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ACTIVITIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE HUMAN RIGHT ON WATER AND SANITATION – A PRACTICE IN THE NORTHEASTERN REGION OF MACEDONIA

Introduction

Providing safe water and sanitation for the entire population without discrimination is a responsibility of all governments. The commitment for concentrating efforts and funds in realization of this right is covered in numerous Conventions, International Treaties, Protocols, Millennial Development Goals, Sustainable Development Goals, etc.

By the Protocol on Water and Health, signatory countries commit to defining policies and target measures aimed at improvement of the condition with water and sanitation access for ALL. This means providing quality and quantity of drinking water, reducing the urban and rural gap in the access to water and sanitation, providing access to water and sanitation for marginalized and vulnerable categories (homeless persons, students, preschool children, care institutions for elderly persons, prisoners, persons living on the poverty threshold etc.)¹.

The Republic of Macedonia has still not ratified the Protocol on Water and Health, but it does

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contribute to raising awareness and interest of relevant factor and of the general population, through a number of activities.

Various activities are conducted through a separate Programme for Public Health, funded by the Budget of the Republic of Macedonia, among which are activities for assessment of the health and ecological risk regarding the quality of drinking water and water supply, as well as establishing health records of the water supply. In the period 1994-1997 with the development of information technology, the Institute of Public Health in the Republic of Macedonia introduced a modern health and ecological monitoring of the water supply that is applied in all 10 Centres for Public Health in the country. In this monitoring, a special information system is used on facilities for water supply for the population and the water quality in those facilities. A novelty in these concepts is that each water supply facility is provided with its own unique identification number which determines the territorial belonging (administrative and geographic location), the type, the owner and the purpose of the facility and the immediate customers - users. The last digits of the identification number are additional and refer to micro-location of the sampling. During the period of the establishment of the system, establishment of integrated monitoring of health, communal and other drinking water supply organizations was considered. When establishing the system, implementation of integrated monitoring of health, communal and other drinking water supply organizations as part of ongoing control of quality and health safety of water in the distribution systems was also considered.^{2,3}

Determining policies and target measures for improvement of the situation regarding access to water and sanitation for all, primarily requires a detailed knowledge of the current situation. For this purpose, a workshop "Evaluation of Equal Approach to Water and Sanitation for Small Water Supply and Sanitation Systems" (Skopje, 16th-17th June 2015) was organized within the process of preparation of the Republic of Macedonia for accession to the Protocol on Water and Health. On the workshop, focus was put on three municipalities (Skopje, Kumanovo and Veles), and, concurrently, coordinators were appointed for filling in the Balance Score Card as a tool for self-evaluation for an equal approach to water and sanitation, identification of priorities and encouragement of the approach to water and sanitation.

Structure of the Balance Score Card and methodology of work

The structure of the Balance Score Card includes a wide range of stakeholders, from the environmental to the social and financial sectors.

The Balance Score Card begins with a short profile of the region and

continues with issues from four thematic areas:

Part 1: *Strategic framework and policies* for improvement of the approach to water and sanitation;

Part 2: *Geographic inequalities* – different areas show differences relating the source and way of water supply, water and sewage network;

Part 3: *Social inequalities* – vulnerable and marginalized groups face different barriers in achieving equal approach, therefore a need for different solutions; and

Part 4: *economic inequalities* - access in terms of payment of the water and sanitation bill.

There are a number of questions for each area with four possible answers. Each answer must be justified, i.e. must rely on information in legal documents, advisory documents, analytical reports, surveys or similar sources.

For each area, the result is calculated and summarized taking into account the number of questions in the area and the reliability of the answers. The maximum score number for each area is 3.

Results from a completed Balance Score Card for the Northeastern Region

The northeastern planning region consists of the municipalities Kumanovo, Kratovo, Kriva Palanka and the newly formed municipalities Staro Nagorichane, Rankovce and Lipkovo. The region has a total area of 2310km² and covers 9% of the total population of the Republic of Macedonia (Figure no.1).



Figure 1. Map of the Republic of Macedonia with an outline of the Northeastern region

The Balance Score Card was filled for all municipalities of the North-eastern region with the exception of the municipality of Lipkovo, where no interest for cooperation was expressed. The newly formed municipalities of Rankovce and Staro Nagorichane are rural municipalities and, methodologically, when filling the Balance Score Card the villages of the same name that are administrative centres of the municipalities are considered urban area, while the other populated areas of the municipalities are considered rural areas. Analysis was made for 2009 and 2014. The region profile is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Region profile – population, access to water and sanitation

	Kumanovo	Kriva Palanka	Kratovo	Rankovci	Staro Nagorichane
Population*	105484	20820	10441	4144	4840
Assessment**	109066	20044	9504	3738	4012
% of population in rural areas	27.7%	30.1%	33.7%	72.8%	88.6%
% of unemployed population	23.9%	20.6%	38.9%	50%	13.5%
No access to safe water (public fountains, wells and individual water supply facilities)	6950 inhabitants 6.59% of total population	595 inhabitants 2.85% of total population	780 inhabitants 7.4% of total population	679 inhabitants 16.4% of total population	1474 inhabitants 30.4% of total population
No access to sanitation (pit latrines and septic tanks)	22808 inhabitants 21.6%	4809 inhabitants 23.1%	3759 inhabitants 36%	2486 inhabitants 40%	4840 inhabitants 100%
No treatment of waste waters	85676 inhabitants 81.2% of total population	none	none	none	none

* Source of information: State Statistical Office (www.stat.gov.mk): Census of population, households and dwellings in the Republic Of Macedonia, 2002.

** State Statistical Office, Estimation of Population, 2016.

Frameworks of governance

In cooperation with the local self-government of the municipalities, the following information regarding the financial policy, i.e. investments toward improvement of the situation of water supply and sanitation has been obtained.

Financial policies sector

In the Municipality of *Kumanovo*, the amount of financial resources needed for obtaining equal approach to safe drinking water and sanitation is estimated by determining the funds required for realization of the Feasibility Study for improvement of the sewage disposal and treatment system that partly covers rural settlements. The first stage provides 5,⁶⁹⁴,720 Euros. The sources of financing for achievement of equal approach to safe drinking water and sanitation are identified, where 15% of the State Budget and 85% of the IPA funds are provided for the implementation of the first phase of the Feasibility Study. Full assessment regarding necessary financial resources for equal approach to water and sanitation for the rural areas has is not carried out.

In the Municipality of *Staro Nagorichane* the amount of funds needed for obtaining equal approach to safe drinking water and sanitation and the sources of financing are identified to a certain extent. Funds have been provided by EBRD (European Bank for Reconstruction and Development) for water supply systems for certain neighborhoods in the Mlado Nagorichane and Algunja villages. Funds have not yet been provided for the Water Supply Project in the Zhegljane, Stepance and Karlovce villages, while the Project for Sewage system with Waste Water Treatment Plant in the Old Nagorichane village, for which the amount of funds has been estimated, sadly faces a serious issue regarding support from the Municipal Council.

In the Municipality of *Kriva Palanka* a Programme was developed for construction, reconstruction and maintenance of the local water supply network for 2015 (Government of the Republic of Macedonia “Water Supply and Waste Water Drainage” Project, PE Komunalec, Municipality of Kriva Palanka) and priority projects, which face issues regarding water supply in the city and in the rural area, were determined. The sources of funding have not been identified since certain projects have been applied with to several funds and there is no response yet.

In the Municipality of *Rankovce* projects have been developed for certain populated areas and therefore the amount of funds needed for obtaining equal approach to safe drinking water has not been fully assessed.

There is no strategy developed in the Municipality of *Kratovo*, i.e. no assessment is made for achieving equal approach to safe drinking water and sanitation.

In all five municipalities, the city government publicly announces the distribution of financial resources through the website of the municipality, Council sessions, public sessions, and public media outlets of the municipality. Final accounts of public enterprises are reviewed and adopted at

Council sessions. There are also legal grounds for availability of public information – Official Gazette no. 13/2006-“Free access to public information” that are obeyed.

Rights and duties of users and rights holders

When entering into a contract with the *Public Communal Enterprise*, the users are informed about their rights and duties. Service providers (the Communal Enterprise) are available for any information regarding the quality and quantity of the water supplied.

When the water supply systems are maintained by *the local communities or the local population*, i.e. the users, they themselves determine their rights and duties and obtain information regarding water quality from the Centre for Public Health –Kumanovo (CPH) – results of analysis conducted in accordance with the Programme for Public Health and draft measures for improvement of the situation.

Reducing geographical differences (urban/rural area)

Quantitative data in this section were obtained on the basis of long-term monitoring conducted by the Centre for Public Health-Kumanovo in accordance with the Programme for Public Health, as well as with data of Communal Enterprises in municipalities and representatives of local communities that maintain the water supply system and the local self-government.

Quantitative information for access to drinking water in municipalities^d

A) Municipality of Kumanovo

The residents of the city and the surrounding settlements have 95% access to safe drinking water. In the rural area of the municipality, 31.5% of the population use drinking water from public fountains and individual wells, 36.2% from local water supplies and 32.22% from the city water supply. The quality and safety of drinking water from local supplies and public fountains is monitored by the Centre for Public Health in accordance with the Annual Programme for Public Health. Of the total number of tested water samples from local water supplies, 29.1% of water samples taken in 2009 and 15.6% taken in 2014 have proven to be bacteriologically contaminated. The percent of contaminated water samples from public fountains and individual wells is higher and ranges from 47.6% in 2009 to 20.5% in 2014.

B) Municipality of Kratovo

The residents of the city have 99% access to safe drinking water from the city water supply system, while 27.5% of the population in the rural area uses public fountains and individual wells; 1.46% have access to drinking water from local water supplies and 70.99% from the regional water supply (one water supply that provides drinking water to several villages). Of the total number of tested water samples from public fountains, 42.2% in 2009 and 26.6% in 2014 have proven to be bacteriologically contaminated.

C) Municipality of Kriva Palanka

The residents of the city have 99% access to safe drinking water. In the rural area, 9.5% of the population uses public fountains or individual wells, while 90.5% - from local water supplies. Regarding the quality and safety of drinking water from the local water supplies, 32.5% of the tested water samples in 2009 and 10.5% in 2014 are bacteriologically contaminated. Analyzed water samples from public fountains and springs indicate bacteriological contamination of 24.3% in 2009 and 9.1% in 2014.

D) Municipality of Rankovce

The residents of Rankovce village, which was considered an urban area when filling the Balance Score Card, have 95% access to safe drinking water, while other villages, i.e. the rural areas 17.7% of the population uses drinking water from public fountains and individual wells and 82.3% from the local water supply. Of the total number of water samples analyzed in CPH Kumanovo in accordance with the National Programme for Public Health, 25.9% of the water samples in 2009 and 15.7% in 2014 are bacteriologically contaminated.

E) Staro Nagorichane

The inhabitants of Staro Nagorichane village (urban area) have 100% access to safe drinking water. In the rural area (the remaining 38 villages) – 37.3% of the population use public fountains and individual wells and 62.6% use local water supplies. In the tested water samples of local water supplies, 34.7% in 2009 and 12.8% in 2014 are bacteriologically contaminated, while that percentage in drinking water from public fountains and individual wells ranges from 42.8% in 2009 to 16.6% in 2014.

The quality and safety of water and access to water is improved in 2014 in comparison to 2009 as a result of undertaken initiatives and activities of the municipality and of the local community (occasional

disinfection of drinking water, formation of protective zones) in accordance with the draft measures specified by the CPH Kumanovo.

There are differences between urban and rural areas regarding access to sanitation, i.e. central drainage waste water system in municipalities of the Northeastern region. The percentage of access to central waste water drainage system is presented in Figure 2.

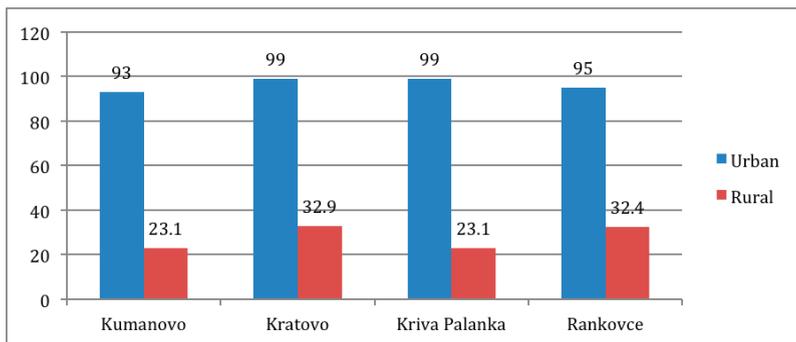


Figure 2. Percentage of population with access to central waste water drainage system in rural and urban areas of municipalities in the Northeastern region of the Republic of Macedonia

The entire population of the Municipality of Staro Nagorichane has no access to central wastewater drainage system.

Only the Municipality of Kumanovo is provided with waste water treatment.

In the entire Northeastern region access to sanitation, in the sense of centralized collection of faecal waste from households, lags the access to drinking water.

Public policies for reducing differences in approach between urban and rural areas

Kumanovo – With the Programme for Development of the Municipality of Kumanovo for 2015, construction and reconstruction of public water supply and sewage systems is planned on the territory of the Municipality of Kumanovo that partially covers the rural area.

Kriva Palanka – A Programme for construction, reconstruction and maintenance of the local water supply network in the Municipality of Kriva Palanka for 2015 is developed.

Rankovce – There is support for water delivery and sanitation for all settlements.

Staro Nagorichane – Projects for the villages in the municipality are being developed; however, there are dispersed villages that pose a difficulty for realization of the approach, which raises the price as well.

Kratovo – The Programme for Managing Unconstructed Construction Land encompasses projects for water distribution to urban areas.

Public authorities identify areas that are lagging behind and are in need of external support. The Centres for Public Health play a major role in the process of identification through their annual reports that are submitted to the Municipal Council, but that role would be even greater and more comprehensive if the Municipal Councils for Public Health would begin operating.

Provision of access to water and sanitation for vulnerable and marginalized groups

Quantitative data for vulnerable and marginalized groups are obtained in cooperation with the Sector for Education, the Regional Centre for Social Work, the local self-government, communal enterprises and by monitoring data and analysis of drinking water conducted by the Centre for Public Health-Kumanovo.

Particular areas of this part of the Balance Score Card included access to drinking water and sanitation for *persons with special physical needs, health institution users, educational institution users, users of day care centres for the elderly, prisoners, refugees living in refugee camps and centres, persons that live in housing with no water and sanitation.*

The Municipality of Kumanovo is the only one to have a Retirement Home for the Elderly with a capacity of 172 persons. During the data filling there were 150 users, 70 of which are bed-ridden, while 7 of them are in wheelchairs and *there is approach to safe drinking water and sanitation.* There is also an alternate source of water supply in the day care centre.

The PI-Prison Kumanovo with its Open Section in Kriva Palanka both have *access to safe drinking water and sanitation.* The Directorate for Sanctions at the Ministry of Justice provides funds for support of the access to safe drinking water and sanitation.

The Migration/Refugee Transit Centre in the Tabanovce village has provided access to safe drinking water and sanitation and separate toilets for men and women. With an Action Plan for Handling Migrants, the sanitary, hygienic and epidemiological condition is under constant monitoring by the Centre for Public Health-Kumanovo that regularly gives suggestions and proposals regarding improvement of the condition.

The category of persons living in housing with no water and sanitation covers the Roma population. 4256 inhabitants of the Municipality of Kumanovo declared themselves as Roma and 64% of them are recipients of social aids. The Centre for Public Health cooperates with non-governmental organizations working with the Roma population. Extensive surveys have been conducted. According to the survey of CRC Drom, there are 1 095 Roma housings in Kumanovo, most of which are illegally built and are owned by Roma; the owners, however, usually do not have documentation on the housing, but only on the parcel. That is the cause of problems regarding water supply and sewage: 40% of the Roma houses in Kumanovo are legal (in the centre of the city), while 60% are illegally built. Most illegally built houses are located in the Sredorek settlement.

Access to water is improved by measures undertaken by the Roma NGO and the Municipality. Research conducted by the National Roma Centre (NRC) within the “Roma woman – a way toward challenges” which was attended by a representative of the Centre for Public Health as well, covers 912 persons from the female Roma population in Kumanovo and Kriva Palanka. According to the data obtained, 90.4% in Kumanovo and 100% in Kriva Palanka are connected to the sewage network. Regarding access to safe drinking water, 92.4% of the surveyed persons in Kumanovo have water in their homes and 100% in Kriva Palanka use drinking water from the central water supply system (only one of the surveyed families does not use the central water supply system)⁵.

The Hospital in Kumanovo and the Centre for Health Care in Kriva Palanka both have separate toilets for men and women and bathrooms for personal hygiene, while the other health facilities have separate toilets for men and women, but lack adequate capacities for maintaining menstrual hygiene. The hospital in Kumanovo has toilets adapted for persons with disabilities. Access to safe drinking water in hospitals and centres for health care in the Region is financed by the Budget of the Republic of Macedonia – Health Insurance Fund, as total material costs of the institution. The other health institutions – private health institutions (private practices) use their own funds to support access to water and sanitation.

In cooperation with competent institutions, there is a continuous control of the approach to safe drinking water and sanitation for users in educational facilities. All educational facilities in the urban area of the municipalities of the Northeastern region have access to safe drinking water and sanitation. The school facilities in the Municipalities of Rankovce and Kriva Palanka have access to safe drinking water and respect the legal obligation to control the quality of drinking water during the period of work of the facility. In the

rural areas of other municipalities of the Region, control over the quality of water in school facilities is within the National Annual Programme for Public Health. Table 2 shows access to drinking water in schools of the Northeastern region.

Table 2. Access to drinking water of students in school facilities in municipalities of the Northeastern region

Municipality	Means of water supply	users (% of the total number of students)	Number of school facilities	% of bacteriologically contaminated samples of total number of samples
Kumanovo	City water supply	91.14	17	/
	Local water supply	3.99	8	32.8 in 2009 and 21.1 in 2014.
	Individual water supplies and public fountains	4.87	11	69.3 in 2009 41.3 in 2014
Kriva Palanka	City water supply	88.5	4	/
	Local water supply	11.45	11	/
Kratovo	City water supply	86.4	3	/
	Regional water supply	10	6	17.6
	Individual water supply	3.6	4	24.3
Rankovce	Local water supply	96.9	4	/
	Individual water supply	3.1	1	/
Staro Nagorichane	Local water supply	90.6	8	/
	Individual water supply	9.4	5	/

All educational facilities in the cities and larger schools in the villages have separate toilets for men and women, while some of the smaller regional schools have shared toilets. Educational facilities lack adequate capacities for maintaining menstrual hygiene.

Public policies for solving issues of vulnerable and marginalized groups

In the Municipality of Kumanovo, under a decision of the Municipal Council no. 07-8565/15 dated from 18.12.2014, material costs for water and sanitation are subsidized for people that are constant recipients of

financial aid (1374/2014). Expenses for water and sanitation of the Centre for Persons with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities over 18 years of age (Poraka Nasha) are covered by the municipal budget, as well as by grants for meeting technical needs in accordance with the needs of primary and secondary school facilities.

The Municipality of Staro Nagorichane has planned funds (200 000,00 denars) for socially disadvantaged families, while in terms of access of water and sanitation, families with a newborn are exempted from paying the water bill for a 24-month period.

In the Municipality of Kriva Palanka the public policy is aimed at the Roma population which, by Municipal Council decision, is exempted from paying water bills.

In the Municipality of Rankovce the public policy is directed toward persons with disabilities and they are provided with free connection to water and sewage.

The Municipality of Kratovo provides assistance to vulnerable groups of citizens namely poor people, with water hoses or sewage pipes, while the newly constructed buildings have separate sanitation equipped for persons with disabilities. The families with lower incomes may cover water expenses by temporal hiring (working).

Public policies for provision of access to water and sanitation

Public authorities have analyzed the impact of various alternatives for resolving issues regarding access through social protection measures and are aimed at avoiding non-payment of bills.

Concluding activities

The results of this intersectoral process were presented at the Workshop for equal access to water and sanitation -“Applying a Balance Score Card for Equal Approach to Water and Sanitation in the Republic of Macedonia” held in Veles in January 2016, attended by several local-level institutions from all three targeted municipalities (Veles, Kumanovo and Skopje). Priorities for every area of action from the Balance Score Card were determined at the workshop. In February 2017, a workshop was held in Kumanovo with representatives from institutions of only the Northeastern region; where results were re-presented and corrected where changes of the situation occurred. At this workshop, objectives and specific goals and activities were determined for development of Local Action Plans for improving access to water and sanitation for every municipality through a cross-sectoral approach

Priorities for Local Action Plans for improvement of the access to water and sanitation in municipalities in the Northeastern planning region:

- Strengthening public policies in municipalities for improvement of access to water and sanitation through elaborating a Programme for Priority Geographic Areas for improvement of access to water and sanitation with activity dynamics and putting the Councils for Public Health in operation.
- Increasing public funds of the municipal budget intended for improvement of access to water and sanitation.
- Increasing the rate of access to hygienic sanitation in the rural environment and promotion of small environmental sanitation systems.
- Bacteriologically safe drinking water in all school facilities.
- Raising awareness regarding consequences of unprofessional water supply management.
- Establishing a Safety of Drinking Water and Sanitation Plan for rural local water supplies, especially those with unprofessional water supply management. The users, i.e. the local community should be actively involved in the preparation of these plans.

Abstract

The paper presents activities conducted in the Northeastern region of the Republic of Macedonia in the context of implementation of the human right to access to water and sanitation. The Institute of Public Health of the Republic of Macedonia, in cooperation with the Institute of Public Health-Kumanovo, conducted numerous activities in the period of 2015 – 2017 within the Programme for Equal Access to Water and Sanitation of the Protocol on Water and Health (coordinated by WHO and UNECE). Within that Programme, the signatory countries are responsible for determining policies and targeted measures aimed at improving the situation with access to water and sanitation for all. This means providing quality and quantity of drinking water, reducing the urban and rural gap in access to water and sanitation, providing access to water and sanitation to marginalized and vulnerable groups (homeless persons, students, preschool children, retirement homes, prisoners, persons living on the poverty threshold etc). Situational analysis of the situation regarding access to water and sanitation in the Northeastern region was conducted and great improvement in the access to water and sanitation was registered, as well as decrease of the percentage of bacteriologically contaminated drinking water samples up to two times in 2014 compared to 2009. This was the result of implemented preventive public health measures and good cooperation between the Municipality and the Centre for Public Health-Kumanovo. Positive outcome of the activities are also the Local Action Plans prepared for improvement of access to water and sanitation in the Northeastern planning region.

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