

Transboundary Aquifer Activities at IGRAC

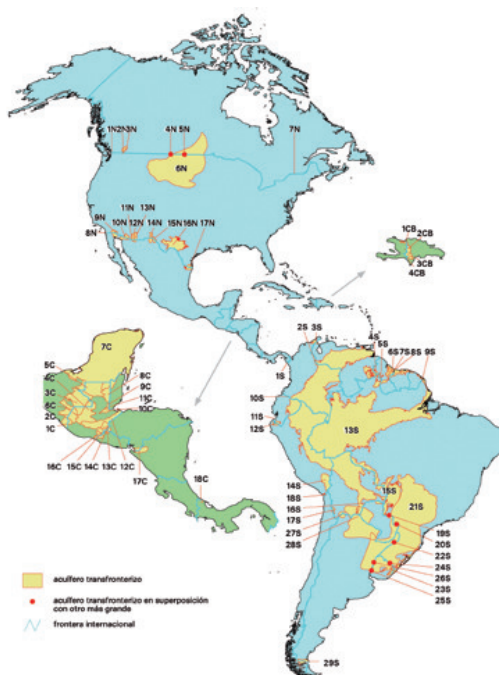
Globally, the vast majority of countries shares aquifers with their neighbours. Political, institutional, socio-economic, cultural and other differences among countries make the assessment and management of internationally shared aquifers - in comparison to aquifers confined within the national borders - often challenging. Insufficient knowledge of transboundary aquifers and a lack of mutually coordinated management can lead to undesirable changes in groundwater flow, quality and quantity. Accordingly, an appropriate assessment and management of Transboundary Aquifers (TBAs) is necessary to prevent or mitigate groundwater problems and to improve the overall benefit from groundwater.

The assessment of global groundwater resources is the core activity of the International Groundwater Resources Assessment Centre (IGRAC). Since 2003, IGRAC provides independent content and process support to the assessment of the internationally shared aquifers. Besides, IGRAC coordinates the development of the Global Groundwater Monitoring Network (GGMN), which is also very relevant to transboundary groundwater assessment and management.

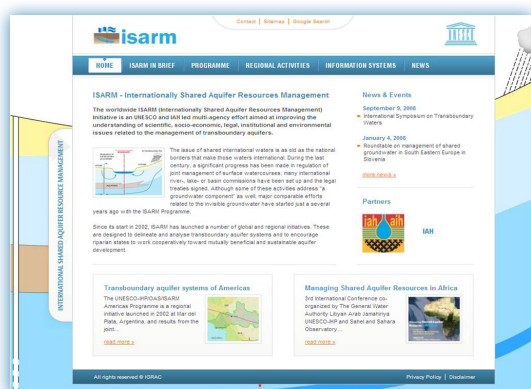
The major TBA assessment activities at IGRAC are carried out within the framework of the ISARM programme, the UNECE assessments and the GEF (Global Environment Facility) projects. ISARM (www.isarm.org) is an UNESCO led multi-agency effort aimed at improving the understanding of scientific, socio-economic, legal, institutional and environmental issues related to the management of transboundary aquifers. The results of the TBA mapping are compiled in the map "Transboundary Aquifers of the World" and presented at the 5th World Water Forum (WWF) in Istanbul in 2009.

An update of this map is now being prepared for the WWF6 in Marseille in 2012 and it will include the results of the recently completed second UNECE assessment of transboundary rivers, lakes and groundwaters in Europe and Asia.

Already in 2005 IGRAC compiled lessons learned from various GEF International Waters (IW) projects and in 2007 conducted a TBA workshop at the GEF IW Conference in Cape Town. In the meantime, IGRAC has become involved in the preparation and execution of several GEF TBA projects, such as IW Science, TWAP and DIKTAS. The DIKTAS project (Protection and Sustainable use of the Dinaric Karst Aquifer System) is executed by UNESCO, and IGRAC -as UNESCO groundwater centre- has provided a manager for this challenging project (<http://diktas.iwlearn.org>)



IGRAC assisted the UN International Law Commission in the preparation of the draft articles on the Law of Transboundary Aquifers. UNESCO has also engaged IGRAC in the development and conducting of ISARM TBA courses (Thessaloniki 2008, Paris 2010). IGRAC is further becoming increasingly involved in groundwater governance activities, looking forward to expanding the TBA community with a broad range of specialists and stakeholders.



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