



**Executive Committee of International Fund to Save the Aral Sea
(EC-IFAS)**

DRAFT Stakeholder Engagement Plan

Central Asia Water Efficiency Cooperation Project (P515897)

Draft (for consultation)

April 30, 2026

Table of Contents (to be updated in the upcoming version)

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION	5
1.1 Project description.....	5
1.2 Objectives and Purpose of the Stakeholder Engagement Plan.....	6
1.3 Potential social risks of the Project.....	6
1.4 Justification for the need for a Stakeholder Engagement Plan.....	7
1.5 Relationship of the SEP with other Project instruments.....	7
Chapter 2. STAKEHOLDERS AND BENEFICIARIES	8
2.1 Methodology for stakeholder identification.....	9
2.2 Project-affected parties.....	10
2.3 Other Interested Parties.....	11
2.4 Disadvantageous and/or Vulnerable social groups.....	12
CHAPTER 3. REGULATORY AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK	12
3.1 Regional Requirements and International Conventions.....	12
3.2 National legislation of the Republic of Kazakhstan.....	15
3.3 National legislation of the Republic of Tajikistan.....	16
3.4 National legislation of Turkmenistan.....	18
3.5 National legislation of the Republic of Uzbekistan.....	19
3.6 The World Bank's Environmental and Social Framework.....	20
3.7 World Bank Operational Policies: OP 7.5 Projects on International Waterways.....	21
3.8 Institutional structure for the implementation of the Project.....	21
CHAPTER 4. Stakeholder Engagement Strategy	22
4.1 Summary of Stakeholder Engagement done during project preparation stage.....	22
4.2 Key Issues and Comments Raised by Stakeholders.....	24
4.3 Summary of project stakeholder needs and methods, tools, and techniques for stakeholder engagement.....	24
4.3.1 General principles of interaction.....	24
4.3.2 Methods and formats of interaction.....	25
4.3.3 Interaction at various stages of project implementation.....	25
4.3.4 Interaction with vulnerable and socially sensitive groups.....	25
CHAPTER 5. DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION AND PUBLIC CONSULTATION	29
5.1 General principles of disclosure and consultation.....	29
5.2 Methods and channels of information dissemination.....	29
5.3 Conducting public consultations.....	30
5.4 Taking into account the opinions of stakeholders.....	30
5.5 Ensuring participation of vulnerable groups.....	30
CHAPTER 6. GRIEVANCE REDRESS MECHANISM (GRM)	31
6.1 Objectives and purpose of the Grievances Mechanism.....	31
6.2 Operating principles of the GRM.....	31
6.3 Structure and levels of the GRM.....	31
6.3.1 Local level (District Offices).....	32
6.3.2 National Project / Basin / Sector level (PMU).....	32

6.3.3	Central Asia Regional Level (CAWEC PMU).....	32
6.4	Grievances review periods	35
6.5	Appeal and further actions	35
6.6	Mechanism for handling labor grievances	35
	CHAPTER 7. IMPLEMENTATION: INSTITUTIONAL ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES	36
	CHAPTER 8. MONITORING, REPORTING AND UPDATING	37
8.1	Monitoring	37
8.2	Reporting back to stakeholder groups.....	37
	CHAPTER 9. RESOURCES AND BUDGET	38
	ANNEXURES	39
	Annex 1: Template to Capture Consultation Minutes	39
	Annex 2. Sample Table: Monitoring and Reporting on the SEP	39
	Annex 3: Template to register claim	40
	Annex 4: Claims monitoring for the period.....	41
	Annex 5: Summary of GBV claim tracking statistics	41

List of Tables

Table 1:	Summary of project affected parties, beneficiaries, and others	9
Table 2:	Summary of International Conventions and Treaties applicable to participating States	13
Table 3:	Summary of meetings and consultations with stakeholders to date.	22
Table 4:	Proposed CAWEC Project Stakeholder Engagement Plan.....	27
Table 5:	Channels for grievances and appeals within the GRM framework of the CAWEC project.....	33
Table 6:	CAWEC Project Grievance Redress Process	33
Table 7:	DRAFT Budget for implementation of SEP with indicative preliminary estimates	38

Table of Figures

Figure 1:	Flow chart of the grievance redress process under the CAWEC Project.....	34
Figure 2:	Format of the log for registering grievances and other types of appeals	34

ABBREVIATIONS/ACRONYMS

ALRI	Land Reclamation and Irrigation Agency (Tajikistan)
BWO	Basin Water Organization
CERC	Contingent Emergency Response Component
ESCP	Environmental and Social Commitment Plan
ESF	The World Bank's Environmental and Social Framework
ESMF	Environmental and Social Management Framework
ESS	World Bank Environmental and Social Standard
GRM	Grievances Redressing Mechanism
ICSD	Interstate Commission on Sustainable Development (IFAS)
ICWC	The Interstate Commission for Water Coordination (IFAS)
IFAS	Internation Fund for Saving the Aral Sea
LMP	Labor Management Plan
MEWR	Ministry of Energy and Water Resources (Tajikistan)
MWR	Ministry of Water Recourses (Uzbekistan)
MWRI	Ministry of Water Recourses and Irrigation (Kazakhstan)
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OIP	Other Interested Party
PAP	Project-Affected Party
PMU	Project Management Unit
PPP	Public-private partnership
RI	Research Institute
RK	Republic of Kazakhstan
KR	Kyrgyz Republic
RPF	Resettlement Policy Framework
RT	Republic of Tajikistan
Tm	Turkmenistan
SCWM	State Committee of Water Management (Turkmenistan)
SEA/SH	Sexual exploitation and abuse / Sexual harassment
SEP	Stakeholder Engagement Plan
SESA	Strategic Environment and Social Assessment
SIC ICWC	Scientific Information Center of Interstate Water Coordination Commission (IFAS)
RU	Republic of Uzbekistan
WB	World Bank
WUA	Water Users Associations

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project description

This project covers Phase 2 of the Central Asia Water Efficiency and Conservation (WEC) Multi-phase Programmatic Approach (MPA) program benefiting the Central Asia countries and regional water management structures under the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS). The US\$940 million program, with the objective to increase water use efficiency and enhance climate resilience in selected countries of Central Asia, was approved by the World Bank's Executive Directors on May 15, 2025. Phase 2 for Central Asia countries includes US\$20 million.

Project Development Objective: To strengthen mechanisms for regional cooperation on transboundary water resources management in Central Asia.

Project Rationale: Central Asia's shared river basins face increasing water scarcity, climate variability, aging infrastructure, and competing demands between irrigation and hydropower. These challenges cannot be effectively addressed through national investments alone. The Project provides the first-ever regional investment in the water sector in Central Asia, strengthening regional institutions, improving shared information systems, and supporting the preparation of win-win transboundary investments. It complements national investments under the Water Efficiency and Conservation MPA by providing a regional cooperation, knowledge, and data platform.

Project Components

Component 1. Preparation of Transboundary Projects (US\$2.0 million): Supports the preparation of pre- and feasibility studies, preliminary technical designs, and environmental and social assessments for jointly agreed transboundary investment projects involving two or more countries. Activities focus on irrigation modernization, water conservation, storage, and coordinated operation of shared water systems, with strong emphasis on climate resilience and energy efficiency. The component aims to mobilize future financing for regional investments.

Component 2. Information Support and Digitalization for Improved Regional Water Management (US\$11.5 million): Strengthens regional water information systems in the Amu Darya and Syr Darya basins through digitalization, modern data collection, remote sensing, and analytical tools. The component supports improved monitoring of river flows, irrigation performance, snow and glacier dynamics, and seasonal forecasting, enhancing transparency, trust, and evidence-based decision making for regional water allocation and planning under increasing climate risks.

Component 3. Institutional Strengthening and Capacity Building (US\$5.0 million): Enhances regional water governance through (i) harmonization of regional legal and strategic instruments, (ii) strengthening the technical and operational capacity of IFAS, ICWC, BWOs, and affiliated institutions, and (iii) regional knowledge exchange, applied research, professional development, and a regional grants program. The component places specific emphasis on youth engagement, gender inclusion, and climate-resilient water management practices.

Component 4. Project Management (US\$1.5 million): Finances project coordination, fiduciary management, monitoring and evaluation, reporting, stakeholder engagement, and compliance with World Bank policies through a dedicated Project Management Unit within IFAS.

Expected Results: The Project is expected to strengthen regional cooperation mechanisms, improve availability and use of shared water information, prepare priority transboundary investments, and enhance the institutional capacity of regional water organizations. These outcomes will contribute to more resilient, efficient, and cooperative management of Central Asia's shared water resources, reducing vulnerability to water scarcity and climate shocks across the region.

1.2 Objectives and Purpose of the Stakeholder Engagement Plan

The EC-IFAS has begun preparations for the "Central Asia Water Efficiency Cooperation Project (CAWEC)" (the Project) aimed to inform regional investments and strengthen mechanisms for cooperation on transboundary water resources management in Central Asia for the improved management, conservation, and efficiency of shared water resources in the Central Asia region.

Given the complex nature of the Project, its regional scope and its potential impact on a wide range of stakeholders during the preparation phase, timely identification of all stakeholders and ensuring their effective and inclusive engagement is of key importance.

This **Stakeholder Engagement Plan** (hereinafter referred to as the SEP) has been developed to identify the Project stakeholders, analyses of their interests, expectations and potential concerns, and establish principles, mechanisms and forms of engagement aimed at ensuring transparency, inclusiveness and consideration of the views of affected parties in the preparation and implementation of the CAWEC Project.

The SEP has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the World Bank's Environmental and Social Standard (ESS10) "Stakeholder Engagement and Disclosure", as well as with the applicable legal and regulatory acts of the participating States *alphabetically*, the Republics of Kazakhstan, the Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and the Republic of Uzbekistan.

The main objectives of the SEP are:

- Identification of key stakeholders of the Project and determination of their roles;
- Ensuring timely and accessible disclosure of information about the Project;
- Organization of effective public consultation mechanisms;
- Taking into account the opinions, expectations and concerns of interested and affected parties when making design decisions;
- Reducing the risk of conflict and increasing the social acceptability of the Project;
- Ensuring the functioning of the feedback and grievances mechanism.

The SEP is a living document and will be updated as the Project develops, remaining publicly available on the official websites of the implementing agencies.

1.3 Potential social risks of the Project

The Central Asia region is vulnerable to the impacts of climate change including rising temperatures, altered precipitation patterns, floods, drought, and water scarcity, exacerbated by land degradation and soil erosion causing landslides and mudflows. Rising temperatures are accelerating glacier retreat and altering snowmelt dynamics (main supply of summer water) and evaporation rates, increasing hydrological variability. This complicates reservoir operations and intensifies trade-offs between summer irrigation demand in areas lower in the river basins and winter hydropower generation in the upper reaches of the river basins with cumulative impacts on individual countries' economic production, livelihoods, food security, jobs, ecology, and rates of poverty levels across the region.

During the USSR Regime the water, energy and land resources of the region were managed centrally in a top-down manner, and nature was viewed as something to be controlled rather than nurtured. Since the collapse of the USSR the water resources management challenges in the region have been exacerbated including by competing national demands, limited capacity in regional/basin coordination institutions, management frameworks, limitations of data availability & acceptance, compounded by strict Sovereign governance limiting cooperation.

The project is primarily technical assistance in nature, covering preliminary studies, pre- and feasibility assessments, improvement of management tools such as digitization of water resources management, and development of regulatory frameworks across Central Asian countries, and institutional strengthening through training and restructuring the institutional body. The products of this operation will contribute towards improved and coordinated decision making over water resources in the region going forward and should thus include environment and social considerations in-line with international conventions into the

decision-making procedures as an inherent part of the management, monitoring and Decision support tools being developed, as well as strengthening this capacity within the institutional body. This will have a beneficial impact for all riparian states of the transboundary river basins, contributing to resilience and sustainable water use. The enhancement of positive impacts such as inclusion of ecological infrastructure needs and environmental flow requirements will be beneficial to all states. Notification about activities within the transboundary basins should include all Riparian states (OP 7.5) not just participating parties. Most activities would be pre-feasibility or preliminary assessments, with E&S screening integrated at this stage and detailed studies reserved for later phases.

The current project activities do not involve direct physical work, and the Environment and Social risk is rated as Moderate. However, the findings of the TA studies will inform future investments in irrigation and drainage modernization, water storage, and regional water management systems. and may generate future direct, indirect, and cumulative physical environmental and social impacts. To manage this, the TORs for the studies will include Environment and Social Screening and determining the potential risk rating of those activities under study, to guide the future safeguard instruments for their implementation.

To avoid conflict between sovereign states and reduce duplication with the national operations under the existing MPA, the safeguard instruments (ESMF, SEP, LMP, RPF) developed by the sovereign participating nations will be used to guide the studies within the respective countries. These instruments will also reflect this requirement.

The Regional Strategic SESA will assess the region's sector of irrigation and water resources management and provide recommendations at a regional and strategic level. Recommendations to specific countries will be updated through their respective ESMFs and include a template site specific ESMP for the installation of monitoring equipment.

1.4 Justification for the need for a Stakeholder Engagement Plan

In accordance with the World Bank's Environmental and Social Framework, ESS10 "Stakeholder Engagement and Disclosure" requires the Borrower to ensure systematic, transparent, and inclusive stakeholder engagement throughout all stages of project preparation and implementation. This standard requires the Borrower to identify affected and stakeholders, ensure timely disclosure of project information, and organize accessible and meaningful consultations.

The CAWEC project covers the geographic area of Central Asia and includes activities supporting strengthening of regional institutions, investments in modernizing data collection and sharing, and preliminary studies for future infrastructure investments, which requires engagement with a wide range of stakeholders— at Regional Scale, Sovereign States, agencies of participating government, water user associations, farmers, local communities, and other stakeholders. Therefore, the development and implementation of the SEP ensure compliance with ESS10 requirements and contributes to increased transparency, accountability, and social sustainability of the Project.

1.5 Relationship of the SEP with other Project instruments

The Stakeholder Engagement Plan is an integral part of the CAWEC Project's environmental and social management system and is closely linked to other environmental and social instruments being developed within the Project.

The SEP complements and supports the implementation of the following documents:

- Regional Strategic Sector Environment and Social Assessment (SESA) – The SESA conducts a review and assessment of the irrigation, bulk conveyance, and water resources management sector across the Central Asia region, focusing in particular on Environment and Social aspects, making recommendations towards strengthening elements both for regional management, and within the participating States. The SEP will be integral for the consultation processes during the SESA.
- National Project Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) – For activities within sovereign states, the existing and under preparation project ESMFs will be used, these ensure disclosure of information about potential environmental and social risks, measures to prevent and

mitigate them, as well as the participation of stakeholders in the risk assessment and management process.

- Environment and Social Management Plans (ESMPs) – The installation of monitoring equipment to improve data collection and quality for improved resource management will require the development of site specific ESMPs. The process for development and disclosure will involve the SEP.
- Labor Management Procedures (LMP) – rules and processes for hiring, managing, and protecting workers’ rights, working conditions, and grievance handling of the Project
- The Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) provides an accessible and effective feedback channel for stakeholders and is a key element of this SEP.
- Environmental and Social Commitment Plan (ESCP) – It is the Funding Recipient’s agreed plan with the World Bank that lists the required environmental and social actions, responsibilities, and timelines for implementing the Project in line with the ESSs.

Chapter 2. STAKEHOLDERS AND BENEFICIARIES

The CAWEC Project engages a broad range of regional, national, and international stakeholders to strengthen transboundary water and energy cooperation in Central Asia. Core Project-Affected Parties (PAPs) include regional basin and coordination institutions operating under the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS) framework—notably IFAS itself, the Interstate Water Coordination Commission (ICWC) and its Secretariat, the Scientific Information Center of ICWC (SIC ICWC), the Interstate Commission on Sustainable Development (ICSD), and the river basin organizations BWO Amu Darya and BWO Syr Darya. These institutions are central to regional water allocation, data exchange, and cooperative river basin management and are therefore key institutional beneficiaries of enhanced analytical tools, coordination mechanisms, and capacity development supported under the project.

At the national level, PAPs include line ministries, water agencies, and specialized technical institutes in Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. These comprise the Ministries responsible for water and irrigation, national water information and analytical centers, design and planning institutes, and irrigation and land reclamation agencies. National IFAS branches and executive directorates also play a pivotal role in linking regional processes with country-level implementation. Through CAWEC, these institutions are expected to benefit from improved technical capacity, harmonized data and monitoring systems, strengthened regional dialogue, and better-informed decision-making on water and energy resources.

Other Interested Parties (OIPs) include riparian governments not directly implementing project activities but affected by regional water-energy dynamics, notably Afghanistan and the Kyrgyz Republic. A range of international NGOs and research organizations—such as the Global Water Partnership, International Water Management Institute, World Wildlife Fund, Welthungerhilfe, and Snow Leopard Trust—are engaged as knowledge partners and beneficiaries of shared data, analytical outputs, and regional cooperation platforms. In addition, international financial institutions and development partners, including ADB, AIIB, JICA, and the Aga Khan Foundation, are OIPs supporting or coordinating parallel and complementary investments.

Ultimately, the ultimate beneficiaries of the CAWEC Project are water users and communities across the Amu Darya and Syr Darya basins, who stand to benefit indirectly from more reliable, transparent, and cooperative regional management of shared water and energy resources, contributing to climate resilience, environmental sustainability, and regional stability.

2.1 Methodology for stakeholder identification

This section will identify all relevant stakeholders, beginning with governmental and non-governmental entities involved in water resources management both at regional scale and Nationally within each participating State, including affected communities and local, district, and regional governments.

For the purpose of this ES Standard, “stakeholder” refers to individuals or groups who:

- Are affected or likely to be affected by the project (project-affected parties including beneficiaries); and
- May have an interest in the project (other interested parties).

Project-affected parties (PAP): include those likely to be affected by the project because of actual impacts or potential risks to their physical environment, health, security, cultural practices, well-being, or livelihoods. These stakeholders may include individuals or groups, including local communities.

Other interested parties (OIP): refer to individuals, groups, or organizations with an interest in the project, which may be because of the project location, its characteristics, its impacts, or matters related to public interest. For example, these parties may include regulators, government officials, the private sector, the scientific community, academics, unions, women’s organizations, other civil society organizations, and cultural groups, riparian states of a transboundary resource.

NOTE: for both groups, special consideration should be given to stakeholders that may be disadvantaged or vulnerable.

Stakeholder identification was conducted based on an analysis of project documentation, the institutional structure of the water resources management and irrigation sectors. Stakeholders were grouped according to their level of involvement in the project and potential impact and are listed in **Table 1**.

Table 1: Summary of project affected parties, beneficiaries, and others

Stakeholder Name	Type of Entity (Gov. Ngo, WUA, etc.)	PAP, OIP	National / Regional interest
Regional			
Internation Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS)	International organization	PAP	Regional
Interstate Water Coordination Commission (ICWC)	International organization	PAP	Regional
ICWC Secretariat	International Organization	PAP	Regional
Scientific Information Center of ICWC (SIC ICWC)	International organization	PAP	Regional
Interstate Commission on Sustainable Development (ICSD)	International organization	PAP	Regional
BWO Amu Darya	International organization	PAP	Regional
BWO Syr Darya	International organization	PAP	Regional
Executive Directorate of IFAS in Kazakhstan	Branch of International organization	PAP	National
IFAS branch in Tajikistan	Branch of International organization	PAP	National
Agency of IFAS in Turkmenistan	Branch of International organization	PAP	National
Agency of IFAS in Uzbekistan	Branch of International organization	PAP	National
The Regional Environmental Center for Central Asia	Regional organization with international character	PAP	Regional
Republic of Kazakhstan			

Ministry of Water Recourses and Irrigation (MWRI)	Government	PAP	National / Regional
Information and Analytical Center for Water Resources	Government	PAP	National
Design institute “KazGiproVodhoz”	Government	PAP	National
Republic of Tajikistan			
Ministry of Energy and Water Resources (MEWR)	Government	PAP	National / Regional
Agency of Land Reclamation and Irrigation (ALRI)	Government	PAP	National
State Scientific Institution “Center for Glacier Research of the National Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan”	Government	OIP	National
Turkmenistan			
State Committee of Water Management (SCWM)	Government	PAP	National / Regional
Design institute “Turkmensuvilimtaslama”	Government	PAP	National
Republic of Uzbekistan			
Ministry of Water Recourses (MWR)	Government	PAP	National / Regional
Center for Digitalization and Monitoring of Water Resources under the MWR	Government	PAP	National / Regional
Other			
Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan	Riparian Government	OIP	Regional
Kyrgyz Republic	Riparian Government	OIP	Regional
Global Water Partnership	NGO	OIP	National / Regional
Welthungerhilfe	NGO	OIP	National / Regional
International Water Management Institute	NGO	OIP	National / Regional
World Wildlife Fund	NGO	OIP	National / Regional
Snow Leopard Trust	NGO	OIP	National / Regional
Asian Development Bank (ADB)	Multi Donor Bank	OIP	National / Regional
Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AiiB)	Multi Donor Bank	OIP	National / Regional
Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)	Global Development Organization	OIP	National / Regional
Aga Khan Foundation (AKF)	Global Development Organization	OIP	National / Regional

2.2 Project-affected parties

Project-affected parties (PAP) include groups that may directly experience positive or potentially adverse impacts as a result of the implementation of project activities. Most of them are the main beneficiaries of the project:

Direct

- a) Regional structures under IFAS. The project aims to improve cooperation and coordination to strengthen regional water resources management in Central Asia. One of the primary beneficiaries will be the regional institution and the structures within the institution, through institutional restructuring, and capacity strengthening.

- b) Governments of the participating States of the project will also be primary beneficiaries, the project aims to support data collection and sharing amongst the riparian states, thereby improving the quality and quantity of data available to the participating states to inform their decision making, as well as supporting regional decision making with better information. Also, preliminary studies in support of future of transboundary infrastructure investments will assist sovereign states with planning and infrastructure development.
- c) River Basin Organizations will benefit from strengthened planning, digitalization, and data-driven water management systems.

Indirect

- d) Farms are the primary users of irrigation services which rely on water availability. Improved management of the transboundary systems will improve the operation of irrigation schemes, scheduling and reliability of water supply for agricultural production.
- e) Water Users Associations (WUAs) are organizations that manage and distribute irrigation water at the local level. The improved monitoring and data sharing will strengthen the decision-making capacity of WUAs in the management and operation of irrigation systems.
- f) Rural households are those living in areas covered by irrigation systems. The project's primary impact is increased water supply reliability and improved agricultural conditions, which can contribute to improved livelihoods in rural communities.

2.3 Other Interested Parties

This category includes organizations and institutions that do not experience direct social or economic impacts from the project, but have an institutional, professional or public interest in its implementation and results. Due to the transboundary nature of the water resources in Central Asia, International Water Law and World Bank Operations Policy 7.5 also requires the notification of the project to other Riparian States of the transboundary resources.

- a) Government of Afghanistan. The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan is a riparian state of the Amu Darya River, one of the core shared river basins of Central Asia.
- b) Government of the Kyrgyz Republic. Although still a member of the governing Board of IFAS but not a participating state of the project, The Republic of Kyrgyzstan is still a riparian state of the Syr Darya river, one of the core shared river basins of Central Asia.
- c) Local government bodies are governing bodies at the regional, district, and village levels that ensure the coordination of the implementation of project activities at the local level, interaction with local communities, and support for the public consultation process.
- d) Research and educational institutions are organizations that conduct research and train specialists in water resource management, irrigation, and agriculture. Their participation can facilitate the implementation of modern technologies and strengthen human resources in the water sector.
- e) The private sector includes companies and organizations that may participate in the project as contractors, equipment suppliers, or consultants, and may also potentially participate in public-private partnership projects.
- f) Non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations (NGOs) are structures representing the interests of various social groups, including farmers, rural communities, and vulnerable groups. They can participate in public consultations, project monitoring, and information dissemination.
- g) International organizations and donors are international financial and technical partners supporting the development of the water and agricultural sectors and may be interested in the project results and exchange of experience.
- h) Mass media – national and regional media organizations that can contribute to the dissemination of information about the project, raising public awareness and ensuring the transparency of its implementation.

Interaction with the specified stakeholders will be carried out through regular exchange of information, working meetings, consultations and other forms of cooperation aimed at ensuring the effective implementation of the project.

2.4 Disadvantageous and/or Vulnerable social groups.

The project will place special emphasis on engaging vulnerable and potentially vulnerable groups, who may face additional barriers to participating in consultations, obtaining information, or accessing project benefits. These groups may be more vulnerable to socioeconomic constraints, limited access to resources, infrastructure, and communication channels. To ensure the meaningful participation of vulnerable groups, the project will employ tailored engagement methods, including targeted community-level consultations, the use of accessible communication channels (including language), and collaboration with local organizations and government agencies.

The main vulnerable and potentially vulnerable groups include:

- a) Low-income rural households are low-income families whose livelihoods rely heavily on agriculture and access to irrigation water. Limited financial resources can reduce their ability to adapt to changes in water resource management.
- b) Women in rural households are women who are actively involved in agricultural work and household management, but often have limited access to information, decision-making and resources, including water and agricultural services.
- c) Women farmers are women who farm independently or manage farms. They may face limited access to land, financing, training, and institutional support.
- d) Smallholder farmers are farm households with limited land and financial resources for whom stable access to irrigation water is critical to maintaining crop yields and incomes.
- e) Tailgate farmers are agricultural producers whose plots are located at the bottom of irrigation systems. These farmers often face limited or irregular access to water compared to users located upstream.
- f) Rural youth – young people living in rural areas who may have limited opportunities to participate in economic activities and decision-making related to natural resource management.
- g) Persons with disabilities are individuals with physical or other limitations who may have difficulty accessing information, participating in public events or consultations conducted within the framework of the project.
- h) Older people are members of the older generation in rural communities who may have limited mobility, access to information, or ability to participate in public debate.
- i) Households in remote rural areas are families living in geographically remote settlements with limited access to infrastructure, transportation services and information distribution channels.
- j) Irrigation service users with limited influence in WUA decision-making processes, including both WUA members and non-members, as well as informal water users who are not covered by formal participation mechanisms.
- k) linguistic minorities, for whom project information and consultations must be provided in accessible languages (e.g., Uzbek and Kyrgyz-speaking populations in rural areas).
- l) women and girls at elevated risk of SEA/SH, particularly in areas where construction works will take place.
- m) informal or unregistered land users, who may be affected by temporary land use, access restrictions, or other impacts covered under ESS5.

CHAPTER 3. REGULATORY AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Regional Requirements and International Conventions

Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan are Parties to a number of international conventions and treaties, summarized in **Table 2**, relevant to management of shared water resources, environmental protection, biodiversity conservation, land degradation, and climate change. These international

commitments provide an overarching framework guiding national environmental legislation, policies, and institutional arrangements.

Table 2: Summary of International Conventions and Treaties applicable to participating States

Convention Name	Mission / Objectives	Countries and Status
Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (1992)	1. The Parties shall take all appropriate measures to prevent, control and reduce any transboundary impact. 2. The Parties shall, in particular, take all appropriate measures* (a) To prevent, control and reduce pollution of waters causing or likely to cause transboundary impact; (b) To ensure that transboundary waters are used with the aim of ecologically sound and rational water management, conservation of water resources and environmental protection» (c) To ensure that transboundary waters are used in a reasonable and equitable way, taking into particular account their transboundary character, in the case of activities which cause or are likely to cause transboundary impact t (d) To ensure conservation and, where necessary, restoration of ecosystems.	Kazakhstan - acceded Turkmenistan - acceded Uzbekistan - acceded
Convention on the Law of the Non Navigational Uses of International Watercourses (1997)	The present Convention applies to uses of international water courses and of their waters for purposes other than navigation and to measures of protection, preservation and management related to the uses of those watercourses and their waters. The uses of international water courses for navigation are not within the scope of the present Convention except insofar as other uses affect navigation or are affected by navigation. – (Article 1)	Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan
Agreement between Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan on Cooperation in the Field of Joint Management of the Use and Conservation of Water Resources of Interstate Sources (1992)	While recognizing community and integrity of water resources in the region, the Parties shall have equal rights to water use and responsibility to ensure rational use and protection of water. (Article 1)	Kazakhstan – Party; Kyrgyzstan – Party; Tajikistan – Party; Turkmenistan – Party; Uzbekistan – Party;
Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)	To conserve migratory species throughout their range by promoting international cooperation, protecting habitats, removing barriers to migration, and supporting research and conservation measures.	Kazakhstan – Party; Tajikistan – Party; Uzbekistan – Party; Turkmenistan – Party
Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)	To ensure that international trade in wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival, through a system of permits and regulated trade covering tens of thousands of species.	Kazakhstan – Party; Tajikistan – Party; Uzbekistan – Party; Turkmenistan – Party

Aarhus Convention (1998)	To promote environmental governance by guaranteeing access to environmental information, public participation in decision-making, and access to justice in environmental matters.	Kazakhstan – Party; Tajikistan – Party; Uzbekistan – Party; Turkmenistan – Not a Party
United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)	To combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought through sustainable land management, improved water use, and inclusive participation of local communities.	Kazakhstan – Party; Tajikistan – Party; Uzbekistan – Party; Turkmenistan – Party
Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) (1992)	To conserve biological diversity, promote the sustainable use of its components, and ensure the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from genetic resources.	Kazakhstan – Party; Tajikistan – Party; Uzbekistan – Party; Turkmenistan – Party
Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972)	To identify, protect, conserve, and transmit to future generations cultural and natural heritage of outstanding universal value.	Kazakhstan – Party; Tajikistan – Party; Uzbekistan – Party; Turkmenistan – Party
United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (1992)	To stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that prevents dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system, serving as a framework for global climate agreements.	Kazakhstan – Party; Tajikistan – Party; Uzbekistan – Party; Turkmenistan – Party
Paris Agreement (2015)	To strengthen the global response to climate change by limiting global temperature rise to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit it to 1.5°C, through nationally determined contributions (NDCs), climate finance, and international cooperation.	Kazakhstan – Party; Tajikistan – Party; Uzbekistan – Party; Turkmenistan – Party

3.2 National legislation of the Republic of Kazakhstan

The interaction of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan with stakeholders is grounded in the **Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan**, originally adopted on August 30, 1995, and subsequently amended, including through the constitutional reform reflected in the new text published on March 18, 2026. The Constitution affirms Kazakhstan as a democratic, secular, rule-of-law, and social State, in which the supreme values are the individual, their life, rights, and freedoms (Article 1). The protection and observance of human and civil rights and freedoms, the development of public dialogue, and the strengthening of social cohesion are defined as fundamental principles of state activity.

The Constitution guarantees openness and accountability of public institutions and establishes the obligation of the State to respect and protect the rights and legitimate interests of citizens, including through access to information affecting their rights and interests. Public participation is constitutionally embedded through the right of citizens to take part in the management of state affairs, both directly and through their representatives, as well as through individual and collective appeals to state bodies and bodies of local self-government.

Environmental protection is recognized as a constitutional value through the State's commitment to fostering a high level of environmental culture and ensuring careful treatment of nature, reflecting the responsibility of the State to safeguard conditions favorable to human life and health.

Key legal provisions

The environmental legislation of the Republic of Kazakhstan is based on the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan and consists of the new Environmental Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan and other laws and regulations of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

The new Environmental Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan (No 400-VI 3PK)¹ was adopted on 2 January 2021 to replace the 2007 Environmental Code. Following the recommendations by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (*OECD*), Kazakhstan introduced considerable changes in the 2021 Code, when compared with the 2007 Code. Several new provisions were inspired by the European Union (EU) environmental legislation. The 2021 Environmental Code entered into force on 1 July 2021.

The 2021 Environmental Code covers most items included in the EU environmental acquis, as well as some additional issues (protection of forests, protection of soils, environmental education and awareness raising, research and development, management of radioactive waste, specific environmental requirement for certain activities) and country specific issues (Protected area in the northern part of the Caspian Sea).

If an international treaty ratified by the Republic of Kazakhstan establishes rules other than those contained in this Code, the rules of the international treaty shall apply. International treaties ratified by the Republic of Kazakhstan shall apply directly to environmental relations, except where an international treaty states that its application requires a legislative act of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

It is prohibited to include norms regulating environmental relations in other laws of the Republic of Kazakhstan, except in cases defined by Environmental Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan. In the event of a conflict between this Code and other laws of the Republic of Kazakhstan containing norms regulating environmental protection relations, the provisions of this Code shall apply.

¹ Latest version: https://wecoop.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/2021-KZ-ENV-Code_full-text_en.pdf

The civil legislation of the Republic of Kazakhstan applies to environmental relations in cases where they are not regulated by the norms of this Code.

The fourth chapter of the said code is fully dedicated to the right of any legal and private person to access environmental information, namely: (i) The public has the right of access to complete, reliable and timely environmental information held by state bodies, including information produced or obtained by them or held by any individual or legal entity acting on behalf of the state body; (ii) Holders of environmental information shall provide environmental information upon request,. No one has the right to demand the party requesting the information to provide justification for their interest in such information.

The holders of environmental information are: (i) bodies and institutions of the legislative, executive and judicial branches of power, local public administration and self-government; (ii) government agencies, not considered as state bodies, whose activities or services are related to the environment; (iii) quasi-public sector entities whose activities or services are related to the environment; (iv) individuals and legal entities – with respect to the environmental information in their possession.

In addition, according to the Environmental Code, Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is mandatory for any economic or other activity that may have a direct or indirect impact on the environment and human health. EIA results are an integral part of pre-project and project documentation, including feasibility studies. The documentation is subject to environmental analysis by the environmental protection authority, depending on the category of the planned facility at the national, regional or local level.

The Water Code (2025) regulates the use of surface, wastewater, and groundwater. It defines specific water consumption and wastewater disposal standards—the established amount of consumed or discharged wastewater per unit of output (per specific volume of work performed or services rendered)—and strengthened water consumption and wastewater disposal standards for economic sectors. The Water Code (2025) places special emphasis on ecosystem preservation and environmental flow. Environmental flow is a mandatory portion of river flow intended to preserve rivers, lakes, and marine ecosystems and must be left in nature. According to the Water Code, environmental flow is a priority and must be observed. Environmental flow is determined for each river basin and depends on the annual water availability and the intra-annual distribution of river flow.

Furthermore, the social protection of citizens affected by the environmental disaster in the Aral Sea region is guaranteed by the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan "On social protection of citizens affected by the environmental disaster in the Aral Sea region". The law defines the main mechanism for taking measures to solve social problems in the Aral Sea region and defines the status of citizens, classification of territories, establishes compensations and benefits for persons in need of social rehabilitation, establishes main approaches to create a system of protection of life and health of people living in environmentally unfriendly areas through creation of sustainable living conditions, priority provision of population with environmentally clean food, medicines and drinking water, improvement of sanitary and epidemiological.

The Republic of Kazakhstan has ratified the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters. According to this Convention, all people have the right to live in an environment conducive to their health and well-being, to have access to environmental information, to participate in decision-making and to have access to justice in environmental matters. Access to information and public participation in decision-making enhances the quality of decisions and their implementation process, raises awareness of environmental issues, provides the public with the opportunity to voice its concerns, and allows public institutions to give due consideration to such interests.

3.3 National legislation of the Republic of Tajikistan

In the Republic of Tajikistan, stakeholder engagement, including information disclosure, public consultations, and the consideration of citizen grievances, is regulated by a number of laws and regulations. These documents provide a legal basis for public participation in decision-making related to the

implementation of investment projects and guarantee citizens' rights to receive information and submit grievances to government agencies.

The main regulatory legal acts governing these issues include:

- Law of the Republic of Tajikistan "On appeals of individuals and legal entities". No.1029 (adopted on July 23, 2016, with amendments as of January 3, 2024).

This law regulates the procedure for submitting, registering, and reviewing appeals from citizens and organizations to government agencies. The law allows for the submission of appeals in written, electronic, and oral form, and sets deadlines for their consideration.

This Law establishes the rights of citizens and legal entities to submit appeals and defines the procedures for receiving, registering, reviewing, and responding to such appeals by state and local authorities. Relevant provisions include:

- ✓ Article 5 – forms of submission of appeals (written, electronic, and oral), including the right to submit appeals through official electronic platforms.
- ✓ Articles 8–9 – registration of appeals, including the use of updated unified electronic registration systems introduced in the amendments of 2024.
- ✓ Article 10 – the right of applicants to receive information on the status of their appeal.
- ✓ Article 13 – deadlines for consideration of appeals:
 - up to 15 calendar days – for appeals not requiring additional review.
 - up to 30 calendar days – for appeals requiring additional investigation.
- ✓ Article 17 – requirements for providing written responses and official notification to the applicant.

The 2024 amendments further streamline electronic submissions and strengthen accountability mechanisms, but they do not alter the core requirements described above. This Law provides the general framework for appeals handling in Tajikistan, while the Project GRM incorporates additional ESS10-compliant safeguards such as multi-level review, systematic documentation, and confidential channels for sensitive grievances including SEA/SH.

- Law of the Republic of Tajikistan “On the Right of Access to Information”, June 18, 2008, No. 383
 - ✓ Article 4 (Right of Access to Information): This article explicitly establishes that every individual has the right to freely seek and receive information regarding the activities of state authorities, local self-government bodies of towns and villages, as well as other organizations. This right includes access to information about state programs and projects.
 - ✓ Article 5 (Obligations of State Authorities to Ensure Access to Information): This article sets out the obligation of state authorities to create the necessary conditions for the exercise of this right by ensuring openness and transparency. They are required to provide accurate information and make it publicly available through mass media or official websites.
- Law of the Republic of Tajikistan “On Environmental Impact Assessment” (18 July 2017, No. 1448)

This law regulates the procedure for conducting state environmental assessments of projects and programs that may impact the environment. Environmental assessments include informing the public and taking into account the opinions of stakeholders. This law establishes the obligation of the project proponent to take public opinion into account at all stages of project planning and decision-making:

 - ✓ Article 5 – Defines the general authority of the Government to approve the procedures for conducting environmental impact assessment (EIA) and for ensuring public participation.
 - ✓ Article 10 (Rights of citizens and public associations) – Guarantees the right to receive information on proposed activities and to participate in their discussion.
 - ✓ Article 12 (Obligations of the project proponent) – Requires the project initiator to organize public discussions and provide all necessary materials for public review.
- The Law of the Republic of Tajikistan “On Environmental Protection,” adopted on August 2, 2011 (No. 760). The law is periodically updated. Significant amendments were introduced in 2017 (No. 1449), and the most recent amendments were adopted on November 13, 2024 (No. 2099).
 - ✓ This law defines the fundamental principles of the state environmental policy.

- ✓ Public participation in environmental matters is regulated by Article 13. This article establishes mechanisms for involving citizens, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders in discussions and decision-making related to environmental protection.
- Article 12, which outlines the rights and obligations of citizens, also plays an important role. It guarantees the right of individuals to participate in meetings, assemblies, and demonstrations, as well as to submit letters, petitions, and complaints on issues related to environmental protection.
- The Law of the Republic of Tajikistan “On Self-Government Bodies of Settlements and Villages,” adopted on August 5, 2009 (No. 549). According to this law, the responsibilities for information disclosure and community engagement are distributed as follows:
 - ✓ Article 4 (“Principles of Activity of Self-Government Bodies”) — establishes transparency and consideration of public opinion as fundamental principles of local self-government.
 - ✓ Article 10 (“Powers of the Jamoat”) — includes the responsibility to organize discussions on important local issues and to inform the population about the activities of self-government bodies.
 - ✓ Article 14 (“Powers of the Chairperson of the Jamoat”) — requires the Chairperson to regularly inform the population about the situation in the settlement or village, as well as about the progress of implementation of decisions of the Jamoat and higher state authorities.
 - ✓ Article 18 (“Meetings (Assemblies) of Citizens”) — directly regulates the conduct of public discussions. Assemblies are convened to discuss the most important local issues, inform residents, and make decisions on community initiatives.

These legislative acts form the legal basis for ensuring transparency in project implementation, stakeholder participation and the functioning of feedback mechanisms, including a grievances mechanism.

3.4 National legislation of Turkmenistan

The interaction of the Government of Turkmenistan with citizens is formally grounded in the Constitution of Turkmenistan, adopted in 2008 and amended most recently in 2016. The Constitution defines Turkmenistan as a democratic, legal, and secular state and affirms that the individual, their life, honor, dignity, and rights constitute the highest value of the State. Sovereignty is vested in the people who may participate in state affairs directly or through representative bodies, thereby providing a formal constitutional basis for public participation in governance.

The Constitution guarantees the right to information and assigns the State responsibility for creating conditions conducive to individual development, protection of life and health, and social well-being. It also includes provisions on environmental protection, recognizing the right of every person to a favorable environment and establishing State responsibility for the rational use of natural resources.

Key legal provisions. The environmental legislation of Turkmenistan is based on the Constitution and consists of a set of framework and sectoral laws regulating environmental protection, natural resource management, and environmental safety.

The overarching legal framework is provided by the Law of Turkmenistan on Nature Protection, which establishes the legal, economic, and organizational foundations for environmental protection, ecological safety, conservation of biodiversity, and prevention of negative environmental impacts from economic and other activities. The law incorporates key concepts such as environmental quality and ecological safety and assigns responsibilities to state authorities, legal entities, and individuals.

Environmental regulation is further supported by specialized legislation, including the Water Code (2016), Land Code, Forest Code, Law on Atmospheric Air Protection (2016), Law on Waste (2015), Law on Environmental Safety (2017), and the Law on Environmental Expertise. These instruments regulate the use and protection of natural resources and establish requirements for environmental permitting and oversight.

Where an international treaty ratified by Turkmenistan establishes rules different from those contained in national legislation, the provisions of the international treaty apply, in accordance with the Constitution. At

the same time, environmental relations are primarily governed by sector-specific legislation, with general legislation applied where specific provisions are absent.

Access to environmental information. Access to environmental information is regulated by the Law of Turkmenistan “On Ecological Information” (2020, as amended in 2023), which establishes the legal framework for ensuring the right of individuals and legal entities to receive information on the state of the environment and natural resources.

Holders of ecological information include state authorities, local self-government bodies, and other entities whose activities affect the environment. Such information is to be provided upon request, typically without requiring the applicant to justify their interest, subject to limitations established by law.

Environmental impact assessment and environmental expertise. Environmental impact assessment is conducted as part of the environmental expertise process and is required for planned activities that may have negative impacts on the environment or public health. The procedure is regulated primarily by the Law on Environmental Expertise and related legislation.

Project documentation, including feasibility studies, is subject to review by authorized state environmental bodies. The environmental expertise process evaluates potential impacts, compliance with environmental standards, and proposed mitigation measures, forming the basis for decisions on project approval.

International commitments. Turkmenistan is not a Party to the Aarhus Convention. However, certain elements related to access to environmental information are reflected in domestic legislation, particularly in the Constitution and the Law on Ecological Information.

3.5 National legislation of the Republic of Uzbekistan

The key legislation for this project can be subdivided into two groups:

- 1) Constitution, Land Code, Civil Code, the Laws "On Farm Enterprise", “On Dekhkan Enterprise”, “On seed production”, "On Environmental Protection" and others.
- 2) Presidential Decrees and Resolutions, Cabinet of Ministers’ Resolutions and industry regulations.

Land Tenure. The legal foundation for land tenure in Uzbekistan is contained in three key documents: the Constitution (Article 55), the Land Code (Chapter 4), and the Civil Code (Chapters 8, 13 and 17).

The Land code stipulates that “land is a state-owned national treasure, it is subject to rational use, and it is protected by the state as a base of life, activities and welfare of the population” (Land Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Chapter 4, Article 16, 1998).

Land tenure in Uzbekistan can be revoked in certain cases. For example, the ownership of land plots is terminated when the land plot provided for non-agricultural needs is not used for two years. Also, for farmers it is mandatory to be a member of the Council of farmers, dekhkan (smallholder) farmers and owners of household plots (thereafter Council). So, upon termination of membership, the right to use the land plot is terminated as well. Councils have the right to monitor the rational use of land and land by dekhkan farms and give instructions to farms, dekhkan farms and owners of household lands according to the national legislation.

Lease contracts are closely monitored by a number of state authorities - local authorities (khokimiyats), the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA), the Ministry of Water Resources, the State Committee on Land Resources, Geodesy, Cartography and Cadaster, and the Inspection for control of the agro industrial complex under the Cabinet of Ministers.

Land use by farmers is closely monitored by the state. Farmers growing cotton and wheat have to comply with state quotas for production and are obliged to sell these crops at pre-determined prices. Farmers growing fruits and vegetables are not subject to the same scrutiny as cotton and wheat farmers, but they also have to follow instructions by local authorities in matters related to growing crops. Dehkan farmers have relatively greater freedom and can sell all their crops at market prices.

The legal and regulatory framework of Uzbekistan provide an adequate and appropriate enabling framework for implementing the key activities to be taken up under the program. Social Protection, consumer responsiveness and public accountability are well enshrined in the legal framework at different levels. The Constitution of Uzbekistan and several laws highlight the importance of state's commitment to serving and ensuring protection of the public, in general, and the poor and vulnerable sections.

Environment, Community Health and Safety. Other relevant legislation includes the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Environmental Protection", first adopted on 09.12.1992, which provides the legal basis for all environmental requirements related to the project. The Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On protection of agricultural plants from pests, diseases and weeds", dated 03.08.2000, provides a legal framework to ensure compliance with sanitary norms, rules and hygienic standards, ensuring sanitary and epidemiological welfare of the population, the storage, use, neutralization, recycling and disposal of chemicals, biological agents and materials.

Policy and Institutional Mandates. In recent years, a number of important Presidential decrees and resolutions on agriculture have been enacted. These decrees and resolutions have mainly tackled institutional reorganization of agriculture. The most important of them is the decree of the President of Uzbekistan #5330 of February 12, 2018 "On measures to radically improve the system of agriculture and water sector governance", according to which the Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources was split into MOA and Ministry of Water Management. According to this decree, MOA will implement a unified agriculture policy for comprehensive modernization of the industry, introduction of science and technology, modern and resource-saving agricultural technologies, advanced domestic and foreign experience in the sector of agriculture and water management. The Ministry will develop comprehensive sectoral and regional programs aimed at ensuring a dynamic development of agriculture sector, food security, increase employment and rural incomes, and maintain a stable level of prices for food products in the domestic market. The Ministry of Water Resources is responsible for implementing a unified state policy in the sphere of management of water resources, ensuring their careful and rational use, reconstruction and modernization of water facilities, hydraulic structures.

A Decree of the President dated 10.09.2018 "On Measures to improve protection of rights and legal interests of farmers, dehqan farmers and owners of household land and effective use of agricultural land" stipulates that by January 1, 2022, all farms must become a multi-profile farm and those farms which do not become multi-profile farms will be terminated.

3.6 The World Bank's Environmental and Social Framework

The CAWEC project is being implemented with financial support from the World Bank and must comply with the requirements of the World Bank's Environmental and Social Framework (ESF).

The key standard governing stakeholder engagement is Environmental and Social Standard 10, "Stakeholder Engagement and Disclosure," which provides for the following core requirements:

- identification of all project stakeholders.
- timely and accessible disclosure of information about the project.
- conducting regular consultations with stakeholders throughout the project life cycle.
- ensuring the participation of vulnerable and potentially vulnerable groups of the population.
- creation of an accessible and effective grievances mechanism (GRM).

In accordance with the requirements of ESS10, the recipient is required to develop and implement a **Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP)** that sets out the methods for informing and consulting stakeholders, as well as measures to ensure the participation of vulnerable groups.

3.7 World Bank Operational Policies: OP 7.5 Projects on International Waterways

OP 7.50 is the World Bank's Operational Policy on Projects on International Waterways. This policy governs Bank-financed projects that involve international waterways, such as rivers, lakes, canals, bays, gulfs, straits, or channels that cross or form boundaries between two or more states. The policy applies to projects that use or may potentially pollute these waterways, including hydroelectric, irrigation, flood control, navigation, drainage, water and sewage, industrial, and similar projects. Key aspects of OP 7.5 include:

- **Applicability:** The policy covers any project involving international waterways, including tributaries and channels recognized as necessary for communication between the open sea and other states.
- **Notification:** The Bank requires the beneficiary state to formally notify other riparian states of the proposed project and its details, if such notification has not already occurred.
- **Cooperation:** The Bank emphasizes the importance of cooperation and goodwill among riparian states for the efficient use and protection of international waterways. It encourages states to reach appropriate agreements or arrangements regarding the waterway.

3.8 Institutional structure for the implementation of the Project.

The implementation of the CAWEC Project will be carried out through Executive Committee of the International Fund to Save the Aral Sea (EC-IFAS), together with the participation of several government ministries and agencies of the participating sovereign states.

EC-IFAS will act as the project executing agent and will be considered as key external stakeholder, providing strategic guidance, overall coordination and oversight of the project implementation.

During the project preparation stage, the coordination of activities related to the development of project documentation, including the preparation of technical, environmental, and social instruments, as well as the organization of consultations with stakeholders, is carried out by the Project Implementation Unit (PIU).

This group ensures coordination and engagement with key regional and government institutions, international partners, including the World Bank, as well as other stakeholders throughout the project preparation process.

Once the project is approved and implementation commences, day-to-day management functions for project activities, including coordination of the implementation of project components, environmental and social support, stakeholder engagement and the operation of the Grievance Redress Mechanism, will be carried out by the relevant internal project management structures.

At the regional and local levels, the following play an important role in the implementation of the project:

- Applicable National Project Implementation Units of participating states.
- water users' associations.
- local government authorities.

These structures ensure interaction with farmers, rural communities and other project beneficiaries, facilitate the dissemination of information about the project and participate in the organization of public consultations.

This institutional structure ensures coordination of actions between the regional, national, and local levels of project management and facilitates effective interaction with stakeholders during project implementation.

CHAPTER 4. Stakeholder Engagement Strategy

TO BE COMPLETED DURING PROJECT PREPARATION

During the project preparation phase, preliminary consultations and working discussions were held with key stakeholders to inform the concept of the project, identify key issues and priorities in the relevant sectors, and obtain initial feedback.

Stakeholder consultations during the preparation phase of the CAWEC Project were conducted under the coordination of the EC-IFAS in cooperation with relevant ministries, local authorities, water user associations and other stakeholders or participating States and Regional Bodies.

The comments and suggestions received during the consultations were taken into account in the further development of project activities and the preparation of this SEP.

4.1 Summary of Stakeholder Engagement done during project preparation stage

Working meetings and consultations were held with key government agencies and relevant organizations in the preparation of this project to date. The focus was on discussing the project concept, its proposed components, and identifying potential environmental and social risks/impacts that may arise during project implementation. Additional consultations of the E&S instruments, including this SEP, will be held in April as shown in **Table 3**, and its results will be annexed to this SEP.

Table 3: Summary of meetings and consultations with stakeholders to date.

Location	Date	Participants	Key Issues Discussed	Main Outcomes / Comments Addressed
Astana, Kazakhstan	November 28, 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Representatives of the Executive Committee of IFAS representatives of MFAs of CA countries Representative of the Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation of the Republic of Kazakhstan Representative of the Ministry of Energy and Water Resources of the Republic of Tajikistan Representative of the State Committee for Water Management of Turkmenistan Representative of the Ministry of Water Resources of the Republic of Uzbekistan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IDA financing opportunities and constraints for regional organizations Structure and scope of the MPA Regional Component Role of the regional recipient and financing determination Project cycle and preparation timelines Implementation of mechanisms, legal framework, and role of EC IFAS Potential activity areas for the Regional Component Working Group governance (meeting frequency, format, decision-making) Coordination with national governments and other stakeholders Establishment of a Project Implementation Unit (PIU) Expert support needs for preparation phase Timeline for project proposal and related instruments 	<p>A regional working group has been established to develop the regional component, comprising representatives of the IFAS Executive Committee as well as nominated representatives of water ministries and agencies from the Central Asian countries.</p> <p>During the first inaugural meeting of the working group, discussions covered the requirements for developing the regional component, the responsibilities and roles of working group members, and the determination of next steps for the regional component's development. All activities to be</p>

Location	Date	Participants	Key Issues Discussed	Main Outcomes / Comments Addressed
				<p>financed under the regional component must be agreed upon by the Central Asian countries and must be implemented for the benefit of at least two countries (they cannot be national in nature or carried out at the request of a single country).</p>
Almaty, Kazakhstan	February 2-3, 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EC-IFAS representatives • Representatives of the ministries and agencies responsible for water resources of the Central Asian countries • Representatives of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the Central Asian countries • Representatives of IFAS branches in the countries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thematic proposals from the countries for regional grant component development, • Identified gaps and possible assistance needed for the development of the project proposal, • Identified the implementation mechanisms of the regional grant component and determined further development steps. 	<p>During the second meeting, the working group discussed thematic proposals from countries for inclusion into the regional grant component, identify the gaps and support required for the development of the project proposal, and work through the execution of the regional grant component, as well as determine further development steps.</p> <p>All proposals were consolidated and registered.</p>
Tashkent, Uzbekistan	March 5-6, 2026,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EC-IFAS representatives • Representatives of the ministries and agencies responsible for water resources of the Central Asian countries • Representatives of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the Central Asian countries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalization of the design of the regional grant component, • Coordination with the members of the Regional Working Group on the main actions of the regional component, • Elaboration of issues related to the execution of the regional component • Coordination of project components and activities with international partners to avoid duplication and identify opportunities for cooperation. 	<p>During the third meeting, the working group prioritized proposals from countries for inclusion into the first batch of regional grant component,</p>
Dushanbe, Tajikistan	April 29-30, 2026,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EC-IFAS representatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalize the first-year plan of CAWEC' implementation, • Discuss execution and awareness of PIU, • Discuss environmental and social requirements of the World Bank, 	TBC

Location	Date	Participants	Key Issues Discussed	Main Outcomes / Comments Addressed
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Representatives of the ministries and agencies responsible for water resources of the Central Asian countries Representatives of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the Central Asian countries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss indicators of the CAWEC implementation. 	
			In addition, special consultations/interviews were organized with the BWO Amu Darya employees to identify their technical and capacity needs.	

4.2 Key Issues and Comments Raised by Stakeholders

During the consultations conducted at the project preparation stage, including working meetings, field assessments, virtual consultations, and a roundtable discussion with the participation of representatives of government agencies, international financial institutions, and other stakeholders, a wide range of issues related to the preparation and implementation of the Project were discussed.

The main issues and suggestions raised by stakeholders included the following:

- improving the efficiency of water resources management.
- the need to strengthen the institutional capacity of responsible government agencies involved in the management of water resources management and development, and implementation of investment projects.
- The importance of taking into account the interests of local water users, including farmers, Water User Associations, and local communities.
- ensuring adequate consideration of environmental and social aspects in decision making and operations, and during the preparation and implementation of project activities.
- the need for effective coordination between regional entities, riparian states, government institutions, international financial institutions, and development partners during project preparation and implementation.

During the roundtable meeting held as part of the World Bank mission, the concept of the CAWEC Project was presented. In particular, it was noted that, given the strategic importance of improving regional coordination and cooperation to enhance water security in the region.

The results of the consultations were taken into account in shaping the overall concept of the Project and in the development of its main components.

4.3 Summary of project stakeholder needs and methods, tools, and techniques for stakeholder engagement

4.3.1 General principles of interaction.

Stakeholder engagement within the CAWEC project will be carried out in accordance with the requirements of the World Bank's Environmental and Social Standard **ESS10 "Stakeholder Engagement and Disclosure"**.

The main principles of interaction are:

- (i) Transparency. The project will ensure open and timely dissemination of information on its goals, activities, progress, and results. Information will be disseminated through local authorities, water user associations, information boards at project sites, and through consultations with local communities.
- (ii) Inclusiveness. The project will ensure the participation of various regional entities, stakeholder groups, including farmers, water user associations, local government representatives, and vulnerable and socially sensitive groups.
- (iii) Non-discrimination. All stakeholders will have equal opportunities to receive information about the project and participate in consultations, regardless of social status, gender, age, or economic status.
- (iv) Timeliness. Stakeholder consultation and outreach will begin early in the preparation of subprojects and continue throughout the project life cycle.
- (v) Accessibility. Meaningful stakeholder engagement depends on timely, accurate, accessible, and comprehensible information. Making available project-related information as early as possible in the project cycle and in a manner, format, and language appropriate for each stakeholder group is important. Formats to provide information may include presentation printouts, nontechnical summaries, project leaflets, and pamphlets. Ideally, maps of the project area and non-technical drawings should be included in the materials. Documents used in stakeholder consultation should be made available to stakeholders, for example on community public notice boards, and, where possible, on the Borrower's website. Documentation should also be accessible for stakeholders with sensory disabilities, for instance, through providing documents in Braille or engaging a sign language interpreter at a consultation meeting, as appropriate.

In cases where literacy levels are low, additional formats like location sketches, physical models, and film presentations may be useful to communicate relevant information. The Borrower should help the public to understand technical documents, for instance, through the publication of simplified summaries, nontechnical background explanations, use of pictograms and infographics, or access to local experts.

4.3.2 Methods and formats of interaction.

The CAWEC project will employ various stakeholder engagement methods to ensure effective communication and participation of stakeholders in discussions of project activities.

The main methods of interaction include:

- Public consultations. Conducting open meetings within sovereign states, local communities to discuss planned project activities, potential impacts, and mitigation measures, as well as a regional scale.
- Focus groups. Conducting thematic discussions with specific stakeholder groups, including NGOs in the sector, regional bodies, farmers, representatives of water user associations, and other stakeholders.
- Written consultations. Distribution of information materials and collection of suggestions and comments from stakeholders through written requests.
- Online and offline information. Dissemination of project information through the official websites of the IFAS and relevant National entities, information stands, banners at project meetings, as well as through local authorities and water user associations.

4.3.3 Interaction at various stages of project implementation

Interaction with stakeholders will be carried out at all stages of project implementation.

- Preparation and design stage. At this stage, consultations will be held with stakeholders on planning project activities, identifying priority areas for strengthening, and preliminary studies, and discussing potential environmental and social impacts.
- Project implementation phase. During the project implementation phase, stakeholders will be regularly informed about the progress of the project, its timing, and potential time constraints.
- Operation phase. Through the life of the project a regional communication protocol should be drafted to guide ongoing communication within the sector going forward.

4.3.4 Interaction with vulnerable and socially sensitive groups

The CAWEC project recognizes that certain vulnerable and socially sensitive groups may face barriers in accessing information, participating in consultations, or benefitting equally from project activities. Such barriers may include limited mobility, low awareness of project processes, limited access to communication channels, literacy challenges, social norms, or geographic remoteness common in rural irrigation areas.

Key vulnerable groups in the context of CAWEC include:

- women engaged in agriculture and women-headed households.
- low-income and labor-constrained households.
- elderly persons and socially isolated individuals.
- persons with disabilities who may have limited mobility or access to information.

To ensure meaningful, safe and equitable participation of these groups, the project will apply specific, tailored engagement measures, going beyond general consultations and fully aligned with ESS10.

Through the applicable National Project SEP and network, tailored engagement measures for vulnerable groups (adapted for CAWEC):

(a) Women in agriculture

- ensuring gender-balanced community engagement teams and involving female social mobilizers.
- organizing women-only discussion groups where needed, to allow free expression.
- scheduling consultations at convenient times, considering women's unpaid care responsibilities.
- providing support such as transport arrangements through villages where feasible.
- working with women's councils at village level and local NGOs supporting rural women.
- targeting women farmers and WUA female members in training and capacity-building activities.

(b) Elderly persons

- conducting household-level visits for those unable to travel.
- using simplified and verbal formats of communication.
- providing repeated outreach in cooperation with village representatives.
- involving family members where appropriate and with consent.

(c) Persons with disabilities

- providing information in an accessible format (large print, audio explanation, pictorial materials).
- ensuring meeting venues are physically accessible when in-person events are organized.
- enabling remote participation through phone/WhatsApp outreach when mobility is limited.
- coordinating with local social protection departments.

(d) Low-income households and small farmers

- outreach through WUAs, agricultural extension services and local authorities.
- using simplified messages and accessible language.
- conducting small group or door-to-door meetings in remote areas.
- ensuring that information on temporary construction impacts and mitigation measures is communicated early.

(e) Residents of remote rural settlements

- organizing mobile outreach (village-led household visits).
- using local community centers, mosques, WUA offices and information boards as communication points.
- providing consultation materials in local languages commonly used in the area (e.g. Uzbek, Kyrgyz).

Cross-cutting measures applicable to all vulnerable groups:

- multiple channels of communication: villages, WUAs, community meetings, phone/WhatsApp hotline, information boards.
- possibility to submit grievances verbally through village representatives or WUAs.
- ensuring confidentiality and safe reporting, including for SEA/SH-related grievances.
- documenting participation of vulnerable groups in consultation reporting.
- proactive engagement by social mobilizers and local facilitators.

Table 4 presents an expanded PROPOSED “**Stakeholder Engagement Plan**” that defines the main forms and methods of engagement within the CAWEC Project, as well as the frequency and identification of parties responsible for implementing the relevant activities. This SEP will be updated regularly during the project to reflect feedback received and changes in stakeholder composition.

Table 4: Proposed CAWEC Project Stakeholder Engagement Plan.

STILL TO BE CONSULTED WITH PARTIES

Project stage	Target stakeholders	Topic of consultation /message	Method used	Responsibilities	Frequency / Timeline
Preparation stage	Regional and National water management organizations	Discussion of project activities, institutional reforms, and modernization of water management systems, Notification of GRM	Working meetings, technical conferences, consultations	EC-IFAS	Before, during or after the relevant activities
	National Agencies, Other Interest Parties	Informing about the project, Notification of GRM	Official letters, meetings, consultations	EC-IFAS, National Entities	Before, during or after the relevant activities
	Local Districts, WUAs, users of irrigation services	Presentation of the project, Notification of GRM	Focus groups, public hearings,	EC-FAS, National Entities	At the preparation stage
	Vulnerable groups (women, women farmers, small farmers, youth, elderly, people with disabilities, families in remote villages)	Information on project Notification of GRM	Local meetings,	EC-IFAS, National Entities	At the preparation stage
Project implementation (preliminary studies, installation of monitoring equipment, institutional reforms)	Regional and National Entities	Discussion of project activities, institutional reforms, and modernization of water management systems, information specific studies including findings and results. Notification of GRM	Working meetings, technical conferences, consultations	EC-IFAS	Ongoing throughout project implementation
	National Agencies, WUAs, users of irrigation services, Other Interested Parties	Discussion of project activities, institutional reforms, and modernization of water management systems, information on specific studies including	Official letters, meetings, consultations	EC-IFAS, National Entities	Ongoing throughout project implementation

		findings and results, Notification of GRM			
	Local Districts, Local farmers, rural households, local communities	Information on project, information on specific studies including findings and results, Notification of GRM	meetings, consultations, focus groups and public hearings for specific studies	EC-IFAS, National Entities	Ongoing throughout project implementation
	Vulnerable groups	Information on project, information on specific studies including findings and results, Notification of GRM	meetings, consultations, meetings, consultations, focus groups and public hearings for specific studies	EC-IFAS, National Entities	Ongoing throughout project implementation
All stages of the project	All SH	Complaint mechanism, Notification of GRM	Hotline, written and oral requests, GRM points	EC-IFAS, National Entities	Before starting work or activities

CHAPTER 5. DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION AND PUBLIC CONSULTATION

5.1 General principles of disclosure and consultation

Within the CAWEC project, information disclosure and stakeholder consultation are key to ensuring transparency, accountability, and effective project implementation. Information disclosure is conducted in accordance with the World Bank's Environmental and Social Framework and regional and applicable national legislation. The purpose of disclosure is to provide stakeholders with timely, accessible and understandable information about the project, its components, potential impacts, and opportunities to participate in the decision-making process.

As part of the project, information will be provided on a regular basis at all stages of the project's implementation – preparation, implementation, and operation.

The information disclosed will include:

- description of the objectives and components of the project.
- information on planned investments and activities.
- potential environmental and social impacts.
- measures to prevent and mitigate them.
- opportunities for stakeholder participation in project implementation.
- mechanism for filing and reviewing grievances.
- reports on the progress of the project.

Project documents, including environmental and social instruments, will be published on the official websites of the IFAS and relevant agencies of the participating State governments, and will be made available to stakeholders upon request. Copies of key documents will be made available at:

- Regional Body – IFAS country offices
- Offices of National Departments and relevant agencies of participating states,
- Participating state local government (hukumat and jamoat) offices,
- Participating State WUA offices,
- mobile formats during community meetings, where printed materials will be provided as needed.

This will ensure that project-affected people, including those in remote rural areas, have accessible and timely information. Documents will also be shared upon request through local authorities, contractors, and the project's Stakeholder Liaison Officer.

5.2 Methods and channels of information dissemination

To ensure effective outreach to different stakeholder groups, various communication channels will be used. One of the main objectives of disclosure of information is that consultative participation of people are prior and timely informed. Key disclosure methods include:

- publication of information on the official websites of government agencies and organizations participating in the implementation of the project;
- placement of information materials in local authorities;
- distribution of information brochures and leaflets;
- publications in the media;
- holding information meetings and public consultations;
- dissemination of information through social networks and online platforms;
- information dissemination through local communities and public organizations.

Information will be provided in appropriate languages for the region, and those of the participating states, taking into account the needs of different population groups.

5.3 Conducting public consultations

Public consultations are an important tool for involving stakeholders in the project implementation process and ensuring that their opinions and suggestions are taken into account.

Consultations will be held at various stages of the project implementation.

Project preparation stage. At this stage, consultations are held with regional bodies, relevant government agencies, water users' associations, local authorities, Other Interested Parties.

The consultations are aimed at discussing:

- discussion of the project concept;
- discussion of environmental and social instruments;
- collection of suggestions and comments from stakeholders .

Project implementation phase.

During the project implementation period, consultations are aimed at:

- informing the population about the progress of work, especially where works will engage with communities e.g. enumerators and preliminary studies;
- discussing possible potential temporary restrictions and related impacts;
- receiving feedback from local communities and stakeholders;
- addressing emerging issues and suggestions;
- conducting consultations for site-specific E&S instruments (ESIAs, ESMPs) as required by ESF, including disclosure of draft documents and collection of comments from project-affected people;
- although not anticipated under this project, should the need arise, carrying out consultations for RAP/ARAP preparation and implementation, ensuring meaningful engagement with affected land users and vulnerable groups;
- consulting stakeholders on proposed project activities, preliminary studies, including institutional strengthening, and digitalization measures.

Operational phase. After completion of work, consultations focus on:

- discussion of the functioning of the water resource management systems;
- receiving feedback from water users;
- improving the efficiency of water resources management.

The results of the consultations will be documented and taken into account when making decisions within the project. See Annex 1: Template to Capture Consultation Minutes

5.4 Taking into account the opinions of stakeholders

All suggestions and comments received during the consultations will be analyzed and, if possible, taken into account during the implementation of the project. Information on the consultations will include:

- date and place of the event;
- list of participants;
- main issues discussed;
- comments and suggestions received;
- decisions taken and subsequent actions;
- Maintaining anonymity of participants where requested.

Summary information on the consultations held and decisions made will be regularly published in project progress reports.

5.5 Ensuring participation of vulnerable groups

The project places particular emphasis on ensuring the participation of vulnerable and socially disadvantaged groups of the population who may face barriers to accessing information or participating in consultations.

To ensure their participation, the following measures will be applied:

- holding consultations at a time convenient for local residents;
- use of accessible and understandable forms of information presentation;
- holding meetings directly in the affected communities;

- involving local organizations and community leaders;
- use of various communication channels, including oral/pictorial forms of information;
- In appropriate non-jargon language.

Such measures will ensure broader public participation and take into account the interests of various stakeholder groups.

CHAPTER 6. GRIEVANCE REDRESS MECHANISM (GRM)

6.1 Objectives and purpose of the Grievances Mechanism

The CAWEC Project will operate a Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) designed to ensure timely, transparent, and fair consideration of requests, grievances, and suggestions from the public, water users, contractors, and other stakeholders related to the implementation of project activities. The GRM can also be used to provide positive feedback.

The CAWEC Project will utilize the grievance redress mechanism (GRM) developed and implemented during the National Project Preparation for concerns within countries and will include a GRM process at IFAS regarding regional concerns. The basic structure of the mechanism will be retained and, if necessary, further refined during the initial phase of project implementation. Detailed information on the Grievances and appeal procedure is provided in the appendix to this SEP.

The GRM is aimed at:

- providing stakeholders with an accessible channel for submitting grievances and suggestions;
- timely identification and resolution of problems arising during the implementation of the project;
- prevention of conflict situations at an early stage;
- increasing transparency and accountability of the project implementation process.

GRM is an integral part of the Project's environmental and social management system and has been developed in accordance with the requirements of the World Bank's ESF, in particular Standard 10 (ESS10).

6.2 Operating principles of the GRM

The grievances mechanism will operate based on the following principles:

- accessibility - grievances can be submitted in a variety of convenient ways;
- free of charge - filing grievances do not require payment.
- non-discrimination - all applications are considered regardless of the applicant's status;
- Confidentiality – protection of applicants' personal data is ensured;
- transparency - Grievances procedures are clear and open;
- efficiency - grievances are considered within the established timeframes;
- right of appeal - the complainant can refer the Grievances to a higher level;
- right of appeal to the court - the applicant may at any time use judicial or administrative mechanisms to protect rights.

The mechanism allows for anonymous reporting. Such reports will also be registered and processed in accordance with established procedures. Particular attention will be paid to the secure and confidential handling of sensitive grievances, including cases involving sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA/SH).

6.3 Structure and levels of the GRM

The project's grievances mechanism provides for a three-tiered system for reviewing appeals:

- Level 1** - local (object);
- Level 2** – Sector / National / National Project PMU);
- Level 3** – Central Asia Regional (CAWEC PMU).

The Project's GRM is focused on resolving grievances as quickly as possible at the local and project levels. Higher levels are used primarily to address complex or unresolved issues. **Table 5** summarizes the methods to submit a grievance, and **Table 6** summaries the Grievance Redress Process.

It is important to note that an applicant can apply to any level of the GRM directly, without having to complete previous levels.

6.3.1 Local level (District Offices)

At the local level, grievances can be submitted in the following ways:

- directly to the relevant District level office (Officer, environmental or social specialist);
- by contact phone numbers indicated on information banners and facility passports;
- through grievances and suggestion boxes at National Project sites;
- through the facility's call logs;
- orally or in writing during meetings with the public;
- through representatives of local authorities (villages), water users' associations or other local structures.

At this level, an attempt is made to resolve the issue on the spot. If the Grievances cannot be resolved promptly, it is registered and escalated to the next level for further review.

Important: A written request is not required to register a grievance. If the Grievances is submitted verbally, the project's responsible person will ensure it is recorded in the Grievances log.

6.3.2 National Project / Basin / Sector level (PMU)

At the National project level (PMU), the following are considered:

- grievances not resolved at the local level.
- appeals related to compensation and temporary use of land.
- claims related to economic losses.
- labor grievances of employees of contracting organizations.
- repeated grievances.
- sensitive treatments, including SEA/SH cases.

If necessary, a special committee may be created to review grievances, including representatives from relevant project entities. Decisions will be communicated to complainants within the specified timeframe.

The project also provides for the use of a sector-wide grievance mechanism related to water resources management, including grievances related to:

- water distribution;
- operation of irrigation infrastructure;
- issues of water resources management.

The consideration of such requests is carried out with the participation of relevant structures:

- Applicable Ministry of Water Resources, or other applicable agency.

If grievance cannot be resolved at the national project level for further consideration in accordance with the legislation of the applicable participating State, it can be referred to the regional level.

6.3.3 Central Asia Regional Level (CAWEC PMU)

The project also provides for the use of a regional grievance mechanism related to water resources management.

At this level, grievances related to:

- water allocation;
- system operating rules;
- issues of water resources management;
- inter-country dispute;
- issues relating to more than one state / downstream impacts

The consideration of such requests is carried out with the participation of relevant structures:

The Interstate Commission for Water Coordination (IFAS)

Table 5: Channels for grievances and appeals within the GRM framework of the CAWEC project

Method of filing a grievance	Description	Responsible for reception	Availability
Personal appeal	Filing a grievance directly to a project representative (social specialist, supervisory engineer or representative of the PMU)	Social Issues Specialist of the Project	At the sites of subproject implementation
Telephone	Contact the project's contact numbers indicated on the information banners and facility passports.	PMU /PIG	During working hours
E-mail	Submitting a grievance or request via project email	PMU	Constantly
National Entities	Submitting a request via the feedback form on the project's official websites	Authorized persons from relevant National Entities PMU /PIG	Constantly
Grievances and suggestion boxes	Special boxes installed at project sites and local authorities	PMUs, National Entities	Constantly
Through local authorities	Submission of an appeal through representatives of villages or other local government bodies	PMU / together with local authorities	Constantly
Through WUA	Transfer of requests through the WUA	PMU together with the WUA	Constantly
During public meetings	Oral communication during consultations and meetings with the population	PMU /	During the consultations

Table 6: CAWEC Project Grievance Redress Process

Stage	Description of the process	Responsible party	Deadlines
1. Filing a grievance	Grievances can be submitted verbally or in writing through various channels: in person, by telephone (hotline), by email, through WUA representatives, local authorities, or project staff. Anonymous grievances are also possible.	Applicant/community representatives	At any time
2. Registration of grievance	The grievances received are registered by the responsible project person in the grievances log and assigned a registration number. If the Grievances are made verbally, the information is entered into the log by the responsible employee.	Social Issues Specialist / Project Person in Charge	Within 1-3 business days
3. Consideration and assessment of the grievance	The content of the Grievances is analyzed, and if necessary, additional information is collected and consultations are held with the relevant project units or local authorities.	PMU / responsible specialists	Up to 10 business days
4. Making a decision and informing the applicant	Based on the review, a decision is made on appropriate response measures. The complainant is informed of the grievance 's outcome and the proposed measures.	Management of the PMU / responsible specialists	Up to 15 business days from the date of registration
5. Closing the grievances or appeal	Once the measures agreed upon have been implemented, the Grievances are closed, and a resolution date is set. If the complainant disagrees, they can appeal to a higher level within the grievances mechanism.	PMU / relevant authorities	Up to 30 business days (if necessary)

Figure 1 presents a simplified diagram of the functioning of the grievances handling mechanism within the Project, reflecting the main channels for submitting grievances and the levels of their consideration. **Figure 2** indicates the format of the log for registering grievances and other types of appeals. Further information on the recording and reporting of grievances and appeals can be found in the Annexures.

Figure 1: Flow chart of the grievance redress process under the CAWEC Project

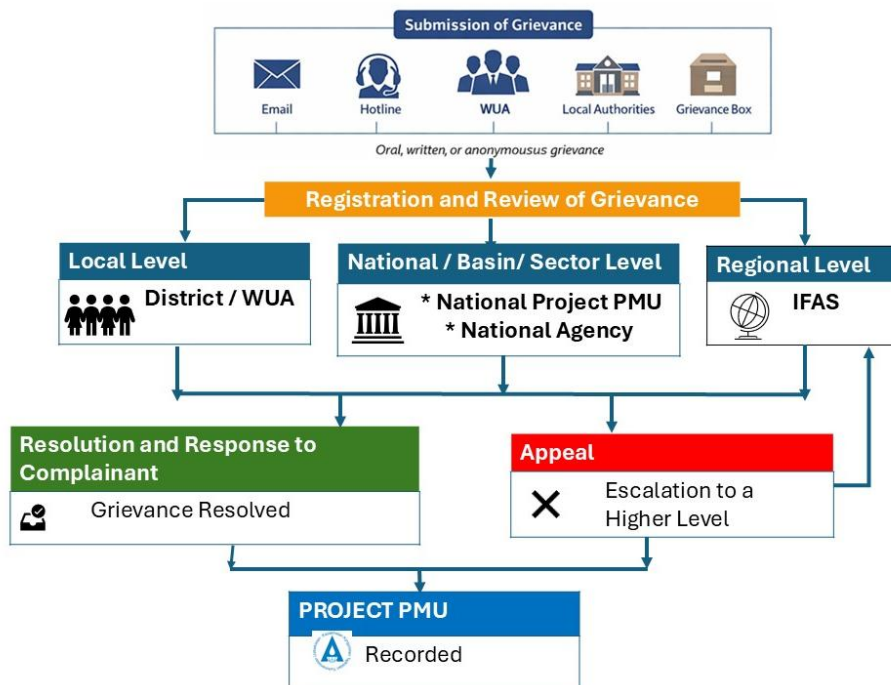


Figure 2: Format of the log for registering grievances and other types of appeals

No.	Date Grievance Received	Submission Method (oral / written / phone / email / anonymous)	Name of Complainant (if provided)	Contact Information	Brief Description of Grievance	Responsible Person	Actions Taken	Date of Response to Complainant	Date of Resolution	Status (In Process / Closed)
-----	-------------------------	--	-----------------------------------	---------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------	---------------	---------------------------------	--------------------	------------------------------

To ensure sustainability and institutional integration of the Project, the Grievance Redress Mechanism will be coordinated with existing Grievances systems of National Projects through the respective government agencies, in particular the relevant Ministry of Water.

To raise public awareness of the GRM’s operations, the Project envisages the hiring of a social and environmental company to conduct an information campaign, including the distribution of information materials, meetings with local communities, and outreach activities.

Importantly, the National Projects established a dedicated project hotline (short number 3553), operating 7 days a week, which has significantly improved access for project-affected people and other stakeholders to submit inquiries, grievances, and requests for information.

Complainant satisfaction and other customer-focused indicators can be used to assess the effectiveness of the project-based GRM. The number of grievances filed and resolved can be included as an indicator of project success.

Information on the functioning of the grievance mechanism, including the number of grievances received, the nature of the grievances and the status of their consideration, will be regularly summarized and included in the project implementation reports.

6.4 Grievances review periods

The timeframes for consideration of applications are established in accordance with the respective legislation of the participating states: *but indicatively as*

- up to 15 calendar days - for requests that do not require additional study.
- up to 30 calendar days – for requests requiring additional consideration.

If necessary, the applicant is informed about the extension of the time period for consideration of the application.

6.5 Appeal and further actions

If the applicant is not satisfied with the decision taken, they have the right to:

- apply to a higher level of GRM.
- send an appeal to government agencies.
- Contact the World Bank GRS.
- take advantage of the judicial system to protect their rights.

The Grievance Redress Service (GRS) is the World Bank's corporate-level mechanism for individuals and communities to submit complaints directly to the Bank if they believe a World Bank-supported project has or is likely to have adverse effects on them, their community, or their environment. The GRS does not replace project-level grievance mechanisms, which remain the primary tool for addressing project-related concerns. The GRS complaint handling cycle consists of five phases: intake and receipt, evaluation and review, solution-seeking, monitoring implementation, and process conclusion with case closure. Complaints can be submitted via the GRS website, email, mail, or through World Bank offices worldwide.

6.6 Mechanism for handling labor grievances

A separate grievance mechanism is provided for employees of contractors and subcontractors, based on the requirements of Standard 2 of the World Bank (ESS2) and national legislation governing labor relations. Detailed information on the labor grievance mechanisms is provided in the framework document: "Procedures for Governing Labor Relations."

CHAPTER 7. IMPLEMENTATION: INSTITUTIONAL ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The implementation of this Stakeholder Engagement Plan will be ensured by the management structures of the CAWEC Project under the coordination of the project's implementing agencies – EC-IFAS and the National Representatives.

During the project preparation stage, coordination of stakeholder engagement activities, including organizing consultations and disclosing information, is carried out by the Project PMU and respective National Entities.

Once the project implementation commences, responsibility for the implementation of the SEP will be assigned to the project management structures (Regional PMU), which will ensure:

- organizing and conducting consultations with stakeholders at the regional, national, and local levels;
- timely disclosure of information on project activities;
- ensuring the functioning of the grievances redress mechanism (GRM);
- interaction with local authorities, water user associations and other stakeholders;
- taking into account the feedback received during the implementation of project activities.

Environmental and social specialists within the project structures will play a key role in the implementation of SEP. Their responsibilities will include coordinating consultations, maintaining stakeholder engagement documentation, monitoring the performance of the GRM, and preparing relevant reports.

Contractors and subcontractors will also be required to comply with the requirements of the SEP and ensure interaction with local communities during construction, including informing the public about the work schedule, possible temporary inconveniences, and measures to minimize them.

CHAPTER 8. MONITORING, REPORTING AND UPDATING

8.1 Monitoring

The SEP will be monitored based on both qualitative reporting (based on progress reports) and quantitative reporting linked to results indicators on stakeholder engagement and grievance performance.

SEP reporting will include the following:

- (i) Progress reporting on the ESS10-Stakeholder Engagement commitments under the Environmental and Social Commitment Plan (ESCP)
- (ii) Cumulative qualitative reporting on the feedback received during SEP activities, in particular:
 - a. issues that have been raised and can be addressed during project implementation;
 - b. issues that have been raised that are beyond the scope of the project and are better addressed through alternative projects, programs or initiatives; and
 - c. issues that cannot be addressed by the project due to technical, jurisdictional or excessive cost-associated reasons. Minutes of meetings summarizing the views of the attendees can also be annexed to the monitoring reports.
- (iii) Quantitative reporting based on the indicators included in the SEP. The illustrative set of indicators for monitoring and reporting is included in Annex 2.

8.2 Reporting back to stakeholder groups

The SEP will be revised and updated as necessary during project implementation.

Responsible staff will gather quarterly summaries and internal reports about public complaints, enquiries, and related incidents, including updates on corrective or preventative actions. These documents will then be sent to the project managers.

Specific mechanisms to report back to stakeholders include:

- (i) publishing consultation summaries and Project updates on the official National and Project websites;
- (ii) posting brief updates and key decisions on notice boards at WUA offices, district offices;
- (iii) sharing minutes/feedback notes through WUA and District focal points and during community meetings;
- (iv) Project newsletter; and
- (v) incorporating stakeholder feedback and GRM statistics (received/resolved issues and actions taken) in periodic Project progress reports that are disclosed publicly. Reporting back to stakeholders will occur after each major consultation and disclosure event, and at least semi-annually throughout Project implementation.

CHAPTER 9. RESOURCES AND BUDGET

To ensure the effective implementation of the activities envisaged by this Stakeholder Engagement Plan, the CAWEC Project will provide the necessary organizational and financial resources.

The main costs associated with the implementation of the SEP are indicated in **Table 7**, and may include:

- organizing and conducting public consultations and meetings with stakeholders;
- preparation and distribution of information materials (brochures, information sheets, banners, announcements);
- Ensuring the functioning of the grievances handling mechanism, including the installation of Grievances boxes, maintaining grievances logs and processing incoming grievances;
- conducting information campaigns and events to raise awareness of stakeholders about the project;
- translation of information materials into relevant languages if necessary;
- transportation and organizational costs associated with holding meetings on site.

Funding for the SEP implementation activities will be provided by project funds and included in the general administrative and operational costs of project management. Specific funding amounts for stakeholder engagement activities will be determined during detailed planning of project activities during the project implementation phase.

(to be included in Component 4 – to be confirmed during procurement discussions)

Table 7: DRAFT Budget for implementation of SEP with indicative preliminary estimates, noting 4 participating countries and 1 regional scale.

No.	Event	Implementation period	Estimated costs (USD, indicative)
1	Conducting public consultations and meetings with stakeholders	During the implementation of the Project	
2	Preparation and distribution of information materials (brochures, leaflets, information stands)	During the implementation of the Project	
3	Supporting the functioning of the grievances handling mechanism (CRM)	During the implementation of the Project	
4	Conducting information campaigns to raise public awareness about the project and the GRM	During the implementation of the Project	
5	Monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the SEP	During the implementation of the Project	
6	Training project staff on stakeholder engagement	As needed	
7.	Contingency (10%)	-	

Total estimated budget: ?? USD *(Indicative; to be further refined during project procurement discussions)*

ANNEXURES

Annex 1: Template to Capture Consultation Minutes

Stakeholder (Group or Individual)	Summary of Feedback	Response of Project Implementation Team	Follow-up Action/Next Steps

Annex 2. Sample Table: Monitoring and Reporting on the SEP

Key evaluation questions	Specific Evaluation questions	Potential Indicators	Data Collection Methods
<p>GM. To what extent have project-affected parties been provided with accessible and inclusive means to raise issues and grievances? Has the implementing agency responded to and managed such grievances?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are project-affected parties raising issues and grievances? How quickly/effectively are the grievances resolved? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Usage of GM and/or feedback mechanisms Requests for information from relevant agencies. Use of suggestion boxes placed in the villages/project communities. Number of grievances raised by workers, disaggregated by gender of workers and worksite, resolved within a specified time frame. Number of Sexual Exploitation, and Abuse/Sexual Harassment (SEA/SH) cases reported in the project areas, which were referred for health, social, legal and security support according to the referral process in place. (if applicable) Number of grievances that have been (i) opened, (ii) opened for more than 30 days, (iii) resolved, (iv) closed, and (v) number of responses that satisfied the complainants, during the reporting period disaggregated by category of grievance, gender, age, and location of complainant. 	<p>Records from the implementing agency and other relevant agencies</p>
<p>Stakeholder engagement impact on project design and implementation</p> <p>How have engagement activities made a difference in project design</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Were there interest and support for the project? Were there any adjustments made during project design and implementation based on the feedback received? Was priority information disclosed to relevant parties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active participation of stakeholders in activities Number of actions taken in a timely manner in response to feedback received during consultation sessions with project affected parties. Number of consultation meetings and public discussions where the feedback and recommendation received 	<p>Stakeholder Consultation Attendance Sheets/Minutes</p> <p>Evaluation forms</p> <p>Structured surveys</p> <p>Social media/traditional media entries on the project results</p>

and implementation?	throughout the project cycle?	is reflected in project design and implementation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of disaggregated engagement sessions held, focused on at-risk groups in the project. 	
Implementation effectiveness. Were stakeholder engagement activities effective in implementation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Were the activities implemented as planned? Why or why not? Was the stakeholder engagement approach inclusive of disaggregated groups? Why or why not? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of SEP activities implemented. Key barriers to participation identified with stakeholder representatives. Number of adjustments made in the stakeholder engagement approach to improve projects' outreach, inclusion and effectiveness. 	<p>Communication Strategy (Consultation Schedule)</p> <p>Periodic Focus Group Discussions</p> <p>Face-to-face meetings and/or Focus Group discussions with Vulnerable Groups or their representatives</p>

Annex 3: Template to register claim

CLAIM REGISTRATION FORM	
Name:	
1. Phone Number:	
2. Other means of contact:	
3. Community/Other:	
4. Age:	
5. Sex: <input type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> F	
6. Any other relevant information:	
7. Anonymous	
8. Type of complainant:	
a) Affected person(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Intermediary (on behalf of AP)	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Civil society organization	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Local Government Institution	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Other (specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Means of receipt of complaint:	
a) Letter	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Telephone call	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Email	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Verbal complaint	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Suggestion box	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) Other (specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Project Issue / Complaint? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
11. Brief description of the problem:	
12. Prior actions taken by the claimant (if any):	
13. Other information and/or documents relevant to the complaint	

Annex 4: Claims monitoring for the period

Table X. Summary of the statistics on the follow-up of claims of the General GRM

Indicator	To be completed
(i) Number of claims received during the reporting period;	-
(ii) Number of claims resolved and within what timeframe;	-
(iii) Number of outstanding claims at the end of the reporting period and comparison with the last reporting period; and reason for the suspense;	-
(iv) Response time respected after receipt of the claim and number of claims resolved in a longer time and why;	-
(v) Claims resolved as % of number received;	-
(vi) Number of claims closed;	-
(vii) Type of documentation to prove resolution	-
(viii) Number of solutions implemented out of the number of solutions that were the subject of claims during the past period;	-
(ix) Number of unresolved claims and explanations;	-
(x) Number of suggestions and recommendations received by the PCU from grievance committees and/or other local stakeholders;	-
(xi) Number and type of dissemination activities on the GRM;	-
(xii) Any other relevant information (explain).	-

Annex 5: Summary of GBV claim tracking statistics

Table X. Summary of the statistics on the follow-up of claims of the GBV

Indicator	To be completed
i. Number and percentage of female focal points in GMs.	
ii. Number and percentage of GBV claims referred to support services;	-
iii. Other	-