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KYRGYZSTAN

CASE STUDY

Association Showcases Excellence

USAID helps a water users association become one of the best in the region



Photo: Winrock Int.

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

“The positive changes and improvements that we see inspire us to participate and contribute to further development of the water users association. Now we actively clean the canal and pay the fees on time or in advance,” said Kambarov Turat, member of Tamchy-Bulak association.

Telling Our Story
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Challenge

The Tamchy-Bulak Water Users Association in Bazarkorgon Region, Jalalabat Oblast was created in 1999 and had more than 1,200 members with 1,384 hectares of land that provided livelihood for 10,500 residents. However, the association's structures existed only on paper. Its members didn't know what the organization did nor even if they were part of the 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 attempts, farmers were unable to secure sufficient amounts of water and harvests were meager.

Initiative

In 2006 a USAID-supported program aimed at supporting water users associations, began cooperating with the Tamchy-Bulak association. To improve the association's governance and water management, the USAID-supported program offered to teach farmers about the structure of the association and water distribution. With the program's guidance, farmers learned to run 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.

Results

USAID's support inspired the farmers to rethink their attitude towards the association. They now actively clean the canal and pay fees on time. The association has paid off its debts to the regional water department and delivers water to its users in a timely manner. 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, association members harvested over 50% more wheat, 60% more corn, 400% more tomatoes, and 8% more alfalfa per hectare than before. Due to its successful operations, Tamchy-Bulak was recognized by the Kyrgyz Ministry of Agriculture as the best water users association in Bazarkorgon Region.