

Project Name Uzbekistan-Bukhara & Samarkand Water Supply (@)

Region Europe and Central Asia Region

Sector Urban Water Supply

Project ID UZPE49621

Borrower(s) REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN

Implementing Agency
Address BUKHARA AND SAMARKAND WATER
UTILITY (VODOKANALS-BVK AND SVK)
Project Coordination Unit
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Environment Category B

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1. Country and Sector Background

The water and sanitation services in Uzbekistan are rapidly deteriorating and the reliability and safety of drinking water are continuously decreasing in a downward spiral. The water supply and sanitation sector in Uzbekistan and in particular in Bukhara and Samarkand faces several constraints: Inefficient operations: Potable water and wastewater treatment plants are poorly maintained and operated resulting in poor performance in terms of quality of output and efficiency. With respect to energy efficiency, improper design of pumping stations, old equipment and low level of automation lead to high levels of energy consumption. For example, the two main pumping stations of wastewater system of Samarkand have been in service for at least 35 years with little maintenance, and pump efficiency is reported to be in the range of 45 % leading to very high waste of energy. In Bukhara, the main and the network pumping stations of the wastewater system are in a dramatic poor state of maintenance. As a result, energy costs are as high as 66% of operational and maintenance expenses in Samarkand and 42% in Bukhara. Other components of the water and sewage systems are similarly inefficient. For example, water networks suffer from excessive leakage (measured loss rates are about 39% for Bukhara and 48% for Samarkand respectively). Other measures of leakage performance show that the systems in Bukhara and Samarkand are 10-100 times worse than well-maintained systems. For example, losses in Bukhara and Samarkand are 5.6 and 17.6 m³/km of main/day/meter of pressure, compared to 0.25 for systems in Western Europe. Losses inside apartment blocks is equally high. Measured consumption by apartment dwellers is about 112 liters per capita per day (lpcd), but leakage in apartment blocks is as high as an additional 100 lpcd. Consumers, households, industry and public agencies not accustomed to water conservation and not faced with appropriate water tariffs waste significant amounts of water. All the losses in the system result in a total production of water of about 700 lpcd in Samarkand and 750 lpcd in Bukhara. These levels are several times higher than in Western Europe, and

consequently the operating costs is significantly higher than international practice. Poor service levels: The excessive water losses and waste result in poor service levels to the population and industries. The water supply services in the two cities are poor in different dimensions. In Samarkand, 30 percent of the network receives a supply for just two periods of two hours every day, and the rest of the network suffers from very low pressure. In Bukhara, the quality of potable water is deficient with very high content of solids. Poor state of repair of facilities: Although the percentage of urban households connected to pipe water supply is greater than 80%, the water treatment and distribution facilities, as well as the wastewater collection and treatment installations are rapidly deteriorating. In both cities a good part of the secondary network of the wastewater system is hydraulically overloaded. The lack of appropriate maintenance, poor planning, the use of low quality materials and equipment, and poor construction quality, combined with the recent shortages of resources, are responsible for the poor state of repair of water supply and wastewater assets. This trend brings the water and sanitation systems towards lower and lower service levels that will bring parts, and eventually the totality of the system, to a halt. Unviable financial shortfalls: The water and wastewater utilities in Uzbekistan are facing reduced government transfers due to fiscal constraints, very low tariffs (the household water tariff in Samarkand in 1999 was about US\$0.014/m³ and in Bukhara US\$0.005/m³), high cross-subsidies (in Bukhara and Samarkand the level of tariffs for non-domestic consumers is about 8-10 times higher than for domestic consumers), and poor collections. Not only revenues are insufficient to cover basic operational costs (much less maintenance costs), the BVK and SVK are only able to recover about 18% and 27% of their billings in cash respectively. The rest is either paid through a cumbersome system of invoice clearing and compensation with other utilities and customers' own invoices and payments, or simply not recovered at all leading to a total collection level of 56% and 79% of billing in Bukhara and Samarkand respectively. In both cities the utilities' accounts receivable represent about 7 months of billing leaving them in a financially untenable situation. The utilities continue their operations by cutting maintenance expenses and not paying vodokanal staff and their suppliers, most notably electricity providers. Weak human resource and institutional capacity: Despite many of skilled technical professionals working in the water sector in Uzbekistan, there is an urgent need for updating and improving skills in modern utility management systems (including management and operations of water supply and sanitation systems), planning strategies, financial and commercial management, and investment selection. The capacity of Municipalities and anti-monopoly commissions to monitor and regulate the vodokanals without undue interference also needs substantial strengthening. Lack of adequate information: The financial and technical information available to the utility management is insufficient and does not provide the information base needed to manage the operations or plan the development of the water and sanitation systems efficiently. The accounting, financial and operational data collection and management systems are inadequate and do not provide a clear picture of the problems faced by the utilities. In fact, financial reports severely overstate the financial performance of vodokanals. Water resources scarcity: Many water supply enterprises in Uzbekistan are located in basins with limited water resources. Although urban water supply is not the largest user of water resources, the competition with other sectors, mainly agriculture becomes particularly

important during drought periods. The problem of water resources is compounded by poor management of regional water systems, poor allocation of water, pollution caused by agriculture and industry in some areas, and wastage in the drinking water systems, both from leakage and lack of water conservation practices. Additionally, operational costs of some of the utilities, such as BVK, are increased by their dependence on water resources located at a long distance from the population they serve and transported through channels or large mains over hundreds of kilometers. The Government strategy for the proposed Bukhara and Samarkand project is twofold. First, to define a new relationship between the central and local governments based on a full decentralization of responsibilities to the local level for the provision of services and full cost-recovery of operational, maintenance and debt service expenses through water and wastewater tariffs. Second, to test for the first time in Uzbekistan, a new strategy to improve water supply services by involving the private sector in the provision of these services. This operation is designed as a first step in the implementation of this strategy, focusing on the two key areas that need the most improvement in the vodokanals, namely the operational efficiency of the water supply systems and the financial and commercial strategies. As part of the Government strategy in the water supply sector, and more generally in the communal services, the Ministry of Communal Services was restructured in December 2000 as an Agency of Communal Services (ACS) with the main goal of commercializing the activities of city and district communal service providers. Some of the key goals of this restructuring and the responsibilities of the new ACS include: (i) to coordinate the reforms in the communal services sector; (ii) to act as regulator and to monitor the compliance of local authorities and commercial entities with the sectoral legislation; and (iii) to attract foreign investments into the sector, including the establishment of joint ventures. As part of the reform, the local governments received the responsibility for the provision of water supply and sanitation services. The new policy calls for the promotion of alternative contractors for such provision so as to create a competitive environment. Additionally, the policy gives a clear mandate to the local governments and service providers to improve efficiency and focus on water demand management.

2. Objectives

The Development Objective of the project is to improve the safety, quality, reliability, efficiency, financial viability and sustainability of the water supply services in Bukhara and Samarkand. The Development Objective would be achieved through: (a) strategic rehabilitation and efficiency improvement of existing facilities in critical condition; (b) institutional strengthening of the Bukhara and Samarkand Water Utilities (Bukhara Vodokanal - BVK and Samarkand Vodokanal - SVK) through a performance-based service contract (SC) with an internationally experienced water utility operator (the Operator); and (c) strengthening of BVK's and SVK's financial capacity through improved financial management and commercial practices.

3. Rationale for Bank's Involvement

The Bank's specific advantage is its comprehensive approach to economic and institutional development issues in Uzbekistan. The Bank has been involved in the reform of public sector enterprises, in particular under IBTA, and has accumulated a good knowledge of the respective key

institutional and financial issues in the public sector of the country. Through its water supply operations (either ongoing or under preparation) and sector work in other Central Asian countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan) the Bank has also acquired a strong understanding of sectoral issues in the region and is therefore in a good position to provide Uzbekistan access to comparative and relevant experiences. Additional value added of Bank support in this project lies in: (a) insisting on a comprehensive reform rather than "band-aid" approaches; (b) requiring the introduction of commercial and cost-recovery practices in water and sanitation services in transition economies; (c) facilitating the selection and contracting of a private utility operator for the project implementation; (d) acting as catalyst for various policy and sector reform decisions; (e) assuring transparency in the selection of the most attractive offer from international operators through the use of Bank's procurement procedures; (f) ensuring that the Operator is not subject to political interference or is prevented from doing its work; (g) supporting the project management and implementation arrangements; (h) providing support to mobilize trust funds for the preparation of the project; and (i) ensuring a continued commitment at various levels to carry out the agreed project activities and reforms in a timely manner. Without the Bank's support, the reform program in the water and wastewater sector of Uzbekistan would progress much more slowly, and the condition of water and sanitation services and related public health and environmental issues in Bukhara and Samarkand would continue to deteriorate. The IBRD funds provided by the Bank will allow the financing of investments and services to support the project objectives.

4. Description

Project Component 1: Investment Fund. This component would finance essential short-term expenditures (such as materials, equipment, vehicles) and a least-cost capital investment program aimed at improving the operations of the water supply system and the services to the population by achieving the performance improvement targets in the service contract. The Operator, together with BVK and SVK staff, will propose the investments that are required to optimally re-structure and rehabilitate key components of the systems (such as sections of the water distribution networks and block distribution systems, specific components of the treatment plants, pumping stations), implement a demand management program, and set up financial management, accounting and commercial systems.

Project Component 2: Service Contract. This component would finance the costs related to the service contract. These costs include a base fee and a performance-based fee to be paid to the private Operator based on achievement of targets defined in the contract. The Operator would be given full responsibility for managing the investment program, operating the water supply system, and developing and implementing the demand management program and the commercial (billing and collection) and financial management departments.

Project Component 3: Consulting Services and Project Coordination Unit. This component would support the Project Coordination Unit (PCU); independent technical and financial auditors that would monitor the

Operator's performance; independent financial auditors to prepare the financial project audits; and other consulting services.

Project Component 4: Refinancing of Project Preparation Facility (PPF). This component would refund the PPF advance used for PCU establishment and operational expenses, necessary equipment and software for the implementation of the financial management system, procurement assistance, training and operational travel of PCU staff.

5. Financing

	Total (US\$m)
Total Project Cost	55

6. Implementation

Implementation period: FY2002 - FY2006. Executing agencies: Bukhara Vodokanal and Samarkand Vodokanal. Project administration and coordination: The Project Coordination Unit (PCU) is being established under the authority of the municipalities of Bukhara and Samarkand as the government level responsible for the provision of water supply services. The PCU will also have a coordination role with the Ministry of Macroeconomics and Statistics (MMS) during the preparation phase, as this organization has taken a leading role in the reform of the water supply sector. The PCU will report to a Coordination Committee that will have representatives from the local governments and key agencies of the central government (Ministry of Finance (MOF), ACS and MMS). The PCU would be responsible for: overseeing day-to-day project activities and the implementation of the service contract; coordinating with BVK, SVK, the Operator, the Municipalities of Bukhara and Samarkand, and the auditing consultants; monitoring performance indicators during implementation of the service contract; and carrying out supervisory responsibility for the Immediate Investment Program and the Investment Fund. Under this structure the PCU is in no way subordinate to the Operator and no payments to the PCU staff will be channeled through the Operator. BVK and SVK will continue to operate under their present status as legally separate, municipally owned enterprises. The relationship between municipal governments and utilities will be at arm's length. Municipal governments will provide an enabling environment that will give their utilities the freedom and obligation to reform and strengthen their institutional and financial capacity. The Coordination Committee will deal with policy and strategic issues and project oversight. BVK and SVK will sign a single service contract with the Operator. The contract will include two service agreements to reflect the differences in the city systems. The Operator will be responsible for managing the water supply services in Bukhara and Samarkand under a four-year performance-based contract. Ownership of the underlying assets and authority for setting tariffs will remain with the Municipalities of Bukhara and Samarkand. The Operator will have responsibility to carry out, on behalf of the vodokanals, the procurement goods, works and services in accordance with the World Bank Procurement Guidelines, including contract signature. The PCU will approve and submit to the World Bank for review the annual implementation plan for the use of IF resources as proposed by the Operator. On-lending Arrangements: Loan proceeds will reach BVK and SVK via a Loan Agreement with the Ministry of Finance (MOF) and a Subsidiary Loan Agreement (SLA) between MOF and both BVK and SVK. In addition, a

Project Agreement will be signed between the Bank, the Municipalities of Bukhara and Samarkand and their vodokanals. The on-lending conditions of the Sub-Loan will be the same of those for the IBRD Loan, given the critical financial situation of BVK and SVK and the inability to increase tariffs to cover more stringent loan terms. The municipalities will be the guarantors of the loans to BVK and SVK. The Central Government will take the foreign exchange risk. Monitoring and evaluation arrangements: The PCU, with the support of international independent technical and financial auditors acceptable to the Bank, will monitor progress against agreed performance indicators specified in the service contract. One of the tasks given to the Operator under the service contract will be the implementation of monitoring mechanisms to gather the necessary technical data to better manage the water supply system. This data will also serve as basis to determine performance improvements in a way that can be independently verified by auditors. The Operator will furnish the PCU with monthly and annual reports summarizing the service contract operations and the utilization of project funds. The PCU will prepare and provide to the Bank, on a quarterly basis, consolidated reports on project implementation progress covering: (i) projections for project financing and implementation; (ii) status of project finances, procurement of goods and works; (iii) status of implementation of the Investment Fund; (iv) statement of income and expenditure for the current and previous quarter; and (v) monthly cash flow projections for the next six months. Reporting formats would be discussed at appraisal and agreed prior to negotiations. All financial information presented would be in compliance with IAS. These reports would be submitted to the IBRD within one month of the end of the relevant quarter, and would provide the basis for monitoring the progress of the project. Draft annual action programs for the upcoming year will be included with the corresponding quarterly report for the Bank's review and comment. The Government of Uzbekistan and IBRD will conduct joint reviews annually during supervision missions. The PCU would prepare a detailed mid-term report to serve as the basis for a Project Mid-Term Review, to be undertaken by June 30, 2003. The PCU, with guidance from the Bank, would also prepare and submit an Implementation Completion Report (ICR) to the IBRD within six months of the closing date of the IBRD Loan. Included in the ICR would be an assessment of the execution of the project, its costs and benefits, the performance of the Borrower, BVK, SVK, the Operator, the PCU, the Bank, and Government agencies involved in the project regarding their respective obligations and accomplishments, and lessons learned.

7. Sustainability

The sustainability of the project during the implementation phase depends on the following factors: The private Operator is selected through an open and transparent competition to achieve the best price for the scope of services requested; The private Operator is able to work successfully with the local staff of BVK and SVK and effectively transfer managerial, technical and financial know-how; The financial resources available to the operator are sufficient to implement the rehabilitation activities necessary to bring noticeable benefits in the quality and reliability of the water services and, furthermore, these benefits are perceived by consumers to be commensurate with the tariff increases; The operating revenues of BVK and SVK that the Operator is able to collect are sufficient to cover the operating and maintenance costs and make the counterpart contributions to the project; The populations of Bukhara and Samarkand agree to the increases in tariffs and the vodokanals are able to

increase collection efficiency from all user categories; andThe regulatory environment of all aspects related to the management and operations of the systems (e.g., construction permits, procurement, water shut-off) are flexible and agile enough to allow the Operator to carry out its functions.The sustainability of the project after implementation depends on the following main factors:Improvements in the water supply services and operational efficiency are in line with the increases in tariffs and collection through which the population is expected to support the reform of the sector and contribute to better services;The capacity of BVK and SVK to increase its revenues to a level required to cover adequate operation and maintenance expenses and continues to grow to allow the water supply companies to cover debt service and principal repayment;The local governments provide the Operator with the enforcement tools to collect water feesThe central and local governments continue to provide the necessary resources to institutional customers to pay their water fees;The Operator not only fulfills its minimum obligations as contracted, but is also able to achieve significant improvements along the target measures, and thereby demonstrates to the Government and the populations of Bukhara and Samarkand that the experiment with the private sector was successful and worthwhile and therefore could be continued;The management and know-how brought by the Operator is effectively transferred to BVK and SVK personnel and leads to fundamental changes in vodokanals' management and operating practices; andArrangements are set in place to ensure continued good management of the water supply services after completion of the project. A specific plan will be prepared after careful analysis of the lessons learned during implementation of the project and evaluation of the full spectrum of future options to continue with private management and operations.

8. Lessons learned from past operations in the country/sector

The proposed operation in Bukhara and Samarkand is the second Bank-financed project in the water supply sector in Uzbekistan. The project suffered numerous implementation difficulties and was in unsatisfactory status for more than two years. The first project, designed to assist communities most severely affected by the Aral Sea environmental disaster, is now in satisfactory status and the lessons learned during the restructuring process have been very useful in the preparation of the proposed operation. The key lessons learned during the implementation of the Rural Water Supply, Sanitation and Health Project include: (i) overly complex designs tackling several sectors (urban water supply, rural water supply, rural sanitation, health promotion and hygiene education) in several regions (cities of Nukus and Urgench and rural areas of Karakalpakstan) and with several counterparts (six water agencies) are very difficult to implement; (ii) the activities of international consultants must be discussed in advance with the Government and their selection and contracting should be done as early as possible and at least before launching project implementation; (iii) project implementation arrangements must be well defined and the roles between project coordinators named by the Government and international consultants should be clearly identified so that adequate supervision can take place; (iv) officials from the central and local government and vodokanal staff should be fully involved in project preparation and implementation; (v) project development objectives should be modest, well-defined, and achievable; and (vi) all agencies in charge of providing counterpart financing should understand the expected profile so that adequate planning can be made in

advance. The Bank's involvement in the water and wastewater sector in the transition countries is still at its beginning and no operations have been completed in CIS countries. Some of the water supply projects in the region have suffered from a lack of focus in project design, inadequate or unclear implementation arrangements that cause significant delays, no up-front conditions to demonstrate commitment, and inadequate understanding by the Government of project objectives. One of the main lessons in Bank's water sector operations worldwide and in the region is that poor quality at entry may result in unrealistic expectations, large disbursement delays, and projects may fall short of meeting institutional and financial development targets. Among the water supply projects, only a few operations recently prepared have supported the involvement of the private sector in the provision of water and wastewater services. The important lessons that can be learned from the Bank's general experience in the water supply sector, and in transition economy countries in particular, and that have been integrated in the design of this operation are: Continuous interaction with BVK and SVK, the Municipalities of Bukhara and Samarkand and other stakeholders during project preparation is indispensable to achieve strong involvement and ownership by the Borrower, taking into consideration the need for reform and the lack of a strong private sector in Uzbekistan. This interaction should continue during supervision. The sustainability of the project depends on a realistic assessment and projection of the minimum financial capabilities of the vodokanals and the commitment of the municipalities of Bukhara and Samarkand to support the financial recovery plan based on higher collection and commensurate tariff increases. A modest first operation improves the chances for success in implementation. Progress in the financial situation of BVK and SVK and change in circumstances should be closely followed to support the Operator's efforts and initiatives to improve the viability of the vodokanals. Local and central governments have limited capacity to provide counterpart funds and the current revenues of the vodokanals require substantial increase to allow them to contribute to the project. The proposed project design calls for a shared provision of counterpart funds from the local and central governments and the revenues collected by the Operator. Realistic expectations of this operation should be modest. BVK and SVK will need further support even after the successful completion of this Project, but the institutional and financial improvements are expected to place the vodokanals in a better position to absorb assistance from IBRD and other donors or IFIs. The involvement of an international private operator with adequate delegation of managerial, operational, and investment selection responsibilities, combined with clear financial incentives to achieve the performance improvement targets can provide significant benefits. The strengthening of BVK and SVK will take place through implementation of the project as the vodokanal staff will be in charge of the day-to-day activities of the operational improvement programs under the management of the Operator, who will undertake specific, targeted on-the-job training programs not only as a condition of the service contract but also to ensure achievement of the targets used to determine the bonus fee. Innovative projects like the proposed one requires intensive technical, procurement and managerial Bank supervision during project preparation and implementation. Implementation arrangements must be clearly defined and understood. During project preparation, the roles of the Municipalities, the PCU, the Operator, BVK and SVK have been reviewed and agreed. The Project Operational Manual will have clear and specific arrangements for project implementation, including

the responsibilities of each party. Successful project preparation and implementation require a strong PCU supported by an experienced international consulting team with engineering and financial expertise. The institutional and policy reforms required for the success of the project need the involvement, commitment and support of the authorities with clear demonstrations of commitment during project preparation. By implementing the first steps of the reforms needed prior to project implementation the Government has not only demonstrated its commitment but will also facilitate the transition to private sector management and operation of the water supply system. Three projects similar to this operation are currently under preparation in Georgia, Tajikistan, and Kazakhstan, and one is currently under implementation in Armenia. In all these projects, an operator will be contracted to manage and operate the water supply services (and in some cases wastewater) of urban centers. Although it is too early to evaluate improvements in these projects, similar management contracts (with incentive fees directly linked to performance improvements) in other regions have resulted in rapid improvements in the quality of service and efficiency of the system. For example, the management operator in the Gaza Water Supply and Sewerage Service Improvement Project with an investment fund of about US\$12 million was able to achieve basically all performance improvement targets. The experience in the Amman Water and Sewerage Management Project initiated in 1999 has been so far equally positive. The proposed project in Uzbekistan faces similar difficulties to the above projects, particularly those in CIS countries, such as lack of understanding on the side of government and the utility of the key reforms needed; a possible waning of commitment and interest with the implementation of politically sensitive issues, for example institutional reform and cost recovery; and initial unrealistic and over-ambitious expectations at the local level, particularly in terms of the financial capacity of vodokanals and the required capacity of facilities.

9. Program of Targeted Intervention (PTI) N

10. Environment Aspects (including any public consultation)

Issues : An initial review of potential environmental impacts and appropriate mitigation measures indicated that the project activities fall within the Category B as per the Bank's OP 4.01. The project is expected to bring significant environmental and health benefits, such as improvements in public health through better quality and availability of treated water, and improvements in the sustainability of raw water sources through reductions in losses and wastage. Potential negative effects can be minimized through appropriate mitigation measures, which for this project are basically normal construction and utility operation practices. Potential impacts of the project would relate to: (i) inappropriate disposal of water treatment sludge; (ii) safety hazards from chlorination process; (iii) pollution by construction run-offs; (iv) disturbance during construction including dust, noise, vibration, access restriction, closure of roads, and increased traffic; (v) improper disposal of demolition debris; (vi) damage to existing utility services during pipe repairs and installation; (vii) safety hazards from construction activities; (viii) spillage of fuel and oil from construction; (ix) damage to trees and vegetative cover; and (x) chance encounters of cultural resources. The project will not entail any resettlement, expansion of existing facilities or construction of new

structures of significant size. Construction works will predominantly entail pipe replacement, which includes pavement demolition, trench excavation, pipe laying, trench filling, and pavement application. Other construction works will be limited to rehabilitation of existing structures such as pumping stations and specific parts of treatment plants. All works under the investment program are planned to be of rehabilitation nature, in properties owned by BVK and SVK or rights-of-way assigned to municipal infrastructure. In order to ensure adequate implementation of the necessary measures to minimize potential negative environmental effects, an Environmental Management and Monitoring Plan (EMP) satisfactory to the Bank will be completed with incorporation of public comments. Requirements for the works to be performed following specific provisions in the EMP and good construction practices will be included in the contracts for rehabilitation and minor works. Specific notification requirements and work stop and rescue procedures will be included in the EMP to respond adequately to chance findings of cultural resources during excavations. The likelihood of such findings is limited as the excavations will be done to rehabilitate existing pipes and equipment in already disturbed rights of way. The OP 7.50 applies to the Project as the cities Bukhara and Samarkand are located on international waterways as defined by paragraph 1(a) of OP 7.50 (both cities are located near the Zeravshan river which originates in the Pamir Mountains of neighboring Tajikistan, and one of the four sources of water for Bukhara receives water from the Amu Daria river). However, considering the nature of the project activities and focus, the exception to the external notification requirements of OP 7.50, set forth in paragraph 7(a) of OP 7.50 is fully applicable. The Project involve rehabilitation of ongoing schemes and construction that in the team's judgement (i) will not adversely change the quality or quantity of water flows to the other riparians; and (ii) will not be adversely affected by the other riparians' water use.

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Note: This is information on an evolving project. Certain components may not be necessarily included in the final project.

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