

German Federal Environment Ministry's  
**Advisory Assistance Programme for Environmental Protection  
in Countries in Central and Eastern Europe,  
the Caucasus and Central Asia (AAP)**

**Final report**

Date: 29 January 2015

**I. Information on the project**

Project title:	Building capacities for the development and implementation of Water Safety Plans (WSPs) and strengthening participation of Eastern European, Caucasian and Central Asian (EECCA) countries in the WHO Small Community Water Supply Management Network (SCWSMN)
Target country/region:	Countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA), in particular: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Moldova, Mongolia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Russian Federation, Ukraine and Uzbekistan
Duration (from ... to ....)	October 2013 to December 2014
Beneficiaries (incl. contact information):	National governments, communities, water supply, health and environment professionals of 12 EECCA countries
Implementing organisation[s]:	World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe, European Centre for Environment and Health, Water and Sanitation Programme, Bonn
Project number:	32709

**II. Information on the rapporteur**

Name of the organisation:	World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe, European Centre for Environment and Health, Water and Sanitation
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## **1. Summary of the baseline situation and the original demand for advisory assistance, of the original project objectives, of the planned measures and of the originally expected results**

The World Health Organization (WHO) has been recommending water safety plans (WSPs) in its Guidelines for Drinking-water Quality since 2004, considering them as the most effective way of ensuring continuous provision of safe drinking-water. Subsequently, increasing numbers of water suppliers and other stakeholders have embraced the WSP approach in the WHO European Region.

Scaling up the adoption of the WSP approach at policy and service provider levels is gaining significant momentum. More than a third of all countries in the WHO European Region have experiences with the WSP approach. This may range from pilot projects to scale-up strategies, to enforceable regulations on WSPs or similar risk-management approaches.

Enforceable legislation exists, for example, in Belgium, Hungary, Iceland, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. In Portugal, the drinking-water regulator encourages water suppliers to implement WSPs, but it is not an enforceable requirement yet. This approach is intended to facilitate the progression from a recommendation to legal requirement, permitting the suppliers to implement WSPs in a step-by-step manner and to share their experiences with the regulatory agency for their consideration in policy-making. In England and Wales, for example, the regulator actively encouraged the water industry to adopt a WSP approach on an informal basis since 2004, before making them a mandatory requirement in 2007.

Also, several countries in eastern Europe, the Caucasus and central Asia (EECCA) have worked with the WSP approach; some have gained experiences through pilot projects. In Tajikistan, for example, the Ministry of Health and Social Protection and the State Sanitary Epidemiological Service aim at incremental uptake of WSPs to strengthen the population's health. The Republic of Moldova has initiated a WSP pilot project in order to serve as an example for other cities and to inform policy-making.

Nonetheless, countries in the EECCA sub-region still have rather limited experience with the WSP approach, and lower levels of uptake at policy-level when compared to other parts of the WHO European region. Therefore, the herewith described project was intended to systematically raise awareness and provide technical advice on WSPs to national policy-makers, build the foundation for sustainable scale-up of WSP implementation in the EECCA region, set the stage for WSP-related follow up activities in the EECCA region by raising interest among external partners.

A key feature of the project was to produce and disseminate guidance materials on WSP implementation in Russian, in particular develop a field guide brochure "Safe drinking-

water for small communities: Water Safety Plans for better health”, which provides hands-on advice on WSP development for operators of small water supplies and community members. The brochure complements the document “Water Safety Planning for Small Community Water Supplies”, which primarily targets professionals working with and providing assistance to small communities. Such guidance for WSP implementation at field-level had not been available from WHO prior to the project; its development was initiated by Member State’s requests.

In addition, the project aimed to build capacity in the area of small community water supplies and to enhance networking within the region. Such supplies form the backbone of drinking-water services in rural areas of most EECCA countries, but technical and financial resources for proper operation, maintenance and management often pose a limitation to the supply of safe drinking-water from these systems. Since these challenges related to small community water supplies are similar in most countries across the globe, including those with high levels of economic development, WHO has provided support to its Member States in this area of work through multiple activities, such as the development of guidance materials on water safety plans for small community supplies, and hosting the Small Community Water Supply Management Network (SCWSMN). The latter operates through a virtual forum and face-to-face meetings giving participants the opportunity to share information on national, regional and international approaches, good practices and challenges. No Network meetings had been convened in the EECCA region prior to the present project.

The project also aimed at supporting implementation of the 2014-2016 programme of work of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)/WHO Protocol on Water and Health. The introduction and scale-up of WSPs as well as improving management of small-scale water supply and sanitation systems are priority areas of the current programme of work. The Protocol is the first international, legally-binding environmental instrument that links sustainable water management and prevention, control and reduction of water-related diseases in Europe. Out of 36 signatory and 26 ratifying countries, 5 are EECCA countries (Azerbaijan, Belarus, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation and Ukraine). Countries which accede to the Protocol are obliged to set targets. Several countries have decided to set targets for WSP implementation or targets related to small-scale water supply systems. It is conceivable that the project has informed decision-making in those countries where the target-setting process was ongoing.

Planned measures to increase capacities for WSPs implementation in the EECCA countries included convening a sub-regional workshop in Kyrgyzstan aimed at increasing awareness on WSPs among water regulators as well as health and environment ministries of EECCA countries. Expected results of the workshop included:

- Increased understanding of the WSP approach and commitment among Governments in the EECCA region to develop national WSP roadmaps to support national level WSP introduction and scale-up based on the learnings from the workshop;

- Better sharing of experiences with WSP implementation and on the management of small community water supplies between countries in the region, highlighting benefits achieved and lessons learned;
- Development and distribution of the brochure on “Safe drinking-water for small communities: Water Safety Plans for better health”, and its translation into Russian;
- Dissemination of key guidance materials developed by WHO to support water safety planning and the management of small water supply systems and making them available in Russian.

Planned measures to increased engagement of the SCWSMN in supporting capacity building for WSPs implementation in small communities in EECCA countries were to convene the next SCWSMN meeting back to back with the sub-regional WSP workshop.

Expected results of the meeting included:

- Review of the SCWSMN workplan prepared based on progress that has been made since the last Network meeting;
- Raising awareness of the network in the EECCA countries;
- Enhancing networking of representatives of the environment and the health sector within the region, as well as with international colleagues;
- Sharing the regional initiatives related to small supplies, including activities undertaken under the Protocol on Water and Health; and
- Exploring the interest and feasibility of expanding the role of the network from solely developing and disseminating resources, to a network that provides practical assistance.

## **2. Implemented measures, incl. description of deviations**

The WSP capacity building workshop entitled “Building capacities for the development of water safety plans” was held on 24-25 June 2014 in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. The workshop was organized by WHO Regional Office for Europe (WHO/Europe) in cooperation with the WHO country Office, Kyrgyzstan, WHO headquarters and UNECE. It was attended by 78 delegates from the water and health sectors, including participants from 12 EECCA countries and Mongolia. The 7th SCWSMN meeting was held back-to-back from 26-27 June 2014 and was attended by 58 delegates from governmental and non-governmental organizations, officials from EECCA countries and participants from beyond the WHO European Region. Due to the close collaboration with the WHO Country Office in Kyrgyzstan, the local implementation was smooth without any deviations from original plans.

The technical contents of these meetings were supported by WHO guidance materials, including the document “Water Safety Plans: a field guide to improving drinking-water safety in small communities” that has been developed within the present project. It should be noted that although the demand from stakeholders to participate in both meetings was very high, some requests for participation had to be turned down due to the limited capacities at the meeting venue.

*Deviations from the original project proposal:* The budgeted costs for supporting participant's travel could not be fully used due to early flight bookings and because more participants than expected offered cost-sharing arrangements, or travelled on their own costs, causing a deviation from the project proposal. Therefore, in close consultation with the technical focal point at UBA, it was decided that the underspent travel costs were re-allocated to translate, print and distribute a key document of the WSP capacity building workshop into Russian, entitled: "Think big, start small, scale up: A road map to support country-level implementation of water safety plans". The document was considered as highly relevant among the regulators present at the capacity-building workshop, resulting in an explicit request for making available a Russian translation.

### **3. Achieved results, incl. description of deviations** (Please, attach relevant project documents and deliverables.)

The WSP capacity building workshop has increased awareness and generated interest among country stakeholders. As a result of the workshop, several countries have approached the WHO/Europe to start or intensify joint work on WSPs in 2015. During the workshop, country delegates discussed building blocks and support needs for successful implementation and scale-up of WSPs and the associated support needs. The workshop proceedings and outcomes are summarized in the brochure "[Water safety plans in eastern Europe, the Caucasus and central Asia – Summary of a workshop on building capacities for the development of water safety plans 24-25 June 2014, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan](#)" (see attached).

The SCWSMN meeting has resulted in increased networking within and beyond the EECCA region. During the meeting, country delegates have also been invited to share their needs regarding guidance from WHO in the area of small-scale supplies. The results from this exchange are to be reflected in a revised version of volume three of the WHO Guidelines for Drinking-water Quality, which focuses on small supplies. These findings have been, among others, summarized in the network meeting report (see attached).

The document "Safe drinking-water for small communities: Water Safety Plans for better health", has been developed, printed, translated into Russian and disseminated among the participants of both meetings and to the WHO country offices in the WHO European Region. After the launch of the document at the network meeting, the document has received global attention, followed by a high demand for hard copies of the English version from several WHO regions. Therefore, the document has also been distributed to WHO headquarters and the two WHO Regional Offices in Asia. A Russian and English version of the document is attached.

Workshop participants had enquired whether a translation of the document *Think big, start small, scale up: A road map to support country-level implementation of water safety plans*

into Russian was possible, to further guide their implementation efforts of WSP policies. Due to the budget deviation described above, such a translation was made possible and 1000 copies of the document were printed and distributed to all countries in the WHO European region which have indicated Russian as official language of correspondence, the pertinent country offices and workshop participants. A copy of the document is attached.

#### **4. Assessment of the achieved results referring to the project's objectives**

All aspects of the project have contributed to increased capacities on WSPs within the WHO European Region. Since the experiences with WSPs in the EECCA region were very limited at the outset of the project – some country delegates were not familiar with the concept at all – the project was successful in generating interest in the topic and in conveying basic knowledge on the WSP approach. During the WSP capacity-building workshop, it became evident that such an activity had been long overdue in the EECCA region. The fact that there was more demand from people to participate in the meeting than capacity to accommodate them also substantiates this appraisal. Among the building blocks for successful implementation and scale-up for WSPs, as identified by country delegates, were “national advocacy” where workshop participants emphasized the importance of national follow-up activities, underlined their improved understanding of WSPs and commitment to foster WSP implementation. Another identified building block was “international guidance” which showed that the delegates were able to familiarize themselves with existing WHO WSP guidance materials and considered them very helpful. Moreover, the country delegates were able to build contacts with European and global WSPs experts and champions from the EECCA region, which can be considered a success in light of the expected results.

Similarly, holding the SCWSMN meeting for the first time in the EECCA region was highly appreciated by the country delegates as well as network members from other regions. The meeting has increased the possibility for networking on issues related to small community water supply and sanitation and to further support capacity building for WSPs implementation in such systems. The topic “sanitary inspections” and the discussions on the updated version of Volume three of the WHO Guidelines for Drinking-water Quality (GDWQ) were particularly appreciated by the meeting participants. The meeting also provided a good opportunity for WHO to receive feedback and suggestions from the country representatives for the revision of this volume. In the session of future priorities, several participants suggested follow-up events on these or similar topics. The meeting was successful in promoting exchange between stakeholders in the area of small community water supplies, which was underpinned by the mutual interest of participants from the EECCA region and other regions to technically support follow-up activities.

## **5. Estimation of the potential impacts of the project** (changes induced by the project)

As a result of the workshop, four EECCA countries (Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and Uzbekistan) have requested WSP activities through Biennial Collaborative Agreements with WHO, which underlines the strong interest generated through the workshop in several countries. The non-governmental organization Oxfam GB Tajikistan indicated plans to include WSPs in their project cycles. In consequence, there will be more policy-makers and WSP trainers available within the EECCA region in the long-run, leveraging capacities for WSP implementation both in policy and in practice. It can thus be expected that several countries within the EECCA region will take first steps towards WSP policy development and initiating pilot projects. Against that background, another result from the project includes explorative talks on WSP scale-up activities in Tajikistan supported by Finland's Water Management Programme (FinWei). The meeting also provided a good opportunity to explore possibilities for collaboration regarding WSPs with international financing institutions, such as the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the Asian Development Bank. Moreover, delegates from the EECCA region have signalled interest in being increasingly active in global activities related to small-scale water supplies organized by WHO, since the SCWSMN meeting provided an initial opportunity for building such relationships.

## **6. Evaluation of the project by the beneficiaries**

The beneficiaries of the project, national governments, water suppliers and non-governmental organizations were highly satisfied with the project results. The immediate feedback from participants on-site and during the follow-up phase of the meetings was extremely positive. The proceedings of project implementation were largely followed as planned; while the estimated impact of the project exceeded what was initially expected. The high interest in participation showed that the WSP workshop was offered at the right point in time and that there is a lot of interest in exchanging about relevant drinking-water policies within EECCA and between EECCA and other sub-regions of the WHO European Region that had previously not been matched. For the Water and Sanitation Programme of the WHO/ Europe, the project provided numerous starting points for follow-up activities. The documents that had been produced supporting the project were considered of relevance by the beneficiaries and have been in high demand since their production and launch. The presence of other WHO offices, including country offices from within and beyond the European Region, headquarters and other international organizations was highly appreciated by the meeting participants and generated a lot of opportunity for further collaboration.

## **List of annexes**

- Water safety plans in eastern Europe, the Caucasus and central Asia – Summary of a workshop on building capacities for the development of water safety plans 24-25 June 2014, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan
- Water safety plans in eastern Europe, the Caucasus and central Asia – Summary of a workshop on building capacities for the development of water safety plans 24-25 June 2014, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan (in Russian)
- Think big, start small, scale up: A road map to support country-level implementation of water safety plans" (in Russian)
- Report of the seventh meeting of the International Small Community Water Supply Management Network Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan 26–27 June 2014
- Report of the seventh meeting of the International Small Community Water Supply Management Network Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan 26–27 June 2014 (in Russian)