The integrated water resources management concept has been promoted by Mexican authorities through the formation of basin councils. One of the specific tasks of these bodies is to develop a water allocation agreement among users based on water availability studies which focus on water accounting and balance. The small-scale irrigation systems, locally known as irrigation units (IU), are the weakest component in water regulation and information reliability, notwithstanding that they account for an estimated 40% of nationwide water consumption.

In this context, the Water Regulation and Allocation Technical Group of the Ayuquila-Armería basin commission, proposed and executed a first phase of a project with the objective of making an update of the IU inventory and diagnostic. The results for the first four municipalities within the basin, expose the IUs current lack of institutional control, water regulation and statistics, as well as the obsolescence of inventory data and show a common problematic among water users’ organizations.

Given the absence of institutional oversight and reliable information, it is argued that the basin councils are unsuccessful in meeting an IWRM. Nevertheless, the case’s experience is considered as a successful action by the basin commission because of its innovative and low cost strategy in institutional coordination.