



## SUCCESS STORY

# Farmers Influence Irrigation Policy

**Farmers can now influence decisions on their irrigation systems**



Water User Association members cast votes for their managing council.

***Through democratic elections, water user association members now have a voice in the management decisions that directly impact their lives and their most precious resource — water.***

Farming in Uzbekistan is almost totally reliant on irrigation systems. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, irrigation canals fell into disrepair. USAID has been helping address widespread irrigation problems by strengthening water user associations that enable farmers to effectively operate, manage, and make investment decisions to maintain and improve their on-farm irrigation and drainage systems.

USAID is currently working with 10 water user associations, benefitting over 75,000 people. USAID helps the associations set up processes to elect representatives and institute a management system that is transparent and responsive to the needs of members. Members can now influence association activities through direct participation. They meet periodically to voice concerns and approve management decisions regarding finances, plans, and association management rules.

Azima Khusainova, a member of the Yurtim Istiqlol pilot water user association, was supportive of the changes introduced through the program. She said, “Our association’s management used to be appointed by government bodies. Consequently, members of the association did not know budget details or management plans.” USAID helped set up democratic elections for her association’s managing council, which Azima said led to the election of experienced farmers that people trusted.

“We now have more trust in the management and the financial transparency of the funds. All farmers understand that the establishment of water user associations according to democratic principles is an important initiative for reforming the irrigation sector in Uzbekistan,” said Azima.