

# RAISING AWARENESS THROUGH MULTILEVEL DIALOGUE

## THE DOM VODY PLATFORM

### Water a contested resource

Tajikistan is one of the most mountainous countries in Central Asia and plays a key role as a 'water tower' supplying this precious resource to its neighbours. Accordingly, water resources are of paramount importance for the country's development strategy regarding the sustainable use and management of natural resources. The competition over water resources at all levels calls for joint efforts between the government, civil society, along with the business, science and education sectors to develop a wise trans-boundary water use strategy.



**Tajikistan - initiator of the 'International Year of Fresh Water 2003' and proposer of the 'International Water for Life Decade'**

*On the initiative of the Tajik President, Emomali Rakhmon, the General Assembly of the United Nations declared 2003 as 'International Year of Fresh Water' (IYFW 2003). President Rakhmon also proposed proclaiming 2005-2015 as 'International Water for Life Decade'. This initiative was supported in August 2003 in Dushanbe by the delegates of the International Forum on Fresh Water.*

### A place to meet

On 30 April 2003 Dom Vody opened its doors to the public in Dushanbe in the building of the National Library. Monthly events attempted to increase people's understanding of the importance of civil society's participation in decision-making processes concerning water resources. This became a platform for implementing various water initiatives presented during the Dushanbe Water Forum in autumn 2003. These efforts matched well with the themes of the 'International Water for life Decade'.

### Goal

The idea of 'Dom Vody' was to create:

- A platform for governmental and non-governmental organizations, students, politicians of different levels, artists and public at large to discuss water issues from different points of view
- A centre, where people can share their interests and exchange their experience of water use and management

### Objectives

Dom Vody had the following objectives:

- To disseminate new ideas and initiatives regarding sustainable water resource management at different levels
- To compile information and experience on water resource management in Central Asia
- To hold thematic activities on topics such as security, peace, integrated water management, self-management, poverty, and agricultural production
- To exchange experience regarding water use and conflict resolution on water issues



## Partners

The 'Dom Vody' project was financed by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), and implemented by the CAMP Program in Tajikistan jointly with the Centre for Development and Environment (CDE, University of Berne, Switzerland). The CAMP offices jointly with CDE developed programs, coordinated and implemented activities involving local initiative groups, working groups of specialists, local consultants, and the mass media.

- **International organizations**

Regional Ecological Centre of Central Asia (CAREC), UN Educational Program, USAID, UNDP, World Bank, OSCE, Oxfam, Chezvi, Aga-Khan Foundation, Soros Foundation, CARITAS, ACTED, GTZ and more

- **State organizations**

Ministry of Environmental Protection, Ministry of Melioration and the Water Industry, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Industry; State Planning and Surveying Institute on Land Utilization, Tajik Agrarian University, Academy of Sciences, Soil Science Institute and others

- **Non governmental organizations**

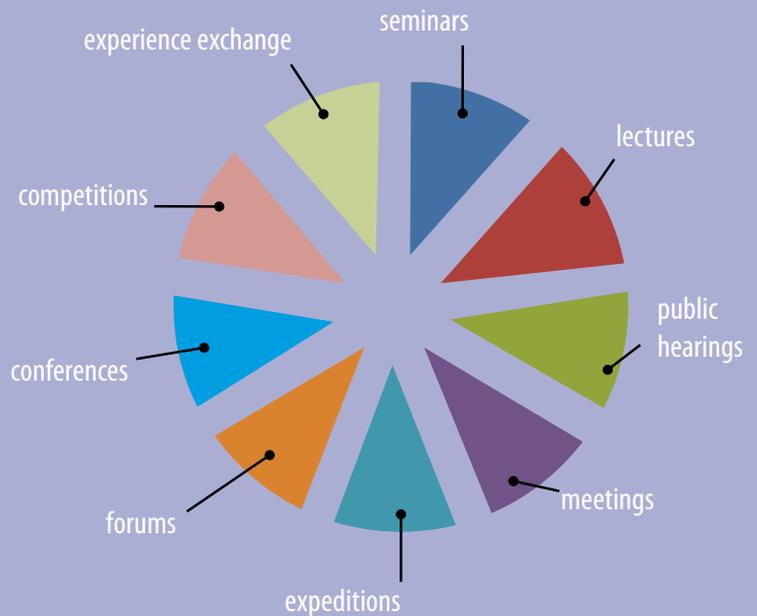
Nature Protection Brigade, Youth Ecological Centre, Munis, International Fund 'Saving the Aral sea' and more

## Activities of 'Dom Vody'

The activities consisted of exhibitions, round-table discussions, thematic conferences and workshops, lectures, reports, presentations, film showings, press conferences, competitions, and festivals. They were structured along six topical lines.

### **TOPICAL LINES OF 'DOM VODY'**

1. *Water is the blood of the land*
2. *Water: one resource – many users*
3. *Water resource management and local self management*
4. *Water saving through appropriate soil utilisation*
5. *Innovative water resource management*
6. *Dom Vody on wheels*



*Types of activities of 'Dom Vody'*



### **1. 'Water is the blood of the land'**

This topic focused on the significance of water in the context of land use. Instructive exhibitions such as 'Changes in the land use of the Tian-Shan and the Pamirs', 'People and mountains', and 'The future of Mountain villages' attracted a lot of visitors to 'Dom Vody'.

### **2. 'Water: one resource many users'**

This topic aimed to show the different interests of water users, the potential conflicts at local, regional and trans-boundary level and raised discussions on possible pathways to their solution. Exhibitions and posters were displayed show-

ing, for example, the results of expeditions along the River Naryn in Kyrgyzstan and the River Vakhsh in Tajikistan. Competitions such as the 'The IYFW seen through the eyes of children' or the 'Philosophy of water' photo exhibition were additional highlights.

### 3. 'Water resource management and local self-governance'

The idea was to visualize communities managing their own water resources.

During the 'Management of Priority Measures Workshop', participants were trained in project implementation, monitoring and reporting. Important activities included the preparatory meeting for the Forum of NGOs of Central Asia (Participation of the community in resolving the Aral sea problems) and the 'Water and Soil Conservation Forum' held in Kohi Vahdad.

### 4. 'Water saving through appropriate soil utilisation'

This topic addressed the role of soil in water storage and possible measures to improve its absorption capacities. One concrete activity was reviewing the results of the National Festival of Ecological Journalism involving different representatives of the mass media.

### 5. Innovative water resource management

Based on the rich heritage of traditional technologies concerning water use, interesting local technical and social ideas were collected and disseminated to respond to the needs of the population.

The exhibitions 'Saving Water by Appropriate Soil Utilization' and 'Innovation in Sustainable Water Resource Management' communicated these ideas to the wider public.

### 6. 'Dom Vody' on wheels

The goal of this topic was to reach other places in Tajikistan using the previous products from Dom Vody in Dushanbe. This allowed remote mountain regions to learn from 'Dom Vody' too.

## Three Round Tables for the Water Code

The first roundtable discussion was held in Khudjant followed by a second one in Khorog both on 'Application practices, gaps in legislation, and collecting proposals and opinion regarding the Water Code'. They were jointly organized with the 'State Oblast Committee for Environmental and Forestry Protection' and local NGOs.

The results of the first two roundtables was a collection of current application practices, identified legal gaps, and proposals for improving the Water Code. These results were later compiled in twenty-six posters that included additional information gathered from two sample villages. These materials were then presented in three exhibitions including the International Conference on Saving the Aral Sea (2005).

The third roundtable held in Dushanbe was based on the results of the previous two roundtables. For this important event additional support was provided by other interested organizations such as Winrock International, USAID, and the SDC. These efforts finally resulted in a modified version of the Water Code submitted to Parliament and later adopted.

#### VISITORS' FEEDBACK TO 'DOM VODY' ACTIVITIES

*"Dom Vody provides attractive illustrations with comprehensive information. The most important aspect however, is that it provides ideas and that they inspire people in Tajikistan."*

*(Bahadur Zoirov, editor in chief of 'Business world' and personal correspondent of 'The Independent Newspaper', Russia, 24 July 2003)*

*"The photos provide a lot of information. They appeal for a protective and caring attitude to this fragile beauty, or irreversible changes may take place."*  
*(Igor Nikolaev, electrician and metalworker of «Tajikenergoremont», 28 June 2003)*

*"The exhibition is very useful and up-to-date. It would be useful to regularly organize such exhibitions in Sogd Oblast. "Given the limited water resources in Sogd Oblast, I propose introducing drip irrigation as a new irrigation technology developed by the Tajik Agrarian University"*  
*(Sultanov L, Oblast representative of the GEF project 'Saving the Aral Sea', 22 September 2004)*

## Strengths of an encounter platform

The very positive experiences gained through the 'Dom Vody' platform and its activities have shown that it:

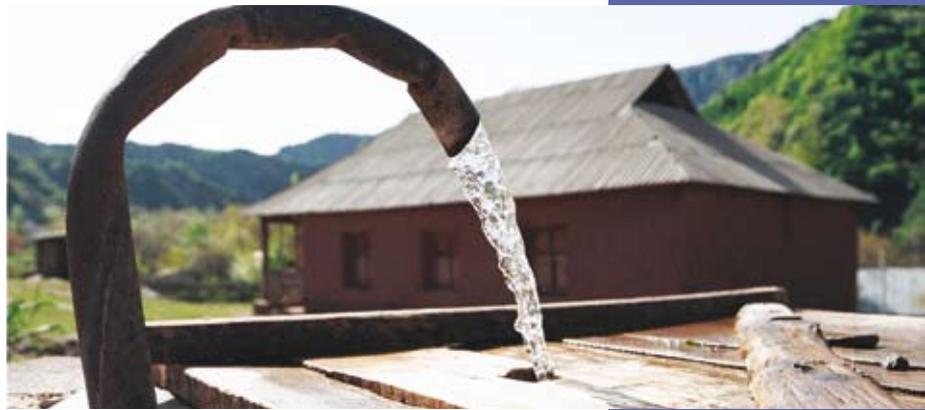
- Is an attractive way of raising the interest of the broader public regarding a specific issue relevant to society
- Is a good opportunity to implement innovative ideas linked to an international topic
- Helps launch a public debate on a relevant issue, linking the opinions and perceptions of stakeholders from different levels
- Offers an excellent opportunity for donors and the implementing agency for public relations (e.g. through high media visibility)
- Helps to identify new potential partners or co-sponsors for joint projects

The experiences gained by CAMP Kuhiston could well be used in the frame of the 'International Water for Life Decade'

## Difficulties

- Initial reluctance of the State officials to jointly reflect on shortcoming in the water use and management. However, this attitude changed when State representatives realised that the goal was not to blame but to jointly seek possible solutions to improve the situation.
- 'Dom Vody' raised expectations among villagers regarding financial support to implement concrete activities in the villages but no money was available to respond to these

expressed needs. In order to avoid such situations, clear and early communication is necessary. Ideally donors would be ready to provide complementary funds for concrete implementation measures.



## Follow-up activities of 'Dom Vody'

In order to capitalize on the momentum created through the 'Dom Vody' platform, a series of follow-up activities were proposed (and have already been partially carried out):

- Posters on water resources and their sustainable utilisation (in Russian and Tajik)
- Compilation of booklets based on these experiences (in Russian and Tajik)
- Production of a film on soil and water conservation (in Russian and Tajik, 2006)
- Further showing of the 'Dom Vody' exhibition in more villages
- Continued training workshops and conferences on water issues
- Preparation of a roundtable discussion on the "Law on bio security"
- Contribution to the WOCAT collection on SWC approaches and technologies based on Tajik experiences
- Development of a popular brochure on 'Water resources and public participation in their effective management' based on experiences from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan
- Development and implement a project on fair water access and sustainable water use in Tajik mountain villages