

# Regional trainings of technical experts - A catalyzer for transboundary water cooperation in Central Asia?

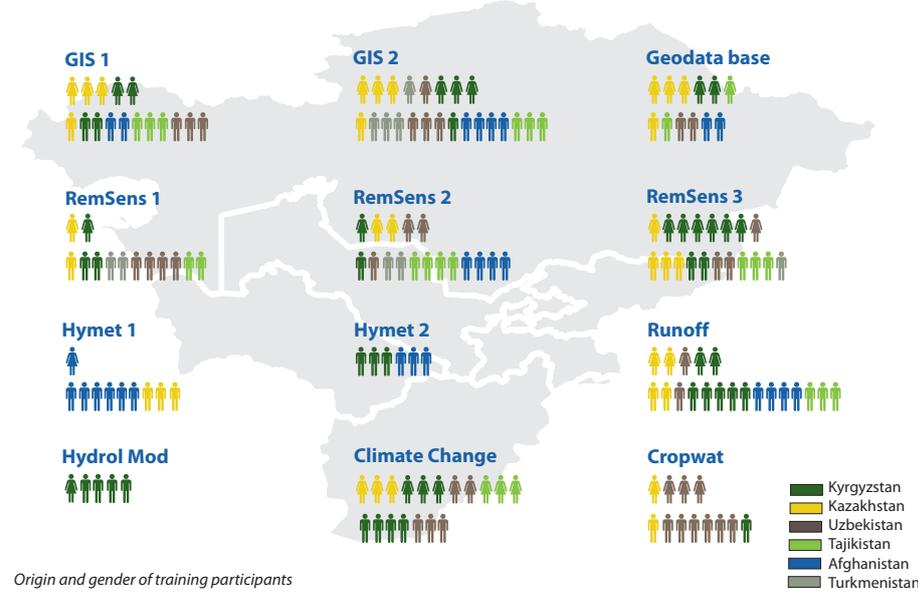
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## Introduction

Central Asia is a water-scarce region and a hot spot for water-related conflicts and environmental disasters. In recent years, water resources management in Central Asia has been facing major challenges: climate change and its impacts on the water cycle, environmental degradation, political and economic transition, and in some countries years of civil war. This led to the degradation of infrastructure, erosion of educational systems and to a

brain-drain of experts. Training water professionals from all over the region in joint short-term technical and methodological courses, as implemented by the CAWA project, may contribute to cross-sectorial and transboundary cooperation in water management by enhancing expertise and building trust.



Origin and gender of training participants

## Regional training approach

During 2010-2013, overall 169 specialists from Central Asian Hydromet services, water management and research institutions, and universities have been trained in one-week courses at GFZ on "neutral ground" or at the Central Asian partner institutions CAIAG and SIC ICWC. The training groups usually included between 10 and 23 participants from all Central Asian countries and Afghanistan. For a number of trainings, smaller groups of 5-10 participants were formed focusing on one or two countries only to enhance the knowledge transfer and give even more room to technical discussions and practice.

The topics of the trainings included Geographical Information Systems, Remote sensing technologies, Geodata management, Hydro-meteorological monitoring, Climate change impact assessment, and Optimization of crop water use.

The trainings were held in English, but co-trainers provided support in Russian language. The program included theoretical lectures and extended sessions of practical work. For GIS and Remote Sensing trainings, participants brought their own data and projects to work on during the course, which contributed to the great motivation of the participants and raised their ownership of the trainings' outcomes.

## Lessons Learnt

Short-term vocational trainings promote "brain circulation" as opposed to "brain drain". They strengthen the methodological expertise of the specialists at the Central Asian partner institutions and raise their ownership and initiative.



The trainings in a multi-country group broadened the perspectives of the participants from a national to a regional one. Among some participants, in particular those who attended several trainings, a new sense of professional identity developed – of belonging to the group of regional experts. Certainly, the trainings established networks between professionals and researchers across the region.

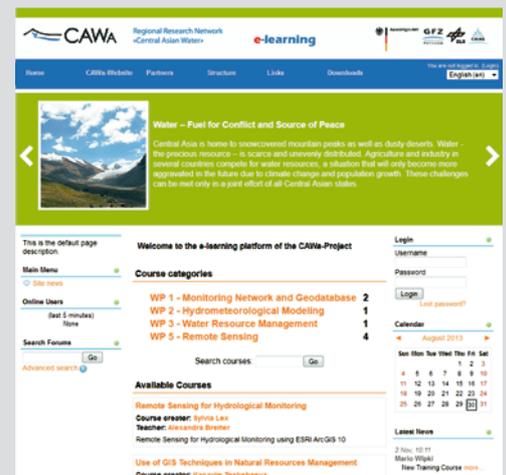
Participants from all countries communicated openly and exchanged their views, knowledge and experiences. They learned about freely available data sets covering the whole region of Central Asia. This led them also to the understanding of the mutual benefits of data-sharing across boundaries and between sectors and institutions as opposed to the still very restrictive data-collection and management praxis in Central Asia. However, the mid-term to long-term effects of the trainings and the sustainability and productivity of the established networks for transboundary cooperation are hard to assess.



Trainings included theoretical lectures and practical sessions.

The involvement of participants from all Central Asian countries has not been achieved for all trainings. Particularly, professionals from Turkmenistan and Afghanistan did not always succeed to receive the due support and permissions of their administrations and governments in time.

## Electronic Learning Platform



The electronic learning platform of the CAWA project (<http://elearning.cawa-project.net>)

The CAWA eLearning platform is based on the open source software Moodle, a multi-lingual Learning Management System (LMS). Within virtual classrooms, documents, data, case studies and results can be shared with all registered participants. Communication functionalities support the organization of training events.

[www.cawa-project.net](http://www.cawa-project.net)

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