

Report

Of activities of the Joint Ecological / Hydrological Expedition in the Upper Amudarya / Pyanj basin with the participation of experts from Tajikistan and Afghanistan.

Within the framework of the UNECE, project "Strengthening cooperation in the field of hydrology and environmental protection between Tajikistan and Afghanistan in the Amu Darya / Panj River basin"

Time: September 20-27, 2017

Covered area:

On Afghanistan – Volusvol of Darvaz, Shugnan, Ishkashim, Vakhan

In Tajikistan- District Darvaz, Rushan, Shugnan, Ishkashim

Goal and tasks:

In accordance with the technical task of the project, the expedition purpose was to study the positive events, negative tendencies in the upper Amu Darya basin and study the possibilities for further coordination of hydrological monitoring with the participation of experts from Afghanistan and Tajikistan. This expedition was based on the experience of the previous expedition in 2015 and included 5 experts from each country traveling for a total of 8 days, 4 days in each country. The participants of the expedition were tasked with:

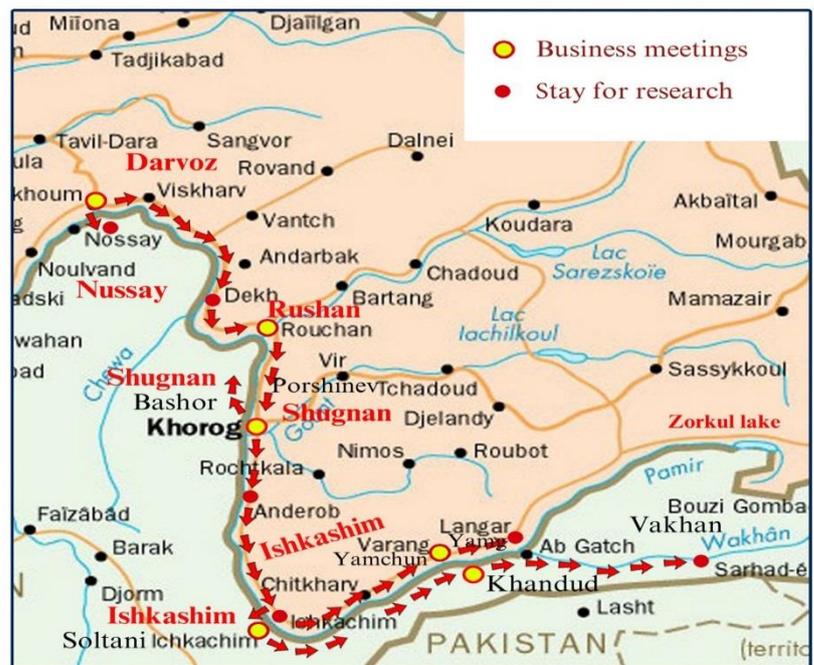
Visit the border areas of both countries;

Organizing meetings with local leaders and representatives of NGOs and other sectors of local communities";

Study the status of the work on the development of hydrology and environmental protection in the area adjacent to the Pyanj River basin, to pay attention to the possibility of using the river floodplain in the development of forests and sown areas;

About the possibility to get acquainted with the state of flora and fauna and the possibilities of their ennobling;

Map of the movement of expedition participants in the project areas «Strengthening cooperation in the field of hydrology and the environment between Afghanistan and Tajikistan in the upper basin of the Amu Darya River»



To study the impact of climate change on the nature and life of the population of a given territory.

A joint expedition of specialists in hydrology and environmental protection carried out its work according to a preliminary developed plan along the Tajik-Afghan border. The activities planned for this expedition were basically completed on the scheduled date on a predetermined route, starting from the Darvaz region and ending in the Khorog town. Throughout the route, the joint expedition surveyed the territory along the Amudarya / Panj River on both sides of the border, according to a preliminary plan, visited the administrative centers in the places located on opposite sides of the river. Members of the expedition several times crossed the state border through border checkpoints.

Members of the expedition began their journey in Darvaz. After visiting the administrative centers of the border areas - the Tajik Kalai Khumb (where they slept) and the Afghan Nusai (a short-term meeting because of the danger in the territory of the vulusvol), they continued their journey towards the Rushan district of GBAO Tajikistan. Upon completion of the events with the participation of the district administration and the population, the expedition traveled to Shugnan along the Tajik side of the border along the Pyanj River, and stopped at Porshinev, 15 km from Khorog, the administrative center of GBAO. After acquaintance with some projects on hydrology and environmental protection, the participants of the joint expedition spent the night in the city of Khorog and on the next day crossed the Tajik-Afghan border in the village of Tem, near the border market on the bridge across the border.

On the Afghan side, members of the joint expedition visited several villages and the administrative center of the Afghan Shugnan to familiarize themselves with current development activities, with the state of affairs in the field of hydrology and environmental protection. During the meetings with representatives of local authorities and the population, the joint expedition determined the common interest in creating a joint system for preventing natural hazards, protecting floodplains and creating new ones along the Pyanj River, managing the water resources of the border river and protecting rare flora and fauna species with participation of local provincial and national authorities as well as international organizations operating in the region.

After spending the night in the Afghan Shugnan, members of the joint expedition on the Tajik side traveled to the Ishkashim district of GBAO Tajikistan. Along the route, they stopped in several localities with a pre-planned goal of getting acquainted with the state of affairs on the ground, meeting with the local population and discussing the dangers and benefits of water, protecting the environment. At the research station of the Pamir Biological Institute of the Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan, interviews were conducted with scientists, including ways to improve agricultural productivity, rational use of existing water and other natural resources, and prospects for the development of eco-tourism as an additional source of income for the local population.

On the same day, members of the expedition crossed the border to the Afghan side, where the Aga-Khan Agency for Environmental Protection visited the office, organized a discussion on problems and solutions of topical issues such as environmental protection, water resources use and prevention of water pollution with involvement of local communities.

The next important and fruitful meeting took place in the local administration of the administrative center of Ishkashim Vulusvol, where the talk was about preventing the laundering of riverbanks, joint use of the border river, the creation of a local environmental protection

structure, organization of measures for gardening and afforestation, and the acquisition of equipment for servicing.

The next day, members of the joint expedition set out on their way to Wakhan along the Afghan side of the border. In the administrative center of Wakhan, they met with the head of the local executive power, organized a meeting with the heads of local administrative structures, the elders of rural communities and activists of Wakhan. Members of the expedition exchanged views with the administration of the local community of the Afghan Wakhan, and many suggestions and recommendations were put forward during the conversation on issues of mutual interest.

The next day, members of the joint expedition arrived in Khorog. Here, they were acquainted with some organizations such as the regional meteorological station GBAO, which predicts the state of weather, seasonal precipitation and condition in rivers and high-altitude water bodies. Further, the members of the expedition were acquainted with the world's second highest botanical garden, where very diverse varieties of trees and plants from all over the world. Another meeting was organized with representatives of the public organization "Pantera" to discuss the possibilities and contribution of public organizations in protecting the environment, and the preservation of a rare and unique fauna, especially endangered species.

At the end of the working trip, the members of the joint expedition started preparing information material on the results of the expedition in order to present the results of the work to the participants of the forthcoming seminar. The details of the activities carried out by the members of the joint expedition are given in the following parts of the report for individual regions in more detail.

Darvaz district of GBAO. 20-21.09.2017.

The district is located in the lowest part of the east of GBAO and borders on the districts of Shamsiddin Shohin, Tavildara and Vanj, and across the Pyanj River with the Nusai district of Afghanistan. 21400 inhabitants, has 4 local jamoats. The total volume of lands is 282460 hectares, including 555 acres of arable land. According to the calculation of local authorities in the district, 282 m³ of solid waste are fixed annually. There is a garbage disposal on the territory of 1 hectare.

There are 8 small and large mountain rivers flowing in Pyanj.

Major environmental problems:

1. Prevention of environmental threats, early information of the population:
2. Coverage of all private households with communal services:
3. Installation of water lines in all villages.
4. Carrying out of biotechnical measures in the winter period for conservation and development of rare wild animals.
5. Use of valuable medicinal plants growing on the territory of the region

The participants of the joint expedition met with representatives of the administrative structures of the district, including the management of agriculture, the emergency committee, the environmental protection department, housing and communal services and others, as well as representatives of social organizations of specialists and activists, only 21 people.

Rushan district of GBAO. 10/21/2017.

Rushan district is located on the border with Afghanistan and Shugnan district of Tajikistan. The population of the district is 26249 people, who live in 7 jamoats. The climate is continental. Here grow a variety of fruit and ornamental trees, like mulberry, apple, pear, walnuts, and many others.

On the territory of the district, there are the Sarez Lake, from which the Bartang River flows into the Pyanj. There are small mountain rivers.

There are cases of water pollution with household waste. There are no sewage and sanitary facilities.

On the territory of the region, there are about 3000 plant species, 25 species of wild animals, such as snow leopard, capricorn, bear, wolf, etc.

During the trip from Darvaz to Rushan district, members of the expedition visited the developed lands in dozens of hectares on the banks of the Pyanj River. Members of the expedition from Afghanistan noted that it is also possible to create lands on the left bank of the Pyanj River. For this, it is necessary to undertake bank protection works simultaneously on both sides.

Davlatmirov Nasim, the head of the nature protection department of the district, confirmed that most of the local residents of the region conduct planting works on these lands and receive a rich harvest. Excessive harvest from the territory of the region recorded about 3000 plant species, their lands, they provide as much as possible not only the central market of the Rushan district, but also the central market of Khorog. It is possible to master such lands on the northern bank of the river. For this, it is necessary to develop and propose projects for implementation. The main conversation took place in the local government authority of the Rushan district. (Protocol No. 2 is attached).

Participants in the meeting also spoke about the problems in providing local residents with local seeds and the need to strengthen the fight against plant and animal diseases on both sides of the river, and to make efforts for shore protection work, and subsequently prepared and approved the following recommendations on all the above issues. (Protocol No. 1 is attached)

Shugnan district of GBAO. September 22, 2017

The territory of the Shugnan district is located around the city of Khorog along the Panj and Gund rivers. The area of the district is 456547 hectares. In seven Jamoats of the region live 38368 people. The climate of the region is continental; the basis of occupation of the population is agriculture.

Waste in the district is not processed, in the administrative center of the district there are enterprises of housing and communal services, there is a garbage disposal.

A variety of fruit and ornamental trees grow on the territory of the district, in particular mulberry, apple, pear, peach and others. In the region there are 6 mountain rivers flowing into the Gund River and further into the Pyanj River. In addition, there are two lakes - Upali 1 and Upali 2.

During the trip to Shugnan district, members of the joint expedition visited the village council Porshinev and the Chashmai Nosir (Nasir Khusrow spring). Here, they received information on the history of the origin of the spring. The presentation of history in the form of folk legends testifies to the veneration of the local population by water and natural wonders. Participants of

the expedition also were acquainted with the activity of the Water Users Association "Ob-Umed" operating in the territory of the Porshinev, starting from 2009. (Protocol No. 3 is attached)

Shugnan province of Afghanistan. September 23, 2017

Shugnan province is located opposite of the Tajik Shugnan. It borders with Afghan Vulusvol Mohimai in the west, in the south-west with the Ragistan district, in the south with Kokhistan, Arkhanj-khvoi and Shukhad districts and Ishkashim district in the southeast.

The population of Shugnan is 27 thousand people. The population is mainly engaged in agriculture, extracts products of horticulture, agriculture, animal husbandry.

The region does not monitor, observe and record wild animals and birds for years, there is no program for educating and informing the population on environmental issues, and therefore information in this area is insufficient.

In the Shugnan Vulusvol of Afghanistan, the members of the joint expedition organized a working meeting with the head of the volusvol Mirzokuli Paimon, deputy head of the department of agriculture, head of the village development, the head of the village council, specialists, and visited the pedagogical school, met with future teachers, representatives of residents of border settlements. At the final meeting, the participants discussed the most important issues of the state of ecology and the environment in Vulusvol. (Protocol No. 4 is attached)

Ishkashim district and the Wakhan valley of GBAO. 24-25.09.2017

The region is located in the southeast of GBAO in the upper reaches of the Pyanj River. There are 30894 inhabitants in seven Jamoats. The area is at an altitude of 2500 to 6000 meters above sea level and is distinguished by numerous hot and mineral springs. Based on three hot springs there are hospitals and sanatoriums, known in Tajikistan and beyond.

The Ishkashim district, especially the territory of Wakhan, is also remarkable for its historical monuments, including the ancient fortresses of Qah-qaha and Yamchun. This area is most attractive for numerous tourists, especially from European countries.

On the territory of the region, the Pyanj River has an especially large water intake basin, which in the future can be taken away from the river and new forests and arable lands are created on both sides of the Pyanj.

Wakhan has a rich world of animals and birds. There are several kinds of wolves, argali, ibex, Bukhara ram (urinal), snow leopard, bear, lynx, Indian goose, falcon and others.

Several environmental NGOs operate in the district.

On September 25th the joint expedition left Khorog in the direction of Ishkashim district. At the scientific and experimental field base of the Pamir Biological Institute, a meeting was organized with the specialists of this research station, and members of the expedition were introduced to new technologies for growing seeds, including a variety of high resistance to potato worms. These seeds withstand various ailments and conditions for such potato varieties are generally favorable for sowing this crop on both sides of the Pyanj River. In connection with this issue. The participants were acquainted with a number of other scientific works and fieldwork of scientists and specialists of the station.

At a meeting with teachers and students in the community of Darshay, a discussion was held on the state of the art and problems in the field of nature conservation. At the same time,

propaganda leaflets were distributed with the purpose of strengthening explanatory work among the population.

On the way from Darshay in the direction of the village of Vrang, the members of the expedition stopped to meet with the local population and distributed propaganda leaflets about the need to protect the environment, including sources of clean water. They also visited a museum created in honor of the poet and thinker of local origin by the Muborakkadam Wakhoni. The responsible worker of this museum shared information about the life and creative activity of Muborakkadam Wakhoni with members of the expedition. At the same time, he stated about the difficulties and the lack of work of the museum of local lore and put forward several proposals necessary to eliminate existing problems.

During the trip, members of the joint expedition held discussions with local residents and guests at the hot spring "Bibi Fotimai Zakhro" and discussed the issue of improving the service and condition of the hot spring. The need to improve the quality of service in this recreational and recreational center was stressed with the aim of attracting the maximum number of guests, including foreign tourists (Protocol No. 5 of the meeting is attached).

Ishkashim vulusvol of Afghanistan. September 25th, 2017.

Ishkashim vulusvol is located in the north-east of Afghanistan, in the province of Badakhshan. The administrative center is the village of Sultan Ishkashim. Located on the river Pyanj, on the border with Tajikistan, in a fertile valley, at an altitude of 3,037 m above the sea level. On the Tajik side of the river there is a settlement, also called Ishkashim. In 2006, two settlements of the same name connected the bridge across the Pyanj.

There are about 20 settlements in the valley, but all of them can be perceived as part of one village. The total population of the valley is over 12 thousand people. Due to the severe mountain climate in the valley, only one crop per year is possible. Wheat and barley are grown.

The population of vulusvol is represented mainly by the Ismailis-Nizaris. The main language of the population is Ishkashim.

Ishkashim has enough land for growing crops. At the same time, there is a rich base for collecting medicinal plants. The fauna of the vulusvol is rich enough. Most of all, there are mountain goat, argali, Bukhara ram, lynx, snow leopard, etc.

The first meeting was held with the staff of the Aga Khan Agency for the Protection of the Environment in Afghanistan (AKAH). Employees of the Agency Imomiddin Iskandari and Abdulbashir Sodot informed the members of the working group about issues related to environmental protection, water use and prevention of water pollution.

Further, a meeting took place with the deputy head of the administration of Ishkashim Vulusvol Administration, Noil Nusratullo. At this meeting, a number of proposals were put forward. (Protocol No. 7 is attached).

Wakhan Province of Afghanistan. September 26, 2017

The Wakhan province occupies the extreme north-eastern part of Afghanistan and the extreme east of the Badakhshan province. It borders with the Ishkashim and Murgab regions of the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast of the Republic of Tajikistan, in the south with Khaiber Pakhtunkhwa and Gilgit-Baltistan provinces of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, on the west

with the Ishakshim and Zebok regions of Badakhshan province, in the east from Kashgar district of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region district of the People's Republic of China.

Wakhan is the most eastern region of Afghanistan. It occupies 10,953 km², being the largest in the province of Badakhshan. The Wakhan province is located in the so-called Wakhan corridor, which is a narrow, high-mountain strip of land about 295 km long and 15 to 57 km wide in the valleys of the Pamir, Wakhandarya and Pyanj rivers.

The population is about 13,000 inhabitants.

During the trip, a meeting was organized with the population of the village of Dugurgund. During the discussion, it was found that the water flowing along the creek from the Dugurgund gorge becomes cloudy in the summer and becomes unsuitable for drinking, and leads crops to drought. In this regard, proposals have been put forward to support the project on the possibility of constructing a water canal, necessary for irrigation of agricultural land from the source of water from a distance of 2 kilometers from the settlement.

On September 27, 2017, the main meeting took place in the administrative center of Wakhan province Administration in the village of Khandood with Mehrdili Mushfik, head of the executive body of the local administration of the Wakhan province. Heads of local state structures, village councilors and volunteers participated in the meeting and considered existing problems in the protection of the environment and other topical issues. (Protocol No. 7 is attached)

Arrival of expedition members to Khorog. September 27, 2017

Khorog town is the administrative center of the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast and is located on the border with Afghanistan at an altitude of 2,100 meters above sea level. Two mountain rivers - Gund and Shohdara - merge into the city and merge here into the Pyanj River.

There are 28640 inhabitants in the town. Here there are scientific, medical, educational and other centers, in particular the main campus of the University of Central Asia, the Khorog State University, the Pamir Biological Institute of the Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan, the branch of the Academy of agriculture of RT, the regional hospital that serve not only residents of GBAO but also part of the Afghan Badakhshan.

The city has an extensive network of water supply and sewerage, which needs reconstruction. Two irrigation canals, sewerage facilities also need reconstruction. The project of the enterprise for processing of solid domestic wastes, which was submitted to the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan and international banks, was developed.

Environmental issues and environmental protection among the population of the city and districts are increasingly working as official organizations for environmental protection, as well as the existing regional Aarhus Center, the Aga Khan Foundation organizations and other environmental organizations.

Arriving in Khorog, members of the expedition, first, visited the regional meteorological station and the Botanical Garden. When visiting the botanical garden, members of the joint expedition drew attention to the location of the garden, the variety of trees and plants in it, as well as the total area of this alpine garden. According to the director of the Botanical Garden, Kuvvatbek Odilbekov, the garden is located at an altitude of 2300 meters above sea level. Cultivated in it a variety of fruit trees and rare species of ornamental plants, as well as other common plants and flowers, most of which represent the four continents. According to the employee of the garden

Pulod, unfortunately, in recent years, the garden suffers from a lack of water, because of which it loses sight.

Further, the members of the expedition organized a working meeting with representatives of the public organization "Panther" and discussed the contribution and potential of public organizations in protecting the environment. At the end of the meetings, the members of the joint expedition started preparing information materials for discussion by the participants of the joint seminar. Thus, the joint expedition of specialists in hydrology and environmental protection from Badakhshan of Afghanistan and Tajikistan summed up its eight-day work with presentations in the final seminar, which took place on September 28-29 in Khorog.