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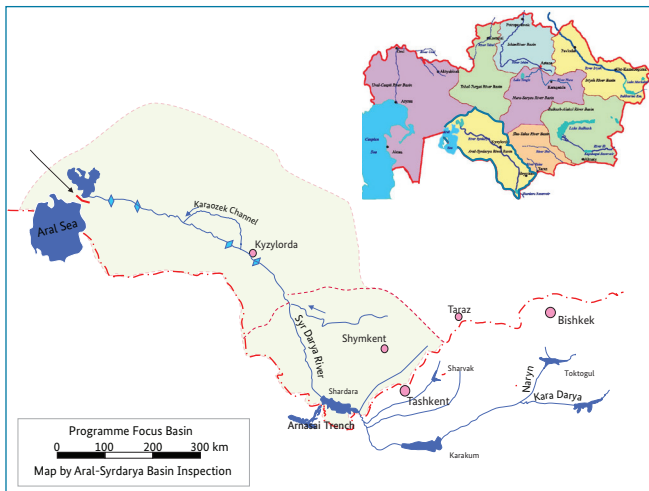
Water Management and Basin Organisations in Central Asia

Improving integrated water resources management in the Aral-Syrdarya basin

Context

The Aral-Syrdarya basin is part of the larger basin of the Aral Sea and is subject to the Aral Sea desiccation process. Despite the best efforts of the Kazakh Government and international donors, it is doubtful that the environmental problems affecting the Aral Sea basin can be reversed.

One of the most pressing problems are the shortcomings in monitoring and management of the irrigation systems and water resources. The institutions responsible often lack the capacity to carry out comprehensive basin assessments. As a result, no proper planning takes place for the management of the resources – either with respect to the use of water at different levels, or in terms of water allocation timeframes. A more systematic approach to water management is therefore required if the situation is to improve. In response, Kazakhstan has now developed the National Integrated Water Resources Management and Water Efficiency Plan, becoming the first country in Central Asia to prepare such a plan.



The Aral-Syrdarya basin in the Republic of Kazakhstan

The Kazakh Aral-Syrdarya basin stretches across the oblasts (administrative districts) of Kyzylorda and South Kazakhstan. It occupies an area of roughly 345,000 km² and is home to about 2.6 million people (17% of the total population of the Kazakh Republic). The main river of the basin is the Syr Darya, which is formed outside Kazakhstan by the confluence of the Naryn and Kara Darya rivers in the Fergana Valley.

Project name	Water Management and Basin Organisations in Central Asia (WMBOCA)
Funded by	European Union Co-funded by the German Federal Foreign Office (Auswärtiges Amt)
Project region	Aral-Syrdarya basin (Kyzylorda and South Kazakhstan Oblasts), Kazakhstan
Main partners	Ministry of Environment and Water Resources of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Committee for Water Resources, Aral-Syrdarya Basin Inspection, Aral-Syrdarya Basin Council, Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia (CAREC)
Duration	January 2012 – June 2014

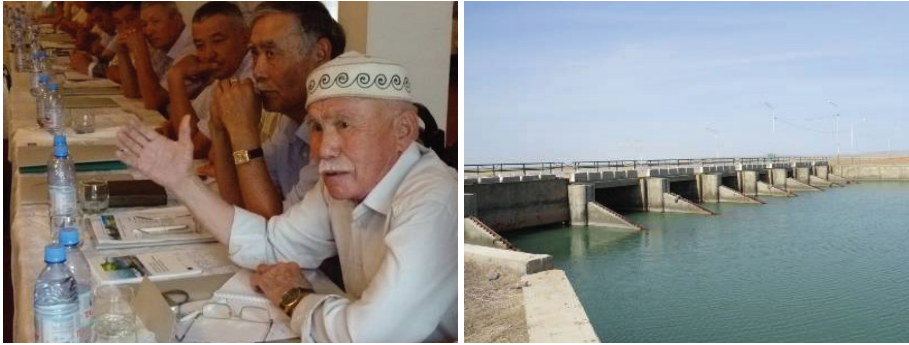
Objective

Environmental protection and the improved management of water resources comprise one of the priority areas of the European Union in Central Asia. The project Water Management and Basin Organisations in Central Asia (WMBOCA) is a component of the European Union Regional Environment Programme for Central Asia (EURECA). WMBOCA consists of two interrelated components:

- Supporting water management and strengthening transboundary river basin administrations in Central Asia
- Capacity building on river basin planning for water management organisations and joint river basin structures

The objective of WMBOCA is to support integrated water resources management (IWRM) at basin level, and transboundary river basin management in particular. The project activities focus on the staff of existing water management organisations, as well as newly established joint water management structures in the selected basins and sub-basins, and the policymakers for the water sector in the Central Asian states.

In Kazakhstan, the programme supports the Aral-Syrdarya Basin Inspection and the Aral-Syrdarya Basin Council in developing and implementing a comprehensive basin plan to promote IWRM at river basin level.



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- 1) The Aral-Syrdarya Basin Council meeting in Shymkent
- 2) The Kok Aral Dam, separating the Northern part from the south-eastern part of the Aral Sea

Measures

WMBOCA is implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH (German Society for International Cooperation) in partnership with the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia (CAREC).

The project consists of various interrelated capacity-building activities for water related organisations. Basin Inspection is a state authority for basin administration regarding water management and distribution. Basin Council is an assembly of all relevant and interested state and civil society institutions in the whole basin area that is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the IWRM plan in the basin. Both institutions collaborate in the preparation and implementation of the basin plan where the project provides particular support. The project provides the relevant training sessions, tools, and instruments for the development of the plan. These measures are funded by WMBOCA. Budget of WMBOCA activities in four Central Asian states (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan) consists of approximately EUR 2 million provided by the European Union and approximately EUR 0.5 million provided by the German Federal Foreign Office.

Results

Implementation of the IWRM Basin Plan for the Aral-Syrdarya Basin Council began in 2012. Since then, supported by the project and as part of the Basin Plan, the Aral-Syrdarya Basin Council has met for four sessions. At these meetings, more than 40 different stakeholder representatives have addressed various questions on the following topics:

- Biological stations in the cities of Kyzylorda and Shymkent
- Identification of water protection areas and lines
- The IWRM Basin Plan
- The technical condition of the reservoir

- Improvements to the condition of irrigated lands
- Thermal and mineral ground waters in the Oblast of South Kazakhstan
- The daily hydrological bulletin of the basin
- The technical condition of the Shardarinsk and other reservoirs

Due to large territory of the country, the central administration of water resources proved to be less effective and efficient. The decentralized structures were to be created in order to identify and address the local needs. With the support of WMBOCA, therefore, such councils have now been established for the Aral basin in Kyzylorda Oblast and the Ugam-Keless basin in South Kazakhstan Oblast. The Basin Inspection takes note of and coordinates the various views in different sub-basins. This contributes to the transparency of state actions and participation of state and non-state stakeholders in water management issues. These actions support better understanding and higher legitimization of Inspection' decisions in mitigation between various interests regarding the water management in the whole basin.

To date, each of the small basin councils has organised three sessions, during which they have drafted basin council statutes and elected council members. They raised questions on the following issues:

- The problems of transboundary allocation of water for the main canals of the region
- The technical condition of the Saryagysh district drainage network system
- The process of headwork construction in the Aksai Canal
- Access to drinking water for the rural population

The council meetings provide a foundation for the basin approach and the integration of IWRM principles in the basin management. This is important for the optimisation of water management and the improvement of living conditions for people in the basin.

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