiday confused the people a little, they thought: "Oh, freedom!", you know, they thought that they didn't have to pay anything. They even forgot about this. And then after four years, they started to pay and this also created challenges. You know why should I pay? And

	all of these misunderstandings? And now the people are paying again and the WUA has more than 5 million soms debts.
00:21:20 Translator 1	During those years, about 11.6 kilometres of canals were cemented from this credit. And people are slowly understanding that this credit should be paid back. Because there was some work done, so it needs to be paid back.
00:21:58 Translator 1	About 1.15 kilometre was under his supervision and his murabs covered it. [Clearing misunderstanding: They are currently paying back the credit, including all of the debts and fines for paying back the money too late and his WUA is responsible for 136 kms in total; of these 11.6 kms were cemented during 2005 and 2007.]
00:24:24 Translator 1	Besides these canals (referring to the 11.6 kms which were cemented in 2005 and 2007 under his WUAs supervision] there were also other canals which were cemented, but it was not from a credit, it was all on a grant basis. By GIZ, this German project and by others.
00:25:01 Translator 1	This project that he's working for provided seeds and fertilisers and they also have plans to that cement these canals as well. So they will work for three years.
00:25:27 Gabriela Berglas	What does he think of the new policy reform?
00:25:54 Translator 1	He's quite positive about it if the AO will be able to help the WUA in terms of techniques, in terms of giving more like tractors and stuff and giving more specialists. This cooperation should work, should be better, should be good.
00:26:21 Gabriela Berglas	Would their WUA also hand over some of their canals to the AO?
00:26:44 Translator 1	If the canals will be under the AO, the WUA can continue their work as they used to do. But maybe the payment and everything will be paid directly to the AO, and they will gain collect this money from the people and will pay to the AO and not to the WUA.
00:27:16 Gabriela Berglas	But they haven't handed anything over yet to the AO, is that right?
00:27:23 Translator 1	No, they haven't.
00:27:25 Gabriela Berglas.	Not yet. OK, but are they planning to?
00:27:38 Translator 1	There is a discussion that the canals will be handed over to the AO or to the RWMD. He doesn't know for sure, but there is a discussion there.
00:27:55 Gabriela Berglas	OK, So what are the pros and the cons of like handing them over to the AO or to the RWMD?
00:28:23 Translator 1	It will be better if the canals will join this RWMD because they have more expertise, they have more like techniques, tractors and other equipment to deal with the irrigation issues.

00:28:42 Gabriela Berglas	So more expertise, more tractors and what do you think are the strengths of the AO?
00:29:12 Translator 1	No matter to whom the canals will be joined, the most important thing is that they should get the best technical expertise and equipment on time, especially when they need it. I mean when WUA needs it during the [hot] season. He's not against or for anybody...
00:29:36 Gabriela Berglas	Yeah, I just wanted to know what the strengths of the AO are.
00:29:43 Translator 1	The AO also have techniques and if they will be able to help them on time that could work.
00:30:00 Gabriela Berglas	So what kind of before? He said. Like he doesn't more support from the government.
00:30:05 Gabriela Berglas	Before he said that they needed some support from the government or the AO, so what kind of support was he thinking about specifically?
00:30:22 Translator 1	Mostly technical equipment, tractors and excavators and stuff because they are very old; they're almost 40 years old. So they will need the new ones and more support in this.
00:30:42 Gabriela Berglas	I assume that they work closely with the RWMD. Did they also have any connections before with the AO, or not?
00:30:53 Translator 1	He didn't say that they have worked with the AO. He just said there are discussions if they should hand it over to the RWMD or the AO.
00:30:56 Gabriela Berglas	Yeah I know but I mean how closely do they work with the AO, [if at all]?
00:31:54 Translator 1	It is written in the law that this RWMD is responsible for the large canals, and they deliver the water all the way up to the WUA. And the WUA got the water from them and they pay back this water to the RWMD. And if they have some issues with the repairment or cleaning of the internal canals, they mostly go to the AO and also sometimes to the RWMD as well. They also have internal canals where regular techniques don't work because of the relief, you know the geographical location, because there are peoples' gardens covering on side or another side of the canals. So there they use their labour force of the people, the village residents, about 80 to 90 people people work for several days, to clean the canals and they do it voluntarily because they understand that they need this water. So, sometimes they use the labour force to help the village residents as well.
00:33:32 Gabriela Berglas	Did you ever encounter an emergency, like canal broke or something like that?
00:34:02 Translator 1	Of course they have these kind of cases as well, especially when this mud comes from the mountains, in these cases they have that. And then they use the again the help of the village head, the AO will sometimes give them equipment, they use their own tractors. In this way they solve this issue.

00:34:38 Gabriela Berglas	Does that work well or do you think and that there's a need for improvement in those cases?
00:35:18 Translator 1	If there will be more like new techniques, new tractors, you know from the AO or from the RWMD, it will be quite beneficial, quite good for them. And there is also point that he says if they will be able to pay the five to six million soms as a debt payment back then there is a chance that they could get their new equipment. But there is no way to pay this back one in one years' time. So, this is the last year for this credit.
00:36:19 Gabriela Berglas	Would they take up another credit again in the future?
00:36:34 Translator 1	No, no way [laughs]. They will not get another credit until they paid back the old one. [Gabriela Berglas: Until after they paid it off?]. Yeah. If they. will pay back. Of course they can take up a new credit. People more or less now understand that they should pay back and there is more consciousness on this. So of course. But with this old one, they don't have a chance to get a new one.
00:37:35 Gabriela Berglas	Bees. He's the water does.
00:38:30 Translator 1	They didn't impose any fines yet. They just explained this kind of job. And from the fees, they managed to collect almost 90% of the payment. And this 10 % is also a risky category. They're very poor or they can't pay it back. In this case they just postpone their payments for the next year. [...]
00:39:13 Gabriela Berglas	Does he know how the fees are made?
00:40:55 Translator 2	In March there is usually the general meeting or the Council of the WUA. And during that meeting, they appoint the definite sum of the fee for irrigation purposes. Based on that, they collect this fee. They make this receipt for the farmers, based on this equation. [showing us the receipt of the fees] He collects this [referring to the receipt] based on these papers and then at the end he collects this based on these papers and then in the end he submits all of the paperwork to the accountant of the company.
00:41:11 Gabriela Berglas	So they all agree on how the fees are made of right and can I ask how the fees are made of roughly? Like what are the main variables of those fees?
00:41:29 Translator 1	He doesn't know. It's a group work in the General Council of the WUA, when they work on others...
00:42:31 Translator 1	Yeah, he says this. This sum is based also on the right of crops. For instance, if the crop gets more water, it's more expensive. If the crop gets less water, it's less expensive. OK.
00:42:30 Translator 1	This sum is based on the variety of the crops. For instance, if the crop gets more water, it's more expensive. If the crop gets less water, it's less expensive.

[...]

ATR – doesn't know about it, but he thinks that WUA will stay anyways.

00:44:19 Gabriela Berglas	Can you say why you think the WUA should stay?
00:44:38 Translator 1	If the WUA will not work there will be huge a huge chaos, especially during the hot season, people will fight with each other. People already got used to this so-called talon system, they got used to getting water for 24 hours and watering based on the schedule. Therefore, it will be difficult without WUA.
00:45:06 Gabriela Berglas	Yes, maybe also what is this prospect of the future as farmer, not as WUA?
00:45:43 Translator 1	The perspective will be should be OK with there if there will be a regular water supply and the farmers will have a chance to get the more, better crops or harvest. Otherwise, they will continue in the way they do.
00:46:03 Gabriela Berglas	Is there anything you'd like to add?
00:46:13 Translator 1	In addition to bring the farmers to the Europe for the sharing of experiences, learning new methods, learning new ways of farming.

Postscript

A proud farmer who showed us the receipt of the farmers. With year, date, name.

This interview went especially well – I was rather relaxed when conducting the interview and the interviewee gave me the answers that I was hoping for. Because I received useful and insightful information, this made it easier for me to question with confidence and to

17) Deputy AK, Kengesh (Non-Pilot)

25th September

The AO / Ak didn't take any canals yet

They aren't even planning to take the canals, there is no discussion about this yet

AKs' personal

17 KE Deputy AK Beshbakov 25_Sept.m4a

Transcript

00:01:21 Translator 1	Personal point of view is that it would be better if these canals were joined with the RWMD because they know how to do their work and they usually do it better. The RWMD has all of this technical expertise, you know, equipment, techniques, all the necessary things to work with the irrigation system than the AO.
00:01:51 Gabriela Berglas	But you, as the AO have a lot of, like administrative power and you also can give funds from the government. And don't you think that that would also be a big strength?
00:02:42 Translator 1	Until now, WUAs were able to do their work quite well. Of course there are differences amongst the different WUAs. For instance, if the AO gets the canals and then do this work from their own local budget, it will be very difficult to do it, but if they get some funds from the Republican budget then the situation could be different.
00:03:34 Translator 1	Concerning, the ATR, he wants to say something. [...]
00:05:06 Translator 1	The situation is, how to say... quite strange, you know, quite difficult. Because for instance, Kenesh AO will join together with this Taldy-Bulak AO, which is about 1 to 2 hours drive from here, it's in a mountainous region, and they will need to get take care of them as well because it's a very poor AO. This is the first point. The second point is that the central, this Mogul village, which before belonged to them, they are now connected... joined with the Bazar-Korgon City [chuckles]. And this Mogul village has about 200 hectares of the state-funded land which was rented for the farmers. And the majority of the local budget was taken from that fund, you know, from the rent money. Is it clear? [...] Mogul is kind of the golden goose, because it has 200 hectares of state-funded land given as a rent to the farmers and the local budget gets most of the budget from them. And now they're joined with the city, and they [referring to Kenesh] are not with them anymore. Instead, they are joined with this poor AO which can't give anything, they are on the dotation so they're very dependent on the Republican budget. So Kenesh AO is losing, it's not winning from this situation.

[...]

Little distraction from the irrigation

- Government initiated a reform about state-funded land. Not only farmers but large corporations can get land from the state-fund
- Before they were only able to get up to 1 ha, now they can get up to 15 ha of land.
- They should now be able to improve the quality of the crops, of wheat growing.
- But in reality its not really implementable because they have issues with the fertilizers, seeds, etc. Very difficult.

00:15:13 Translator 1	The point is that even if the farmers joined for the bigger cooperatives, the government is still supporting them, in terms of getting the low interest credits, in terms of getting the good quality seeds, in getting the fertilisers, for the farmer. You know concerning these points, the farmers and the farmers cooperators still need this government support a lot because they are getting seeds from this Department of Agriculture under the district administration, but there the quality of the seeds are not good. They say: "If you grow this, you will get like 10 tonnes of whatever per hectare", and then in practise it is not like this.
00:16:49 Translator 1	He as a farmer wants to get the good quality seeds plus the good quality gasoline as well.
00:17:09 Translator 1	The most important thing is good quality seeds and then a cheaper price for gasoline during the hot season and that is the main issue for the farmers and the farmers cooperations as well.
00:18:01 Gabriela Berglas	What about the help of the state concerning irrigation issues?
00:19:00 Translator 1	Concerning irrigation system, WUAs are doing their work very well. Because that's the private surprised organisation. They have been dealing with the irrigation since so many years and they know how to do it already. Of course they need support from the side of the AO in terms of providing more techniques and maybe specialists, but otherwise they are working quite well.
00:19:58 Translator 1	Because of the water scarcity and plus this drought system every year, he says that the government should pay more attention to this and these kind of issue should be solved on the high government level.
00:20:14 Gabriela Berglas	And the government should solve it.
00:20:15 Translator 1	Yeah. Because the farmers are feeling this scarcity situation every year.
00:20:24 Gabriela Berglas	You said the WUAs are doing their job well. How can you see that?
00:21:07 Translator 1	In practise, he sees that they are working quite well with the people, with collecting the fees for the services, on making the budget, distributing the water. They just need support, little support from the AO in terms of specialists and technical equipment and also from the RWMD to clean up, to repair the canals. But otherwise, none of their government agencies can do their work. Because the WUAs have already been in place for many years and they know how to do the work.
00:22:18 Translator 1	In terms of technical support, like tractors, excavators... they are very, very old, you know, almost from Soviet times, more than 30 years old. And they sometimes also rent the new ones, but the rent payment is also high. And that's why they will need the new equipment, the WUAs.
00:22:44 Gabriela Berglas	And he said that he wishes for more support from the government. What kind of support?

00:23:24 Translator 1	From his side he only sees technical things like tractors, excavators, and specialists. But if you talk with the WUAs, you will probably find some more answers. But from his side there are only these two points.
00:23:52 Gabriela Berglas	I meant what he wishes from the Republican budget.
00:24:18 Translator 1	Yes, from the Republican budget as well. Because... a simple case would be to purchase a new tractor for instance, because the local AO budget will not be able to do that. They will need the Republican budget support.
00:24:36 Gabriela Berglas	So like supporting this form of funds, right? Yes. And did he also mention more awareness of the problem from the side of the government for the irrigation problematic?
00:24:57 Translator 1	Ah yeah. For the farmers from the side of the farmers, from the government, the public.
00:25:40 Translator 1	He believes that there is of course the consciousness, the awareness of the issues, especially with that drought problematic and the irrigation. [...] [Discussing with Translator what to ask Deputy of AK]
00:26:41 Translator 1	[...] Maybe you should ask what kind of changes should be done for the WUA? Maybe they will introduce new changes which will help the WUAs to work better. [...]
00:28:26 Translator 1	For instance, as the village council, as the local parliament, there could be the suggestions from his side, from the deputies that the WUAs should stay should remain the same, that they should continue their work, but they will need...they should have more support from the AO and from the RWMD in terms of technical specialists, technical expertise, tractors, excavators, and in this way, without transferring the canals to anyone, it can be done in the same way as it used to work, but with more support.
00:30:54 Translator 1	He doesn't see how to say how this new policy will be implemented, it's very questionable. If for instance these canals will be transferred to AO, AO doesn't have enough people to work with the irrigation system. They still need this WUA to help them. So, if will WUA will remain, what is the point of transferring these canals to AO? He doesn't see the point. Like the ultimate goal.
00:31:28 Gabriela Berglas	They could help them in an administrative way?
00:32:47 Translator 1	The [crucial] point is on what level the WUA is working. If they are working well, they already have all of this, they already have a good system. They have fee collection, they even impose fines on the people, but they should get these fines as well. This is the matter of working well or not. If they are working well, they already have all of this.
00:33:41 Translator 1	The point is that maybe in theory it looks good, that the AO will have more administrative resources to collect the money. But in practise we don't know for sure how it will be. First point. Second point, WUAs already have that experience of collecting the funds, of collecting the money from the people and they have been working here for almost what? For more than 20 years, so they have quite an experience this system. So his point is to keep these WUAs and to provide more support, that's all.

00:34:42 Translator 1	Maybe we can finish and then if you have on the way some kind of questions, you can refer to the family again you know because while we are writing, you will have more like.
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Postscript

At one point my translator helped me and suggested some good questions to ask the deputy of the AK. This was a very helpful suggestion, as I after the deputy started to talk about his views on farming and the farming cooperations, I kind of lost track of my interview guide.

As there were citizens outside waiting to speak to the deputy, he didn't have a lot of time to remain for longer. Even though the interview was rather short, it gave a good insight on the people who do not completely agree with the policy reform.

22) Merged Interview with Head of AO and Head AK, Kyrgyz-Ata (Pilot)

22 P Kyrgyz-Ata Head AO and AK 5_Sept.m4a

Kyrgyz-Ata: 5 Villages

1 WUA

Signed to position in 2021

Internal canals : 24 or 44 km??

Took over 44 kms (all), no cementation, (tried) to clean and do some current reparation work until now

AK: 35 people work in AK, 5 of them are specialized in the irrigation sector

ME: 1 member who is also Head

5 murabs

1 excavator driver

1 accountant

1 operator

6 fee collectors

1 main engineer of RWMD

4 plumbers, who do all of the services

Pre-Reform:

- Only saw bad sides
- WUAs had many debts

Transcript

Gabriela Berglas:	Does he know how the irrigation system worked before the policy reform?
00:06:03 Translator 2	When he was assigned to the job, he only saw the bad sides [of the WUAs]. This organisation was in debts. [...] They had debts of 200'000 soms. The credit was for two excavators, for like [each] 100'000 soms.
00:07:28 Translator 2	So, in the WUAs there are some suppliers who supply water [note: murabs]. They didn't get money.
00:08:13 Translator 2	In addition, they also took money from the people and they promised to build. But unfortunately, they didn't.
00:08:26 Gabriela Berglas	With building he means cementing the canals?
00:08:30 Translator 2	Ooba, ooba [Kyrgyz, translated to: Yes, yes]
00:08:33 Gabriela Berglas	When he took money from the people, with people he means like the farmers?
00:08:36 Translator 2	Yes.
00:09:02 Translator 2	Nobody knows what happened to the money because you know, like corruption is possible.

[...]

- 1 WUA in the entire village

- The AO took over all of the 44 kms of internal canals
- They weren't able to cement any of the canals yet, but they did some maintenance work

00:13:24 Gabriela Berglas	Does he know why the WUAs didn't work until now?
00:15:15 Translator 2	Because of irresponsibility, they didn't do anything. The Head of this association [WUAs] was assigning his siblings, it's called nepotism, you know... his siblings in very important positions. And he also told me that maybe there was some corruption. About this, they didn't do anything.
00:15:51 Gabriela Berglas	Basically all of the important positions of the WUAs were just basically like family members. And did they have any education? [...] Like any knowledge that maybe qualified them anyways?
00:17:08 Translator 2	The head was assigning those people who didn't even have any idea what they were doing. They were just like signing up, you know, like all the documents that the other people like brought to them.
00:17:25 Gabriela Berglas	OK, so the farmers came and they have like documents and problems and they wanted money from them and they [the WUAs] just signed them without understanding it correctly.
00:17:38 Translator 2	Yes
00:17:46 Gabriela Berglas	But they collected the irrigation fees on time? [explaining what the irrigation fees are]
00:17:55 Translator 2	Yes, they did.

[...]

- Internal canals: all mud canals

00:19:40 Gabriela Berglas	The WUA gave the canals to the AO. Did they do this voluntarily or did they discuss it? [explaining it, while other people are entering the room]
00:21:36 Translator 2	So yes, at the beginning there was tension. They were resisting. But then eventually, they did. First, they [AO & AK] had meeting with them [WUA] and talked about all of the problems... Like in that they are responsible for everything, and then they agreed to give [them the canals]. [Somebody offers us tea and coffee]
00:22:16 Gabriela Berglas	It's also quite interesting that the AO it took over the WUA even though they have very high debts. Does the WUA [actually meant

	AO & AK, but translator did not correct this in their translation] have a plan to pay off these debts on time?
00:24:44 Translator 2	All the debts are responsible for them, the AO.
00:25:09 Gabriela Berglas	They paid them off?
00:25:13 Translator 2	Yes, like for excavators.
00:25:20 Gabriela Berglas	For tractors as well?
00:25:25 Translator 2	[nods] They are paying off the excavators right now.
00:25:30 Translator 2	They're being paid.

[...] Translator 2, Advisor & GB try to resolve a misunderstanding.

00:28:25 Translator 2	RWMD also had debts and they are also paying them off.
00:28:34 Gabriela Berglas	Are they paying their debts together off?
00:28:36 Translator 1	Yes
00:28:41 Gabriela Berglas	How would he describe the cooperation with the RWMD in general?
00:30:08 Translator 2	They are working very close together, very well, but sometimes there are conflicts. Because they have to give... divide water... it's a problem like we should get like more water...
00:30:30 Gabriela Berglas	The AO probably wants to receive more water from them, is that right? [Translator 2 nods] So how do they solve this problem? Do they discuss it?
00:32:42 Translator 2	He has just shown the map of the department [RWMD], so there is a canal, and in order to solve the conflict, they decided to install a camera so that they can observe... When the department closes the water, they see it in the camera and call.
00:33:17 Gabriela Berglas	What was the problem? Was the problem that RWMD just closed the gates?
00:33:23 Translator 2	The department also gives water to other villages. And sometimes there is a scarcity, and they [then] don't give any water to them. And that's why they installed a camera. So they observe and call and solve this problem.
00:33:47 Gabriela Berglas	So the AO put up the camera?
00:33:53 Speaker 3	Yes, they put it up.
00:33:58 Gabriela Berglas	Does he think that the RWMD could have taken the canals? Would they have been capable?
00:35:00 Translator 2	He doesn't know that.
00:35:02 Gabriela Berglas	Has there already been a change, because they already used some excavators and tractors? Did the farmers already receive more water? Since they took over the canals.

00:36:03	Translator 2	In 2021, with the help of Helvetas, they started to get more water. In this year, they decided to provide money, distribute money, around 200,000 soms.
00:36:39	Gabriela Berglas	To where?
00:36:45	Translator 2	To clean.
00:37:08	Translator 2	In 2022, they cleaned 11 kilometres. In spring. After they cleaned the farmers came and thanked them after they saw the results. [I continues]. Before, the water suppliers [murabs] didn't get money [referring to salary] via credit cards. In 2022, they gave them cards and they started to get money [referring to salary] [from the AO]. You know like before, they didn't get any money.
00:38:34	Gabriela Berglas	With suppliers you mean murabs, right? [Translator 2: Yes]. And what about before, did they then get any money [referring to salary] [from the RWMD]?
00:39:01	Translator 2	Before, they didn't get any money [referring to salary] for like 6 months [from the WUAs].
00:40:08	Gabriela Berglas	Were the farmers able to irrigate their land more often than before?
00:41:44	Translator 2	As a result of cleaning, we have more opportunities nowadays to get more water and he also told me that from ???, this is an AO, they gave 10 tons of cement [from the AO].
00:42:20	Gabriela Berglas	Who cemented the canal? Did the farmers do it themselves or was it the AO?
00:43:04	Translator 2	So he distributed cements to the murabs. And the murabs did all of this stuff. [I continues] Also, not only murabs do this job and also people in spring are free, so the murabs and the people work together, they clean water [referring to Ashar].
00:44:11	Gabriela Berglas	So for example in Massy, Rayon Nooken, farmers were able to like irrigate their fields not twice but three times last season. Is a similar effect visible here as well?
00:44:53	Translator 2	Yes, he said that before. It is more water now.
00:45:40	Gabriela Berglas	How would he describe the relationship of AO with the farmers?
00:46:11	Translator 2	They are working very close with each other, when they [farmers] have problems, they will always come to the AO and they will try to solve the problem.
00:46:22	Gabriela Berglas	What are the main problems that farmers address to the AO?
00:47:18	Translator 2	In 2020, there was a problem. The farmers called him at night at 12 o'clock. Nowadays, they don't have such problems anymore, because they have solved this problem. And they transferred this responsibility to the ME. They only have problems with the water schedule.
00:49:11	Gabriela Berglas	OK, that's the main problem. Now it's like the water distribution and what kind of problems were there before? For example,

	when they called them at night at 12:00 o'clock? What was that exactly for a problem?
00:49:39 Translator 2	Because of water scarcity. Nowadays, after trainings, everything is good, and they only have problem with time schedule for the distribution of the water.
00:49:52 Gabriela Berglas	Can he describe the problem with the time schedule?
00:51:21 Translator 2	Usually they give water to one village. But there some people who take water [GB: They steal water?] Yes, they steal water. Because of this, they have problems with the time schedule.
00:52:48 Translator 2	They used to give water to the whole village once. But nowadays some canals have holes and its flooding... That's why they decided not to give [all of] the water [at once] to the whole village. That's why they decided to do the time schedule.
00:53:28 Gabriela Berglas	So that was before the time schedule, because some canals were so broke that they just lost the water. [Translator 2: Yes]. And now if they have the time schedule, they can control it better [Translator 2: Yeah].
00:53:56 Gabriela Berglas	Does he know about other problems that farmers have, also maybe like stealing or maybe not paying their fees?
00:55:19 Translator 2	One of the main problems is that some farmers don't give money on time. It's kind of difficult to collect money from farmers. And also some canals broke, with holes.
00:55:47 Gabriela Berglas	Are the broken canals directly reported to the AO?
00:56:40 Translator 2	You mean to the AO, right? Yes, they are. They report it and he [referring to the Head of the AO] goes directly to the field.
00:57:35 Gabriela Berglas	Is there a scarcity of water because they're like usually further away from the canals, or because they have access as the last people in the chain of the canals Do you see that differences there in access?
00:58:56 Translator 2	As said before, because of the holes, the water does not go to all of the farmers, that is why they decided to do the time schedule, so that all of the farmers can get more water.
00:59:15 Gabriela Berglas	So then, so theoretically the time schedule should help that every farmer has access to water. But then if other people steal from other villages, then it doesn't work anymore, right?
00:59:36 Translator 2	He with the other AOs gather. They told these people about it not to steal.
00:59:56 Gabriela Berglas	OK, they had like a meeting or conference together and then they inform the people that they shouldn't steal [Translator 2: Yes] And has it gotten better since then? Did they see an improvement?
01:02:02 Translator 2	Due to the water scarcity all of the farmers couldn't get [any] water. But even after the time schedule they started to get more. They informed the farmers through WhatsApp and other like apps. They said like today this village gets water, so don't steal. So the situation is getting better now, but sometimes it happens. Some people don't have like WhatsApp or other...

	They're not into apps. So sometimes they still they break the rules.
01:02:57 Gabriela Berglas	OK, actually they have also improved like the communication with the farmers by having WhatsApp and stuff. Does he know about many fights between farmers that share neighbouring plots?
01:03:36 Translator 2	Yes, sometimes with each other, sometimes with neighbours.
01:04:32 Translator 2	There was an occasion recently, where one of the farmers hit another one with this tool. But before having the time schedule, these problems happened more often, but after the time schedule its better.
01:05:06 Gabriela Berglas	When it comes to the AO and AK, how many people come from the irrigation sector? How many of them have the water irrigation structure of their political agenda? [Translator 2: You mean what?] I mean how many people in the AO and AK have connections in the irrigation sector?

[...]

- Head of AK enters the room
- Quick introduction of me and the project
- People are well qualified

01:16:31 Gabriela Berglas	What I heard from other AOs is that sometimes some AO's have problems hiring high qualified people because the pay is very bad. Is it true that many employees just go somewhere else and work like in a foreign country? [...]
01:17:42 Translator 2	They don't have this kind of problem because they raised the salary 20 %.
01:20:02 Translator 2	The people who work in this field get more money and they also raised the water fees.
01:20:38 Gabriela Berglas	They have this ME, right? Did they include any people from the WUA into it?
01:20:58 Translator 2	Only murabs work for them, others don't.
Gabriela Berglas 01:21:36	Why didn't they include other people from the WUA?
01:22:51 Translator 2	They only needed murabs, and other structures went away.
01:23:02 Gabriela Berglas	OK. Did he also say why they went away or?
01:23:06 Translator 2	Because they only needed murabs.
01:23:16 Gabriela Berglas	Did he also elaborate exactly why?
01:25:05 Translator 2	They took six murabs and they didn't take people from other structures because for example, they have enough people [of their own] like accountants, and other stuff. And he mentioned before that there were some problems, some conflicts. There was a conflict with the accountant and the head because of a misunderstanding and the problems. And the head didn't want

		[to hire those employees]. They only took the murabs. [...] Yes, there were tensions.
01:26:13	Gabriela Berglas	So I assume that they are happy with the work of the murabs. Do they do their work properly, on time?
01:26:37	Translator 2	There is a controller who controls all the stuff. All the jobs of murabs and he says that they work very well and there aren't any problems.
01:27:15	Gabriela Berglas	[...] Did he know how the old tariffs were made of? How transparent were they before with the WUAs?
01:28:29	Translator 2	He doesn't know about it before.
01:28:33	Gabriela Berglas	They raised the tariff 20 % [this is false as they raised the salaries by 20 %, but it hasn't been mentioned by how much they have raised the fees]. Can you tell me how you roughly calculated this tariff? Did you also include paying off debts, getting profits? You know for investments in the future like maybe buying new tractors and excavators, is that like included in this new tariff?
01:31:39	Translator 2	The fees that they get from farmers are not enough to do investments or like big jobs. For instance, for one hectare of land, the farmer only gets 1000 soms, which is not enough. They can raise the price of the fees but the people won't agree with this. That's why the fees they get from the farmers are not enough.
01:32:30	Gabriela Berglas	[...] And what about cementing in the future? Is it like roughly planned if it all in the future?
01:34:01	Translator 2	The Korean cooperation agency [note: KOICA] gave them 4 million soms in order to build the canals.
01:34:37	Gabriela Berglas	OK, so they have the canals, and is it with an interest rate?
01:34:42	Translator 2	With interest? Yes. [GB: And to what interest rate?] It's a grant.
01:35:26	Translator 2	So they will build one and in two days they will build another one. [...] Not a big, but a small canal. [GB: How many metres?] 750 metres. In Ak-Bulak village.
01:36:43	Translator 2	So in order to build the canal, they spent 2 million soms [from KOICA] and the AO also gave them 200'000 soms.
01:39:19	Translator 2	They gave 200'000 soms from their own budget and then in addition, AK gave 400,000 soms to build that canal.
01:39:53	Gabriela Berglas	When it comes to increasing the tariff fees, you said that it is very difficult to increase the fees. So did they already try to increase the fees, but then it didn't. So they increased fees by 20%, right? [Translator 2: They increased them by 10 %] And then, the farmers were very unhappy, but they are paying that, is that right?
01:41:15	Translator 2	Before raising the fees, they had a meeting with the people and they were discussing about it, about inflation... They were ok with raising the fee.
01:44:09	Gabriela Berglas	[...] Do you have any plans of digitalizing the whole administration? [...]

01:44:34	Translator 2	Yes, the ME will show you tomorrow.
01:45:07	Gabriela Berglas	He's in the AK [...] How easy or difficult is it to convince people that the irrigation infrastructure is important or to like invest in these things? Is it a hot topic or are people more interested in other problems?
01:46:37	Translator 2	The people understand it correctly, because they know that they have problems with this irrigation. And they don't like those other problems.
01:47:14	Gabriela Berglas	How did the policy influence their work?... How has his work changed since the policy reform? [Translator 2: Since 2022?] Yes.
01:49:01	Translator 2	He only got positive sides because when Helvetas and KOICA came they showed the work steps now his jobs are much easier. And in this village, they have really big problems with water. And when the people came to the AK they taught how to solve the problem.
01:49:49	Gabriela Berglas	They also got a training from Helvetas and KOICA?
01:50:18	Translator 2	He doesn't know.
01:50:28	Gabriela Berglas	When it comes to just making general project proposals... AK and AO work together, is that correct? Proposals? Could you like briefly explain the process of making the project proposals?
01:53:04	Translator 2	So when it comes to making project proposals, firstly they invite Helvetas or KOICA and tell them their problems and then they go to the people and ask them about this. But when it comes to the budget, the AK does the budget.

[...]

- More discussions about the project proposals

01:56:22	Gabriela Berglas	But what do they feel is the one of the main limiting factors of the success of all of these projects? Like money...? [...]
01:57:48	Translator 2	There is a problem with documents and also with the budget. [GB: What does he mean with the documents?] There are documents that you should fill out to realise what you made, maybe like a report.
01:58:21	Gabriela Berglas	What exactly is the problem?
01:59:05	Translator 2	It takes a lot of time to collect all of the documents. Firstly, you should go to the AO and the Oblast...

[...] Funding

- They get funds also from Rayon Oblast Development Fund
- Most difficult part to apply for a fund is to estimate the prices of everything.

ATR

- Thinks it positive because some AOs have a small budget → Fusing two or more into one, they will have more budget

Future

- If government will give more funds, they can solve these problems.
- He thinks that government is taking enough responsibility, gives enough thought to the problems, because before they cared less.

Postscript

Translator No. 2, ABAD counsellor and I were welcomed in the Head Office of the Head of the Aiyi Okmotu Kyrgyz-Ata. We were offered the regular tea, coffee and sweets. The head greeted us with a warm smile and seemed excited to meet us.

In the beginning of the interview, it became quickly clear that the translator did this for the first time, and had some difficulties in the beginning to translate everything. This is one of the reasons why the interview was longer than usual; the 2 hours and 15 minutes clearly exceeded the ideal interviewing time. At some passages the interviewee talked for a long time but the translator then summarized it in one to two sentences. There were also long breaks between the translations, as I later on learned that the translator was not used to translating English directly from Kyrgyz and back. He first had to take an intermediate step and translate everything into Russian, as this was the language in which he studied all of the grammar and vocabulary.

As I sometimes felt that the translator did not fully understand what I wanted to know, I started to elaborate my questions so that my translator would understand where my questions were coming from and in what kind of direction I was heading to. By giving a context, I wanted to make the translations easier. However, this led me into not asking clear questions anymore and also probably confused my translator a bit as myself.

Overall, the first part of the interview went very well. The Head of Aiyi Kinesh entered the meeting in the middle of the interview, so that I later on did a separate interview with him again.

After asking the main questions, I got a bit tired and nervous and then I lost track of the essential Qs that I wanted to ask. As I asked them about the process of project proposal, I wasn't clear enough in what I wanted to know and that is why I received an answer of how the project proposals specifically for Helvetas were made.

Overall, the interview went pretty well and gave some really interesting insights.

23) Head of Municipal Enterprise, Kyrgyz-Ata

6th October 2023

Head of ME worked as murab before; he was a water supplier, later on became head of ME.

Worked with ABAD Advisor

ME is under the AO, so what AO says and orders they will do

ME founded in 2019

24 members

6 murabs

2 excavators (1'185'000 soms taken as a credit, and they are paying it off with

1 car (Hyundai Porter) for emergencies (to reach the people)

Wanted to take more

Internal totally 44 kms; in total 21 kms are cemented; aryks: 17 kms (smaller canals), canals:
6 kms cemented (larger canals)

External canals: not 100 % sure. 11 external canals that feed Ak-Bulak

23 P KA Head ME 6_Oct.m4a

Transcript

00:17:11 Gabriela Berglas

What can you tell me about the WUAs before the policy reform, what was good, what bad?

00:19:00 Translator 2

Before this system formed, he only saw the bad sides. Nobody checked, one of the officials came and checked them. The murabs didn't get any money.

00:19:25 Gabriela Berglas

For example, they didn't get money for like six months, is that correct? [referring to information I gained the day before in an informal, non-recorded conversation]

00:20:13 Translator 2

With the murabs, firstly, there was a delay with money, the salary and the murabs used to only get cash. However, now they get it via cards... they always get money on time.

00:20:40 Gabriela Berglas

I think they also did some maintenance of the canals, right? Did they cement anything during that time [pre WUAs]?

00:21:21 Translator 2

They did some small work, partly, but not like this right now.

00:21:29 Gabriela Berglas

They did some parts?

00:22:30 Translator 2

They did some partial cleaning, which means not very often. But *they* [ME] did a big cleaning for 10 kms when they started working.

00:22:46 Gabriela Berglas

That was in 2019, right?

00:23:00 Translator 2

It was in 2022.

00:23:05 Gabriela Berglas

But they didn't do any cementing I guess? [Interviewee and Translator nays]

00:23:34 Gabriela Berglas

How many members of the WUAs wanted to hand over the canals to them?

00:24:01 Translator 2

44. [GB: Are those all of the people?] Yes, that's all.

00:24:36 Gabriela Berglas

Were there any arguments of keeping?

00:25:02 Translator 2

The siblings of the Head off the WUA... [not comprehensible]

00:25:32 Gabriela Berglas

Before the policy... How would you describe the... was there any cooperation between the WUA and the AO or the WUAs despite them not being able to legally help them, but maybe there was like still some informal corporation?

00:27:29 Translator 2

Before the WUAs and AO didn't have any relationship, because they didn't have the right to check the accounts.

00:27:29 Gabriela Berglas

Why were the WUAs incapable of doing the work?

00:28:50 Translator 2

Because of these many heads... like... they were afraid. Because if they did like something wrong, then the people had a chance... they had the right to replace the head. But however, now he's assigned by the government.

00:29:24 Translator 2

Like, I mean before it was like People's Association. So that's why like they were kind of incompetent. Everybody had a chance to [be] replace[d]. However, now, only the government replaces them and assigns them. So that's why they are afraid of giving bribes, doing corruption.

00:30:01 Gabriela Berglas

What were they afraid of in the WUA before?

00:31:34 Translator 2

Before, there were eight representatives in the WUA. During that time, the government didn't have a right to check what they were doing. Obviously, they could do corruption, they could take money. However now, the government has the right to check. [...]

[...]

- How many kms of canals are cemented? → 750 metres
- they are repairing some holes as we saw the day before

00:34:27 Gabriela Berglas

What does he know about the outcome of these 750 metres of cemented canals?

00:35:22 Translator 2

After this was done, the farmers get more more water because they repaired some holes and put new cement.

00:35:39 Gabriela Berglas

Did the farmers also get more harvest yield, does he know such things?

00:36:11 Translator 2

Let's ask the farmer this question.

00:36:15 Gabriela Berglas

And how would you rate the relationship of the municipal enterprise with the farmers?

00:37:23 Translator 2

Their relationship is good because there is like this regulation. As I told you before, they bought cameras and right now, they are regulating everything. The farmers are content.

00:37:56 Translator 2

It all comes because of the money. They didn't build everything, but eventually, they will realise all of this stuff and then they hope that the farmers will be more content. [GB: Ah, gaining trust first?] Yeah.

00:38:40 Translator 2

If they raise the tariffs, the situation [not fully comprehensible, perhaps "evaluation"] could be like bad. It could become negative between them and the farmers. [GB: Ah so they are careful there?] Yes, very careful.

00:38:55 Gabriela Berglas

What kind of issues do you farmers address to you?

00:39:18 Translator 2

So it's about water problems most of the time.

00:39:24 Gabriela Berglas

Yeah, but what kind of ones?

00:40:47 Translator 2

The usual address about the scarcity of water. Do you remember when we went to the first village [referring to ???] That's the most populated one. Most of the farmers don't get enough water. So that's why when they come here they address that. [...] They come here and ask them to repair the canals. But they are always looking for new projects, for new opportunities to repair and to ask for money from the government, from other like organisations, in order to solve this problem.

00:41:45 Gabriela Berglas

And when they come with this water scarcity, what do you tell them exactly?

00:42:13 Translator 2

When they address this problem, he said he will go out with them and try so solve this problem, like maybe repair. And then he is going to deliver water to all of them. Of course not enough, but a little bit.

00:42:39 Gabriela Berglas

But then it takes a lot of time to get the funds,

00:43:49 Translator 2

As a result of this, farmers break the rules and steal water. There is the main canal from which all of the villages take water. They give the water with the times schedule. that essentially before because of the holes some farmers don't get enough water, so some farmers break the rules and steal water.

00:44:25 Gabriela Berglas

Do the farmers sometimes come to him when they have disputes?

00:45:23 Translator 2

In the special season in July and August they have problems amongst farmers. When they are into conflicts, they call him. And he should come... and they say that he should solve this problem otherwise the conflict will worsen. They say that while you are sitting here you should work otherwise we will write some... to the government. [GB: Letter to the government?] Letter to the government.

00:46:04 Gabriela Berglas

And what does he do then? Does he then go there and try to like...

00:46:07 Translator 2

...Yeah. He goes there and tries to solve this problem.

00:46:14 Gabriela Berglas

And on the field, are there any discrepancies or differences between the access to water? Is it easier to get more water for some farmers? For example, maybe some farmers who are at the end of the canal... are they always the same people who don't get the water?

00:47:37 Translator 2

Before the people who lived at the end of the canal got little water because the canals hadn't been cleaned... they aryks. However, now the opposite is true; Everyone gets the equal [amount of] water.

[...]

Talking about

Talking about the different funds they have received from different organisations.

- About 4 mio. soms from
- They received grants from KOICA and the Kyrgyz government.
- Government project: They installed a device to level up the water with the help of the grants received by the government; they arrived with excavators and re-arranged stones. Costed around 5000 to 6000 soms. The government bought them.
- They came with the e

00:56:05 Translator 2

Nowadays, the government is interested in such kind of... The Head of the government says that if AOs have problems, they should address them to him and he will help them. Yeah. Not only for this village but for whole Kyrgyzstan.

00:56:28 Gabriela Berglas

So, then getting funds from the government is not that difficult at the moment, is that correct?

00:57:55 Gabriela Berglas

Yeah, it's not that difficult. [...] To your question, it's not that difficult to get from the government. But sometimes they need to get money for solving their problems. Yesterday I told you about the 750 metres of cemented canals? [The KOICA] gave them 2 Mio. Soms, AO together with AK gave them 600'000 soms in total.

00:59:24 Gabriela Berglas

Do they also get a funds from them Oblast Development Fund?

01:00:05 Translator 2

The government says that they will give them 2 Mio. Soms next year for a project that they are planning. [...] For irrigation canals.

01:01:23 Gabriela Berglas

And the debts that they're still paying off are only from the excavators, is that right?

01:01:26 Translator 2

Only from the excavators, right.

01:01:45 Gabriela Berglas

What does he know about the current tariff system... how are the current water fees made up?

01:02:20 Translator 2

For one hectare, they pay 1000 soms.

[...]

Clearing a misunderstanding

- Before: 1 hectare costed 800 soms, they then increased the price to 1000 soms per hectare in 2022 (last year)

01:07:29 Gabriela Berglas

He believes that they should increase the tariff, but he also believes that that will lead to conflicts under the farmers, and with the relationship of ME, is that right? [Interviewee nods]

01:08:03 Gabriela Berglas

Do they give fines to farmers who don't pay their fees?

01:08:21 Translator 2

They are planning to do so but they have not realised it yet.

01:08:34 Gabriela Berglas

What percentage of farmers pay their fees?

01:09:01 Translator 2

This year they collected money from 50 %, and they are also planning to collect the other 50 %. [note: by the end of 2023]. You know in the irrigation, the farmers pay like for a year. So they need time [to collect this large money at once] and because of this there is sometimes a delay. [...] Only 50 % of the farmers have paid, and the others have not paid yet.

01:10:31 Gabriela Berglas

And is there anything else he wants to add in general, about irrigation?

01:11:48 Translator 2

Right now, they have an app for water supply. [...] They are the first people who made this app. They have put all the data of the WUAs into it. With this app you can see how much money you need to pay or how much you have already paid. With the date when you have paid the money.

01:15:09 Translator 2

After they have transferred this into their system, their job has become easier. They can see the debts and who has not paid yet. Before, if they didn't pay any money it was forgotten. However, now with the help of this app they have the data to see who has paid and who hasn't paid yet.

01:15:46 Gabriela Berglas

Do you also have a map? Like have you mapped all of the pipes and can you see which canals are broken?

01:16:14 Translator 2

No, they don't have that yet but they are going to.

01:16:19 Gabriela Berglas

And who has developed that app?

01:16:23 Translator 2

The conducted it with IT specialists from Osh city. They worked with other organisations abroad, but they are located in Osh and they contacted them. They are the first people who use this.

Postscript

My interviewee wore a suit and had a calm and professional demeanour. He seemed to take the interview quite seriously, and he gave clear and precise answers.

At one point of the interview, I wasn't sure whether I was asking the right questions. I think I got a bit into a rut concerning how they reacted to issues in the irrigation system, and that led me into receiving the same answer multiple times. But at the same time, I had a question in mind where I wanted to get more detailed answers. It wasn't obvious that I wanted to hear a more detailed version of how the interviewee exactly solved the issues, so that he could illustrate to me how exactly he was helping the people. Because everybody can say that they "try to solve a problem", but in my case I wanted to know what does this exactly entail? Does an employee of the ME simply go to the site, look at the problem and say: "Yes, we will fix it another day" But usually nothing happens. Or did somebody go to the site and give instructions how to fix the canal exactly?

Moreover, with this interview I realized how much can get lost in translation.

In the end, I got a little bit confused with the tariff payment → I confused hectares with m^3 , and I somehow didn't properly pick up the information that they paid per hectare

24) Farmer, Kyrgyz-Ata (Pilot)

6th October, Head Office of Municipal Enterprise

24 P KA Farmer 6_Oct.m4a

Transcript

00:00:01 Gabriela Berglas

Can he recall the irrigation system before the policy reform?

00:01:00 Translator 2

As you see, not everyone's well informed. Before, this system didn't work. They had no idea how to ask or like... they thought that they didn't have rights to ask where there debts went or why the system didn't work. They never asked.

00:01:30 Gabriela Berglas

They never asked? Mhm. And was it a general perception, or was there also a reason why they thought that?

00:01:38 Translator 2

They had no idea, nobody told them that they should ask.

00:01:43 Gabriela Berglas

OK, so they just paid the fees, [Translator 2: Yeah] and nothing ever happened. Right? Were the canals around your plot ever cleaned or repaired?

00:02:28 Translator 2

The quality of the job of the WUA was negative. And they all understood that when the WUAs started working under AO. Right now they know how they worked.

00:02:49 Gabriela Berglas

But like the canal was never cleaned, right?

00:03:56 Translator 2

So before this system worked, they had no idea that there are murabs because the murabs never helped them. I mean they [referring to the farmers] did the job of murabs. I mean the farmers tried to deliver the water by themselves, but it's actually the job of murabs, right? And sometimes [they also did] the cleaning job of the WUAs.

00:04:27 Gabriela Berglas

Ok, so did they clean like once a year?

00:05:34 Translator 2

The murabs were pretending that they were working. And sometimes they were using their own interests in assignments, you know like there was this corruption.

00:05:51 Gabriela Berglas

Did the murabs collect money?

00:05:56 Translator 2

No. The murabs took the cements for their own interests, you know, maybe for their houses.

00:06:06 Gabriela Berglas

Ah OK, so the cement of the WUAs actually went to the murabs and they used it for their own house. [Translator 2: For their own interest]. OK. Who collected the money then?

00:07:01 Translator 2

He's not sure who collected the money, but there were officials who used to come to their houses and ask for money. And they never thought that they had the demand... [incomprehensible]. But however now, the government teaches them that they should demand or what they should pay. But before, they never thought about it.

00:07:33 Gabriela Berglas

Did they have like some kind of teaching or training from the government?

00:08:40 Translator 2

With the help of apps like WhatsApp, someone created a group and they joined and through this app they told them about this. And they never thought that the murabs should always be with them and should do the jobs. Because before they didn't know about it, it was the job of the murabs.

00:09:08 Gabriela Berglas

And that was over social media? [Translator 2: Yeah]. So he was there and he was the head of the AO, right?

00:09:14 Translator 2

Yeah. And he also mentioned the Head of the ME. When he became the head of the ME, he was doing really good job. When they [farmers] had problems, he went immediately and tried to solve the issues.

00:09:40 Gabriela Berglas

Ah, he immediately comes, nice. How would you rate like in general the relationship with the ME?

00:10:34 Translator 2

The relationship between the farmers and the enterprise is very close right now. Right now they have rights or when they need help, they come without any problem and address it. And he's [Head of ME] always helpful. He's always ready to help.

00:10:55 Gabriela Berglas

Does he have an example of an issue which he had and where the Head of the ME came?

00:11:57 Translator 2

Before, there was a big water scarcity and sometimes there were like 10 to 20 farmers who told them that they had water scarcity. Of course, like nobody would get like enough water. Then, with the help of the Head of the ME; he made a time schedule. I mean the farmers before never thought about a time schedule. So the head of the ME like solved this problem with the time schedule.

00:12:29 Gabriela Berglas

Who did they address before with this problem, before they had the head of ME?

00:13:25 Translator 2

Before they didn't address the problem, nobody they was trying to solve this problem by themselves. But there were bad days when they tried to deal with it by themselves, but they couldn't. Even the head of the WUA couldn't help them.

00:13:53 Gabriela Berglas

Did they have conflicts amongst each other, especially with the neighbours at that point?

00:14:45 Translator 2

Before, especially during the season when there is more water scarcity, there were like 4 or 5 times where you start hating other people and as a result of this, there were conflicts. But right now, when they have problems, they immediately come to the Head of the ME.

00:15:15 Gabriela Berglas

And is he [the Head of ME] able to solve all of the problems? [laughs. As the Head of ME also sits in the same room, it is obvious that he probably will not give a strong critique]. Pretend he's not here, otherwise it's bad for my data [laughs].

00:15:35 Translator 2

[Farmer nods] Yes [laughs].

[...]

General information about his farm

- His farm is less than 1 hectare (counts as middle-sized farm)
- Potatoes & carrots; these need to be watered 5 times per season
- Harvesting time is from September to October
- His field is located at almost at the end of the canal

00:18:28 Gabriela Berglas

How is he accessed to water? Is he now located a bit at the end of the canals or at the beginning?

00:18:59 Translator 2

Almost at the end.

00:19:07 Gabriela Berglas

Have you noticed a difference with the old model that you would get less water than the people who were located more at the beginning of the canal?

00:20:02 Translator 2

Before, they had more water scarcity because the murabs didn't bring the water because of this. And now when the excavators started working the water reaches everyone equally.

00:20:34 Gabriela Berglas

Are the canals around his plots cemented or muddy?

00:21:05

Yeah, they're all muddy.

00:21:28 Gabriela Berglas

He said he needs to water his his crop 5 times a year, right? Does he now see a difference... Can he water his crops more often than with the WUAs?

00:22:21 Translator 2

Now it's easier. And people now know about the murabs. And now he sees this system very positively.

00:22:44 Gabriela Berglas

Bit I mean how many times was he able to water his farm before and how many times can he water it now?

00:23:21 Translator 2

So he could water it five times but before, they were getting less water. And before, he was working from the day until the night to get the water. He had to find the water.

00:23:48 Gabriela Berglas

[...] And how long does it take the water now to flow?

00:24:45 Translator 2

Around twelve hours. [Gabriela Berglas: So that's like twice as fast] From 10 p.m. to 10 a.m.

00:25:00 Gabriela Berglas

Ah during the night so he doesn't lose water due to the evaporation. Is this the same volume during these twelve hours?

00:25:42 Translator 2

Yeah. If he starts at 10 in the morning the water gets less. [...]

00:26:03 Gabriela Berglas

No, no. I mean in general, because he used to water the whole day. But was that the same amount of water in total, which got on to his fields as in these 12 hours?

00:26:15 Translator 2

Yeah, he said so, yes.

00:26:19 Gabriela Berglas

Did he see a difference in the harvest yield with the new system?

00:27:07 Translator 2

He sees the new system very positively because right now, they don't have the same difficulties like they had before. And now they believe that they can continue farming because before, due to the water scarcity, some farmers quit their jobs. [Gabriela Berglas: And what about the yield?] It depends on the farmer. There is more harvest from the crops.

00:27:53 Gabriela Berglas

Can you tell how much more crops?

00:29:55 Translator 2

From one hectare, he gets 34 kilograms of potatoes.

00:30:11 Gabriela Berglas

And that's more than before?

00:30:13 Translator 2

Yeah, it is more than before. [Gabriela Berglas: Like 10% more or like...?] Yeah he doesn't know.

00:30:25 Gabriela Berglas

Have you noticed a change in your profit?

00:30:47 Translator 2

Yeah, he gets more profit.

00:31:05 Gabriela Berglas

Have you also noticed a difference in income?

00:31:11 Translator 2

Yeah, I already asked him about the income before. He said yes, but he's not 100 % sure about it.

00:31:40 Gabriela Berglas

So in general, how would he rate his relationship with the murab?

00:32:03 Translator 2

He has the chance to ask them everything whenever they need it. That means the relationship is good.

00:32:20 Gabriela Berglas

How does the water schedule work for you?

00:32:57 Translator 2

They give them rights to choose what time they need to water, their lengths and they choose during the night or during the day.

00:33:08 Gabriela Berglas

And is the water schedule on time?

00:33:23 Translator 2

Yes, everything's on time.

00:33:26 Gabriela Berglas

Do they also get the promised amount of water?

00:33:46 Translator 2

Yes, if you demand a specific amount of water, they then will give it to you.

00:33:57 Gabriela Berglas

Does he know about any tricks to stretch the law a bit? For example, I've heard of farmers who steal water, or they maybe build their garden too close to the canals, or they're not paying their fees.

00:35:02 Translator 2

Yeah, as already said before it happens. Like if there are like 10 people who argue that they need water... [...] It happens sometimes that one or two farmers steal water, but they try to solve this issues by themselves.

00:35:33 Gabriela Berglas

So you mean the farmers amongst each other? [Translator 2: Yeah] Does that also include the village head?

00:35:50 Translator 2

No.

00:35:59 Gabriela Berglas

How did they find a solution when somebody steals water, for example?

00:36:36 Translator 2

Even when the farmers stole water, if there was still enough water, then it was ok for them. But if there is water scarcity, they then call the Head of ME.

00:36:50 Gabriela Berglas

Did he ever encounter any an emergency? And if yes, how your difficult was it to solve that problem?

00:37:12 Translator 2

You mean now or before?

00:37:13 Gabriela Berglas

Just in general, like if you have an emergency.

00:37:32 Translator 2

Yeah he will contact the Head of ME.

00:37:35 Gabriela Berglas

So what is the most urgent issue that needs to be improved according to your point of view?

00:38:19 Translator 2

Nowadays they don't have urgent issues. He's happy that the people are working like this and they do their job very well. That's enough for him. If they keep up working like this they are content.

00:38:48 Gabriela Berglas

Sometimes people contact the head of the AO and some people contact the head of the ME.

Does he have an idea why this is like that?

00:39:46 Translator 2

Some farmers have a perception that the AO solves all of the problems. They have these kind of perceptions.

00:39:58 Gabriela Berglas

Ah because they anyway go to the AO for other issues and then they'll just address the irrigation as well. What do you know about the current water that you pay? What is your opinion on the water fee?

00:40:49 Translator 2

If the people who work in the ME keep on working well, then they are content, they don't have any problems.

00:41:02 Gabriela Berglas

OK, only if they weren't doing their job they would be unhappy. Do you believe that increasing the fee would be ok, because they increased the fee from 800 to 2000? [Translator 2: What do you mean?] What was their reaction?

00:41:48 Translator 2

Their reaction was OK because even like even if they need to pay like 800 soms before, the didn't do their job well. However now, they do the job well and that's why they're content.

00:42:05 Gabriela Berglas

What? What would you think if they would raise the fees again?

00:42:28 Translator 2

They will show their reaction... Like they would be unhappy... They would say: "Don't do this, don't increase".

00:42:37 Gabriela Berglas

OK. they would rebel, huh? [laughing] What do you think about introducing fines for farmers who don't pay their fees? Well, you should also add that that's a hypothetical question that they're not they're not doing that.

00:43:38 Translator 2

He agrees that they should introduce a punishment for those ones who did not pay. If you have the opportunity or if you have money but you don't pay, then you should be punished.

00:44:20 Gabriela Berglas

How does how does she see the prospect of the farmers in the future?

00:44:55 Translator 2

If the AO and the ME will work better and well, then they will get [incomprehensible], he is positive.

00:45:08 Gabriela Berglas

OK, good. That would be everything from my side. Is there anything that you would like to add?

00:46:42 Translator 2

He thanks the organisation and also the head of AO and the head of ME for working well and for helping them. And he also wishes that in the future, that they become better and then they do the transfer. Yeah. Thanks to you again for coming up here.

Postscript

The farmer was a very sweet and humble man, who appeared to be happy to be interviewed. As we were in the room with the Head of ME, it was clear that the farmer wouldn't criticize him or the practices of the ME. In hindsight, I would re-formulate the question and instead of asking him about clear negatives about the ME I would ask him if there was anything that he'd wish from the ME, or if he'd have a suggestion of improvement. This way, instead of elaborating any direct forms of criticism the question could have led into a discussion between two experts sharing their know-how, and how they possibly would do certain things differently. I should have reformulated the question of stealing water, as it may sounded a bit like that I was accusing him of doing so. I wanted to know if he knew from anybody else how and when water is being stolen. But I don't think that the question was taken in the wrong way. In general, I am quite positive about my findings and that my persistence in asking the participants for more details about the things that they just said resulted in some new findings. This way, I actually received some detailed information about the changes that happened, and how the farmer feels about them. Moreover, a direct link between the Head of the ME and visible changes has been made.

25) Vice Head AO, Nookat, Pilot

9th October

In total 501 kms of internal canals (aryks)

19 AOs in Rayon Nookat and 1 city

- Of which 1 AO doesn't have any canals

Head was also part of the Policy Reform

25 Rayon Nookat Vice Head 9_Oct.m4a

Transcript

00:02:48 Gabriela Berglas

Can you recall the irrigation system before the policy reform? What was good and what was bad?

00:04:20 Translator 2

In brief, he only sees the bad sides of the old system. Before, there was no responsibility, like nobody took responsibility. Nobody knew like what they should do. He was waiting [for] the system because he knew that this system would work. And now everyone is responsible and they do their job. [...]

00:05:09 Gabriela Berglas

And can you maybe also explain exactly like where like who is exactly responsible? Like where does he see the biggest responsibilities?

00:06:03 Translator 2

So before you know that it was responsible to offer and he says that like he didn't see any effect when the WUA was in control. However, right now it's the responsibility of the AO and they do their job effectively.

00:06:21 Gabriela Berglas

Does he know the exact reasons why the WUAs didn't work very well? Because in the other region, they had a lot of corruption.

00:08:03 Translator 2

As you know, WUAs had lots of debts. That was the reason why they transferred this responsibility to the AO. You know that like yesterday, he was also talking about the debts. [...]

00:08:47 Gabriela Berglas

Was there also a technical aspect?

00:08:50 Translator 2

No.

00:09:49 Translator 2

The head of the WUAs didn't pay the salary to his workers for about 2 years. Like totally about 600'000 soms. 500'000 soms

00:10:09 Gabriela Berglas

500,000 somsof salary.

00:10:12 Translator 2

Yeah, about.

00:10:13 Gabriela Berglas

OK. And di the WUAs also take any credits?

00:10:39 Translator 2

Yes.

[...]

- This Rayon Nookat has 15 WUAs
- The other WUAs also took credits for excavators

00:13:36 Translator 2

Yes, he helped one village. It's called Karatash. They cemented 3 kilometres, which costs 3 million soms.

00:14:04 Translator 2

And there is also a cement factory nearby, and they were helping [handing out] cements to all of the WUAs. [Gabriela Berglas: So they gave them cement?] As a support. [GB: Did they donate it, or did they sell it to a special price?] For support.

00:14:31 Gabriela Berglas

From the 501 canals that they have, how many kilometres of them are cemented in total?

[The interviewee takes his phone and calls somebody]

00:16:49 Translator 2

Right now, he's talking about the cement he distributed to the AOs. In total, he distributed 103 tons of cement. He distributed all of the cement to 10 AOs. [...]

00:17:30 Gabriela Berglas

Before the policy reform, did they have any sort of contact or cooperation with the WUA support? You know like informal, non-legal support?

00:19:02 Translator 2

They were cooperating with each other. But it was legal, not illegal.

00:19:13 Gabriela Berglas

Yeah, I know. I didn't mean illegally. I meant, like, informal.

00:19:22 Translator 2

Because the WUA was not in control... you know the AO didn't have the right to control them, due to that reason there was a big mess in the WUA. However, right now, WUA is under the AO and they do their job very well.

00:19:49 Gabriela Berglas

Can you maybe say what kind of corporation they had? What did they do? Did they give them cements or any teachings?

00:20:36 Translator 2

Yes, they were giving cements.

00:20:44 Gabriela Berglas

And did they see the WUAs use those cements?

00:20:48 Translator 2

Yes. They also have pictures if you want, they can show them.

[...]

Presented us pictures of cemented canals: From December 2020, 2021.

00:24:46 Translator 2

In December 2022, they gave 4 tons of cements to a village to repair the holes. They only give the cements to the people, they then fixed it themselves.

00:28:05 Translator 2

500 kms of canals in total, of which 80 kms are cemented. Everything was cemented during Soviet Union, not known that any canals were cemented via WUAs. [...] In Nookat, there are 4 rivers. One river is in total 113 kms. The WUA did repairments and cleaning, but no cementing.

00:35:06 Gabriela Berglas

So what is the main reason why the WUAs didn't work?

00:36:26 Translator 2

In total there are three AOs which took the WUAs. One of the main reasons are, of course incompetence. They didn't do their job well. But the other WUAs are still working. And before they had a meeting when the WUAs weren't doing their job. And then the AOs decided to take those WUAs under their control. [I continues] For instance, there is one village called [*incomprehensible*], and they also have a WUA, and that WUA works very well.

00:37:28 Gabriela Berglas

So what works there very well? Are they repairing the canals and cleaning them?

00:37:41 Translator 2

Yeah. Repairing stuff, cleaning stuff.

00:37:44 Gabriela Berglas

Did they also have the case where they wanted to hand over the canals but they didn't take them, because of debts or something?

00:37:51 Translator 2

Before that they had a meeting and they decided that only 3 AOs decided to hand over. The others didn't want to. Because they are WUAs that are working well.

00:38:00 Gabriela Berglas

Are there any AOs which would really like to take over the WUAs because they think that they would do a much better job than the WUAs?

00:38:53 Translator 2

The AOs, they agree. I mean, they don't have any problems with other WUAs.

00:39:04 Gabriela Berglas

Ah, ok, they're happy.

00:39:04 Translator 2

Yeah. They're happy.

00:39:16 Gabriela Berglas

What does he know about excavators and tractors? Do all AOs and WUAs have enough excavators and tractors?

00:39:43 Translator 2

No, not enough.

00:39:50 Gabriela Berglas

What is his attitude on the other farmers? Does he think that the farmers are taking enough responsibility of like of the irrigation infrastructure? Are they paying their fees?

00:40:41 Translator 2

The farmers pay their fee once. If they did not pay, then they were not able to get water.

00:43:14 Gabriela Berglas

What does he think is the ideal model that WUAs should have? Should they be under the AO or work independently?

- There is a law that states that the WUAs should work tightly together.

- WUAs should work with ME

00:43:23 Translator 2

The WUAs should work with the municipal enterprise.

[...] Clearing of misunderstanding

00:44:59 Gabriela Berglas

What does he think of the tariff policy? What did he know about the fees that the farmers are paying?

00:45:42 Translator 2

They should raise the tariff. It is not enough. There is water scarcity each year, so they should raise the tariff.

00:46:07 Gabriela Berglas

What are like the biggest strengths that he has seen with the policy reform?

00:48:03 Translator 2

There are 11 canals in Nookat and all of them have been built a long time ago and they all need repairments. They were built in Soviet Union. I support this system, because nowadays, if there are problems they can go to AO and ask for problems. But before, they didn't have this right. Because the WUAs were electing the head by themselves. But now, they have control, because they can elect the head by themselves.

00:49:21 Gabriela Berglas

Do you think that the WUAs should disappear or remain? Or be incorporated under the AO?

00:50:28 Translator 2

I cannot say for sure if the WUAs should because there are some villages where their bosses do their job well.

00:50:56 Gabriela Berglas

What is your attitude of the municipal enterprise? What are the strengths and weaknesses?

00:51:17 Translator 2

You mean uh, the monies and the plus of municipal enterprise, right?

00:53:25 Translator 2

Speaking about the strengths, they have high responsibility in their job. And I'm not sure about the weaknesses.

00:54:11 Translator 2

So he would give the ME in general 8 points out of 10.

00:56:12 Translator 2

The farmers pay their fee on time and that's why he supports Kyrgyz-Ata more. If all of the MEs would work like the one in Kyrgyz-Ata he would give them a 10.

00:57:03 Gabriela Berglas

Do they pay by cash or online?

00:57:07 Translator 2

They don't have the digital system.

00:57:28 Gabriela Berglas

App and then they're still taking it manually, right? OK. So that's like one really good thing. So it also sounds a bit as if he's saying that there's maybe think that kid he's utilised maybe a bit more independent.

00:57:28 Translator 2

Yeah, he told the state that there's only one.

00:57:46 Gabriela Berglas

Because you know they.

00:57:49 Gabriela Berglas

I think they themselves they initiated that app, right?

00:57:54 Gabriela Berglas

I mean, they like made it right nicely think that, like, maybe Kiki's authors in general works a bit more independently than the other eloquent.

00:58:08 Gabriela Berglas

More responsible.

00:58:18 Translator 2

And.

00:58:27 Translator 2

Yeah, like they created this app like for the first time.

Postscript

- This interview was one of the more difficult ones. The answers were dragging, and they were not entirely what I expected. The answer
- My translator often just summarized the answers
- I think I was talking too fast and I asked too complicated questions. My questions should have been more straightforward. I did this because I wanted to elaborate my questions, so that it would become clear what I wanted to know.

26) Head RWMD & Engineer RWMD, Rayon Nookat (Pilot)

9th October

The policy reform is implemented in 3 different villages of Rayon Nookat

Interviewee 1: Head of Repair Management Rayon Nookat

Interviewee 2: Engineer of RWMD

Irrigation Infrastructure

- He is responsible for 1
- The overall condition of the overall irrigation infrastructure is in general middle satisfactory
- The overall condition of the canals is bad
- In total there are 13 km canals
- 10 canals
- 3 canals are being currently repaired

16 WUAs, debt of 600'000 soms

Attitude on old model

- The WUAs didn't do their job
- E.g. There are 4 canals which should be repaired, but the WUAs were not doing it in the past nor today
- The RWMD wanted to take the matters in their own hand made a project proposal and sent it to the ADB, but they didn't receive an answer yet.

WUAs

- The WUA didn't do their job, they didn't do it regularly, not on time. They only did the cleaning.
- Main reason: nobody controlled their work

Credits and Debts

- The RWMD doesn't know much about the credits and debts of the WUAs

Main problems:

- Had issues with their equipment
- Some WUAs, even though they promised a specific amount of water, but they usually don't deliver the promised amount of water. They did this to save money (because they collected money for a specific amount of water, but then didn't deliver it all)
- In the past, they cemented (fixed) some canals thanks the support of a help organisation. But it only lasted for 1 year and broke down after that. We were discussing about the reason why it broke down so quickly, it is probably due to the cheap quality of the cement. This was supported by the organisation ARIS
- They asked the AO for transportation, for support, but they didn't ask the RWMD for support often. But when they asked them, they helped them.
- Even though they themselves own their own equipment, it is not enough to manage it all

00:35:56 Translator 2

They think that the WUAs should be eliminated because for instance, when the WUA gets water for like three som, they sell it for 20 som. And they don't give the money to them [RWMD]. That's why the WUAs have lots of debts and that's why they should disappear.

00:37:31 Translator 2

In other villages, there are WUAs which will take the water also for three som, but they then sell it for 4, 5, 7, 8 or 10 som. But anyways, the WUAs don't give the RWMD the irrigation fees [that's why they're so highly indebted].

00:40:13 Translator 2

[Interviewee 2]: In the beginning of the season, the WUAs only paid 78%. That means that 22 % has not been paid yet. The RWMD has sent people to collect the rest of the fees. This means that the WUAs don't collect [100 % of] the money, and they don't do their job.

00:42:17 Translator 2

In total there are 16 WUAs in Rayon Nookat, and they didn't pay yet 600'000 som of their irrigation fees for this year.

00:43:01 Translator 2

[Interviewee 2]: There is also one AO called Töröz, and it has not paid 117'000 som since last year. [GB: Ah that's the one with the ME, right?] Yeah.

00:43:21 Gabriela Berglas

How difficult is it to collect the money? So maybe they send somebody and then do the spas, do they then like discuss it with them or do they just hand them the money or do they bring like an explanation?

00:44:56 Translator 2

The head of the WUAs just collect the money they need and the other money like should be collected by the RWMD.

Murabs

- Relationship between RWMD and murabs is good.
- The reason why the farmers didn't know what murabs were is because the murabs were changing all the time.
- With the old system, the murabs didn't do their jobs.

00:23:24 Translator 2

Yeah. So he's saying that before [during the old model] the murabs didn't do their jobs. Because first of all, they had a very low salary. And at that time, the WUAs was the people's responsibility. If the people didn't like the murabs they could change everyone [immediately appoint a new one]. It was bad. Everything comes down to money, to finance.

00:24:16 Gabriela Berglas

There must have been difficulties between the murabs and the head of the WUA. Is that true?

00:24:55 Translator 2

Yeah, as I told you before, if they [the committee of the WUA] didn't like the murabs, they just changed them.

Policy Reform

- Positive about the reform, works well

But there are still people who don't believe in the abilities of the WUA -> the WUA only shows up when they need financial resources, but they never show up for any other reasons

- Nowadays, the murabs deliver the promised amount of water

00:58:26 Speaker 3

Last year, they paid on time. But before, when it was under the WUA they had many problems paying off the fees. They WUA didn't pay fees on time.

01:00:03 Translator 2

The WUA asked the RWMD, and they said that they should first pay like 30 %.

AO

- Cemented 1 km

ME

- 2 ME in Nookat: Kyrgyz-Ata and Belbörök.
- Kyrgyz-Ata has 68'000 soms debt and Belbörök 17'000 soms debt. → These villages have time until 15th October to pay off the fees
- During the interview, the Head of the ME of Kyrgyz-Ata (who I interviewed a couple of days before), called and said that they paid off the remaining irrigation fees.

RWMD

- Owns 2 excavators, 1 truck

29) Head of Agricultural Department (& Farmer), Rayon Nookat

11th October 2023

Farmer and Head of Agricultural of Rayon Nookat since 3 years.

Voice 029_11_Oct_3 WUAs Aravan.m4a

Transcript

00:03:32 Gabriela Berglas

The cleaning OK from the people. Does he organise the cleaning himself then?

00:04:06 Translator 2

[Farmer & Head of Ministry of Agriculture] Yeah, it's challenging to do the cleaning because it takes a long time. It takes a lot of time to clean all the canals.

00:04:30 Translator 2

They're saying that if the canals were like cemented, then it would like there wouldn't be no problem with water.

00:04:42 Gabriela Berglas

And how is his relationship with the with the other WUAs?

00:05:22 Translator 2

So when they have such kind of problems, they have a meeting with the WUA of Abu-Hayat.

00:05:32 Gabriela Berglas

What usually happens then? Does he have an example?

00:06:12 Translator 2

They have a meeting, then they discuss which days and what time they should get the water, and then they try to solve this problem.

00:06:32 Gabriela Berglas

Do they have this time schedule?

00:06:39 Translator 2

Yeah, they have the time schedules.

- Farmers mostly receive the water on time

00:09:01 Translator 2

They need a full repair so that the water will reach the end. For instance if they give like 100 litres of water, then only 50% of the water gets to the end.

00:09:25 Gabriela Berglas

Has the canal ever been repaired since the Soviet Union?

00:10:10 Translator 2

They haven't cemented canals, they only have muddy canals.

00:10:33 Gabriela Berglas

How would he describe his relationship with the murab?

00:10:38 Translator 2

It's very good.

00:10:44 Gabriela Berglas

Does he think that the murab is doing a good job despite the problem of the canals?. Or could he improve something as well?

00:10:38 Translator 2

He's doing his job very well.

00:11:04 Gabriela Berglas

Does he know about like some tricks of other farmers who maybe, like, steal the water or don't?

00:11:21 Translator 2

Very often. The farmers steal the water very often. This thing happens very often because they don't get enough water.

00:11:49 Gabriela Berglas

Mm-hmm. So still water? And when you know that they steal water, how does he try to solve this conflict?

00:12:23 Translator 2

First they contact the murabs and then both officers.

00:12:34 Gabriela Berglas

Can the police do anything about this? Because it's like...

00:12:50 Translator 2

Yeah, they fine them.

00:12:54 Gabriela Berglas

OK, that's interesting. Because the canals, I mean, they don't belong it to the AO they still are private, right?

00:13:54 Translator 2

Before, the canals were under the WUA, however now they are under the AO.

00:14:04 Gabriela Berglas

Ah, I thought there they are non-pilot [they only just recently handed over their canals to the AO].

00:14:22 Gabriela Berglas

You do you they contact in the emergency?

00:14:49 Translator 2

When they have like emergency situations, they usually contact with the head of AO and his first assistant.

00:14:59 Gabriela Berglas

And what do they then do? Can you give an example?

00:16:13 Translator 2

So in short, Aravan is like far away from the glaciers, so they all always have problems with water scarcity. And when they have, like he didn't tell like an example, he just told that if they have such kind of like problems, they contact the AO and they tell them that they should distribute the water with the time table. But he didn't tell about a big example.

00:16:50 Gabriela Berglas

OK. And why aren't they contacting the murabs then?

00:17:46 Translator 2

When they have such a problem, they contact the WUA as well.

00:17:55 Gabriela Berglas

What does the WUA then do?

00:18:08 Translator 2

They also look at the time schedule.

- Good relationship with Village Head, and they also come and try to help solve the problems
- Only 50 % of the canals are under the AO, the rest are still under the WUA

- The farmer gets water from the canals that are under the AO
- The AO does not have a ME → they rent out their canals to the WUAs, they do the job and are controlled by the AO

00:21:39 Gabriela Berglas

How would he overall quality of the work of the of the WUA?

00:22:15 Translator 2

If he would rate from zero to out of 10, he gives them a 10.

- Farmer pays 100'056 soms per hectare irrigation fees
- He has 68 hectares in total

00:23:47 Gabriela Berglas

What does he think of the future? Will they be able to cement the canals in the future?

00:25:39 Translator 2

The farmers are doing their job well, but they only have the problem with water scarcity.

00:26:15 Translator 2

We have this [water] reservoir, which is quite far away from here. Even if we get water from Papan won't be able to get the full [amount of] water because there are [too] many villages [which also need the water]. And the water won't reach Aravan. [...]

- Head of AO enters the room and conversation

00:30:22 Translator 2

He's saying that the specialty of Aravan is that like, they get the harvest like twice a year. And the irrigation is very important here [in Rayon Nookat] because here it's like the measurement of farming. Because they only focus on cotton. If the farmers get more cotton, then there people will work in the agricultural field. [GB: Is it more lucrative?] Yeah, he's saying that like, if they focus more on cotton, and if the farmers get more cotton, then there will be more people who will have a job.

00:31:31 Gabriela Berglas

They have a water scarcity, but is the agricultural field growing in general?

00:33:11 Translator 2

[Head of AO]: The agriculture has improved this year because the government has provided them with fuels. [...] And with a specific type of wheats.

So the the the head of elopement is going to like to have a meeting. He has a meeting. Yeah.

- Head of AO leaves the room again

00:34:31 Gabriela Berglas

As the from the national Turkish government side, what should they maybe improve for the irrigation sector? Maybe maybe like more awareness? More funds?

00:35:13 Translator 2

[Farmer & Head of Ministry of Agriculture] It would be great if the government would cement all of the canals so that they will be able to get enough water. [referring to the national government]

00:35:40 Gabriela Berglas

So that basically the national government would give the funds to the AO and WUAs, so that they can do that?

00:35:47 Translator 2

Yes.

- Farmer doesn't believe that they need a separate government for irrigation, and calls that a "waste of money"
- Where should the money come from for the canals? Should come from the government and organisations. Increasing the fee is a bit difficult, because the people will otherwise get angry. That's why they shouldn't increase.
- It would be good if the government would provide them each year with money for cementing 300 – 400 metres of canals per year
- They are currently not collaborating with any organisation, nobody contacted them.
- He as the Gead of the agricultural department also never contacted any organisation during this time period.
- Head of AO on the other hand has an ongoing project with Chinese organisation, which is planning to invest 28 mio. soms

00:46:27 Translator 2

The canals are now under the AO and each year they give 500'000 soms.

00:47:08 Gabriela Berglas

OK, these questions are slowly at the end, is there something important he wants to add about the canals?

00:48:05 Translator 2

He wishes that all of the canals will be cemented. [...] Because it is 10 kms distance from the RWMD to Aravan, and the canals are muddy.

- RWMD is not supporting them

27) Vice Head AO (and Farmer) & Head AK (Aravan, NP)

10th October 2023

Merged interview with both interviewees. Head of AK entered the room a bit later at minute 6.

The Vice Head of the AO is also a farmer

Notes for Postscript

- The recording quality is very low;

Audio file

27 NP Aravan Vice Head AO (farmer) & Head AK 10_Oct.m4a

Transcript

Irrigation Infrastructure

- In Aravan village there are 3 big canals which are 66 kms long in total.
- Of these, 20 kms are cemented in total, the rest are muddy.
- 3 different WUAs work on these 3 canals
- 3 WUAs: Abu-Kaya, Kara-Kurga & Spativa

00:02:33 Gabriela Berglas

How would you rate the overall condition of these canals [referring to the 66 kms of canals in Aravan village]?

00:03:06 Translator 2

There is a canal called [incomprehensible] and it's condition is really bad. Each year, they do the repairment but it's getting worse anyways.

00:03:29 Gabriela Berglas

Does he know what they are repairing each year?

00:03:56 Translator 2

At the beginning of the year in Spring they give cements each year to the WUAs.

00:04:16 Gabriela Berglas

So each year so they can do some repairing. OK. And then do you think that they use all of the cement to repair their canals [referring to other WUAs in the region which stole cement for their own purposes]?

00:04:38 Translator 2

All cements are used because they are controlling them.

00:04:51 Translator 2

So the WUA comes here [to the local council] and gives them reports, for example with pictures.

00:05:09 Gabriela Berglas

And were they able to cement any new canals, or was it only repairment?

00:05:40 Translator 2

They were only doing repairments. [GB: Do they also do cleaning?] Yes. They clean the canals twice a year. At the beginning of the spring, there are like little rocks which are stuck in the canals and because of this the canals get [blocked]. [...]

00:10:44 Translator 2

[Head AK] At the beginning of the year, AO goes to the AK and asks for money from them, and says that they like need to repair the canals or something like that, like it's broken. And they [AK] distribute the money for them. And for this year, they distributed around 1,000,000 soms for irrigation.

00:11:14 Gabriela Berglas

And so that money goes directly to the AO, and then to the WUAs? [...]

00:12:58 Gabriela Berglas

How would you rate the competence of the WUAs?

00:13:32 Translator 2

[Vice Head] This year, 2023, they took water [worth] around 500'000 soms and paid them 471'000 soms. They should pay 29'000 soms, like almost 99% is paid and they are working well. And if they didn't work well then... [incomprehensible]. [...] They still have time until November to pay their fees. [...]

00:15:03 Gabriela Berglas

OK. So they do actually work, they clean they pay their fees but they're not really capable of cementing new canals.

00:15:37 Translator 2

The build 550 metres of canals... cemented. [GB: When?] This year.

00:15:58 Gabriela Berglas

From where did they get that money?

00:16:06 Translator 2

From the AO.

00:16:18 Gabriela Berglas

What is their opinion on the new policy reform?

00:17:04 Translator 2

This year they plan to take the responsibilities of the WUAs under the AO.

00:17:11 Gabriela Berglas

Are they going to have a ME?

00:17:40 Translator 2

Right now, they don't have a ME, but they are going to have [one]. They will use the company which cleans the village. [...] It's a private company, they also clean all of the garbage in the schools and kindergartens.

00:19:33 Translator 2

OK. The governments company, the cleaning company gave them 700'000 soms, so they bought some transportation. Like this one [pointing on a picture of a little truck].

00:20:05 Gabriela Berglas

Could you perhaps elaborate why you want to take over the WUAs?

00:21:09 Translator 2

[Vice Head AO]: This year there was a big conflict distributing the water. And that's why they decided to combine responsibilities of the WUA under the AO because when there like together, there is only one thing that will work. If they work separately, then the people in the WUA will take the water and give it to people that they want to. And there will be more control if their combined. And people also come to him [Vice Head AO] and ask for water.

00:22:22 Gabriela Berglas

And what is his [Head AK] opinion on the policy reform?

00:22:40 Translator 2

[Head AK]: He also thinks it's the right decision if it is combined. Right now, it was separate from the AO... [incomprehensible]. [Head of AK basically repeated what the Vice Head AO said before]

00:23:45 Gabriela Berglas

And from the WUAs side, do they want to hand over the canals to the AO or is there some resistance? [Translator 2: No, they don't want to]

00:24:07 Gabriela Berglas

OK, why not?

00:24:49 Translator 2

At the beginning of the season, like people all want water, but there is not enough. Because of this... people want the WUA to be under the AO.

00:25:10 Gabriela Berglas

And are you going to take over the members of the WUA and integrate them into the municipal enterprise?

00:25:22 Translator 2

Yes, definitely.

00:25:40 Gabriela Berglas

Do the WUAs have any larger debts?

00:26:05 Translator 2

So they have a debt of 55'000 soms. [...] They will pay these debts soon, and then they will be taken over by the AO.

00:27:50 Gabriela Berglas

Is it a must that the WUAs will have to pay off their debts before the AO will take them over?

00:27:52 Translator 2

They must pay off. [I am not entirely sure whether my translator means that it is a must to pay off the debts before or not]

00:28:11 Discussion of equipment

- AO owns 3 cars, 1 excavator, 1 tractor

00:29:05 Gabriela Berglas

How would they describe their relationships with the farmers? Do they know their problems?

00:29:26 Translator 2

Yes, they know their problems because they work very close with them.

00:29:35 Gabriela Berglas

Does he have an example?

00:30:28 Translator 2

They are working very close and at the beginning of the season, they come and ask. So when they have problems, they they give them water, fuels, and they also tell them like that this year they should plant like cotton... [GB: Why cotton?]

00:31:38 Translator 2

Why cotton? Because the cotton is very useful. If they because if they plant cotton, there will much more [incomprehensible] for making soil... [...] It's also good for the government. [...] Cotton is also important for us, because from the "stick" of the cotton we make bread.

00:33:01 Gabriela Berglas

Ok, so they're actually acting as s support for the farmers, so they're giving them water, cotton, gas, and like advice. Do you know if the WUAs did something similar as well?

00:34:48 Translator 2

OK, the main thing is that in spring, they have a loss of water, like we discussed [before]. [...]

35:00 – 37:30

- They don't make any project plans unless they have the budget for it
- They want to build water wells

00:37:18 Gabriela Berglas

And so when the farmers, when they have their water issues, for example, when there's like scarcity of water, what do they do for example?

00:37:51 Translator 2

[...] They have a time schedule.

00:38:02 Gabriela Berglas

Who introduced that? Was that them?

00:38:10 Translator 2

Yes, they did that.

00:38:17 Gabriela Berglas

And how does the time schedule work for them?

00:38:45 Translator 2

So with the time schedule, it's getting better and if the farmers break the rules, then they do not give water to them.

00:39:06 Gabriela Berglas

And but do they have to, like, pay a fine?

00:39:32 Translator 2

No, it [not giving them the water] is worse than a fine.

00:39:33 Gabriela Berglas

[laughs] Actually that's true! They are more strict.

00:39:37 Gabriela Berglas

Exactly. OK, so with the time schedule, did they see any differences? Do farmers get more water or do they get it more often?

00:41:18 Translator 2

OK. Basically during June, July, August, it's the time when it's very hot and there is especially at this time their time schedule works. Because it is during these days that the people take the water turn by turn.

- As soon as canals are broken, farmers will miss water
- By repairing canals, they will receive more harvest

00:41:50 Gabriela Berglas

And when it comes to the cleaning and some repairing, do they receive a little bit of more water than before?

00:42:28 Translator 2

When there is when the canals are broken, then the water will be missed right after the repair stop the water. [...] If everyone gets [enough] water, the farmers will have like more harvest.

00:43:17 Gabriela Berglas

[...] What about the time schedule? Are there less conflicts with the farmers?

00:43:56 Translator 2

They don't have conflicts.

00:44:02 Gabriela Berglas

Did they have conflicts before the time schedule?

00:44:17 Translator 2

Yeah, before there were many conflicts and then they decided to make a time schedule.

00:44:22 Gabriela Berglas

Does he have an example?

00:44:55 Translator 2

Some murabs [promised] to give water to ten people, but only gave water to 5 people. Then the conflicts started.

00:45:11 Gabriela Berglas

Does he also see a difference in the access of water? For example, people who have their field at the end of the canals, do they always receive less water than other people?

00:45:48 Translator 2

They get the water equally.

46:00 -

- The WUAs paid 96 % of the fees to the RWMD
- Specialty of this Rayon is that the farmers harvest twice a year. Just like in Masy.

Clearing of misunderstanding

- These people say that only in Aravan do they harvest twice a year. However, in previous interviews other stakeholders also claimed that about their region. It is possible that this statement is true for the entire Osh and Jalal-Abad region, but that I didn't get that at first.

00:51:46 Translator 2

Yeah, he was also mentioning that in the future, they are going to build the dam in one village. They sent the proposal to the council and they are checking it and in the near future if they plan and realise this project they will be able to save like 30 million m³ of water. If they like build the dam.

00:55:12 Translator 2

One of the main problems of this village is that they want to cement like all the aryks and the canals because for instance, when the head of the RWMD gives them water, for like 100 metres let's say, only 15% of that water arrives at the end due to the muddy canals and the rest of the water is just missing. And that's why they want to cement all the canals and small aryks to solve the problem. And there are some canals, which are like 7-10 kilometres long, which should be cemented. [...] They don't have enough budget.

- They sent project proposals to get wells

01:01:39 Gabriela Berglas

How is the relationship with the RWMD, are there any conflicts, for like getting the water?

01:02:01 Translator 2

They don't have any problems.

01:02:07 Gabriela Berglas

And how is it to work with them? Do they also get, I don't know, like excavators or something like that from them?

01:02:46 Translator 2

Yes, if they ask for excavators they will get them.

01:02:57 Gabriela Berglas

Do you think that the RWMD could also take over the canals? Why the AO and not the RWMD?

01:03:35 Translator 2

They aren't able to do this. [Gabriela Berglas: Why not?] Because the canals are too far apart and the canals are very big.

01:04:06 Gabriela Berglas

So why do they believe that the WUAs don't work that well? Are the people not educated enough, aren't they organised

01:04:55 Translator 2

They only have problems with water scarcity.

01:05:08 Gabriela Berglas

And how is the relationship between the AO and AK concerning the water issue?

01:05:26 Translator 2

Their relationship is good... [incomprehensible]

01:05:31 Gabriela Berglas

How much do farmers pay for their water fees?

01:05:45 Translator 2

The farmers pay 2300 soms.

01:05:58 Gabriela Berglas

Oh, OK, that's quite a lot. That is the highest fee that I heard until now.

01:06:56 Translator 2

They [the AO] raised the tariffs because the people who were working in the WUA this year told them that they had a very low salary. And when they raised the tariff, they raised the salary at the same time as well.

[...]

01:07:26 Gabriela Berglas

OK. Yeah. So they also raised the salary of the members of the adult.

01:07:31 Gabriela Berglas

And is it now also more attractive maybe to work for the government here like or do you think the salaries are high enough to attract?

01:08:15 Gabriela Berglas

What do you think of the tariff? Do you think that it should be raised? Or not?

01:10:52 Translator 2

[Until now] They don't decide, he said. And it's the head of the WUA which makes a presentation to people each year and decides on the fees. Like they show the spendings and how much there was available. They will decide which tariff they will pay.

- Afterwards, the AK will decide on the financial budget of the WUAs and their spendings and tariff.
- ATR: This AO is the largest one and they will not combine it with other ones
- Farmers future: They have a positive outlook on the future, they believe the farmers will receive more harvest

Postscript

- Was located in a large conference room

30) Head of WUAs, Aravan (newly made Pilot)

11th October

3 WUA Heads in Aravan

Abu Hayat (6-8 ha, cotton & wheat), at the end of the irrigation canal, canals in bad condition because they are muddy

Kara-Korgon

Tebat

Abu-Hayat (42 kms canals in total,

Kara-Korgon (22 kms)

Name of WUA	Founded in	Head since	No. kms total	No. kms cemented	Handed over to AO	Cemented by whom	members	No. of kms cleaned
Abu Hayat	1996	2017	42	1.8, 700m by FSU, no cementation by themselves	all	AO	60-70	1.5 Mio. Soms from AO to cement 550 m
Tebat	2009	2011	11	0	all	-		1.5 kms cleaned with excavators, rest Ashar
Kara-Korgon	2001	2018	22	1 (5%), by themselves	20	A		200 metres cemented in 2023

During FSU, only 700 metres were cemented, the rest they did by themselves

Voice 030_11_Oct.m4a

Transcript

00:07:41 Translator 2

Tebat is complaining that they don't get enough water, because all of their canals are muddy.

00:08:07 Gabriela Berglas

I heard that you cleaned your canals twice a year, once in beginning of spring. Is that correct?

00:08:54 Translator 2

[all]: Yes, it's twice a year. And at the beginning of the spring, they also do massive cleaning stuff and repairing stuff.

00:09:03 Gabriela Berglas

So that's like the big repairing with all of the cement that they get. [Translator 2: Yes] And when is the other time that they clean the canals?

00:09:41 Translator 2

In autumn. [...] In the beginning of November and in the beginning of spring.

- Discussing how many kms they transferred to the AO (noted in table above)
- They cemented 150 metres this year. And the other 26 kms they cleaned with the help of the cleaning stuff.
- They own the excavator themselves (private)
- AO distributed 500'000 soms in total to the 3 WUAs

00:14:45 Translator 2

[Head Abu Hayat]: This year, the AO distributed 1.5 Mio. soms to Abu Hayat to cement 550 metres.

00:15:12 Gabriela Berglas

Why did Abu Hayat get 1.5 Mio. soms and the others 500'000 soms in total?

00:16:43 Translator 2

[Head Abu Hayat]: AO distributes each year, 500,000 soms, except for Abu Hayat, to whom they gave 1.5 million soms. Why? Because in Abu Hayats' village, they have a large water loss. So he discussed it with the AO, and they decided to distribute the money to them.

00:17:23 Gabriela Berglas

OK, so did you have like the most water loss? [Translator 2 nods]

- Head of Abu Hayat gets my phone number so that he can send me the picture of the new canal
- Would be great if Swiss investors would come to Switzerland and give them a grant, because there is a lot of wasser missing.
- Abu Hayat has 1000 ha of land, that is why he needs especially a lot of water

00:24:04 Translator 2

[Abu Hayat]: He has never cemented without the help of the AO due to a lack in budget. If there is some small repairing stuff, then they distribute money by themselves.

00:25:38 Translator 2

[Kara-Korgon]: They also never have cemented with their own budget because their budget is too small, and it's only enough for the salaries of the people. [GB: But they also do the repairing?] Yes, small repairs. [GB: And what about Tebat?]

00:27:27 Translator 2

[Tebat]: They do the small repairing stuff. And before, the AO didn't help them, and there many problems. But however now, after this system started working, they [AO] now focus more on the irrigation and they give money each year.

00:27:51 Gabriela Berglas

So, before the AO didn't have any excavators and stuff, which they could have given to him?

00:28:06 Translator 2

No, before they didn't have any excavators and stuff.

00:29:48 Translator 2

[Tebat]: When the Soviet Union collapsed and nobody took attention, nobody was caring about the canals, about the irrigation. And when the government formed again, they formed WUAs for the irrigation. And he was also talking about the job. Like he doesn't have any holidays, he works every day. [GB: So he's saying that it's really tough for him to work?] Even if they have holidays, the government won't pay them additionally.

00:31:31 Gabriela Berglas

OK, so in general, what is their attitude towards the policy reform, that they can give it to the AO?

00:33:19 Translator 2

[all]: They are positive with this system and they say that if they provide them with fuel and if they increase the salary of the WUAs, then why not?

00:33:35 Gabriela Berglas

So with the fuel, they would buy the fuel before beforehand, right? [...] [The government would buy and sell fuel to a lower and fairer price] Because if you got it right, the problem is that the fuel prices rise a lot, right?

00:33:53 Translator 2

Yes, and they spend a lot of money for fuel. If they are like united, then it would be great if the government would provide them with fuels. So they are happy.

00:34:33 Gabriela Berglas

Those who have cemented something, did they already see a difference? Do they have like more water volume? Can they water more often?

00:35:23 Translator 2

They are saying that they started getting more water when they cemented the canals.

00:35:30 Gabriela Berglas

Can they water their crops more often or is it only once or twice a year, per season?

00:36:28 Translator 2

[Abu Hayat]: They get the same crops per season, they now they started getting more water, enough water. Before, when the canals were not cemented, they missed water, they were getting less water.

00:36:38 Gabriela Berglas

Is this the same for Kara-Korgon?

00:37:59 Translator 2

[Kara-Korgon] His village is the last [in line]. So, consequently, he gets less water [compared to the other villages]. Before, it was very difficult for him, when the canals were not cemented. But even now, even though the main canals are cemented, it is still challenging for him to get water. [respondents were laughing and joking with each other because he is the last in line]

00:38:30 Gabriela Berglas

Why doesn't Kara-Korgon want to hand over more canals to the AO?

00:39:20 Translator 2

The two kilometres that he handed over, are the main canals.

00:40:10 Translator 2

They handed over these canals because they were in a bad condition. [...]

00:42:21 Translator 2

The AO asked the WUAs to give them the main canals that were in a bad condition.

00:42:27 Gabriela Berglas

So did they also see a higher yield, do they have more harvest and a higher profit? Those two WUAs with the cemented canals.

00:43:53 Translator 2

Since the AO cemented the 550 metres of canals, the people are happy, but before there were lots of conflicts. Because they had less harvest. [...] The plus side of the cemented canals, you do not need to do big cleaning stuff, you know with the excavators.

00:45:56 Gabriela Berglas

So in general, how do you think is the whole situation developing, like in what kind of direction? Do they believe that the canals are now getting cemented one by one?

00:47:00 Translator 2

If the government and other organisations will help us, then the irrigation system will grow. *But*, I want to be honest and say that we are not able to make or cement all the canals with our own budgets due to the lack [of finances].

00:48:07 Translator 2

The government provides money, distributes money to the RWMD. Which means that they don't focus on internal canals.

00:48:38 Gabriela Berglas

Because that of course this is the old system because it was a private enterprise, so he's basically criticising that now they should also give more money to the AO, right?

00:48:52 Translator 2

Yes, in order to pair all the internal canals.

00:48:55 Gabriela Berglas

So actually the government should take more responsibility and give more funds?

00:49:01 Translator 2

Yeah. [Tebat also agrees with him]. If the AOs would distribute more money, that would help them.

00:51:12 Translator 2

It would be great if the RWMD would not take fees from them, because the government distributes lots of money to the RWMD. It would be great if they would give the water for free. Because the RWMD sells water for 3 soms.

00:52:09 Gabriela Berglas

How high is their fee collection rate? Do they collect like 90% or more like 50%?

00:53:10 Translator 2

Abu Hayat has around 60 - 70%, Tebat has around 50 % and Kara-Korgon has less than 50 % [right now, they still have time until the end of the year to collect the remaining money].

00:53:28 Gabriela Berglas

Do they have an idea why their fee collection rate is so low?

00:54:04 Translator 2

The people right now don't have any money. That's why the farmers give less fees. And the harvest is less and the price for vegetables is less, like for potatoes, cottons, yes.

00:54:35 Gabriela Berglas

Is it just this year less, because of the drought?

00:54:39 Translator 2

hey haven't collected the full fees yet because... So last year, Tebat collected 96 %, Abu Hayat as well. Kara-Korgon collected around 60 %.

00:55:33 Gabriela Berglas

But what? But like it's a type of said that he has less harvest. Is it because he has so many muddy canals? Because I think Abu Hayat has more harvest because of more water, right?

00:56:00 Translator 2

Abu Hayat has more harvest because he has more cemented canals. The harvest is actually good, but they weren't able to sell the cottons. [...] [Abu Hayat claims]: Equipment is expensive, fuel is expensive...

00:58:04 Translator 2

OK, so he's saying, the fuel is expensive, the equipment is expensive, but the water is not expensive, it's very cheap. And they wish that the fee for water like would increase a little bit.

00:58:32 Gabriela Berglas

Does he think that increasing the fees would be feasible? Because they are already quite high.

00:58:54 Translator 2

Yes, the farmers will disagree.

00:59:46 Translator 2

If they increase the price for water, then there will be more workers because right now, there are some murabs who get 5000 soms per month, which bad actually. If they increase, then the murabs will have to work day and night in order to be very productive. But, the people will disagree with this. Consequently, they cannot increase the fees.

01:00:22 Gabriela Berglas

Did they already try and talk to the people and explain to them why they need to increase the fees?

01:00:51 Translator 2

Actually, they already increased the price for the water this year. But the price for the water [in Aravan] is really large compared to other villages.

01:01:27 Gabriela Berglas

How much did they increase the fee?

01:01:46 Translator 2

20 %.

01:01:48 Gabriela Berglas

Ok, so maybe they will have to wait a while until they can increase it again.

01:02:19 Translator 2

[Abu Hayat]: When he started working, it was 18 soms and then he increased it to 23 soms. And he also increased the salary of the murabs by 100 %. Tebat and Kara-Korgon also increased the fees from 18 soms to 20 soms, 20 %. That is 2000 soms per hectare per year.

01:04:20 Gabriela Berglas

What kind of factors did you include in this fee?

01:04:57 Translator 2

They increased the fee because the RWMD increased the fee. For instance before, he had to pay 65,000 soms, and now today he has to pay 100,000 soms.

01:05:42 Gabriela Berglas

Were they able to discuss this increase in price with the RWMD?

01:06:19 Translator 2

It was an order of the Ministry of Agriculture.

01:07:00 Translator 2

Even though the RWMD increased the fee, they still get the same amount of water.

01:07:32 Gabriela Berglas

What are the main differences between their WUAs? Except of course having different amounts of muddy canals.

01:09:47 Translator 2

Actually they don't have any differences, but some people in their villages some people pay their fees on time and others do not. That's a difference. And they want the government to build the water reservoir, so that they get enough water and on time.

01:10:20 Gabriela Berglas

OK, good, thank you very much.

Postscript

Mistakes:

- In retrospective after transcribing this interview, I did not ask enough questions which directed towards the policy reform; I was experimenting with the questions too much and I underestimated how “ok” my first set of questions for Jalal-Abad region already were. I had the ambition to “re-invent the wheel” but I probably overdid this and lost focus of my most important thesis question.

31) Head WUA (Aravan) & Head WUA Support, Aravan (newly made Pilot)

12th October

31 NP Aravan Head WUA & Head WUA Support 12_Oct.m4a

Transcript

00:00:01 Gabriela Berglas

How would you rate your overall irrigation in general?

00:01:41 Translator 2

[Head WUA]: They don't have enough water resources. For instance, they take water from five places; reservoir Nayman. And one of the main issues is water scarcity. And the canals condition is very bad.

00:03:32 Translator 2

[Head WUA]: Yeah. Again, concerning the water scarcity; It's really difficult when you don't have your own reservoir. They get water from 4 rayons in Uzbekistan.

00:06:49 Translator 2

[Head WUA]: Currently, there are 97 wells, only 46 of them are in good condition and the rest is outdated. And if the pump stations were working well, it would be easier for us to get water... nowadays they are also outdated. [...]

00:07:30 Gabriela Berglas

Didn't he say something like 25%?

00:07:48 Translator 2

[Head WUA]: Yeah, like 20%... Only 25% of the canals were cemented and the rest are in a bad condition, and that's also one of the reasons why the water is missed.

00:08:53 Translator 2

[Head WUA]: Currently, in 8 rayons, in eight villages, there are 12 WUAs and one municipal enterprise.

00:09:48 Translator 2

[Head WUA]: There are some houses which are built near the small canals, and for that reason they cannot do the repairments. Because they are too close.

00:10:27 Translator 2

[Head WUA]: So they were exploiting them and because of that, now it's really hard to provide water to the farmers. [...] And to do the repairments.

00:11:57 Translator 2

The people who live in the villages are growing and their fathers built new houses for their children in their backyards. So it's difficult for them.

00:12:14 Gabriela Berglas

Because otherwise they would, like, come into the garden and they would like... [Translator 2: Yeah] OK, so do you think that they maybe also like a law from the AO, that gives certain boundaries to stop this problem?

00:13:19 Translator 2

There is actually a law, but it says that you cannot build the house nearby the water but it doesn't work.

00:13:55 Translator 2

Because the population is growing each year.

00:14:03 Gabriela Berglas

So he said that 25 % of the canals are cemented. Of those 25 %, does he know how much percent is in a good condition? And how much needs repairs?

00:14:47 Translator 2

50-60 % of those cemented canals are in a good condition.

00:15:01 Gabriela Berglas

So they have a municipal enterprise. Does he see a difference in the work of the municipal enterprise compared to the WUAs?

00:15:51 Translator 2

OK, he was recently transferred. There was this other Rayon, but yeah, he before he was working in Nookat. So he's he was telling me about the Nookat multiple enterprise. He's saying that yeah, he saw differences. With the ME, you have a control and he was telling that the municipal enterprise was working well.

00:16:48 Translator 2

So he's also saying that when it's under the municipal enterprise, then the government will support them more. However, now when it's just WUA, then the money is lost by itself.

00:17:03 Gabriela Berglas

So he's basically naming the main reason why it works well is because there is a certain amount of control and more funds. Does he have anything add to that?

00:19:38 Translator 2

The government does not give enough support to the WUAs. Before, they combined 5-6 WUAs and knowing that when you don't have support, it's just useless.

00:20:02 Gabriela Berglas

They combined five to six WUAs with each other, but who's they?

00:20:36 Translator 2

There is one village, [village name incomprehensible] And they were six WUAs, and they combined them. In one village, one AO.

00:21:00 Gabriela Berglas

And why did they combine them?

- Respondents gave very long answers, and I then advised my translator to translate shorter sequences.

00:22:56 Translator 2

[Head RWMD]: There is actually support from the government for the WUAs. For instance, in the moon AO, the government was supporting them and the WUAs were cleaning all the wells. And now they will be in a good condition.

00:24:00 Translator 2

The reason was that like before, they didn't see any good results from them and that's why they came up with the decision to combine the WUAs to see more results.

00:24:14 Gabriela Berglas

They combined and the results then were that they cleaned the wells?

00:24:19 Translator 2

Yeah, yeah.

00:24:25 Gabriela Berglas

What else did they do exactly?

00:24:39 Translator 2

They cleaned the 4 wells with the budget from the state government.

00:24:48 Gabriela Berglas

Were they also able to clean any canals?

00:25:29 Translator 2

This year they will distribute money to clean the canals, so the government actually spent around 2,000,000 soms you know to clean with the equipment. [incomprehensible]

00:25:55 Gabriela Berglas

And also so they could buy like equipment, right? [Translator 2: Yeah]

00:26:02 Gabriela Berglas

2 millions is a lot – did they buy an excavator or a tractor?

00:26:54 Translator 2

With this money, they built transformers for electricity. With the money from the AO.

00:27:26 Gabriela Berglas

Is it like so other than like also working at the same time more on energy issues like electricity.

00:27:31 Gabriela Berglas

Are they now also working on like energy issues?

00:28:14 Translator 2

Because there is a lot of scarcity of water, they decided to support the AO with money.

00:28:46 Gabriela Berglas

How did they now combine these five to six files? Because those must have been a lot of like people. Were they all combined together or did some people lose their jobs?

00:29:47 Translator 2

The workers still work there. It just became one ME.

00:30:08 Translator 2

One of the good things is that when it became a municipal enterprise, so now AO has a chance to distribute money.

00:30:30 Translator 2

Because when it's just a WUA, the AO cannot distribute money.

00:30:40 Gabriela Berglas

It's probably also more transparent as where the money goes to. Do they believe that these specific WUAs have the problem of corruption where they took the money they took fees but the money just disappeared?

00:32:23 Translator 2

He's not sure about it for 100%, but when the WUAs gave them money, they got receipts and counted the money. So there was no corruption.

00:34:30 Translator 2

Those WUAs worked with receipts. But there were other WUAs which did not work with receipts.

00:34:37 Translator 2

They worked there that, like money by themselves.

00:34:42 Translator 2

And he was shattered that if it if there is presence of the spa like goes to the municipal enterprise then there will be more control and.

Respondent 2 doesn't agree with respondent 1. The farmers always get the receipt from the WUA.

Farmers

- Receive a receipt from the murabs

00:37:10 Translator 2

First, there are some murabs who just say that the farmer should pay an amount of money, but they don't provide any the receipts. So that's why like he came up with the decisions that they should always ask for a receipt.

00:37:38 Gabriela Berglas

So, I mean they are actually non-pilot region, right? So like what was their impulse to adapt so quickly to take over the canals? [...]

00:39:27 Translator 2

So, actually it was a suggestion of the government. The government suggested to transfer the responsibility of the WUA into an enterprise for at least one village and see the results, see the differences.

00:39:46 Gabriela Berglas

OK, so which one was the first one that they did? Was it Kyrgyz-Ata?

00:42:43 Translator 2

Kyrgyz-Ata is working very well and they were the first which who created an app where all of the farmers are able to pay the money by themselves and do not have to pay the murabs. And it's also one way to get rid of the corruption. Kyrgyz-Ata now also works with other organisations like KOICA. And with the help of KOICA, they built some canals.

- They took 42 Mio. Soms from the World Bank. They built 4.6 kms of canals. With an interest rate of 25 %. They received it in November 2021 and paying it off by 2023.
- The houses are built too closely next to each other, and that's why the people need to clean the canals with their hands. No place for excavators

00:54:28 Gabriela Berglas

Do they have the problem of people stealing water for irrigation? Like for their garden and for their houses. Is that also part of the problem?

00:55:44 Translator 2

One of the reasons why the water does not reach the end is because the people who live nearby, they [use] the pumps, and they take the water.

00:57:43 Translator 2

In 2001, there was this one system where the people had a chance to build their own houses. And now because of this, they [the WUAs] don't have rights to interfere. And the only way to solve this is to go to court. So anyway, they cannot win the court [case] because the people will say that in 2001, the government gave us this lands and we pay tax for this lands.

- Did they receive funds from the AO?

01:06:10: Often have conflicts. This year for instance, the had meetings. And many people were discussing about the water scarcity problems. Talk about building a water reservoir. Hope that they can build that in the future. They do not see any results yet. There is a deputy from the supreme council who is trying to build this reservoir, but they are not seeing any results. New reservoir will give them 50 Mio. more water.

01:10:00: Kanyebek went to the government in June and discussed that the government should distribute money to the AOs, because the WUAs are now under them. 105 Mio. soms should be distributed to AOs with ME throughout the country.

01:14:32 Translator 2: When the WUA is under the ME, the AO will solve their problems.

01:16:30: It depends on the person in the WUA, whether it works or not.

Postscript

- *The interviewers voice was very calm* – They talked a lot, but the translator had difficulties to capture the nuances and details of the conversations. He usually summarized the basic point of what the respondent said.

37) AK Vice Head, Ak-Suu (Pilot)

25th October 2023

Pilot

Voice 037.m4a

Transcripta

Gabriela Berglas

Can you recall taking over the canals?

00:00:50 Translator 3

During that time, 2 1/2 years, overall 500 kilometres of canals in their in their village were under management, so they were cleared up from any obstacles on the way. And many systems to control the water flow were installed during that time.

00:01:37 Translator 3

This number was achieved with a quite limited budget. We saved lots of money, so 500 kilometres worth in total spend around 5 million soms. It's quite a good amount, good management. Many people were encouraged to help, like volunteering of the village residents. So that that's basically it. We believe that it's quite a good achievement for the last two years.

00:02:05 Gabriela Berglas

Did you say that 500 kilometres or metres?

00:02:51 Translator 3

Did you get?

00:03:08 Translator 3

Puzzle.

00:03:12 Translator 3

Apart from that, we, the AO, we're striving a lot to implement innovative technologies in the irrigation [sector]. So there's a special machine that resembles the rain style of...

00:03:30 Gabriela Berglas

Ah drip irrigation.

00:03:31 Translator 3

Yeah, drip, drip irrigation. So, eight of them were implemented... Because of implementing the technology, like around 800 hectares of land that was prior very difficult to irrigate, because of the landscape difficulties and ineffective ways, because of the small canals, 800 hectares are being irrigated at the moment. The farmers are currently adapting to it, getting used to it and in the future, we hope it will increase the number of users.

00:05:12 Translator 3

And another thing is that around 4 hundred ha of unusable agricultural land there... they were because of the water issues... But right now, underground waters are used. They like dug a hole and got underground waters to irrigate it [referring to wells]. Around 400 hectares, yeah.

00:05:52 Translator 3

So that's the summary of our work for the last two years. According to my opinion, we did quite well implementing these technologies for the people, making the right techniques for the canals. And we hope that in the future it will be much better. We aim to achieve much more to help the farmers a lot more with building good systems for the irrigation.

00:06:23 Gabriela Berglas

That sounds really, really good so. You said the 800 hectares via drip irrigation. So were these not irrigated at all before?

00:07:13 Translator 3

They were irrigated before, but the irrigation was super ineffective. Then the water was wasted. Our goal was to make it more effective and to irrigate all of the lands, like equally and balanced.

00:07:35 Gabriela Berglas

And so he said that they cleaned 500 kilometres of the canals. With the system that controls the water you mean these big like square things that you can put up and down?

00:07:56 Translator 3

Yeah, that's it.

00:07:58 Gabriela Berglas

And how many kilometres did they cement in these 2.5 years?

00:08:27 Translator 3

Nazira more aware of these numbers relating to the cementing in in her interview, she will share the numbers then. [...]

00:09:01 Gabriela Berglas

Can you recall the main issues you had before the policy reform, what were the biggest problems?

00:10:17 Translator 3

He has professional experience in working the AO in the administrative sector for 17 years. And one of the main issues before the policy reform was the budget management. Like before, it was quite difficult to get the budget to clear out the canals and do any kind of work. After the [implementation of the] policy it became much easier, much more transparent how you get the money. And Nazira helped with the paperwork, with organising everything with the reports and it became much easier to implement any kind of work because the budget was quite readily available.

00:10:59 Gabriela Berglas

So they had a budget, but it wasn't clear where the money went.

00:11:26 Translator 3

So basically, there was no specific law for it, no procedure for the local administrations on how to get that money. It wasn't embedded in the law in general.

00:11:42 Gabriela Berglas

What does he know about the collection of irrigation fees? [...] Because in the other places, they sometimes had problems collecting enough money from the farmers.

00:13:10 Translator 3

So before, it was in cash, but right now it's mostly digitalized in the banks, in the terminals like the person goes pays of certain amount. Like he says for one hectare he takes the receipt and goes to the local administration. It says like: "Here it is. I paid for it" and then receive the water.

00:13:33 Gabriela Berglas

So does he see a difference in how much money they get? Do they collect more money now with this system?

00:13:59 Translator 3

It's visibly more.

00:14:10 Gabriela Berglas

Does he know anything about conflicts that they had with the WUAs? Like did the WUAs have any conflicts with the RWMD, for example?

00:14:17 Gabriela Berglas

No [he doesn't know anything about these kinds of conflicts]

00:14:18 Gabriela Berglas

How well organised were the WUAs? Were they capable of handling the bureaucracy?

00:14:29 Translator 3

No, they are working quite well and they're quite organised.

00:15:09 Gabriela Berglas

So he's the head of the Ak-Suu district. Where can you see the largest differences between the different AOs when it comes to the irrigation infrastructure?

00:16:33 Translator 3

The location of the villages plays a big role. Because the situation is that the villages which are closer to the city have shorter ways to irrigate compared to the ones that are located a little bit further away. The difference in numbers indicated that 1 village has 500 hectares, the other one has three 3500 hectares, and there's definitely a difference in the management of them. The smaller ones are easier [to manage]. That might be one difference.

00:17:15 Gabriela Berglas

Does he see a difference in access of the water? So for example do the AOs which are closer or more upstream get more water than the ones downstream?

00:17:37 Translator 3

There's definitely difference.

00:18:15 Translator 3

Nazira mentioned two specific differences. The one that you mentioned, like the ones that are upstream are easier to access. The ones that are a little bit far away are a little more difficult. Overall, the total amount of canals are in some places like 17 kilometres, and in other places it's like 100 kilometres in total, so it's definitely much more difficult to manage 100 kilometres.

00:20:18 Translator 3

Yeah, there there's quite a difference. It depends on the size of the lands. It depends on the water resources available to them. For example, if one AO received like 5 million soms, the other one can receive 20 million. It absolutely varies depending on the land situation.

00:20:43 Gabriela Berglas

What is the strength of the AO Teploklyuchenka?

00:21:40 Translator 3

Teploklyuchenka is a centre of this district. As a village, many municipal institutions are built here, like tax collection. The population overall is quite large, I think 18'000 people. So they have more resources and they have more capability and organisation compared to others.

00:22:06 Gabriela Berglas

How many AOs took over the canals of the WUAs?

00:22:28 Translator 3

All of them.

00:22:45 Gabriela Berglas

How would you rate the general work of the municipal enterprises?

[...]

00:23:43 Translator 3

So the general evaluation would be good. They did quite well with the numbers and they want to do much better in the next years.

00:24:06 Gabriela Berglas

So how many members of the WUAs did they take over to the ME?

00:25:06 Translator 3

Basically, all of them are still working in the area. Just now, the budget, the balance is controlled by the AO. Basically, that's the difference.

00:25:38 Gabriela Berglas

What does he think of ATR?

00:26:28 Translator 3

Reform is in the process, but regarding this specific district, it's quite difficult to say anything specific. Why? Because, there's a difference in reforms in the structure of the administrations, like some of them are merging together. [incomprehensible] with the president's official declaration. It's not ready yet. It will be possible to see, like give some comments after the statement of the President is ready and goes out.

00:27:03 Gabriela Berglas

Doesn't he have any concerns that people are people like fearing to lose their job, if they merge?

00:28:13 Translator 3

So right now, it's again difficult to say and there are certain limitations due to the governmental politics. From the comments regarding that, it's not quite ready yet. That's why it's difficult to see anything specific at the moment. But in the upcoming days, maybe in social media, it will be published like, how the things turned out to be, who is with who, if any people will lose their jobs or something like that.

00:28:48 Gabriela Berglas

When it comes to the national Kyrgyz government, is the government aware enough of the irrigation issues?

00:29:45 Translator 3

I cannot say directly that the government abstains or overlooks this issue. The fact that right now we're implementing the systems, buying new technologies... I think this means that the government is concerned about this issue. And I'm a governmental worker, so [they are] definitely [involved].

[...]

- The Vice Head is content with the work of the AO and AK

38) AO Vice Head, Ak-Suu (Pilot)

26th October 2023

Voice 038.m4a

Transcript

00:00:11 Gabriela Berglas

What can you remember of the irrigation before the policy reform?

00:01:05 Translator 2

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, many of the canals were without supervision. And in 2015, we decided to create our own WUA and to manage it. There was a lot of criticism and doubts whether you can create such an organisation yourself. [...]

00:03:53 Translator 2

The situation is that many people doubted it. Even the governor of the region himself, like on the Assembly of the government institution, like regional government institution, he said that "You can postpone it. I don't think that on a district level it's an implementable thing. Like you can you cannot realise it." And that... here one person like motivated us a lot to realise this project. It was one person who right now is the governor of somewhere in the southern region. Before, he worked under her in her team. But she said: "I don't think you can do it." And she had a dramatic touch to it. Like I don't like when people hate me, I don't like it when people doubt me. I made an assembly of different people. Nazira was also included there, like with three people and we said like, OK, let's do it guys. And Nazira helped a lot with their paperwork and documentation. Others worked here and at that time she was also a vice head of AO. So that's the story of how the first WUA you say was implemented.

00:05:25 Gabriela Berglas

In which AO was that, where the person who motivated everybody?

00:05:42 Translator 2

His name is in Quebec Mujahedeen, he is the governor of Osh region.

00:06:24 Translator 2

He's a very intellectual, capable and competent person. If you meet him, if you talk to him, he's a really nice person and he found a way to push my buttons well, and he hit my ego a little bit. I think it worked because we very quickly found people [who are alike], Nazira included, and we called that project Ak-Suu 2015. AWP AK-Suu 2015.

00:08:04 Translator 2

After the gathering of the team and finishing the documentation, the practical work began. They took away 89.9 kilometres from a department. The department was called district... it was under the management of a Ministry of Water Resource department on the district level like a district as you remember is a bunch of villages. [RWMD]

00:10:01 Translator 2

Do you remember the person that we met yesterday after the interview? In 2015, he was elected as the chief of this WUA. And she [the interviewee] said that they didn't regret it for once, because he is very competent. And other than he is a great work ethic. If he receives a task from us, it doesn't matter if he's sick or something like that. What happens is that he goes and does it.

00:11:32 Translator 2

And he has a personal enthusiasm for work as well. Usually, it's not a good idea to praise him directly, because people get very cocky and arrogant. But that's not the case with him because

if you go and praise him, he gets much more motivation. He wants to live up to that praise, even more. So he is an amazing worker, she says.

00:12:24 Gabriela Berglas

Karakol is the first region that did this?

00:14:50 Translator 2

They weren't first. Other villages, some of them had it already. But they were the ones that raised the initiative to create such an association. Because before, farmers and many people... because the location is located upstream they didn't care about it a lot because it was finished, it was done [referring to the canals]. But before it was much more structured after the creation of our WUA 2015, like organised people were making plans, making orders. Who takes the water? After whom? Something like that.

00:15:36 Gabriela Berglas

OK, um

00:15:39 Gabriela Berglas

I'm a bit confused. I don't quite understand the basics yet. Is this so? It's just like now this this 2015. Is this like this with the water User Association or is this under the idle?

00:15:50 Gabriela Berglas

Is this private or?

00:17:24 Translator 2

This WUA was public. But they had the full support of the AO, for organisation and collecting fees most of the time. And the WUA was not too big, just a couple of people. The chief himself and one accountant and one controller who goes out to check if everything is alright [referring to murab], not a too big team.

00:22:07 Translator 2

The situation is that it was collected, the team gathered up. And one of the first things that they did is that they organised a cabinet stage by stage where they could sit in a room, and a computer. And then one of the biggest issues was to organize an excavator and a tractor to clear up those canals. They had difficulties always asking for rent or asking some people for a favour they sat down and they just thought, let's get us our own tractor, you know. And they wrote the project. I think that one department of the World Bank that's concerned with development projects like this. And they wrote the project they did everything in the documentation right. And in the end, the situation was that they will fund the tractor but they would need to return 50 % of the cost. And the long story was how to plan to return those costs. They gathered up all of the people from the village assembly and they said "Look, we're working like this and we need to pay off this tractor because this tractor is going to do lots of good work." And we counted it down, we calculated it and it turns like that. This is our offer. Usually it's 300 soms per hectare per year for water usage. Let's add 50 soms to it, people. Because these 50 soms will be go to the tractor. The people of the village accepted it, and to this day they are paying soms, so it's almost paid off.

00:27:39 Translator 2

Actually, they started with the fact that that tractor also has extra problems with the maintenance. You need to get the fuel, get the working materials for like fixing engines and repairments. They said it was quite difficult but the main idea was that they as an AO, even before this policy, supported this other WUA a lot. The budget that was generally for agriculture, they tried to fix and finish some work that's related to irrigation. They built some certain tubes. [Gabriela Berglas: Do you mean the closed one?] Yes, the tubes to improve the

irrigation. They have helped with the clearing of the canals, with the expenses, as well as mechanical clearances. They supported it a lot because the initiative was originally from them.

00:30:26 Translator 2

A big part of this work was carried out by the method called Ashar. Basically, it's volunteering. The village goes out and physically helps to clear out the canals for free. For us, for this village itself, it wasn't a big deal because we're located upstream. But the Rayon itself helped those villages that are located downstream and which have difficulties receiving the water [...]. They helped the people to gather and work together with Ashar. This way, a lot of cleaning has been made possible to carry out.

00:31:18 Gabriela Berglas

Because they usually clean the canals once a year, is that right?

00:34:21 Translator 2

To answer your question: You can call it once a year, but it's usually done from the end of March 'till the end of May, every Saturday. And you call it Subbotnik. And it's usually organized by the cleaning boards. The cleaning of the aryks, the small canals, and they are the bigger canals right before the main ones start.

00:34:54 Translator 2

And she was also talking about the fees, like extra 30 soms fee for the maintenance of the works.

00:35:28 Translator 2

It's 30 soms per year to fund, at least partially, things like fuel, repairment of materials, engine oil, things like that. And the situation is like always that some people like to agree without any conflicts, some people agree with conflicts, and some people don't agree at all. And with those we try to work with extra conduct, extra explanation that it's for our own good and to get high quality water you need to put in some work.

00:36:57 Translator 2

And they talk about the numbers from the budget of this local AO. In 2022, it was 867,000 soms specifically for irrigation purposes. And this year, we gave out 1.451 Mio. soms. It's partially a result of accepting the policy, implementing those practises in real life. This is the thing that we got. It's specifically for irrigation purposes. After the acceptance of the policy, AO without being at all afraid... like before they were afraid of directly giving out money.

00:38:22 Gabriela Berglas

Were they afraid to fund at all?

00:38:24 Translator 2

Yes, because there were no clear protocols of how to do it and it was usually carried out through the common budget that was for agricultural purposes. And right now, it's specifically for irrigation.

00:38:43 Gabriela Berglas

This is this year and this was before in 2022? So in 21 or like before, they didn't give any funds at all?

00:44:40 Translator 2

With the part of afraid, the thing was that before and even now not allowed to give out funds by law to private enterprises from the budget of the AO local budget, so you cannot fund it. It's illegal. And that's why they just used the AWP as the executors of doing some work that the AO were doing. And they included in the budget of agriculture. But right now, because the canals and everything is under them, it's not illegal to fund the work that is done under them, that's why they can increase the budget to improve their work without any without any

fear, without any problems. And she also mentioned one method... There's a thing that's called at Atwaranyk. So basically here's the canal, and here's the field [gesturing a canal next to the field with his hands]. The canal brings water to water the field. But there's some extra water that's left, and usually what happened was that extra water used to disrupt some village roads. Right now, they are working on the plans to create those canals that would carry the extra water back to the canal.

00:48:09 Translator 2

They're very lucky with the head because he is very competent and she used one adjective to describe him. It's called [incomprehensible Russian or Kyrgyz word]. "The person who understands all the processes related to agriculture and village very well." And as a personality, he's not afraid to move on. He can take certain risks to carry out certain missions. And she mentioned some people who are above him. He's in a good relationship with them, so if they have a project in mind, they can without fear go out and implement it in practice.

00:50:48 Translator 2

She says that she's been working for 40 years in the government, and she's seen many specialists, many directors as well. But these two [referring to the two heads of the AWP and AK] are very special. They have a very good understanding of each other and she thinks that it's the best in bringing them together. And because of this good understanding, which is not always the case, like sometimes the guys like to compete each other in a very negative sense. With the egos. But they are working pretty well.

Postscript: This was a rather unusual interview as that I did not ask many questions, but that the interviewees talked a lot by themselves. She had a wonderful flow of telling the story of how they met.

39) AK Responsible Secretary, Ak-Suu (Pilot)

26th October 2023

Voice 039.m4a

Transcript

00:00:02 Gabriela Berglas

So first general question is, how did you perceive the irrigation system before the policy reform?

00:01:26 Translator 3

So the situation is that even though it wasn't perfect, because our village has lots of irrigatable land. In 2015, the AWP was created, and they were really working towards making it better, the general situation was even though far from perfect, but quite good before accepting the policy.

00:02:00 Gabriela Berglas

So with the new policy, what is the biggest change that you see?

00:03:18 Translator 3

Because the WUAs were private before, we weren't really able to help them a lot. Like we helped them directly or indirectly. But right now, after accepting this policy, it's possible to dedicate the amount of budget to control them better and the situation improved in general from our perspective as well.

00:03:48 Gabriela Berglas

Did you any improvement in the internal organisation of the AO?

00:05:53 Translator 3

So basically, it helped us to improve service for the people, the value that they bring to the people because she personally considers the... even though it was overlooked in the codex or constitution, it should be under the local administration control. And after this reform, because of this budget control, the local administration can dedicate a certain amount of budget and we were able to do much more than before. Before the WUAs were only doing those repair works or buildings constructional works or clearance works, mostly done by the personal finances of the AWP. But right now, because of the direct involvement of the local administration, it's much quicker and more work is done.

[Interruption due to visa issues]

00:08:31 Translator 3

Even though it's a local matter, matter of a local village. But in case there were certain problems with the water or with anything relating to irrigation, people usually come directly to AO. Because it's their administration. If they have problems, issues, they come to them. Before, they used to explain that the WUA is a private company. It's not related to local administration, and that they should go and talk to them. But right now, because they can come directly to them, they can directly influence them and they can help solving problems that happens in the field. That is that when it comes to the organisation part.

00:09:27 Gabriela Berglas

Does she have an example of a common problem? When the farmers come to them?

00:09:34 Translator 3

She mentioned one or two things. The one when there was not enough water for them, because of the queue. And there were cases when there was too much water and it would flood neighbouring fields. These were the two things she mentioned.

00:09:54 Translator 3

Two things you mentioned, you don't need to ask more.

00:09:59 Gabriela Berglas

What did they do when they didn't have enough water? Did they like make like a time schedule?

00:12:05 Translator 3

The usual situation is like that the person comes to them with the issue, they go together to the AWP, the Spas. They try to find out the cause of the problem. And in case they are needed, the AWP is the executioner of the plan and usually the AK help with the budget. If for example some person says that there is not enough water for them, AWP will explain their plan. Like certain crops are the priority to be watered and the others can wait. And they'll say at that time of the year or what day they'll receive it. Or in case somebody comes and says that they cannot reach their field because it's inaccessible due to the roads, the AO and AWP come and fix the road. A cosmetic fix, not with concrete [laughs]. Basically, they cleared them out... and they used the small stones [GB: in the canals?]. On the roads that lead to the fields. That's the example that she [the interviewee] brought.

00:13:52 Gabriela Berglas

Do the farmers now come less often with issues than before?

00:15:10 Translator 3

If we talk in terms of comparatively to the previous years, we can say that it's less. Because right now, we're able to conduct all of the mechanical clearances of the canals this year, we built the tubes where it's needed. This is at the beginning of the year, and it makes the process of irrigation much more effective, and I think that that's why there are much less complaints than before.

00:16:35 Translator 3

Nazira's additional point is that Teploklyuchenka is the only district that accepted this reform as let's say a "matter of local importance". Which means that compared to other villages, they can directly involve in the processes. If they want to, they can ask for accounts or audits of the old problems, of the finances. Or they can directly involve in the management system. That's basically what she says, like it's more controlled than usual because they accepted it. They call it "voss"; VMS – "a matter of local importance".

00:17:46 Gabriela Berglas

How does it look like from side of the funds? Did they actually take any credits? [Translator 3: Ah, you mean if any WUAs took any credits?] Yes.

00:18:21 Translator 3

Yeah. Do you remember the tractor? Yeah, that one for example. So far, it's the only credit that they have.

00:18:45 Gabriela Berglas

Do they see any large difference in access to water in this village? Because when they are there, of course upstream village but.

00:18:53 Gabriela Berglas

[...]

Clearing of misunderstandings

00:19:16 Translator 3

The law was implemented very recently and it's difficult to say something very impressive that has changed. I forgot to translate it before.

00:19:43 Gabriela Berglas

Did they used to? Do they still like steal water or not pay their fees?

Part Two

Gabriela Berglas

Did they used to? Do they still like steal water or not pay their fees?

00:00:26 Translator 3

Before, a visible problem was the collection of fees. Not everybody paid them and there were difficulties. But right now, even though we cannot say it's 100 % perfect, people are slowly coming to realise that it really matters. It matters if we pay people who work before us, like I mean in the process. They can do their job well and we'll give them a much more effective irrigation because of that.

00:01:03 Gabriela Berglas

So that was actually course a result of you always talking to the farmers, right? And convincing them.

00:02:59 Translator 3

So basically, at least two times per year they try to make a common assembly, a gathering of the village where first of all, many things are discussed. Like if it's in the beginning of spring, the matters of summer and fall are discussed. And there are different matters that are discussed apart from irrigation and there are lots of things related to agriculture, related to cattle. And there we usually justify what work we've done and we explain it. If there's also a moment where people share their problems, like: "I cannot reach the water" or "This canal, it's super broken. Can you fix it?" Like from the natural canal. And they usually say: "OK, people, please give your fees and for that money, we'll do all this work." I think that's the result of it like in general in the gatherings.

00:04:09 Gabriela Berglas

When it comes to the tariff, I understood that they paid 350 soms per hectare per year? [Translator 1: Yes] OK. What is your opinion on this tariff? Do you think it needs to be maybe increased in the future?

00:05:00 Translator 3

It should definitely be increased in the future. But people are coming to understand those processes and if we will ask them to pay more, they will demand more work to be done, to receive better irrigation systems. And we're working towards really improving that, to live up to their expectations so that we can confidently improve or increase the fees.

00:07:14 Translator 3

Before it was like... by before, I mean there's a point when they accepted it is a matter of local importance, as I've mentioned it before. Before it was quite usual. We give money, they give water, their business. Not too warm, not too cold. But right now, because we accepted this as a matter of local importance, we can create a three-party deal. Where each party, so WUA, AO and RWMD, where each of them has their certain obligations and responsibilities. They can build 3 sided deals right now.

00:08:08 Gabriela Berglas

OK. So they actually like increased their relationship together. Do they do any trainings or do they give help or something like that? Like does the RWMD help them with excavators?

00:09:18 Translator 3

Giving finances or funds and providing trainings is not practised. They have their own equipment and if we ask them for a specific problem, we'll get a few, and we can use it for this issue. But we don't usually do that.

00:09:45 Gabriela Berglas

Do you sometimes borrow equipment from them?

00:11:36 Translator 3

The situation before 2015... They just had a simple administrative commission that was directly linked to the AO. In 2015, AWP accepted and agreed that they are on special Commission also, and they accepted the policy... like the policy book in which every situation was indicated. "If you do this, you receive this fine, if you do that, you receive this fine." Yeah, the situation is like that. And right now, because it has been accepted as a matter of local importance, "rights violation Commission" was created and they look at it even much more strict.

00:12:34 Gabriela Berglas

So it's stricter now than before?

00:12:35 Translator 3

Yes, because the AO completely accepted it.

00:12:47 Gabriela Berglas

What are the most important steps that need to be done?

00:14:08 Translator 3

[...] Entire repairment of the irrigation system. The truth is that the main canals that right now transport the water, were built in the Soviet era and right now they are worn out, they're getting older. And the local budget cannot handle this large kind of scale project. I think the future one of the most important steps would be to prepare a project, a business plan and present it to the governmental level so that they could help us to fix the entire irrigation system.

00:15:35 Translator 3

That's specifically just a small observation because we cannot say anything specific. Why? Because, as you know, a administrative, territorial reform is happening right now [referring to the ATR]. We don't know how it's going to be after that, who will be under whom? Who will be connected to who? Maybe all of the WUAs will be under the RWMD. Or every canal will count as a matter of local importance. We don't know. After it's carried out. I think it will be much more convenient to draw a whole picture for the next steps of development. Yeah, we don't know what will happen.

00:16:23 Gabriela Berglas

OK. And how does she view in general the future of the farmers here?

00:20:36 Translator 3

So basically, their personal opinion is that considering the fact that the villages' main sector of livelihood is agriculture, the matter of irrigation should definitely be the priority. And they gave certain views on the ATR. They said that it's more or less impossible that the WUAs will be under the RWMD because it's unrealistic for them to manage all of them. And they mentioned that instead, it most probably should be under the control of the matter of local importance. And they also said that maybe some WUAs will be dissolved, will disappear and the AO will create their own municipal department. And they also mentioned one thing that is very difficult is that the big lens is scattered among lots of different people. And sometimes one hectare is one type of crop, and the other one is a different type of crop, it makes the process of irrigation organisation much more difficult and requires much better

understanding of the people and of the agriculture. If someone is watering the field the other one is flooded. Or where one side is wheat, the other one is the crop that's fed to the cattle. They have different times when to be watered and different times when to be collected. But in general, they said that it would be much better if it stays under their control because they are locals, they understand the matters and even though it will be under RWMD people anyway will come to them and seeking help if they have problems. That's basically it.

00:23:36 Gabriela Berglas

If she said that the irrigation needs to be the priority, doesn't she think that the irrigation has enough priority in the AO and it's political discourses?

00:25:09 Translator 3

If you ask about the politics... of course our main livelihood is agriculture is farming, then in practise it's also discussed as the matter of the biggest priority, like agriculture is land and irrigation is like in separatable part. One of the biggest parts is also cattle, but for the cattle you also need some food. And then that's also related to agriculture irrigation again. So to answer your question it's definitely yes, priority in the politics is helping the people with their main livelihood is related to irrigation.

42) Head RWMD, Ak-Suu (Pilot)

30th October

- Works since 7 months (beginning of 2023) as WUA Head
- 42 TEP Head WUA_30 Oct.mp4

Transcript

- He works as the head since 7 months. Before that, he worked in a different place

00:04:09 Translator 3

[ABAD consultant and Head are discussing] The thing that they are talking about so far is the fee collection process. Before, the maximum was like 60 % of the fees were collected. It was very problematic, but after going to cashless payment through the bank. The fee collection rates are at 95 % maximum. There are still some problematic WUAs, but right now it's much better.

00:04:39 Gabriela Berglas

OK. So that increased drastically. Does he know what the main problems are with those WUAs which still don't pay?

00:05:22 Translator 3

Three main reasons, the most common one is that some farmers do not get the water. Maybe because of the location, maybe because of some other issues. But if they simply don't get the water they don't pay. The second one is the issue with the financial capabilities, like some people simply don't have... They're struggling with money, financial struggles, and that's why they don't pay. And the third reason mentioned is simply irresponsibility.

00:06:54 Translator 3

So one thing he also mentioned is that right now, I mean it's not decided yet. But the rumours are that there will be another reform where like all of the WUAs will be under the management of this water department. They're just rumours, but the people hear about those rumours and some people say like: "We heard that WUAs are not functioning anymore, they are dismissed, like why should we pay you?" Like it's not clear.

00:08:03 Translator 3

There are just rumours about the change in the law of the irrigation management. But there is no specific statement from the President or from the administration of any kind of law that it was accepted.

[...]

- 221 kms in the hands of the WUAs, around 70 kms of them are cemented (all during the Soviet Union), the rest 150 kms are muddy
- 14 mio. soms were dedicated for repairment works
- They have 4 landmarks; 1 pump station, 79 employees
- District Ak-Suu: 48'100 ha arable land
- 3642 ha irrigatable land, rest not irrigatable (the water doesn't reach it)
- Hardly any equipment; he had showed me their red excavator. It was completely repaired. Plus they have received some support from the ADB
- No support from the government
- Planning to get the following equipment:
 - o They are going to receive a crawler excavator (one with chain wheels)
 - o Large Transportation truck that can carry 35 tons

- They [who?] helped with the total replacement of the pumping machines that were originally installed in 1975. Costed 230'000 USD.
- They work in collaboration with the AO.

00:17:17 Translator 3

Teploklyuchenka AO had 1 1/2 kilometre long canal that they struggled to dig. And right now, with the help of this excavator that I just mentioned before [referring to the one that I saw on the field] is digging up, helping them, doing the work. If some serious equipment is required like this, they borrow it [from the AO], but the fuel is from them.

00:20:47 Translator 3

So basically, they [the 70 kms of cemented canals] were built and cemented in 1953. But from that moment they didn't undergo any kind of repair works, or any management or maintenance. So this year, around 46 kilometres of it underwent the repair works. They cemented an extra layer I think, the total budget was 1.3 million.

[...]

- Mentioning the water reservoir that was also built during the Soviet era. But this hasn't been maintained, mud is collected on the ground and the water is stationary.
- Project in the future: they calculated everything to maintain it in the future, but it costs 4.5 Mio. to maintain everything
- Basically, all of their work is funded by the government, but they got support from the ADB because they prepared a project for them. The projects goal is to make a sewerage for Karakol, to clear out the water. This goes to the irrigation. Sustainable goals. This was a full grant

00:26:43 Gabriela Berglas

When it comes to the AOs you said that you have a good relationship. Do you see any differences between the different AOs?

00:28:55 Translator 3

As mentioned before, there's definitely a difference in the location of the upstream and downstream villages. There's definitely a difference in the size of the irrigated. Lands, and some villages have only very few irrigated lands and other villages are nearly 100 % irrigatable. There is a little difference in the mentality. I think those who are located upstream tend to be more arrogant, they don't like to obey the WUAs. There was one situation when he needed the help of the police. He got them to help him out so that the order, that was mentioned before, you know 3 days one village than 3 days the other village, so that the the time schedule wasn't violated.

[...] Downstream villages are struggling.

00:30:41 Gabriela Berglas

Has he seen any difference since he established the time schedule?

00:30:56 Translator 3

He established it this year, to prevent conflicts. The schedule brought very substantial help and effectiveness, and the downstream towns also get their water now on time.

00:32:10 Translator 3

This tense situation only lasts for around 20 days, and at the same time simultaneously, many people need the water. That's why the system that they built is like the... it starts from the downstream. The water is transported through the canal like in an express way without any

stopping, like they finish and then go up and they go up and go up. And after that, it gets much easier, it gets free again, no strict measures. [...] So with express canal he means there's one main canal, every door that goes to the villages is closed.

00:33:00 Gabriela Berglas

Ok, so that is something new that he did?

00:33:06 Translator 3

He basically is working for seven months right now like that. It's pretty difficult to say what was before.

00:33:17 Gabriela Berglas

And so by like organising this, did you do this together with the WUAs or was that more mainly the work now of the RWMD?

00:33:50 Translator 3

Basically, the schedule is built by them [WUA]. He is showing their example.

- WUA head presents a family tree of the relationships of the various stakeholders

00:34:32 Translator 3

So the they create a schedule like this and get it approval from different establishments, like here is the District Head, here is the RWMD Head, here is the WUA Head. So they basically build it. And let it approve of all these different people.

00:35:05 Gabriela Berglas

I don't know if he knows the answer to this question, but are there also large financial differences between the various AOs and WUAs?

00:35:22 Translator 3

Yeah, definitely. There's difference in budget, yeah. The different AOs have differences in the size of irrigated lands, from 1000s of hectares to no irrigatable places. That causes a difference in budget.

00:36:00 Gabriela Berglas

So I assume that I'm also. Does that work then also show so that the poor spots and local juice that they also you know get?

00:36:11 Gabriela Berglas

Less like cleaning and less cementing and work done.

00:36:14 Translator 3

You mean like if they're a little bit irresponsible with the work when you're incompetence?

00:36:20 Gabriela Berglas

Are the differences in budget also visible? Do the richer AOs also do more visible work?

00:37:29 Translator 3

So specifically here, you cannot say anything about this because like they work on their own, they don't hold them accountable. They just provide water and they do the rest. And one thing that he mentioned is like this year specifically, 21 kilometres of the mechanical clearance, like the WUA received equipment from them.

00:38:01 Gabriela Berglas

So what does he think now of the policy reform? Does he think that it's a good idea that they can give it?

00:41:54 Translator 3

He's personal opinion is that one visible benefit of going under the AO is that the fee collection process is getting much better, like 60 to 90 %, which is like a great result. But the WUAs have

a low acceptance rate of being under the management of the AO. And it would be very good for them [RWMD] if all of the WUAs would be under their own management. Why? Because most of the times, people come complaining to us, like if there is a problem in one place with water that they are not receiving, they [RWMD] will say ok, here is one border of us, one point where we provide the water, and the other one should be under the responsibility of the WUAs. But most of the time, people don't really understand that. They think that if we [RWMD] provide the water, it means that because of people are not receiving the water.

00:43:19 Translator 3

But the specific situation is that some of the WUAs are not doing their work properly. That's why another reform would be nice. But regarding your question, the first point was "yeah". He means it would be much better if there's 1 entity that will be in control, that will be responsible for the water, so that the people know where to address their problems specifically.

00:43:54 Gabriela Berglas

So that this responsibility is clear?

00:43:56 Translator 3

Yeah, super clear structure of the responsibility.

00:43:59 Gabriela Berglas

OK. Yeah. Because at the moment, it seems that the model is a bit mixed, because when I was in the South, I didn't really have this perception.

00:44:54 Gabriela Berglas

How would he then in general, rate the work of the WUAs? What do they especially well and what bad? [...] Does he have an example?

00:47:47 Translator 3

There's a difference in in them. Like there are four villages, Teploklyuchenka included, that he really likes and respects their work because they're really good at their job. They take good care of their own canals, their payment fees are on time. And when there's a crisis, like a little bit of tense moment, because this Ak-Suu is located at upstream, like the district itself. It's also responsible for transporting the water to the next district. And at the same time, when many people like gather up, which makes it a little bit difficult. The people from those WUAs come to him and talk: "Oh, can we help, what can we do here? Let's solve the matter together". That's why he respects them. And the other one he mentioned that he sees them only once a year, when the water is needed, and then spring and the other times like it, they didn't even come. So basically, that's what varies, how they work.

00:49:02 Gabriela Berglas

So then he doesn't even know what the other WUAs are doing. The ones who don't show up OK.

00:49:07 Translator 3

Yes, because as mentioned before, they give the water up to the certain point and after that it's the responsibility of [the others]. They cannot hold them accountable [for anything], check them, require any reports, anything. Just irrigation payments.

00:49:29 Gabriela Berglas

And the ones that do it well, what is the example of those?

00:49:45 Translator 3

In general, he mentioned like taking good care of the canals, on time payments and helping in the tense moments. I think like by the upholding to the schedule well.

00:52:09 Translator 3

He cannot remember anything specific at the moment, but he provided like 2 examples. One is the WUA Head in Börovash [name not 100 % sure] village. Down there. She, with her own initiative, even went to the regional mayor, to ask for financial support of the building of a 400 metre canal that will be with concrete blocks [named Lotok]. The regional budget helped a little bit and the district budget also helped a little bit to do that work, like 400 metres. Because they are not simply cemented. Like those are blocks, concrete blocks that are made in the factory and they are built like... [really large and heavy.]

00:54:04 Translator 3

Do you remember the Vice head of the Rayons? With the drip irrigation?

- Mentioned this to be very sustainable; they calculated they are very efficient
- With the help of the governments for four villages 2 drip irrigations each (a total of 8 drip irrigations were installed)

00:55:09 Gabriela Berglas

According to his opinion, how should the WUAs work in the future?

00:55:23 Translator 3

It would be nice if the WUAs were integrated to their RWMD, because people come to them when there's no water because they are the providers of the water.

00:55:42 Gabriela Berglas

And then they would control and transparency?

00:56:55 Translator 3

Even if they are dismissed, it's not a super efficient step. Why? Because those associations are basically local people that came together. And they things like, let's do this, let's do that. They understand the local context very well. That's why it's not a super smart move to dismiss them. But it would be definitely better if they worked under the RWMD.

00:57:41 Gabriela Berglas

When it comes to the Kyrgyz government, so they receive funds from them, what else should the Kyrgyz Government do for the water irrigation?

00:59:20 Translator 3

The government is helping really well because in the past, last year, they gave 3 Mio. to the Rayon. This year, it was 19 Mio. soms specifically for these irrigation purposes. But the situation is that in the Southern region, Batken, they had a little bit of difficulties and with the permission of the RWMD, they took back 5 million so that they could help them instead. (they took away 5 mio. soms from Ak-Suu and gave it to Batken instead).

01:02:23 Translator 3

So, he says, compared to before, the government is paying much better attention than before. And as you mentioned, the drought situation that happened in 2019 and 2020

- Many people lost their harvest to the drought
- Many people were complaining
- They distributed 500 mio. soms last year
- For 2024 they plan to distribute 1 billion soms

Main thing from government should be:

- Finance → then you'd have personnel, resources
- Hope that the good relationship will remain
- They should raise the salaries! RWMD has super low salaries compared to other departments

Postscript

Head of WUA was a very sweet man and lovely interview partner, with whom I shared a very nice interview session.

6.3 Bibliography

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