Current trends in water use, availability of supply, changes in seasonal flows in all major rivers, issues of over abstraction and pollution in upstream countries, and probable impacts of climate change, all are leading to reduced resilience in the water sector. It also makes it clear that water has become a national strategic issue.

In good years, Uzbekistan uses all available water supply, leaving no room for growth in productive sectors such as agriculture and industry. In water-scarce years, which are likely to be the ‘new normal’, the main productive sectors have not enough water to realize their full economic potential and have a negative impact on national GDP.

Nevertheless, public policy in the various productive sectors identify that more water is required for sector expansion to meet national economic growth targets. This poses a strategic dilemma in governance for the country as, without a national strategic approach to water resources management, there will be increasing conflict between sector policies in regards to water allocation; this will become worse with time and will have serious negative economic and social consequences for the government.

UNDP is developing an Integrated Water Resources Management and Water Use Efficiency Plan for Zarafshan River Basin in Uzbekistan as a practical demonstration of the use of IWRM principles to improve water management in Uzbekistan, to strengthen the legal and regulatory framework for the water sector by drafting a new, forward-looking water code, and to support the integration of water into relevant sectoral policy frameworks.

IWRM and water efficiency planning is taking place within a single river basin, the Zarafshan, on a pilot basis where successful results can be scaled up to the national level during a possible second phase program. In summary, it is the role of an IWRM Plan to lay out these strategic issues, especially as they affect wise investment decisions, sector behaviour and equitable allocation of water.

The Government has recognized the necessity of a full national water strategy and has formally requested the UNDP to lead such an effort. A new Water Code will underpin the transition to a more modern water planning and management system; it includes provisions for a national strategic approach for water planning.

In summary, it is the role of an IWRM Plan to lay out these strategic issues, especially as they affect wise investment decisions, sector behaviour and equitable allocation of water.

What’s NEXT

Redesign of the power strategy to reduce energy consumption by 36% million kWh by 2027, in order to reduce electricity demand and the related environmental impacts, and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by more than 700 tons.

Provide sustainable water supplies for 2,000ha of land, utilised by 38 farmers and 401 householders in the Sanam, Mekhmatkazik, Zafarobod, and Kanal-Yoqa villages.

10,000 hectares of land were reclaimed through 30 projects

60 schools and kindergartens are currently under reconstruction
habitats, and loss of number of plant and animal species. Currently some species are on the brink of extinction or became fully extinct. The number of many animals and plant species has not yet reached critical level, but continues to recede.

Since 2009 UNDP along with the national counterparts- Ministry of Water Resources and Agriculture have been working on development of national programme aiming at establishing and expanding current system of protected areas from current 2’317’030 to 8’114’140 ha.

UNDP recommended creating 29 natural protected areas of different level of protection and designation depending on location, purpose and current state of the protected sites.

5 strict reserves, 2 national parks with subsequent functional zoning of territory, 2 natural parks of local significance, 11 zakazniks for conservation, revival and reproduction of some natural sites and complexes, 2 biosphere reserves, 2 territories for expansion of existing strict reserves, expansion protected zones of 2 existing strict reserves, 2 clusters of protected Zones of existing National parks, 1 cluster site of biosphere reserve.

Recommended expansion of the existing system of PAs will enable protection of:

- Up to 70% of the diversity of vertebrate species;
- 90% of the fauna of rare and endangered vertebrate species;
- 96% of bird species, 88% of mammal species included in the Red Book of Uzbekistan;

**Strategic Plan of Expanding Current System of Protected Areas**

The more efficient maintenance of Uzbekistan’s protected area system will provide additional security to the nation’s unique flora and fauna.

**Existing System of Protected Areas**

Existing system of protected areas of Uzbekistan generally reflects diversity of nature and landscape complexes of Uzbekistan, but it does not provide full-fledged protection of biological diversity of the country in general for a number of objective reasons.

**Distribution of Protected Areas (PAs) in Uzbekistan**

Distribution of Protected Areas (PAs) in Uzbekistan does not fully conform to distribution and significance of components of biodiversity, as well as the mandate of preventing the risks of its reduction.

**Human Activity**

Human activity led to significant reduction of the habitats, and loss of number of plant and animal species. Currently some species are on the brink of extinction or became fully extinct. The number of many animals and plant species has not yet reached critical level, but continues to recede.

**Plan of Expanding Current System of Protected Areas**

600’000 people benefited from raised TB awareness

**Development Review**

Currently protected area 2’317’030 hectares

Planned 400 percent increase up to 8’114’140 hectares
Information Centers are effectively supporting two-way communication between the public and local governments. Through “Hotline” communications, web-sites, they are bringing various issues raised by local citizens to the attention of local administration and assisting in taking bold actions to address these issues, thus are generating positive public image of local khokimiyats.

For the reported period, Information Centers in pilot regions have received over 400 requests of the citizens, majority of which were properly addressed by local administrations.

Samarkand City khokimyat has adopted this approach and established their own Information Center.

In accordance with the Order of the President of Uzbekistan, for the first time in Uzbekistan the Parliament has been carrying out a legal experiment on testing the Draft Law “On openness of local state bodies and administration” in Samarkand and Bukhara regions.

The Information Center Model was presented to the Working Group of this legal experiment to implement in all khokimiyats of these two regions within.
Bastamkul Saidkulov is one of many farmers working in Uzbekistan’s arid regions who face problems related to poor-quality soil and lack of rain, and have had to seek new approaches of overcoming these problems. His previous livestock farm was underproductive, leading to reduced incomes and low living standards.

The solution to Mr. Saidkulov’s problems came in the form of what is referred to in Iran and Turkey as ‘Green Gold’, but is better known as the pistachio nut. It is ideal for dry regions with low levels of precipitation, where there is little prospect for alternative forms of agriculture. The crop is very resistant to drought and infertile soil, and represents a long-term investment that in five to seven years will produce crops 50 times more profitable than wheat.

Mr. Saidkulov has been a key fore-runner of pistachio farming in Uzbekistan. With support from the UNDP-supported GEF Small Grants Programme, Mr. Saidkulov contributed to a study conducted by experts from the national Forest Research Institute to determine how pistachios could replace other less-sustainable crops on his land along the Nuratau mountain ridge.

Since the pistachio’s first introduction in Uzbekistan, approximately a hundred hectares of plantation has been established, with a further 1,000 hectare earmarked in the Djizak Region alone. A year after the crop’s introduction, it was realised that planting material and forestry providers would have to expand in order to meet demand for the crop.

To meet the growth in demand for pistachio seeds and related products, ‘points of growth’ are being established. These facilities will contain collections of highly-productive pistachio varieties, and will provide planting and inoculate materials to farmers.

The Gal Aral collection has been the first of such ‘points of growth’, established in the Andijan region of Uzbekistan, with another planned for the Fergana valley. An eventual total of four to five points of growth will be sufficient to match the newly-found popularity of the sustainable and profitable ‘Green Gold’ crop in Uzbekistan’s arid regions.