



The Process of Preparing a National IWRM and Water Efficiency Plan for Kazakhstan

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Foreword

Kazakhstan is in the midst of its water reform. The country's National Integrated Water Resources Management and Water Efficiency Plan has come a long way and is now being gradually implemented.

Through the work with the UNDP Water Governance Facility at SIWI (WGF) it has become apparent that there are many useful national water reform experiences which are not shared on a systematic basis. The ambition with this paper is to display and disseminate key-experiences of doing water reform in Kazakhstan, particularly with regard to process issues.

Many countries around the world are currently undergoing water reform and this paper provides additional insights to avoid reform pit-falls and to apply measures for consensus-building and to mediate conflicting views on the content and process of water reform. In many countries there are many times initial uncertainties about implementing IWRM due to concern that the changes will not be positive for the individuals involved. Many stakeholders fear being taken out of their comfort zone and the IWRM context is no exception to this. Issues of increasing capacities and changing attitudes are a matter of information and knowledge building to expand their comfort zones to encompass integrated water resources management (IWRM).

The paper suggests in addition to set in place vital national processes and institutions that facilitate the development of reform content and implementation. For example, simultaneous public awareness campaign is vital to developing a broad understanding of IWRM and broad support for the preparation and implementation of the National Integrated Water Resources Management and Water Efficiency Plan. In the case of Kazakhstan it was also seen as critical to set in place an Inter-ministerial Working Group for the approval and adoption process as it forms a conduit of information between the water management authority and their respective ministers.

These are examples of processes and measures other countries, particularly in the Central Asian region, can learn from and include in their own emerging processes of improving water governance reform and implementation.

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1 Introduction

The Project for a National IWRM and WE for Kazakhstan is being carried out by UNDP Kazakhstan, starting in June 2004, and due for completion in June 2007. It is being financed mainly by the Norwegian government with additional support from UNDP, Global Water Partnership (GWP), the Water Governance Facility (WGF) and DfID. The Draft National Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) and Water Efficiency (WE) Plan for Kazakhstan was completed in December 2005. This note presents a discussion of its preparation, highlighting why Kazakhstan was ready for a Plan and the process of its development.

1.1 The Geographical Context

Kazakhstan is a large country, with an area equivalent to all of Western Europe, but with a small population of 15 million. A significant proportion of the country is uninhabited, being either rugged mountain or harsh desert environments. Population and commercial activity are concentrated in the south and east of the country and along the main river arteries.

Kazakhstan's water resources are limited and highly seasonal, typical of arid and semi-arid climates. Practically all of the runoff generated in Kazakhstan is derived from snow melt and glacial melt in the mountain areas. But half of the water Kazakhstan uses comes across borders with neighbouring countries. Kazakhstan is both an upstream and downstream riparian, sharing waters with China, Russia, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan (plus, indirectly, Tajikistan) as upstream neighbours and Russia as a downstream neighbour. Kazakhstan shares the Aral Sea with Uzbekistan, and all five of the Central Asian countries, plus Afghanistan, have an impact on the Aral Sea and its basin.

The ecological destruction of the Aral Sea is directly related to the massive irrigation expansion of the 1950s and 1960s. Exacerbating the problem is the extremely low water use efficiency, which is among the worst in the world. Though there has been some reduction in water use for irrigation because of the decline in agriculture over the last 15 years, the situation on water use efficiency has not improved.

While much of Kazakhstan is arid or semi-arid it is not a water scarce country under the accepted definitions, even in terms of water generated only within the country. Ineffective water management causes the apparent water shortages.

Water quality is a major problem in the water bodies of Kazakhstan. This is partly due to the Soviet legacy of ecological neglect in river basin management but is currently made worse by the administrative gap which has resulted in no organisation having the responsibility to manage and improve water quality or river ecology.

1.2 The Water Management Context

Water resources are managed under the national Committee for Water Resources (CWR), currently under the Ministry of Agriculture. The CWR has been moved several times between the ministries of agriculture and environment, as well as having been an agency without ministerial affiliation under the Office of the Prime Minister. Under the CWR are the eight River Basin Organisations (RBOs), which adheres to the first principle of IWRM, that the river basin is the correct level at which to manage water resources. There are some links with

other ministries, such as environment and health, but coordination is limited and many important water management responsibilities and functions falls through gaps in the administrative structure.

2 The Potential for Establishing IWRM in Kazakhstan

At present, water resources management in Kazakhstan is best described as being fragmented, underfunded and poorly governed and there is need to develop much stronger government commitment to water management. However, Kazakhstan has made some significant steps in establishing a foundation for IWRM, including:

- The new Water Code, passed in 2003, has several weaknesses which need addressing, but it is the key legislation guiding the preparation of the National IWRM Plan.
- The Law on Environmental Protection (1997) includes several articles related to water. It is anticipated that the water environment will be better addressed in the Environment Code which is currently in draft and is expected to be passed in 2007.
- The “Strategic Plan of the Republic of Kazakhstan Up To 2010” (2001) is a government plan for overall development which includes several elements on the improvement of water resources, their management and the environment.
- The administration of water resources according to river basins by the eight River Basin Organisations (RBOs) sets in place the basin principle in managing water resources.
- River Basin Councils (RBCs) for each river basin were instituted in the 2003 Water Code, paving the way for real stakeholder participation in the water resources management decision making process.
- Kazakhstan is undergoing rapid economic and social development which is driving improved environmental awareness, greater involvement of civil society organisations and improved access to information.

Together, these elements create a good climate within which to complete a National IWRM and WE Plan to show the way forward in establishing sound water resources management practices.

Even with the support for water management apparent in the above points, there remains the need for financial and organisational commitment from government. Ministries and other government administrations need to be coordinated to:

- build capacity and strengthen the institutions
- amend and augment the legal base
- rebuild the monitoring and information systems
- ensure environmental protection of rivers and watershed, etc.

Several projects on capacity building in the water management organisations contributed to an overall understanding of IWRM prior to the start of the preparation of the National Plan. Of particular note was the Nura Ishim River Basin Management Project, funded by the UK Department for International Development (DfID), which took place over a period of eighteen months leading up to the start of the IWRM Plan project. This capacity building project emphasised the establishment and implementation of IWRM within the RBOs as well as at the national level Committee for Water Resources (CWR) and contributed to the drafting of the new Water Code in 2003. RBOs and the CWR and other organisations therefore had a good foundation in IWRM before the process of preparing the National IWRM and WE Plan began.

3 Preparing the National IWRM and WE Plan for Kazakhstan

3.1 Background

In addition to preparing the National IWRM and WE Plan the UNDP project is simultaneously establishing stakeholder River Basin Councils (RBCs) in each of the eight river basins of Kazakhstan. RBCs were instituted under the 2003 Water Code and their establishment in conjunction with the National IWRM Plan creates good synergy and builds a mutual momentum as RBCs are of the utmost importance to the implementation of the IWRM Plan.

The draft National IWRM and WE Plan was completed in December 2005 and the preparation team will continue to work with the government through the process of approval and adoption into an official government plan. The first two RBCs were established in October and December 2005 and the remaining six will be formed during 2006. The project will continue to support the development of the RBCs and strengthen stakeholder participation in them through to the end of the project in mid 2007. The figure below illustrates the steps involved in preparing the Draft National Plan as well as the approval and adoption period.

3.2 First Steps

The first step was to develop the project administration. The deputy Chairman of the CWR was appointed as the Project Director with the day-to-day management being carried out by a UNDP Project Officer and a Project Manager contracted for the project. A Steering Committee was formed chaired by the Project Director (CWR) and supported by the Senior Programme Assistant from UNDP and the Regional GWP.

Because of the need for governmental integration on water resources, an Interministerial Working Group was planned to be formed at the outset of the project, but attempts to establish it were not successful until almost a year after project inception. This issue is discussed in more detail below.

Steps in The Preparation of the National IWRM and WE Plan for Kazakhstan																									
	2004							2005												2006					
	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J
National IWRM and WE Plan for Kazakhstan																									
Working Papers on IWRM, RBCs and MDGs		X					X																		
Stakeholder Forums				X		X	X			X			X				X				X				
RBO and CWR Workshops				X		X				X			X			X		X			X			X	
Formation and Meetings of IMWG													X			X				X			X		X
Preparation of Concept Note										X															
Preparation of Draft National IWRM & WE Plan																			X						
Preparation of Final National IWRM & WE Plan																									
Approval Process for National IWRM Plan																									
Establishment of RBCs				X		X		X		X		X		X		X		X		X					
Improving Participation through Stakeholder Dialogues																									

3.3 The Drafting Process

It is important to consider that developing an understanding of the principles of IWRM and their application and implementation must be a two way process. The preparation team must have a good understanding of what is possible in the national context as well as the needs and interests of water management professionals and other stakeholders. At the same time, it is necessary to educate the same people in the principles, practices and implementation requirements of IWRM. IWRM is a relatively new concept, especially to those not directly involved in water management. In Kazakhstan, the two way process was accomplished through a very broad programme of working papers and other documents as well as a variety of forums and workshops, as described below.

Working Papers

Two Working Papers on each of the three project components were written and disseminated in July and December 2004. The purpose of the Working Papers was to describe the current situation in water management, to define IWRM and other terms to develop a common understanding and to identify main issues for discussion.

RBO and CWR Workshops

A series of workshops was set up to facilitate a dialogue between the preparation team and senior staff of the RBOs and the CWR. The objectives were to determine priorities for the IWRM Plan and how these may be implemented. The workshops also acted as training sessions on IWRM as RBO and CWR staff were not conversant with many aspects and had not yet given consideration to what IWRM implementation would mean in Kazakhstan and in their respective river basins.

River Basin IWRM Plans are being prepared under the project following the completion of the National Plan. River Basin IWRM Plans are beyond what the Johannesburg Declaration called for, but the situation in Kazakhstan presents an opportunity to strengthen the existing river basin approach to management. The RBOs need significant capacity building and improved funding from central government and the River Basin Plans identify and specify these needs, provide a basis for budget application and facilitate a process of monitoring their growth and development. RBO Workshops began early in the project (the first in September 2004) to train staff in aspects of IWRM looking toward preparation of the River Basin IWRM Plans.

Stakeholder Forums

Several Stakeholder Forums were held over the first year of the project. The participants were invited from a very broad spectrum of specialists on water, health, environment and other areas, from government, academia, NGOs and other organisations.

The original objective had been to identify priority issues and to obtain ideas on how integration may be developed between the various organisations. However, it became apparent in the first forum that very few people knew what IWRM is. Many had heard of it and even used the term quite freely but did not actually understand its concept. Some dismissed it as a 'western concept' that has no applicability to Kazakhstan. Others were concerned that the introduction of IWRM and the integration that is its main point would weaken their organisations by removing or reducing their functions and budget allocations. The first forum was therefore very difficult as the assumption of a general understanding was incorrect and there was little support for IWRM outside of those organisations directly

involved in water resources management. Subsequent forums included presentations to educate participants and to reduce their concerns.

The Preparation of a Concept Note for the IWRM Plan

The preparation of the draft National IWRM and WE Plan must have solid involvement from stakeholders, identifying key issues, selecting priority areas for improvement and determining the time line for implementation. In the original project schedule, the draft National Plan was to be completed by March 2005. However, real understanding of IWRM remained limited and it was decided to postpone the draft and instead prepare a Concept Note. This was to identify and prioritise the key elements of the Plan and offer a time schedule for its implementation and, especially, to serve as the basis for further discussions in preparing the draft Plan.

The Concept Note proved to be a valuable document and is recommended for any National Plan prepared in the future. It was widely read and many comments and suggestions were returned. It can be seen as a “draft of the draft” of the IWRM Plan. Where knowledge of IWRM is limited, which would be the case in most countries preparing a National Plan, it is difficult for stakeholders to contribute effectively without a tangible idea on which to build their own ideas. The Concept Note assists this process.

Interministerial Working Group

An Interministerial Working Group (IMWG) was necessary for the preparation of the Plan because integration requires changes in how the ministries and their departments interact and work together, share information and distribute functions. Such changes require consensus, which should be developed through a proper participatory approach which the IMWG can facilitate.

The project had made attempts early in the project to establish the IMWG, but it was not well received at those times. The complaint was that the project did not yet have solid ideas on which the IMWG could comment, without which the project was wasting their time. There was no understanding of the participatory process in which the project and the IMWG could form ideas jointly. However, following the preparation of the Concept Note, the members of the IMWG had something concrete to work with and were then willing to participate. With the Concept Note as a base the IMWG started to be an integral part of the process. The first full IMWG meeting was held in June 2005, following the Concept Note in March 2005.

3.4 Public Awareness

Throughout the eighteen month project period leading up to Draft National IWRM and WE Plan various Public Awareness initiatives were undertaken by the project. These were mainly simple and inexpensive activities making good use of journalists to ensure events were well reported. A part time journalist was on the project staff for the first year of the project, helping to keep the media connected with the project. Technical papers were prepared for scientific and technical journals in Kazakhstan to inform the academic and professional community. Small brochures were prepared and handed out at meetings of various sorts at the local administration level. The programme was very effective at raising awareness with the public, professionals and local administrators and politicians. It is apparent that the programme has paid for itself as local administrators and politicians, local and national NGOs and others have received and made comments on the draft Plan.

3.5 Key Areas of the Draft National IWRM and WE Plan

The Draft National IWRM and WE Plan focused on several key areas for initial attention, as described in the following table:

Improving Governance	Prepare a National Water Policy
	Decrease fragmentation in water management functions
	Coordinate the legal foundation in water, environment and local administration
	Rationalise financing for water resources management
Strengthening Institutions	Increase the authority and build capacity in CWR and RBOs
	Rebuild capacity in CWR and RBOs
	Establish and build capacity in RBCs
	Improve education and increase public awareness
Improving Watershed and Ecological Management	Improve land management and monitoring
	Institute the management of water quality
	Improve the efficiency of water use
Information, Management and Access	Rebuild infrastructure and capacity in surface water monitoring
	Rebuild capacity in groundwater management
	Establish the National Water Information Centre
Improve Transboundary Water Cooperation	Determine specific needs from upstream neighbours and develop agreements
	Determine and meet responsibilities to downstream neighbours

The Draft National IWRM and WE Plan was completed in December 2005 and disseminated widely. Importantly, the local administrations (akimats) and the local councils (maslikhats) were included in receiving the Draft Plan. They had become aware of the Plan and the basic principles of IWRM through the project's Public Awareness work and through the process of establishing River Basin Councils, which include members of the akimats and maslikhats. It is expected that they will be key actors in the approval process.

3.6 The Approval and Adoption Process

The draft National IWRM and WE Plan was disseminated and a period of one month was provided for consideration and the return of comments. It is anticipated that the approval and adoption process will take six months at minimum and the first step was to convene a meeting of the IMWG. IMWG meetings are public, with the panel of representatives of the many ministries with water interest, and a gallery for observers who have the opportunity to ask questions and make comments. The first meeting was very well attended with every key water and environmental professional as well as administrators present.

The Plan is currently a document of CWR and it is their responsibility, with the help of the IMWG, to take it through the approval process. Once the approval is completed it will be adopted as an official document and Plan of the Government of Kazakhstan, which means it has the official capacity to be funded through central government reserves. While the CWR leads the process of approval and adoption, the IMWG will play a crucial role in ensuring support from all ministries with interest or involvement in water and its management. There are several questions, such as the future status of CWR, which will need interministerial consensus to determine and to act on.

3.7 Stakeholder and Administrative Interest

It is important to the adoption and implementation of the Plan that there is broad interest from all actors. The IMWG plays an important role here, being the conduit of information between the CWR and their respective ministers.

Local administration (akimats) and local councils (maslikhats) have become very interested in the National Plan because they see the need for, and benefits of, improved water management. Their interest and involvement was generated by the combined efforts of a good public awareness programme combined with the activities surrounding the establishment of RBCs, of which akimats and maslikhats are members.

While the work on the National Plan is ongoing, documents known as “Schemes for Comprehensive Use and Protection of Water Resources” are being prepared for each basin. These are mainly infrastructure based planning documents for investment in water resources. The organisation carrying out the works (Kazgiprovodkhoz, formerly the State Design Institute for Water Planning, now a private consultant) collaborated closely with the Plan preparation team and has included a chapter on IWRM in the scheme documents. This is important in that it brings together the infrastructure side with the management and governance side of the water resources equation.

The ‘National Ecological Forum’ of Kazakh environmental NGOs was held in Almaty on 16 and 17 January 2006, about a month after National IWRM and WE Plan was published and disseminated. Because of the importance the NGOs place in the Plan and its implementation, two of the four final resolutions were that:

- civil society supports the implementation of the IWRM Plan
- the NGOs will actively participate in the establishment of River Basin Councils

3.8 Continuing Work

Through the first half of 2006 efforts will be devoted to the approval and adoption of the National IWRM and WE Plan. At the same time, work will begin on preparing River Basin IWRM Plans. Preparing IWRM Plans for each river basin helps to focus the RBOs’ attention on their specific basin needs with regard to capacity building, governance and coordination with other organisations. This also gives National IWRM and WE Plans a broader perspective and illustrates that it is really at the basin level that water resources are managed.

During the preparation of the Draft Plan, work was progressing on the River Basin Councils and by the time of the Draft National Plan, December 2005, the first two RBCs were established (Balkash-Alakol and Nura-Sarysu). The remaining six will be established by the end of 2006.

However, work on the RBCs does not end with their establishment; rather, it begins. Developing and building capacity in the RBCs is far easier with an existing and functioning group of individuals to work with, so it was decided to form the eight RBCs fairly quickly and then spend a lengthy period developing their capacities and strengthening the participation of stakeholders. Between the beginning of 2006 and the end of the project in 2007, work in support of RBCs will continue and will include a special component of increasing participation through stakeholder dialogues.

4 General Conclusions on Preparing a National IWRM & WE Plan

- It is beneficial to have started capacity building on the principles of IWRM before the start of Plan preparation.
- A new, or at least modern, Water Law is helpful as the Plan can be based on its approach.
- The opportunity to establish stakeholder River Basin Councils in conjunction with the preparation of the National Plan was beneficial to both.
- It is necessary to educate most of the stakeholders, including water management professional, in the principles and practices of IWRM. An understanding of IWRM prior to the start of the Plan cannot be assumed and developing that understanding is a two way process between the preparation team and the stakeholders.
- There are initial suspicions about implementing IWRM due to concern that the changes will not be positive for the individuals involved. Most people fear being taken out of their comfort zone and the IWRM context is no exception. Changing attitudes is a matter of information and knowledge building to expand their comfort zones to encompass IWRM.
- Preparing an early “draft of the draft” is necessary as it provides a tangible idea for the IWRM Plan on which stakeholders can build their own ideas and more effectively contribute to the Draft National Plan. In Kazakhstan, this took the form of a Concept Note which made recommendations on the main components and priorities for the National Plan.
- A simultaneous Public Awareness campaign is vital to developing a broad understanding of IWRM and broad support for the preparation and implementation of the National IWRM and WE Plan.
- An Interministerial Working Group is vital to the approval and adoption process as it forms a conduit of information between the water management authority and their respective ministers.