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**Organisational Efficiency of Water Users’ Associations in
Uzbekistan**

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Abstract

For decades the collective use of natural resources in Uzbekistan was centrally controlled. In 2000, irrigation systems were handed over to farmers during an extensive structural adjustment leading to the founding of Water Users’ Associations (WUA) as means of self-organisation in several regions of Uzbekistan. In the framework of the ZEF — Uzbekistan project the administrative and organisational structure of these WUAs was studied. In order to assess the organisational structure and efficiency of the WUA’s one WUA in the Region of Khorezm was investigated using the institutional criteria set by Ostrom. Those criteria define self organised associations as having clear boundaries & members, congruent rules, collective-choice arenas, monitoring etc. For the WUA in Khorezm those criteria were assessed using questionnaires, expert (7), and focus-group interviews with 37 water users between November 2001 and January 2002. The study showed an ambivalent evaluation of the situation. It was evident from the interviews that the criteria set by Ostrom for an efficiently working self-organised group of water users were only partly fulfilled. However, structure and efficiency of the organisation were positively assessed by the WUA members. The study concludes, that the criteria designed from a western viewpoint possibly are not generally applicable in a Central Asian connection. The criteria would have to be adapted to the socio-cultural environment to take into account historic facts as for example the clan-system in Uzbekistan. Thus, a new tool would be created better adjusted to evaluate and analyse the efficiency of self-organised groups in the regional context.

Keywords: Central Asia, institutional analyse, self organised association, use of natural resources, water management