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KYRGYZSTAN

CASE STUDY

Association Showcases Excellence

USAID program helps an association become one of the best in the region



*The rehabilitated section of the canal prevents water losses and ensures equitable water distribution among the water users.
Photo: Winrock*

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- Kambarov Turat, member of Tamchy-Bulak association

The Tamchy-Bulak Water Users Association in Bazarkorgon Region, Jalalabat Oblast was created in 1999 and had over 1,200 members with 1,384 hectares of land and 10,500 beneficiaries. However, its structures existed only on paper. Its members didn't know what the organization did nor even if they were part of this association at all, and farmers never participated in its activities. The association was unable to collect fees for the irrigation services and was badly indebted to the regional water department. Water distribution was poorly arranged and caused annual fights among the farmers. Despite their desperate attempts to direct water to their lots, farmers harvested barely 3 tons wheat, 2.9 tons corn, 1 ton tomato or 50 tons alfalfa per hectare.

In 2006 the USAID-funded Water Users Association Support Program, implemented by Winrock Intl., began cooperating with the Tamchy-Bulak association. To improve the association's governance and water management, the USAID-funded program offered to train farmers about the structure of the association and water distribution. With the program's guidance, farmers learned to manage their organization, to apply the principals of democracy and transparency, and to design effective water distribution plans. A USAID grant helped rehabilitate critical sections of the association's 72 kilometers of irrigation canals and construct an office for meetings, training programs, and community functions.

USAID's support inspired the farmers to rethink their attitude towards the association. “The improvements that we see inspire us to participate and contribute for further development of the water users association,” says Kambarov Turat, member of Tamchy-Bulak association. “From now on we actively clean the canal and pay the fees on time or in advance.” The association has paid off its debts to the regional water department and delivers water to its users in a timely manner. Using its own resources, the association even purchased a car for its transportation needs, while a backhoe loader donated by USAID helps in the canal maintenance. Farms receive water when it's most needed and the villagers no longer have to fight with each other about it. The harvests increased as well. In 2008, the association members harvested over 50% more wheat, 60% more corn, over 400% more tomato and 8% more alfalfa per hectare than before.

Due to its successful operations and exemplary yields that exceed those of other associations, in 2008, Tamchy-Bulak was recognized by the Kyrgyz Ministry of Agriculture as the best water users association in Bazarkorgon Region.