



# Wetskills-Kyrgyzstan 2018

Press release

## Wetskills for the first time in the Central Asia

*Between the 15<sup>th</sup> of October and the 26<sup>th</sup> of October, the first Central Asia Wetskills Water Challenge will take place in Kyrgyzstan (KG). During the event in Bishkek, 25 students and young professionals from the The Netherlands, Germany, China and Kyrgyzstan will work together in teams to come up with out-of-the-box concepts for actual water related cases, posed by the National Water Resources Management Project (NWRMP). The Kyrgyz National Agrarian University (KNAU) is hosting the event.*

*The results will be presented during the Wetskills finals and awarding the 26<sup>th</sup> of October from 9.30 – 11.30 in the library of the main building of the KNAU.*

### Cross-sectoral collaboration for facing water challenges

Wetskills and all participants are happy with the support received from multiple stakeholders across the wider water sector, which enables the event to take place. The World Bank and the NWRMP of the Department of Water Resources, together with Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) support the event, recognising the value of the Wetskills event and its potential to promote collaboration among young professionals. Wetskills will foster partnerships across Central Asia, by empowering knowledge and cultural exchange between Central Asian, Dutch and Kyrgyz authorities and organisations.

### Cases

The five formulated cases can expect out-of-the box concept by the team of students and young professional from the water sector. The central theme is: How to organize and finance the water and irrigation sector in Kyrgyzstan in a resilient way for a sustainable future. An overview of each case is below.

### Intensive program

On October 15<sup>st</sup> the event will be officially opened with an inauguration. The in depth start on the 17<sup>th</sup> of October is traditionally with the so-called *BrainHurricane*: an interactive brainstorming event where the mixed teams will learn more about their cases and case owners. Through a special speed-date session with several Kyrgyz, Dutch and international experts from



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the water industry and academia, the teams get the opportunity to collect information and inspiration.

The teams will present their concepts with a pitch and a poster presentation session during the World Bank Seminar, hosted at the Kyrgyz National Agrarian University. A jury will decide the winning team during the event. The winning team will be announced during the awarding at the World Bank Seminar.

### About Wetskills

The Wetskills Water Challenge is a two-weeks pressure-cooker program for students and young professionals with a passion for water from all over the world. In transdisciplinary and transcultural teams they work together on water-related challenges. Their challenge: *develop innovative and out-of-the-box solution for water challenges in a fast-changing world.* The challenges are real life and local cases from companies and (governmental) organisations from the water sector.

Wetskills was firstly organised in 2010 and became an independent Foundation in 2015. Since 2010, 32 Wetskills events have been organised worldwide, in 20 different countries. More than 600 participants and 100 universities and organisations were involved. The Challenges take place worldwide, usually during international water related events, expert meetings or trade missions.

### More information:

If you want to publish about this event, the organisation can tailor your wishes. This also includes interviews, visit during the programme (like BrainHurricane and/or Finals). Please, contact the people below.

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## Overview of the cases

### Irrigation and drainage Sector

#### Case 1: Financing irrigation: subsidies, cost recovery or Public-Private-Partnership (PPP)?

Kyrgyz irrigation water is cheap; it is fixed by the Government at a very low level. Farmers pay a small Irrigation Service Fee (ISF) for the irrigation water they are using. At this moment it is estimated that the ISF counts for about 20% of the current budget to manage, operate and maintain (MOM) the irrigation systems. The remaining part of the budget is provided by the Government. The total MOM budget is far from the required budget to do proper MOM and upgrading of the systems, leading to further deterioration of the condition of the irrigation systems. This process is already going on since about 1980, the last phase of the Soviet era. Most of the irrigation systems are currently in need of rehabilitation.

For the future choices have to be made concerning financing the irrigation sector. What is a reasonable amount of money a farmer can pay for his irrigation water? What are the required budgets for MOM? How much can the Government provide? Should the Government continue subsidizing the irrigation sector? Or should there be a focus on PPP for further MOM of the irrigation systems, like water tourism? Are there other options?

*Remark: on this subject the World Bank has reports available in the NWRMP-phase 1. Participants of this case have to do some studying and analyzing this information.*



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### Case 2: Future Organization of the irrigation and drainage sector

The Kyrgyz irrigation sector is divided in a so called off-farm part (the main canal system) which is managed by the Department of Water Resources and Land Improvement (DWRLI) and the so called on-farm part which is managed by Water Users Associations (WUA's). The context in which these systems are managed is changing quickly, for instance technical possibilities are increasing, the climate is changing, etc. In the current situation technical improvements are taken up in a very limited way. Climate change is hardly used in plans for the future, the number of staff working in the DWRLI is decreasing and staffs are aging. More than 55% of the current staff is over 50 years old, a large number of pensioners keep on working. In the coming years many professionals in the DWRLI will retire and take with them all the practical knowledge. In addition, there is a limited amount of fresh graduates and young professionals who want to work in the irrigation sector.

What are the future technical and social challenges and possibilities to built up or keep a capable management of the irrigation sector? What are the skills required to meet these challenges and tap these possibilities? How should the DWRLI be staffed in 10-20 years from now and what is needed to realize this staffing (training, funds, recruiting, etc.)? How can the irrigation sector attract fresh graduates and energize young professional to stay in the irrigation sector? Can you suggest improvements for the WUA's?

*Remark: on human resources of the DWRLI and the status of the WUA's the World Bank has information. You are the professionals of the future who could indicate what motivates you in working in this sector, use this valuable knowledge. This case is focused on creative thinking and brainstorming.*

### Water Resources Sector

### Case 3: Water Resources, Water Use and Climate Change

Kyrgyzstan has abundant water resources. An amount of water is used in Kyrgyzstan, but also downstream countries like Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan depend on water flows from Kyrgyzstan. Due to climate change the hydrology of the rivers is going to change. Water demand is increasing. Many sectors depend on water: agriculture, drinking water, industrial use, ecological use, tourism, etc.



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What are the main users of water, and how can these users contribute to good water resource management? What is a good water resources management in Kyrgyzstan from the point of view of for instance water quality, ecology, minimum requirements of water etc.?

What are the future challenges for development of the water sector, like climate change, water pollution, over-abstraction, decreased availability?

What are the adaptation strategies that Kyrgyzstan could adopt to address these challenges?

### Case 4: Organization of the water resources sector

Kyrgyzstan has abundant water resources. An amount of water is used in Kyrgyzstan, but also downstream countries like Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan depend on water flows from Kyrgyzstan. Due to climate change the hydrology of the rivers is going to change. Water demand is increasing. Many sectors depend on water: agriculture, drinking water, industrial use, ecological use, tourism, etc. But they hardly contribute financially to the water sector. Water resource management functions are divided over about 10 different agencies. River Basin Management organizations are hardly in existence, in case they exist they have very limited capacity, power and budgets. River basin planning is hardly practiced.

Which options are there to (re)structure the sector so that it is managed more efficiently and sustainably? How would you manage the water sector reform process, with staff and budgets shifts?

What are the skills required to meet the challenges of the water resources sector? How many people with which skills are needed to work in the sector? How should training and recruiting be organized? From which budgets of other financial sources should these activities should be funded?

How should the water resources sector in the future be financed, and how much would it cost? Subsidies, fees, taxes?

What is further needed to build up a functioning water resources sector?

### Case 5: Rehabilitation of schemes or new schemes?

Most of the irrigation schemes in Kyrgyzstan are in need of rehabilitation. Deferred maintenance in the past 30 years has led to this situation. In some schemes the required investment for rehabilitation and modernization is very high. Which level of investment is still justified for rehabilitation, should certain schemes be taken out of production?



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An option to be considered for the future is to invest in new schemes. In such new schemes the system can be built up according to the current requirements. The existing systems were constructed in the Soviet plan economy, which is very different from the current requirement. In the Soviet period systems were built for large collective farms, nowadays farming units are much smaller, but current Water Users Associations are in many cases following the borders of former collective farms. How could investing in resilient irrigation schemes in Kyrgyzstan be organized to care for a sustainable future? Should be the focus on investing in rehabilitation of schemes, constructing new irrigation schemes, or find a middle way?



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