



CASE STUDY

Ukraine: Sustainable Rural Development - demonstrating solutions for water supply, sanitation and agriculture

Summary

In Ukraine, reforms in the sector of water supply and sanitation have focused on centralising water supply and sanitation. Efforts have been made to decentralise water management, delegate to local authorities and increase supply in rural areas. This has been done through awareness campaigns, capacity building and innovative techniques of wastewater reuse. The lesson learnt from this case is that IWRM principles need to be considered for water infrastructure planning.

Background

In Ukraine, reforms in the sector of water supply and sanitation were initiated more than 10 years ago. They resulted in substantial changes, including decentralization of water management functions, delegation of infrastructure management functions and responsibilities to local authorities, development of underlying laws and regulations in the sphere of drinking water supply.

However, all these reforms and actions are predominantly focused on centralized water supply and sanitation and users of these centralized systems. Small towns and rural settlements do not attract adequate attention of governmental authorities and reforms in the sector. As a result, 5.7 million urban residents and 11.7 million rural residents use drinking water from local sources, including shallow wells, captages, springs etc.

It is worth to note that in the majority of cases these sources are of inadequate technical conditions. Statistics of 2004 show that about 22% of wastewaters are discharged without treatment, 37% undergo primary treatment prior to discharge to surface water bodies and 41% undergo primary and secondary treatment.

The rural population of Ukraine has extremely low incomes, high unemployment rates, limited access to safe drinking water, and a poor infrastructure. Since the independence of Ukraine little has been done to stimulate the development of the rural areas and the situation is worsening.

Actions taken

Since 2000, in the course of implementation of its campaign “Drinking Water in Ukraine”, Ukrainian NGO MAMA-86 studied problems of decentralized water supply, in particular, the problem of quality of well water in rural settlements of Poltavska, Chernigivska and Ivano-Frankivska oblasts.

In November 2003, in partnership with Women in Europe for a Common Future (WECF), MAMA-86 launched its project “Co-operation for Sustainable Rural Development: Drinking Water Supply, Eco-sanitation, and Organic Agriculture”. The project was implemented for 3 years and was supported by MATRA Program of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the villages of Vorothka (Yarmeche, Ivanofrankivsk oblast), Bobrik (Verjevka, Nizhin) and Gozhuly (Poltava). In order to contribute to the rural development and to improve the public health and the economical situation, this project implemented demonstration projects and organized awareness raising campaigns in the areas of water, sanitation and agriculture. To empower the local population and authorities, they were actively involved into the project.

The project activities ranged from public awareness campaigns, stakeholder and public events, gender-economic-social analyses, laboratory tests, obtaining hydroecological and health data, discussing business and engineering plans with local authorities, strengthening community capacity to seek for sustainable alternatives in use and disposal of wastewater and infrastructure measures that were implemented in 3 pilot regions. Each of these regions focused on the same environmental and health problems, however, specific approaches and methods were applied.

Outcomes

In terms of awareness raising:

- In general, the level of awareness of environmental and sanitation issues in the project areas was low
- On local level there is very limited access to information on environment or water quality and a low awareness about the relation between environment, water quality and health
- The implementation of demonstration solutions together with educational activities to increase this awareness has proven to be a very successful strategy.

In terms of bureaucracy and corruption:

- Water, wastewater and waste management in Ukraine is a political post – the managers are appointed according to their political preferences instead of their experience
- The responsible local authorities of Gozhuly kept information on the high fluoride levels in cwss water from the local population
- After Soviet times a lot of administrative information disappeared or got missing, like locations of obsolete pesticides or the quality of public drinking water.

In terms of financial resources:

- Most municipalities lack financial resources and adequate systems, leading a deficient maintenance and operation of public services, like drinking water, wastewater treatment or heating systems.

In terms of drinking water:

- In all three project areas nitrate levelsof well water exceeded the national standards 5-10 times, posing a health risk on the users
- Water supply and waste water systems are in state of decay posing a health risk on the citizens and need restoration
- In general there is no tradition of cleaning the drinking water wells.

In terms of sanitation:

- In general the level of sanitation in the rural areas is very low: in particular the toilet facilities in the schools and other public institutions are in a disastrous state
- Attention of the regional school authorities was attracted with pilot projects on indoor dry urine diverting toilets for schools, school sanitation got an issue for the decision makers
- To have access to an indoor toilet facility without having to walk through the cold or rain, was for the users a real improvement, the new toilet system was accepted very well.

Lessons Learned

This study illustrates that IWRM principles need to be considered when planning for water infrastructure.

The case study points out limitations in three main areas of intervention:

- Improvement of well water quality in rural villages
- Eco-sanitation techniques applied in local schools and townships
- Implementation of organic agriculture in pilot farms.

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Supporting Materials

Sustainable Rural Development in Ukraine. Demonstrating solutions for water supply, sanitation and agriculture (pdf)

Related IWRM Tools

Local Authorities, Community-based water supply and management organisations, Civil Society Organisations , Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships, Facilitation and Mediation

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