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WATER USERS ASSOCIATIONS IN ARMENIA: ACHIEVEMENTS AND BOTTLENECKS



Water Management in EaP Countries: Recent Innovations

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THE HISTORY OF ESTABLISHMENT OF WATER USERS ASSOCIATIONS

- 1991-1993: privatization of agricultural lands, livestock and other means of production
- 1998-2001: establishment of 150 water-consuming cooperatives
 - Most of them were not financially sustainable, mainly due to small service area
- 2002: Law "On Water User Associations and Federations of Water User Associations"
 - new organizational/legal status was created - WUA, organization created by water users
- 2003-2004: Establishment of 54 WUAs
- Until 2014 WUAs were reorganized from 54 WUAs to 37 WUAs in several stages
 - Each reorganization was based on the results of feasibility studies and analyses of WUA's activities, principles of indivisibility of hydraulic units and other indicators
- 2017: Reorganization of WUAs through merger – 15 WUAs

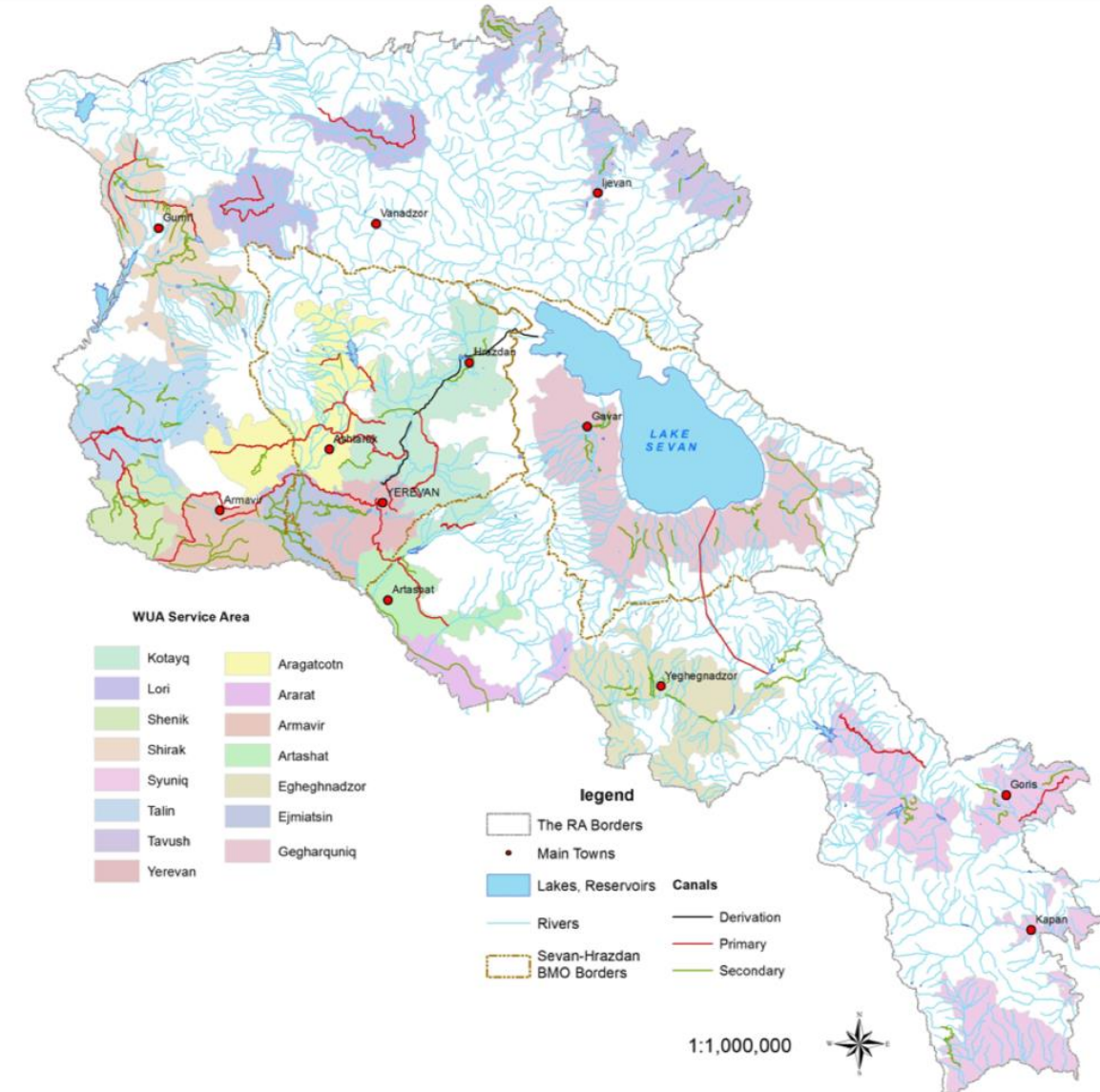


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KEY RESULTS

- WUAs play important role in agricultural water management
- 15 WUAs responsible for about 200,000 ha, of which 95,000 ha is actually irrigated
- WUAs: operate secondary and tertiary systems and small pumping stations and reservoirs
- WUAs are not yet financially sustainable and still depend of subsidies
- Current level is 11 AMD/m³ (0.029 USD/m³), while average self-cost is **24 AMD/m³** (0.063 USD/m³), the gap is covered by the Government subsidy





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SUCCESS FACTORS

- Introducing of participatory management in the field of irrigation
- Transfer of the the main part of the management functions of irrigation systems directly to water users in order
- Increased ability of WUAs to act independently and increased degree of responsibility
- GIS-based water management program, designed to calculate the hectares of the service area of WUAs, the composition of crops, the volumes of water delivered to the field, and the irrigation service fee and membership fees as a water user

CHALLENGES

- The Law on WUAs requires that the service area of each WUA comprises entire hydraulic unit, while the merger of 37 WUAs in 2017 into 15 WUAs apparently did not entirely follow the hydraulic boundaries of irrigation scheme, but rather the administrative boundaries
- Some WUAs are very large, comprising between 5 to 20 thousand members. While the Law on WUAs provides for the establishment of a representative system so that farmers can elect one of their members to represent them at the General Assembly meeting of WUAs, this seems a problematic issue. For example, for larger WUAs it might result in meetings of 250 representatives, and meetings with such high numbers are very challenging to manage
- WUAs still need significant training and capacity building on ensuring participatory management procedures, and effective implementation of authorities assigned to the WUA governance bodies



LINKS FOR ADDITIONAL READING

- EU4Environment in Eastern Partner Countries: Water Resources and Environmental Data, Draft Final Report, “Review of technical performance of WUAs in Armenia and identification of opportunities for reforming irrigation service fees and subsidies”, 2023
- World Bank Group, “Enhancing Irrigation Service Delivery in Armenia”, Presentation prepared for the Workshop on Strategic Irrigation Sector Reforms in Armenia, 2023
- World Bank Group, Final Report, “Irrigation Service Delivery in Armenia: Assessment and Proposals for Improvement”, 2022
- World Bank Group, Final Report, “Towards Integrated Water Resources Management in Armenia”, 2015



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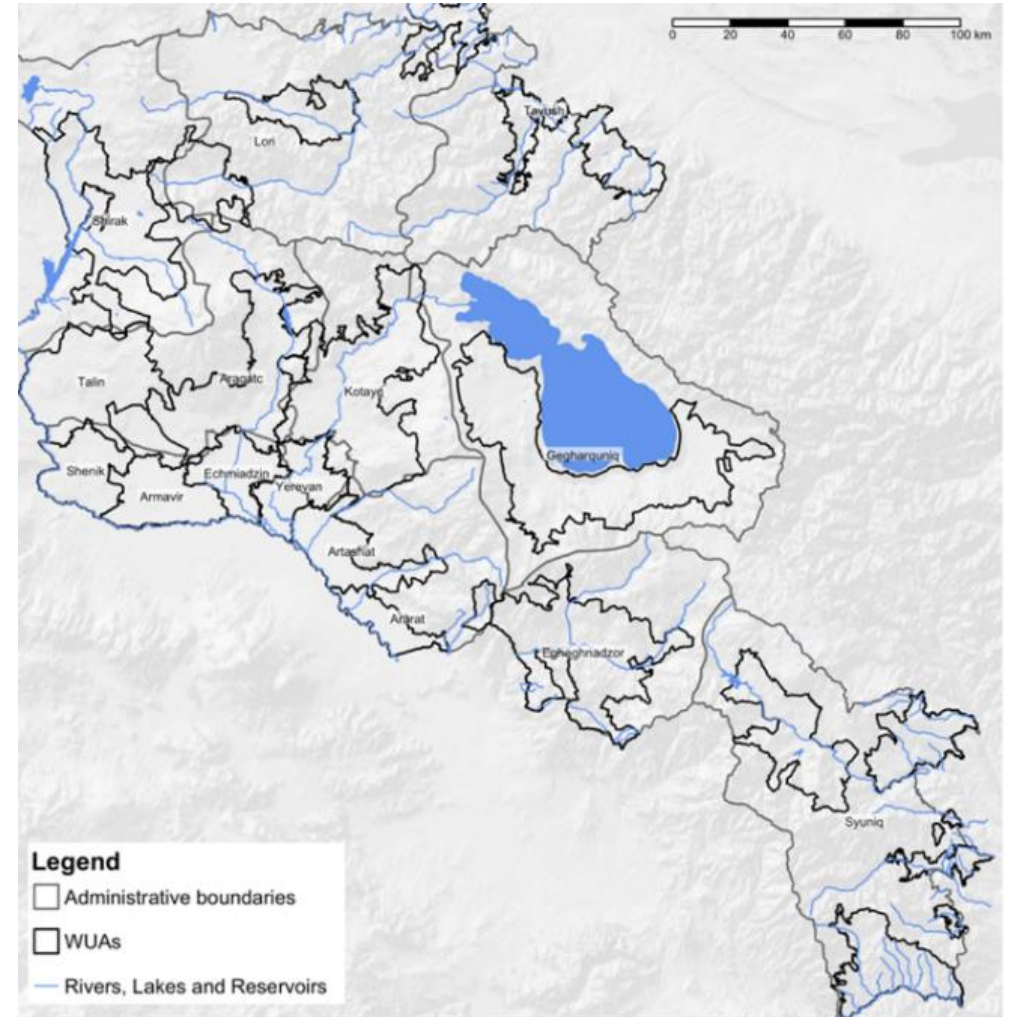
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THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION !

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