

TRANSBOUNDARY RIVER BASIN MANAGEMENT: EXISTING PROBLEMS AND POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS ON AN EXAMPLE OF KURA-ARAKS RIVER BASIN

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Figure 1: Map of the South Caucasus with delineated Kura-Araks basin

The Kura and Araks Rivers have the largest drainage area in the Caucasus. Kura contributes 55% of the river basin flow and Araks contributes 45%. The river system has around 10,000 tributaries and covers 5 countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkey and Iran. Total area of the basin is about 190,000 km², and 16 million people live there.

Kura River total length: 1,364 km
average discharge 575 Mm³/yr

Kura originates in Turkey (185km), passes through Georgia (390km), Azerbaijan (789km) and discharges into the Caspian Sea.

Araks River total length: 1,072 km
average discharge 210 Mm³/yr

Araks originates in Turkey (300km), marks the borders between Armenia and Turkey, Azerbaijan and Turkey, Armenia and Iran, and then Azerbaijan and Iran. Araks discharges into the Kura (80km) after crossing the Azerbaijan border.

Main Parameters of the Kura-Araks Rivers Basin

Country	Population (million, July 2003 est.)	Kura River		Araks River	
		Total basin area (%)	Area (km ²)	Total basin area (%)	Area (km ²)
Armenia	3.3	15.79	29,741	22	22,090
Azerbaijan	7.8	30.70	57,800	18	18,000
Georgia	4.9	18.43	34,700	-	-
Turkey & Iran	-	35.06	66,000	60	61,000
Total	16	100.00	188,241	100.00	101,090

The main obstacles of collaboration among the Kura-Araks river basin countries are:

- lack of trust among the countries,
- socio-economic instability, poverty
- historical and ethnic issues,
- discrepancy in legal field,
- absence of water-related agreements,
- lack of coordination among water related projects and parties in countries,
- old infrastructure and poor monitoring.

Further key actions to address the existing challenges and foster cooperation:

- promote willingness to cooperate,
- bring together stakeholders and parties,
- carry out local and regional capacity building and awareness raising initiatives,
- review respective legislation and policies,
- improve water resources planning, use, management, monitoring and protection,
- develop basin management plan,
- reveal mechanisms for dispute resolution, identify mitigation measures, etc.

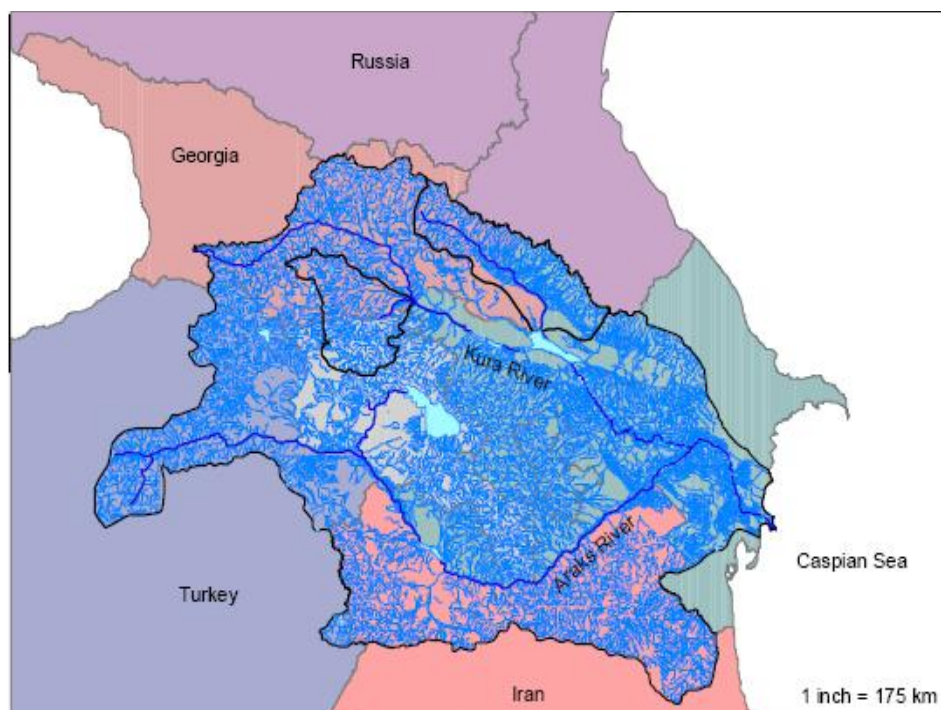


Figure 2: Water Resources of the Kura-Araks basin