

8

SECTION

Activities
of International
Partners
in Central Asia

8.1. Asian Development Bank



ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has provided technical assistance support and made investments in the water sector in the Central Asia region since its first lending (to Kazakhstan) in 1998.

Investments to date, totaling US\$4.4 billion, have included support for flood management, irrigation and drainage, clean water supply, sanitation, hydro-power, institutional reforms, and knowledge and capacity building.

Projects in Central Asia and other CAREC countries in 2023

ADB has assisted the [Central Asia Regional Economic \(CAREC\) Program](#) for regional cooperation and integration. This partnership of 11 countries²³⁵ supported by six multilateral institutions promotes development through cooperation, leading to accelerated growth and poverty reduction.

In 2017, CAREC introduced agriculture and water as a key pillar of the CAREC 2030 strategy. In 2020, ADB approved technical assistance (TA) to support the development of the CAREC water pillar, emphasizing economic aspects and sustainable financing of water resources management.

The framework for CAREC water pillar was developed and endorsed in 2021 by the Ministerial conference. Following a series of consultations with CAREC countries, a dedicated working group for the Water Pillar was established in 2023 with representatives from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

The Working Group of the Water Pillar is an advisory and consultative body who provides guidance on the implementation and future direction of the Water Pillar and development of regional projects and technical assistance, including coordination with other regional initiatives.

The Water Pillar is envisaged to expand over time to include other CAREC countries and will be assessing potential projects for financing in the coming years including water-energy nexus modeling.

Investment approvals in 2023 included an additional financing of \$5 million grant for the [Emergency Flood](#)

[Assistance Project in Pakistan](#). Approved in February 2023, the project supports urgent provision of climate-resilient seeds for staple crop cultivation and women-led livelihoods to meet basic household needs. This additional financing from the Japan Fund for Prosperous and Resilient Asia and the Pacific is managed by ADB to expand the original scope of the Emergency Flood Assistance Project in 2022. In that year, ADB approved a \$475 million loan and \$3,050,000 grant for Pakistan's post-flood recovery and reconstruction response to contribute to the economic recovery of flood-ravaged provinces of Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh, while building longer term resilience.

In October 2023, ADB approved a €48 million loan and €500,000 grant for enhancing the policy and institutional framework for sustainable water resources management and an efficient state-owned enterprise for delivering irrigation services in [Georgia](#). This [project](#) will increase resilience to future climate change impacts by (i) revising irrigation fees to ensure improved efficiency of water use and financial sustainability of irrigation systems under climate change, and (ii) modernizing existing infrastructure from open canal to more efficient, combined closed pipe and open canal networks. It will also support water-efficient irrigation technologies and promote innovative and climate-smart agricultural production.

In [Uzbekistan](#), ADB expanded its technical assistance support to the preparation of the Resilience in the Amu Darya River Basin Investment Project with a total grant of \$1,825,000 approved in November 2023. The technical assistance will help design the Ayakchi and Obizarang Reservoir projects listed in the pipeline for 2024 approval. The technical assistance also covers a study tour to Japan to learn from Japanese experience and knowledge in integrated and comprehensive climate adaptation measures such as dam development and operation, and innovative water saving and digitalization technologies required for the projects.

In December 2023, a technical assistance in the amount of \$528,000 was approved by ADB for preparing the [Naulong Integrated Water Resources Development Project in Pakistan](#) that harnesses flood flows generated by intense but highly episodic rainfall. The proposed project will increase the reliability of water resources by developing a storage reservoir for multipurpose use of agriculture, power generation and drinking water.

Source: Asian Development Bank, <https://www.adb.org/>

²³⁵ Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, People's Republic of China, Mongolia, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan

8.2. Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank

The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) is a multilateral development bank with a mission to improve social and economic outcomes in Asia. Headquartered in Beijing, AIIB began operations in January 2016 with 57 founding Members and have since grown to 109 approved members worldwide.

The 2023 AIIB eighth Annual Meeting themed “Sustainable Growth in a Challenging World” marked AIIB’s first in-person Annual Meeting since 2019, and the first one in Africa (Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt, September 25-26). The meeting highlighted AIIB’s continued commitment to supporting the key infrastructure demands of its Members, and alluded to the climate-centered global agenda, and the compounding challenges faced by its Members. During the meeting, the Bank announced that it would host its next Annual Meeting in Central Asia. The ninth annual meeting of the Bank will be held in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, in September 2024.

Projects in Central Asia in 2023

AIIB has signed a loan agreement (\$36 million) for the development, construction and operation of a 100-MW [wind power plant](#) in the Zhambyl region of **Southern Kazakhstan**. The project will be co-financed by EBRD, Green Climate Fund, and Green Technology Fund. When fully operational, the plant is expected to help reduce the country’s emissions by over



200,000 tons of carbon dioxide-equivalent per year on average.

In **Tajikistan**, a [Rogun Hydropower Development Project – Phase 1](#) was proposed for financing in 2023 for the construction of a hydropower plant, currently in progress, with a designed generation capacity of 3,780 MW. In Phase 1, AIIB is considering investing USD 200 million in certain components of the Project. Further phases of development will be reviewed at a later stage by reflecting on the progress to date.

In **Uzbekistan**, AIIB approved the [UzPSB Energy and Water Efficiency, and Renewables Bond Investment](#) (\$25 million), which will finance a portfolio of renewable energy, and energy and water efficiency sub-projects in Uzbekistan. \$145 million were approved as co-financing for the construction, operation, and maintenance of three solar photovoltaic independent power plants (See Section 8.3. [European Bank for Reconstruction and Development](#)).

Source: <https://www.aiib.org/en/index.html>

8.3. European Bank for Reconstruction and Development

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) was established in 1991. It invests in projects facilitating the transition to open market, as well as the development of business activity.

The EBRD work in Central Asian countries on water issues is very broad, including water supply, wastewater treatment, RES, and increased climate resilience.

Projects in Central Asia in 2023

EBRD invested more than €1.2 billion in Central Asian economies in 2023. More than 100 projects supported renewable energy, water efficiency, private entrepreneurship and sustainable infrastructure. Sixty per cent of investments were green.

Highlights of the EBRD’s work in **Kazakhstan** include the launch of the [GEFF Kazakhstan II](#) and an investment in a local currency bond issued by the country’s transmission system operator, [KEGOC](#). The funds will help make the country’s electrical grid more sustainable and reliable.

In the **Kyrgyz Republic**, the EBRD pledged new funds under its [Kyrgyz Water Resilience Framework](#) to sup-



port the modernization of water supply services in the Batken and Jalal-Abad oblasts. The Bank signed a number of sovereign projects aimed at modernizing key transport and energy infrastructure to improve the country’s connectivity and climate resilience, including: (1) upgrade of a 30 km section of the [Issyk-Kul Lake ring road](#); (2) increase of the reliability of the national electricity transmission and distribution grid; and, (3) rehabilitation and modernization of the [Lebedinovskaya hydropower plant](#) – the largest investment in the country’s hydropower sector in 20 years.

The completion of three infrastructure projects in **Tajikistan** allowed more than 400,000 people in 13 municipalities across the country to enjoy better access to clean and safe drinking water. Last year the EBRD launched the [GEFF Tajikistan II](#) and extended new GEFF loans to Bank [Arvand](#) and microlenders [Humo](#) and [Imon International](#). With a joint base of more than 540,000 clients and operational even in remote

mountainous parts of the country, these three institutions will help bring green finance to even the smallest borrowers in Tajikistan. The EBRD offered support to local retailers and agribusiness companies under a risk-sharing scheme with the country's largest private lender, Bank Eskhata.

Uzbekistan remained the leading recipient of EBRD funding in the region for the fourth year running, by attracting more than €700 million. The Bank: (1) financed the construction of three greenfield solar power plants with total installed capacity of nearly

900 MW in **Jizzakh**, **Samarkand**, and **Sherabad**; (2) provided funds for the construction of a 100 MW wind power plant in the autonomous republic of **Karakalpakstan**; (3) provided a sovereign loan to modernise 118 pumping stations and improve the sustainability of water supply for irrigation in the Fergana Valley. Samarkand became the first city in the country to join the **EBRD Green Cities programme**, and is planning to deploy ecologically friendly electric buses as part of this engagement.

Source: <https://www.ebrd.com>

8.4. European Union



The European Union's engagement with the region has significantly expanded since the early 1990s. In 2019, the Council adopted a new EU Strategy on Central Asia. The new-generation bilateral Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (EPCAs) form a cornerstone of EU engagement. At the beginning of 2023, the EU and Tajikistan have started negotiations on an Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (EPCA).

More than 100 delegates gathered for the **7th European Union – Central Asia High-Level Conference on Environment and Water Cooperation** (Rome, February 23-24).²³⁶

The EU reiterated its support to the five countries of the region accelerating a green transformation of their economies to ensure sustainable development.

The **19th EU-Central Asia Ministerial Meeting** took place in Luxembourg (October 23). The participants endorsed the **Joint Roadmap for Deepening Ties between the EU and Central Asia** and stressed the need to strengthen regional cooperation in Central Asia as an effective and desirable way of tackling climate, water-energy and environmental challenges and recognized the importance of further action in stepping up and promoting such cooperation including through sharing knowledge and experience in sustainable water management and fostering political dialogues within the region and between the EU and Central Asia.

EU Regional Environment Programs in Central Asia

EU is currently supporting two regional cooperation programs in Central Asia on environment-related issues: (1) **Central Asian Water and Energy Program (CAWEP)** implemented jointly by EU, WB, Switzerland and UK to promote water and energy security at the regional and national levels (see **World Bank**); (2) **Regional coordination and support to improve the EUCA Platform for Environment and Water Cooperation** (see further).

“European Union – Central Asia Water, Environment and Climate Change Cooperation (WECOOP)” in 2023

After three and a half years of dedicated work to enhance national environment, climate change and water policies and to promote green investments in Central Asia, the WECOOP project closed (April 14). Key results: (1) The Project supported policy dialogue between CA and the EU with participation of over 700 policy makers and experts; (2) WECOOP worked on enhancement of national policies and capacities in CA and promotion of green investments. 520 national experts improved knowledge and skills in environmental governance, of them 56% are women. 19 environmental national policy documents have been adopted by relevant institutions with project's assistance. More than 100 representatives of municipalities and NGOs attended 3 WECOOP workshops on investment project preparation. 115 students and young entrepreneurs received training on green business development and 30 university teachers on environmental economics; (3) 3 regional media contests with participation of over 130 journalists were organized to raise awareness on climate, biodiversity and renewable energy. The project organized study tours for national experts, journalists and young entrepreneurs to Czechia, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, the Netherlands; (4) Project experts developed analytical review of biodiversity and significant ecosystems conservation priorities in CA. Published 16 news bulletins on developments in EU policies legislation, new relevant reports and studies.

Source: <https://ec.europa.eu>, <https://wecoop.eu>

²³⁶ organized under the auspices of the EU–Central Asia Platform for Environment and Water Cooperation

8.5. German Society for International Cooperation

As a globally active federal enterprise for international development cooperation, the German Society for International Cooperation/Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH/ supports the German Federal Government in implementation of its development policy goals.

Since the beginning of the 1990s, GIZ has been implementing programs and projects in Central Asia.

Regional Programs and Projects on Water, Environment, and Development

The German government, in collaboration with its Central Asian partners, launched the **Green Central Asia Initiative**²³⁷ (with a budget exceeding €450 million) in 2020 to engage in a political dialogue process on climate, environment, and security. Its primary goals include promoting the environmentally friendly use of natural resources, safeguarding ecosystems and biodiversity, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

This initiative aligns with Germany's foreign policy focus on 'climate and security' within the United Nations framework and supports the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 6 (clean water and sanitation), 13 (climate action), and 15 (life on land). GIZ collaborates with partners in Central Asia across various areas such as Water Management, Green Economy, Climate Adaptation and Risk Management, Land Management & Biodiversity, and Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency.

One notable project under this initiative is the '**Green Central Asia: Transboundary dialogue on climate, environment, and security in Central Asia and Afghanistan**' (2020-2024). Commissioned by the Federal Foreign Office, it facilitated the drafting of the **Regional Climate Change Adaptation Strategy for Central Asia**, which was introduced at COP28 in Dubai and adopted in 2023. Moreover, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed among four countries' glacier research institutions and Meteorological Institutes (March) to develop a common regional methodology for monitoring glaciers, enhancing regional coordination.

Scientific institutions like the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK), the Helmholtz Centre Potsdam - German Research Centre for Geosciences (GFZ), the Martin Luther University Halle Wittenberg (MLU), and the German-Kazakhstan University (DKU) have provided vital support and capacity building measures. For instance, they developed a statistical weather-driven crop model for wheat yield forecasting in Kazakhstan, conducted hydrological mode-



ling, drought monitoring (<https://droughtmap.geo.uni-halle.de/droughtmap>) and monitored reservoirs, lakes, GLOFs (Glacial Lake Outburst Floods), and other natural hazards.

The **second phase of the Green Central Asia Initiative**, starting in April 2024, will further support the Regional Climate Adaptation Strategy with a focus on enhancing regional adaptation and mitigation. This phase is co-financed by the EU Turkmenistan Facility and will deepen the policy dialogue between the EU and Turkmenistan on renewable energies, methane reduction, and environmental protection.

Additionally, projects like '**Climate sensitive Water Resources Management in Central Asia**' (2023-2028), commissioned by the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and co-financed by the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC), aim to implement Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) principles in the Aral Sea Basin by supporting basin dialogues along the Amu Darya and the Syr Darya, building capacities and working in particular on improving water quality and groundwater monitoring and introducing digitalization measures at selected pilot sites of transboundary irrigation canals. Similarly, the BMZ-commissioned **projects on climate risk management and integrative land use in Central Asia** work on **water-related risks** at the pilot basins Isfajram-Saj, Zerafshan, Shakhimardan, Murgab, Chu, Talas and **sustainable land use practices** in the five Central Asian countries.

In the realm of **Green Economy**, GIZ collaborates with partners to promote socially just and environmentally friendly economic development. Noteworthy projects include initiatives in the **Aral Sea region**, Tajikistan, and **Kyrgyzstan**, which focus on integrating green technologies, improving water access and efficiency, and developing product-specific marketing strategies for international markets.

Moreover, in the **renewable energy and energy efficiency** sector, GIZ supports efforts to achieve climate-neutral energy coverage by 2050, emphasizing energy efficiency, renewable energy sources, and hydrogen promotion.

Source: GIZ Green Central Asia Program, <https://www.giz.de>, www.greencentralasia.org

²³⁷ this initiative is a significant contribution to the Team Europe Initiative on Water, Energy, and Climate Change in Central Asia

8.6. Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development



The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is a multidisciplinary, inter-governmental organization comprising 38 member countries and provides a unique forum and the analytical capacity to assist governments to compare and exchange policy experiences, and to identify and promote good practices through policy decisions and recommendations.

The OECD is working to help developed and developing countries meet the water challenge. The OECD contributes analyses to improve the information base, identifies good practices, and provides a forum for exchanging country experiences.

OECD work on water focusses on the economic and financial dimensions of water management and improving governance.

In addition to analytical work, the OECD works with selected regions and countries to facilitate the reform of water policies.

The OECD has enhanced its convening power and capacity to structure discussion among stakeholders on water issues, by setting up international initiatives including the [Roundtable on Financing Water](#), the [Water Governance Initiative](#), and the [Network of Economic Regulators](#).

The OECD facilitates the [Global Commission on the Economics of Water \(GCEW\)](#) which was convened by the Government of the Netherlands and launched in May 2022 with the aim of redefining the way water is valued and governed for the common good.

The [OECD Council Recommendation on Water](#) captures policy guidance developed by the OECD and can inspire water policy reforms in countries around the globe. Non-member countries are welcome to adhere to the Recommendation with a view to create a momentum for water policy reforms that contribute to water security and sustainable growth.

The Recommendation on Water includes high-level policy guidance on topics relevant for water resources management and the delivery of water services including managing water quantity, improving water quality, managing water risks and disasters, ensuring good water governance and ensuring sustainable finance, investment and pricing for the water and water services.

Activities in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia in 2023

In Central Asia, the OECD works with partner countries through its [GREEN Action Task Force](#). The GREEN Action Task Force annual meeting in 2023 was held on [May 11-12](#) in Istanbul, Turkey at the OECD Istanbul Centre, with an agenda that reviewed progress with implementation of the program of work for 2023-2024 and a substantive focus on the biodiversity policies in EECCA, greening public finance in EECCA countries, mobilizing and catalyzing private-sector investment in green economy transition in EECCA and a special session on the effects of the Russian invasion of Ukraine on climate and energy policies in the European Union's Eastern Partnership and Central Asian countries. The meeting also provided an update on work on strengthening water management and on the energy-water-land use nexus in Central Asia.

The OECD assists the countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) in adopting a more integrated approach to water management, applying robust economic and financial analyses and improving multistakeholder participation. It also helps in identifying and removing some of the key obstacles to effective and efficient water management, while reflecting countries' level of socio-economic development. This work is part of the programme of the European Union Water Initiative (EUWI), for which the OECD is a strategic partner, together with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and is aimed at improving river basin management and water governance frameworks. National Policy Dialogues are jointly facilitated by the OECD and UNECE and fed by robust analytical work, often lead to practical implementation of policy advice.

The OECD focuses on the economic aspects of water resources management (policy coherence, managing water for growth and making the best use of economic instruments for water management), and on the financial sustainability of water supply and sanitation services (strategic and mid-term financial planning and financial support mechanisms to the sector).

Work in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus is carried out within the frame of the [EU4Environment Water Resources and Environmental Data Program](#) which the OECD implements in partnership with the Environment Agency Austria (UBA), Austrian Development Agency (ADA), International Office for Water (OIEau) (France) and United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)

In Central Asia, recent work has focused on the analysis of [energy, water and food security as part of a new program of work on "nexus"](#). In 2023, this work

led to the publication of a series of case studies titled [Climate-Resilient Agribusiness in Central Asia: The water, energy, land-use nexus approach](#). As part of strengthening its relationships with the International Fund for saving the Aral Sea (IFAS), the OECD in collaboration with its nexus implementing partners²³⁸ SIC ICWC and UNECE and the European Union organized a side event at the IFAS conference: “Central Asia: Towards sustainable future through strong regional institutions”. The side event [“Innovative Solutions for strengthening regional cooperation on water and energy in Central Asia”](#) saw high-level welcoming remarks from H.E. Mr. Daler Juma, Minister of

Energy and Water Resources of the Republic of Tajikistan and H.E. Ms. Terhi Hakala, the Special Representative for Central Asia, the European Commission. The OECD with its implementing partner SIC ICWC also contributed to the [UN SPECA 26th Session of the Working Group on Water, Energy and Environment](#) where a panel session on the nexus was organized and presented. This work was launched in 2023 and the OECD partners with SIC ICWC, EBRD, FAO and UNECE on this five-year regional program (Kazakhstan, Almaty, hybrid, November 7).

Source: OECD

8.7. Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) has a long history in supporting its Central Asian participating States in the area of regional water management, focusing on water governance and support for transboundary water management, training and capacity development, research and development of standards and legislation.

Activities in 2023

The Intergovernmental Chu-Talas Water Commission's activities were supported by the **OSCE Programme Office in Astana and the OSCE Program Office in Bishkek**. The support aims to promote transboundary water dialogue and co-operation on Chu and Talas river basins. With the support of national experts, a technical examination of the reservoir was conducted; necessary maintenance and repair work for Orto-Tokoy water reservoir in the Kyrgyz Republic were determined. OSCE also supported the organization of the [11th Meeting of the Working Group on Environmental Protection \(WGEP\)](#) under the Secretariat of the Intergovernmental Chu-Talas Water Commission (Almaty, November 21). The participants from the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz Republic discussed the results of laboratory water quality assessments and also reviewed a joint annual report on water quality and the hydrometeorological situation in the Chu and Talas river basins.

As part of OSCE's efforts to enhance national legislation in line with good practices in the efficient and sustainable management of water resources, expert assistance in revision of a new edition of the national Water Code of Kazakhstan was provided.

The OSCE Programme Office in Dushanbe supported organization of two capacity-building workshops for representatives of Syr Darya River Basin's Steering Committee with a strong focus on gender mainstreaming and increasing women's participation in water



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

resource management, as well as a workshop for young professionals to increase capacity in project proposal writing with a focus on sustainable water management.

In the area of legislative support, OSCE assisted passing three by-laws to the Water Code (2019) focusing on irrigation and drainage in Tajikistan. OSCE also supported the Land Reclamation and Irrigation Agency of Tajikistan developing the 2024-2028 Land Reclamation and Irrigation Programme. To promote regional cooperation, OSCE supported 10th meeting of the National Commission on Irrigation and Drainage with a focus on experience exchange between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. This event also aimed at enhancing regional dialogue on climate change in Central Asia and bringing in young professionals to stimulate their interest in the land reclamation and irrigation sector.

OSCE worked with the Ministry of Health and Social Protection of Population to develop sanitation regulations and rules on waste water treatment in Tajikistan and facilitated the production of awareness raising videos on sanitation norms applicable to drinking water. OSCE also facilitated a desk review on sanitary wastewater management and implemented a survey on wastewater disposal facilities and their impact on open water sources. The capacity building trainings for the Sanitation and Epidemiological Centers employees on the topic of sanitation regulations on drinking and ground water were conducted in Tajikistan's four regions and involved 735 employees (317 female; 418 male).

Support for the assessment of the **pollution in the Syr Darya river basin was provided by the OSCE Project**

²³⁸ In 2023, OECD in partnership with SIC ICWC, EBRD, FAO and UNECE launched the five-year project “Regional mechanisms for the low-carbon, climate-resilient transformation of the energy-water-land Nexus in Central Asia”

Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan via the Ministry of Ecology, Environment Protection and Climate Change of Uzbekistan. Within this framework, monitoring missions to settlements on the basin were organized to conduct seasonal analysis of the water surface and sediments on the point of their contamination by various pollutants. This support contributes to Uzbekistan's efforts on implementation of efficient disaster risk reduction mechanisms and safety precaution measures.

Support in the implementation of Central Asian countries' commitments in the area of water management as well as strengthened dialogue and co-operation was provided by the **Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities** at the OSCE Secretariat in Vienna, with notable activities listed below.

In 2023, OSCE launched the next phase of the project "[Women, Water Management and Conflict Prevention – Phase III](#)". The project contributes to more inclusive and participatory water governance and capacity building of women water professionals, including in mediation and peacebuilding processes.

In partnership with the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia (CAREC) and Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI), OSCE continued the organization of monthly capacity-building sessions for the [Women in Water Management Network in Central Asia and Afghanistan](#).

The Network works to support a community of practice for women water experts engaged in different aspects of transboundary water cooperation processes in Central Asia. Women water experts from the region engage in joint capacity building, experience sharing, and knowledge exchange, supporting development of women water experts in the region and enhanced regional water cooperation.

Preparations have been underway to organize the *Global Network Forum for Women in Water Diplomacy* on 4-8 March 2024 in Vienna for the Central Asian Network together with partner networks from Africa, North America and other regions. More than 80 women water professionals, partners and stakeholders are expected to meet and exchange experiences, plan the next steps in advancing the network strategy, development and cooperation.

In August 2023, OSCE and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), contributed with a session on "**Facilitating Transboundary Water Cooperation through Data and Information Exchange**" at the **Stockholm World Water Week**. The event gathered more than 50 participants from the international water sector – many of them young professionals – and was an occasion to discuss the importance of data and information exchange focusing on transboundary water management. A highlight of the event was the introduction of a "Data and Information Exchange Toolkit – Facilitating transboundary water management and governance through cooperation", developed by OSCE in partnership with the IUCN Environmental Law Centre in Bonn within the framework of the OSCE project on Water Diplomacy and Conflict Prevention.

In September 2023, OSCE contributed to the *Water Day at the 13th Central Asia Leadership Program (CALP)* held in Almaty, Kazakhstan. Participants attended lectures by international experts in water diplomacy, gender equality, and sustainable development. The sessions focused on state management in the water sector where participants were introduced to the approaches of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM), progress in implementing IWRM practices in Central Asia, and discussed the main constraints to sustainable cooperation among regional countries in transboundary river basins.

Source: OSCE

8.8. Swiss Confederation (SDC and SECO)



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC

State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO

Switzerland initiated its ongoing **Cooperation Program for Central Asia (2022-2025)**, maintaining a strong focus on water, infrastructure and climate change. The Program is set up in a way to encompass regional efforts to address water and climate change, along with national portfolios in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The overall goal of the regional water portfolio is to see Central Asian states collaborate, use evidence and take concrete steps

to manage their water resources with a basin approach in a climate-resilient, sustainable and inclusive way. Through the bilateral portfolios, Switzerland aims to see People live and work – reasonably protected from natural hazards – in resilient settings and use quality public infrastructure services, and water resources are managed with a basin approach in a climate-resilient, sustainable and inclusive way.

In the **Kyrgyz Republic**, Switzerland supported the Kyrgyz government agencies in implementing the National Water Resources Management Program (NWRMP), which has significantly contributed to the effectiveness and efficiency of selected basin management institutions and water utilities. The Swiss funding facilitated the completion of essential tasks

such as the preparation of Asset Management Plans (AMP) and the creation of digital maps for numerous Water User Associations (WUAs). As a result, a large proportion of WUAs have developed comprehensive irrigation and drainage management plans, leading to a notable increase in satisfaction among community members regarding the services provided. However, there is a need for improved gender representation within WUAs, advocating for better and more balanced inclusion of women in management roles. Despite these challenges, the Swiss-supported NWRMP has positively impacted over a quarter of a million people in the country. Additionally, efforts to enhance the resilience of rural communities against climate change impacts have been notable, with various measures such as infrastructure development, training, and support for climate-smart agricultural practices contributing to increased resilience among community members, particularly women.

In **Tajikistan**, Switzerland continued its support for various initiatives aimed at enhancing the country's infrastructure and resilience to climate change impacts. In close coordination with other development partners Switzerland continued its support in the implementation of the Water Sector Reform and assisted in the development of new Water Code adopted by the GoT in 2020, the State Program for drinking water supply and sanitation for the period up to 2032 (approval expected in 2024), the "National Water Strategy 2040" (approval expected in 2024) and the "National Program on Melioration and Irrigation 2030". Another notable achievement was the improvement in interagency disaster risk reduction (DRR) coordination, facilitated through the National DRR platform established with the Swiss support. Efforts to improve access to quality public services, including water, sanitation, and electricity, have seen significant advancements, with thousands of additional people gaining access to essential services. DRR and CC concerns were integrated into the river basin planning within NWRMP project. Moreover, climate change adaptation measures have been implemented in cities like Khorog and rural areas of Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO) as well as in Rasht valley benefiting thousands of residents, but projects in certain regions have faced obstacles due to security concerns and restrictions imposed by local authorities. Swiss initiative on biodiversity conservation and climate resilience launched in the Southern Khatlon region and ground water management in Sugd. Overall, Switzerland's support in Tajikistan encompasses a wide range of initiatives aimed at promoting sustainable development and resilience in the face of environmental challenges.

In **Uzbekistan**, Switzerland sustained its support for initiatives aimed at enhancing integrated water resources management (IWRM) and improving public services, particularly in the water supply and sanitation (WSS) sector. Through partnerships with international organizations like the Asian Develop-

ment Bank (ADB), World Bank (WB), and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Switzerland assisted in the development of a comprehensive legal framework for IWRM, including the submission of crucial documents such as the draft Water Code and the Water Strategy 2024-2026 to the Cabinet of Ministers. This support reinforced Uzbekistan's commitment to water conservation and environmental protection, aligning with its strategic priorities for 2030. Furthermore, Switzerland's efforts included promoting women's empowerment in the water sector and implementing various WSS projects to benefit over half a million people. These endeavors reflect Switzerland's dedication to fostering sustainable development and resilience in Uzbekistan, addressing key challenges such as climate change adaptation and efficient natural resource management.

In continuation of its efforts in the three focus countries, Switzerland remains actively engaged in advocating for **regional cooperation and coordination around Water, Infrastructure and Climate Change issues in Central Asia**. The Swiss flagship initiative, **Blue Peace Central Asia** will continue, underlying the Swiss commitment to hydro-diplomacy and promoting of water as vector towards peace, stability and sustainable development. Switzerland continues to engaging with and strengthens regional organizations and dialogue platforms, foster an evidence-based dialogue and identify strategic demonstration projects to set best practices in water cooperation in the region.

Based on a successful demonstration project of Blue Peace Central Asia, the new **"Smart and Precise Prognostic Hydrology for Innovative Risk Management and Resource Use Efficiency in Central Asia" (SAPPHIRE)** project was launched. The project modernizes operational hydrology workflows in Central Asia Hydromet organizations, streamlines data management and processing steps, improves quality of forecasts of river discharge and builds capacity and interagency regional cooperation. By integrating information on snow for hydrological forecasting, SAPPHIRE is directly linked to the Swiss **Cryospheric Observation and Modeling for improved Adaptation in Central Asia (CROMO-ADAPT)** project, which strengthens the glacier, snow and permafrost monitoring systems in Central Asia. CROMO ADAPT builds on Swiss expertise in monitoring and adaptation in alpine water and disaster risk management to develop user-oriented climate information services, and supports the planning of adaptation measures to increase resilience to climate change.

Switzerland also continues its contribution to the **Central Asia Water and Energy Program (CAWEP)**, a multi-donor trust fund managed by the World Bank (see [World Bank](#)).

Finally, Switzerland continues to build on the **Governance of Groundwater Resources in Transboundary**

Aquifers (GGRETA) project, a global project with the Pre-Tashkent aquifer as one of three pilot areas.²³⁹

Beyond its direct involvement in projects within the region, Switzerland recognizes the importance of fostering dialogue and knowledge exchange among regional donors.

Switzerland's commitment to promoting water security and climate resilience is further demonstrated through its participation in key thematic meetings and conferences, including the Dushanbe Water Process and UN Water Conference. By emphasizing a systemic approach, Switzerland underscores the interconnection of climate change, food security, and water management.

Publications. (1) [Online course book](#) on Hydrological Modeling developed by Hydrosolutions as part of the Blue Peace Youth Pillar Program; (2) the [Water Footprint Assessment for Central Asia](#) contributes to a better understanding of the costs of water consumption for various uses across sectors as well as along specific agricultural value chains; (3) the [SnowMapper Central Asia](#) is gaining increasing significance for snow cover analysis and monitoring in Central Asia. This tool, a result of the fruitful collaboration between SAPHIRE Central Asia (hydrosolutions GmbH) and CROMO-ADAPT (SLF) projects, leverages climate reanalysis data for high-resolution snow cover dynamics analysis.

Source: Regional Water and Climate Change Advisor for Central Asia, Embassy of Switzerland in Uzbekistan

8.9. United States Agency for International Development



The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) works across the whole Central Asia region to transform water-sharing problems into cooperation that would lead to better and equitable water management.

Activities in 2023

The USAID Regional Water and Vulnerable Environment (WAVE) activity, with a total budget of \$21.5 million, aimed at strengthening regional capacity to manage shared water resources and mitigate environmental risks in the Syr Darya and Amu Darya River basins, [continued](#) in 2023.

In 2023, the WAVE activity [sponsored](#) seven representatives in the CA delegation attending the UN Water Conference 2023. Under the theme of "Every drop counts," the delegates participated in a variety of sessions on a range of topics from reviving the ecosystem of the Aral Sea to preserving glaciers and the cryosphere, and using the Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystem Nexus approach to improve water management. It completed its summer school on academic writing for 12 winners in its Young Researchers Competition. The 10-day school was designed to strengthen the researchers' skills in preparing their studies for submission to peer-reviewed journals (May).

USAID Central Asia's Environmental Restoration of the Aral Sea Activity I (ERAS-I) [organized a three-day expedition](#) for a delegation of representatives from Germany, Japan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and the United States to visit several afforestation projects in the dried bed of the Aral Sea, including the USAID Oasis, where 200,000 black saxaul seedlings have been planted to test optimal growing conditions for restoring this vital ecosystem (May 21-26). Following the Expedition, USAID convened the first Aral Sea Donor Coordination Conference, which included more than 130 representatives from various national governments and international organizations (e.g., WHO) to discuss strategy and opportunities for improved coordination among initiatives dedicated to restoring this vital ecosystem (Kyzylorda, May 25-26).

A series of [workshops were concluded](#) in Khiva, Uzbekistan, where more than 40 water, agriculture, environmental, energy and economic specialists from Amu Darya River Basin countries gathered to learn about the initial results of long-term water and energy models developed for the basin by a group of national and international experts.

With the support of USAID, Foundation for Tolerance International (Kyrgyz Republic), Istiqbolli Avlod (Uzbekistan), and Youth Group for Protecting the Environment (Tajikistan) have [engaged students](#) in the Fergana Valley to form "Green Patrols," local youth groups who lead small environmental projects in their communities and raise public awareness about the need for water conservation.

Source: www.usaid.gov

²³⁹ implemented by UNESCO through a planned new phase

8.10. World Bank

For more than 30 years, the Bank has supported the efforts of Central Asian countries in improving the living standards of their people and promoting economic growth. Now, the Bank is increasingly adopting a regional approach to tackle the development challenges of Central Asian countries, through cross-border cooperation, fostering dialogue, and knowledge sharing across key sectors such as energy and water, transportation, and healthcare.

Central Asian Water and Energy Program. Since 2009, the Central Asia Water and Energy Program (CAWEP)²⁴⁰ has been supporting regional cooperation and integration for strengthening water and energy security. CAWEP consists of three pillars that support data and diagnostic analyses, institutions, capacity, and dialogue, and related investments: (1) Water Security; (2) Energy Security; and (3) Water-Energy Linkages.

Since the start of the program, it has facilitated 23 water, energy, and environmental investments of \$3.78 billion. **The third phase** of the program, ended in November 2023, catalyzed almost \$1.6 billion in new Bank-funded water and energy investments, convening many technical knowledge exchanges, and providing technical assistance to build sector capacity for more than 25 national institutions. It contributed significantly to the development of an integrated regional hydrological and meteorological data processing and forecasting platform – Central Asia Flood and Early Warning System (CAFEWS), which will improve regional monitoring and forecasting of extreme weather and other risks, assist in disaster preparedness, and support the management of water resources and the optimization of agricultural and energy production.

The ambitious **fourth phase** of the program (CAWEP-4) will promote regional cooperation for more resilient and better-integrated water and energy management under a changing climate.

Activities in 2023

Projects at national and regional levels. Several projects under the water and water-energy linkages pillar were completed in 2023: (1) "Support for Preparation of the North Aral Sea Development and Revitalization Project" and "North Aral Sea Engagement" (Kazakhstan); (2) "Strengthening Irrigation



Management across Central Asia", as part of which an online earth observation platform for mapping irrigation performance was developed, and Web applications were created for each of the five Central Asian countries, as well as an application for the entire region; (3) "Regional Water Resources Management in Central Asia"; (4) "Integrated Landscape/Catchment Management for Sustainable Hydropower" (Tajikistan); (5) "Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment of the Power Sector Expansion" (Tajikistan); (6) "Energy Efficient Water Services" (CA), which organized in 2023 a workshop on financial sustainability (Astana, March 28-29) and a study tour to the Danube River Basin (Austria, May 2-6).

Events. CAWEP organized two flagship events: (1) the Central Asia Energy Trade and Investment Forum where the interlinked opportunities of energy security, decarbonization, and economic growth were discussed (London, [March 2-3](#)); and, (2) the fifth Central Asia Climate Change Conference²⁴¹, where the need for better water, energy, and land (agriculture) management and to pay closer attention to climate change was emphasized. During the conference, two youth sessions – Youth for Climate and Youth for Connecting Policy, Activism and Science – provided a platform for youth to engage in climate change discussions. (Dushanbe, [May 16-17](#)).

Regional dialogue. CAWEP continued its support to the regional dialogue and structured reform process for the IFAS institutions by facilitating Regional Working Group (RWG) meetings. RWG members visited the Mekong River Commission (MRC) and participated in the international conference that MRC organized for the fourth MRC summit in Vientiane. Participants discussed lessons learned from institutional reform processes with the MRC Secretariat, as well as insights into the MRC's budget, data and information exchange, basin planning and monitoring mechanisms, and coordination between basin- and national level entities of the MRC (April).

Source: www.worldbank.org, CAWEP Annual Report 2022 and 2023

²⁴⁰ launched in 2009, the program entails three phases. Phase 1 ran until June 2013, phase 2 – until December 2017, and phase 3 was extended until November 2023. The joint program is supported by the European Union, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and USAID and managed by the World Bank

²⁴¹ in cooperation with CAREC