

Final Evaluation Report for the  
Water Users Association Manager Training in 2005

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## **Introduction**

This report documents the evaluation of the fifth year of HasNa's Water Users Association (WUA) management training program. The evaluation was a collaboration between Dr. Robert Wise of SystemWise Consulting in Washington DC and Dr. Bulent Gulcubuk who is a professor at the University of Ankara in Turkey. Dr. Wise designed the overall evaluation methodology and interview protocol. Dr. Gulcubuk, who speaks Turkish, collected interview data in Turkey and performed preliminary data analyses.

In each of the prior years from 2001 to 2004, staff of WUAs, along with staff of Turkish government agencies involved in water distribution in southeast Turkey, have traveled to the United States to develop their professional skills. In the U.S., each year's cohort received 3 to 4 weeks of training in conflict resolution, English language, and in technical topics related to water and agricultural management.

In 2005, the participants were the chairmen of nine WUAs and one was a member of GAP, the Turkish government agency that has oversight responsibility for all WUAs. The participants paid for their travel to the U.S. and HasNa funded their training and travel while in the U.S. The travel time of these chairmen was constrained, so English language training was eliminated and their training was limited to 2 weeks, occurring in the first two weeks of May 2005. Because most of the participants in this training cohort did not speak English, all training was done with the use of translators.

The first week included four days of conflict resolution training and one day of project planning and leadership skills. Some afternoons included visits to U.S. and Turkish government agencies in Washington DC. For the second week, the group traveled to California to observe at first hand the management of a large, non-profit water distribution authority agency serving farmers in the San Joaquin Valley.

## **Evaluation questions and methods**

The evaluation of this training program was guided by the following three questions:

1. What were the participants' reactions to the training?

Three types of data were collected to assess participant reaction. First, participants were asked to rate how well they liked the training. Second, a focus group was held to determine

what the participants had learned from conflict resolution training. Third, the instructors were interviewed about participant behavior in their sessions.

2. What problems, if any, occurred in planning, coordinating, and conducting the training?

The instructors who provided the training were interviewed about the overall management of the project by HasNa and about any logistical, communication, or support problems they experienced before or during the training program.

3. To what extent did the participants apply their training experience after completing the program and returning to their jobs?

To evaluate the application of their training back on the job, participants were asked during training to select a project to carry out back in their jobs that would use the skills that they learned in training, and prepare a project action plan. The action plans contained specific tasks to be accomplished with due dates, who was responsible, and how they would evaluate the success of their plans.

## **Evaluation Findings**

### **1. Participant reactions**

At the end of the first week, the participants were asked to rate how much they liked the conflict resolution training on a three point scale where 3 meant “liked it a lot,” 2 meant “liked it a little,” and 1 meant “did not like.” Eight rated it a 3, two rated it a 2, and none rated it a 1 indicating a highly positive reaction.

In a focus group session at the end of the first week, participants were asked to list the skills they had learned in conflict resolution training. The list generated by the group was compared to a list of skills provided by the conflict training instructor and the two lists matched. It was concluded that the participants as a group were able to recall without prompting the key skills they learned in conflict resolution training. It cannot be concluded from these data that the participants had mastered these skills, nor was it expected after only a few days of classroom training.

Interviews with the instructors indicated that the participants showed attentive and willing engagement in the training activities. All instructors were very pleased with the participants’ behavior and viewed their training experiences as successful. They reported that need to translate between English and Turkish made instruction go more slowly than in prior years.

### **2. Problems in managing the program**

All instructors acknowledged that the amount of time allowed for their training sessions was limited and offered a number of suggestions for how the training could be more effective with more time.

The instructors all reported that they had no problems with HasNa's planning, coordination, and support of the overall training program. Logistically, things went a lot smoother than in some previous years. For example, there was good coordination and hand-off of the participants as they transferred from one instructor to the next. Instructors reported that the few logistical support problems that had occurred in prior years were corrected in this year.

### **3. Participant application of training**

To address this question, data was collected by individual interviews in December 2005, approximately seven months after the U.S. training program. A Turkish-speaking researcher, Dr. Bulent Gulcubuk from the University of Ankara, used a semi-structured interview protocol to collect data from the nine WUA chairmen; the GAP official that participated in the training was not interviewed. The researcher reported difficulties in contacting some of the nine participants to arrange for the interviews, and was able to complete interviews with 6 of the 9 chairmen. The difficulties in contacting the chairmen had to do with the failure of several chairmen to keep the appointments they made for the interviews, requiring the researcher to pursue some chairmen to reschedule appointments for interviews. In spite of repeated efforts, three of the chairmen were not interviewed.

The interviews focused first on the status of the follow-up action plans that the chairmen had committed to during training. All of the action plans aimed at educating WUA farmers in better use of water so as to avoid wasting water and ruining crops by over-watering. The plans relied on two educational approaches—(1) meeting with farmers to discuss water usage and (2) the preparation and distribution of a brochure on water usage. The results of the interviews with the six chairmen are presented next.

#### **Results of plans to hold informational meetings with WUA members**

Of the 6 chairmen that were interviewed, all reported that their plan to hold meetings with farmers to discuss proper water usage had been implemented. However, the extent of the implementation varied among the chairmen:

- Chairman A held 8 meetings with approximately 115 of 600 members (19%)
- Chairman B held 5 meetings with approximately 315 of 800 members (39%)
- Chairman C held 3 meetings with approximately 190 of 745 members (26%)
- Chairman D held 9 meetings with approximately 255 of 1300 members (20%)
- Chairman E held 5 meetings with approximately 165 of 300 members (55%)
- Chairman F held 15 meetings with approximately 450 of 5,500 members (8%)

Some chairmen only had meetings with their advisory council, while others went out to villages and held meetings with groups of farmers. All six chairmen reported that the topic of proper water usage was discussed in each of the above meetings. In general, the chairmen reported that their members did not display much interest in the topic at the meetings. The chairmen believe that this was because members think that they already know about the topic and did not see a need for the discussions.

### **Results of plans to produce informational brochures**

With regard to their plans to prepare and distribute a brochure on proper water usage, only two of the Chairmen reported that they did so. In their interviews, they reported the following:

- Chairman E reported printing 380 brochures and distributing most to 250 members
- Chairman C reported printing 745 brochures and distributing all to 745 members (however, the evaluator was unable to finding any evidence to support this)

The chairmen that did not implement their brochure plans said that their busy work schedules prevented them from carrying out their plans for the brochures. However, informal discussions between the evaluator and the staff of some of the chairmen indicate that these chairmen also did not delegate any responsibility for preparing brochures to their staff.

### **Ancillary results of efforts to educate members**

One chairman reported that after discussing proper water usage at meetings with his members, there was a 50% decrease in water valves and water meters being broken.

Two chairmen reported that after discussing product diversification at meetings, some members planted potatoes and almonds as alternatives to their regular crops.

### **Conclusions and Suggestions**

The six chairmen interviewed were quite excited about sharing the experiences from their U.S. training program with the members of their associations. They believe that they learned a lot about how to improve the productivity of their member farmers. They all expressed a desire to see the training program continue.

This group enthusiasm must be tempered by the fact that only six of the nine chairmen were interviewed, and the interviewer had to aggressively pursue many of these six to get them to keep their appointments for the interviews. Of the three chairmen who were not interviewed, two failed to keep their interview appointments after repeated rescheduling. (The third chairman not interviewed was away on travel.) This difficulty in arranging the interviews was in part due to the busy schedules of the chairmen and in part due to their lack of appreciation for and understanding of the importance of the evaluation effort.

Although all nine participants had made commitments to educate their member farmers on proper water usage through meetings and brochures, not all followed through equally on their commitments. All six chairmen interviewed reported that they held meetings with their members to discuss this topic. The number of meetings ranged from 3 to 15 and the percent of association members attending these meetings ranged widely from 8% to 55%. Only two of the six chairmen interviewed reported preparing and distributing brochures about water usage (with one of the two reports questionable).

The common explanation given for not carrying out their project action plans more thoroughly was that the chairmen were too busy. However, it was noted that none of the chairmen involved their own staff in carrying out these project commitments. These chairmen may have a tendency to see themselves as the sole decision-maker in their leadership roles and to not appreciate how to increase their leadership effectiveness through delegation and involving others.

In future training of association leaders, it is recommended that more attention be placed on how to involve staff in the planning of a project, how to delegate project responsibility to staff and how to monitor whether a delegated project is being carried out. In addition, the importance of evaluation needs to be continually emphasized.