

Sustainable Use of Water Resources in the Republic of Armenia

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Research Question: Challenging areas of water resources management, water supply and sanitation services in Armenia

Background: The challenges are mainly related to the targets set aside under the Protocol on Water and Health, which is currently in ratification process by the Government of Armenia. These challenges are the followings: to promote at national level the protection of life and health of the public both in terms of individual and collective aspects, as well as to improve the management and use of water resources, including the protection of ecosystems, to improve safe water supply and discharge (as of now 579 communities from total 993 settlements still don't have an access to water), and to control and reduce water-related diseases.

Over the last ten years the Republic of Armenia has recorded significant legislative and institutional achievements in terms of water resources management and protection, the main direction of which was introduction and application of the principles of integrated water resources management (IWRM) in the country. The Government of Armenia has strived to improve access, reliability and quality of the drinking water and its infrastructure with increased use of public-private partnerships (PPPs), which have changed the way it manages the sector and brought about improvements in quality and service to customers.

Currently the majority of the population of Armenia is served by three water and wastewater utilities under PPP arrangement. The water sector has improved but still has a long way to go. PPP Contract alone cannot resolve all sectoral challenges. The state of the infrastructure and assets is still very poor, with a need for major investments to bring it up to a reasonable condition as well as for expansion of service.

Institutional Structure/Framework

The assets and overall authority relating to use of resources and provision of water and water supply sanitation/wastewater services is held by the Government of Armenia, with the following institutions:

- The State Committee of Water Economy (SCWE) has general oversight for sector management and operation. The SCWE has responsibility for establishing the various PPP arrangements and maintains a function of continuing project management for all of them, and for development of new long-term arrangements.
- Other state entities have responsibility for ensuring compliance with environmental and other regulatory issues:
- The National Public Regulatory Commission (NPRC) has responsibility for economic regulation and ensuring compliance with tariff setting in the water sector.

- Water Resources Management Agency of the Republic of Armenia has responsibility to manage and protect the water resources.

This research aims to review the existing situation for Water Management in Armenia, with the objectives of providing guidance on improving levels of service, ensuring long term sustainability of the sector, and maintaining affordability of services to users. The recommendations to the key challenges affecting the development of the sector would provide with the following outcomes: more people use improved water supply, sanitation and municipal services; to increase the share of population connected to the centralized water supply system and sanitation system, to expand and improve water supply and sanitation systems in urban and rural areas, to increase average duration of drinking water supply per day, to construct and/or upgrade water supply infrastructure; to improve water utility management.