



Consultation Meeting/workshop on The Protocol on Water and Health and equitable access to water and sanitation in Azerbaijan

Minutes

Date: 5 July 2018

Location: Caspian Plaza Hotel, Baku

Background: The objectives of the consultation meeting were:

(1) To support implementation of the targets set under the Protocol on Water and Health in Azerbaijan, by offering a platform to raise awareness on the targets set and to consult various stakeholders on future steps for the achievements of such targets.

(2) To provide an opportunity to discuss the findings of the assessment of the situation of equitable access to water and sanitation in Azerbaijan, reviewing challenges identified to ensure equitable access to water and sanitation.

The Consultation meeting was organized by UNECE within the national workplan of Azerbaijan under the European Union Water Initiative Plus (EUWI+) for the Eastern Partnership programme and with additional financial support by the French Ministry of Solidarities and Health.

Agenda: The Agenda is attached to the Minutes (Annex 1)

Participants: The list of participants is attached to the Minutes (Annex 2)

Summary of discussions

Welcome and opening remarks

Mr. Mutallim Abdulhasanov, Head of Department of the Environmental Policy Subdivision, Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources, opened the consultation meeting. He informed participants about the activities of the national Working Group on the Protocol on Water and Health implementation in Azerbaijan over the past years; under the leadership of Leyla Taghizade, Hygiene and Epidemiology Centre, Ministry of Health, and the recent finalization of the draft targets by the Working Group and respective key governmental entities. The draft targets were submitted to the Ministry of Health and the signature was expected in a very near future. Targets would then be submitted for signature to the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources. Once adopted, targets would serve as a roadmap for the implementation of the Protocol, with responsibilities for implementation being shared between Ministry of Health, Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources and Ministry of Emergency Situations. He highlighted that the consultation meeting would particularly discuss access to water and sanitation by vulnerable groups, which have limited access to services.

Mr. Vaqif Abdullayev, Deputy of Hygiene and Epidemiology Centre, Ministry of Health noted that water and health issues were not yet fully solved in Azerbaijan, where access to safe drinking water was not ensured everywhere. He informed that steps were being taken to improve the situation but that joint action was still needed in that field to contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Mr. Alisher Mamadzhonov, EUWI+ Regional Coordinator, UNECE reminded participants that the meeting aimed to discuss the Protocol's targets implementation as well as the outcomes of the assessment of equitable access to water and sanitation. He congratulated the working group and the joint efforts of ministries and other institutions. He informed that UNECE could consider supporting the implementation of selected priority measures (not investments but measures which would require support with international expertise) with financial support of the European Union under the EUWI+. He also noted that the meeting would also discuss the future steps for the implementation of the human rights to water and sanitation as well as possible funding opportunities to implement the identified recommendations.

Session 1 – The Protocol on Water and Health: driving progress to improve access to water and sanitation

Mr. Mamadzhonov introduced the UNECE-WHO/Europe Protocol on Water and Health and its linkages with the Sustainable Development Goals. He clarified that water and sanitation targets under SDGs had a more ambitious definition than under the previous Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and that even if the drinking water MDG was achieved, some additional efforts might be needed to reach SDGs.

The representative from the Parliament noted that targets set were very ambitious, in a difficult context of a downstream country, and that reaching those targets would require huge investments. He highlighted the need to better reflect the human rights to water and sanitation in the Constitution.

Ms. Leyla Taghizade, Hygiene and Epidemiology Centre, Ministry of Health presented the national targets set under the Protocol on Water and Health to improve access to water and sanitation in Azerbaijan. She particularly highlighted the challenges faced in the provision of safe drinking water in rural areas, and therefore the definition of specific measures to improve the situation and the need for their implementation to decrease the number of water-related diseases. She also informed that some progress towards reaching the Protocol targets had already been done with 443 villages to have been connected, thus giving access to improved water service to 720 000 people in the Kura-Aras region.

Marta Vargha, National Public Health Institute, Hungary presented (remotely) the experience of Hungary in implementing the Protocol on Water and Health as well as in setting and revising targets.

Participants requested:

- The translation of some of the guidance document developed under the Protocol into Azerbaijani;
- The publishing of and awareness raising on the national targets set under the Protocol (they will be posted online and sent to regional health centers);
- The Working Group to further clarify responsibilities and obligations of different institutions for reporting.

Session 2 – Applying the Equitable Access Score-card: methodology & outcomes of the national assessment

Ms. Chantal Demilecamps, UNECE, introduced the work on equitable access to water and sanitation under the Protocol on Water and Health. She pointed that the Protocol was practical instrument to progressively support the implementation of policies and practices the human rights to water and sanitation and contribute to SDGs implementation and other regional commitments (such as the Parma declaration). She also introduced the Equitable Access Score-card, a self-evaluation analytical tool developed under the Protocol, which had been applied in Azerbaijan between 2015-2018 to establish a baseline and prompt discussions on actions needed to achieve equitable access to water and sanitation.

Ms. Leyla Taghizade then presented the background, main objectives and general approach of the self-assessment of equitable access to water and sanitation in Azerbaijan, in which more than 40 experts from various institutions had been involved. She reminded the participants of the process followed for the assessment (launching workshop, distribution of the questionnaire (Score-card) by the Ministry of Health to various institutions to collect information, working group analyzing data and discussing findings). She mentioned that findings of the equitable access self-assessment were considered when drafting the national Protocol targets.

Ms. Gunel Gurbanova, National Monitoring Department, Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources, presented the main findings from the equitable access assessment (scoring, analyses, comments). Challenges to ensure equitable access to water and sanitation and possible solutions were then further discussed in two groups:

- Group 1: “Steering governance frameworks to deliver equitable access to water and sanitation” as well as “Reducing geographical disparities”;
- Group 2: “Ensuring access for vulnerable and marginalized groups” as well as “Keeping water and sanitation affordable for all”.

Main problems identified included:

- geographical discrepancies in access to water and sanitation between rural and urban areas, with some neighborhoods in rural and mountainous areas without access to centralized water systems;
- problems related to access to water and sanitation in schools and lack of knowledge of WASH;
- need to improve water and sanitation infrastructure in the penitentiary system;
- need to improve conditions of access to water and particularly sanitation by refugees and internally displaced persons;
- need to improve sewage systems and access to sanitation in residential areas of Baku suburbs;

- water quality not controlled in private wells.

Actions already taken to improve equitable access as a result include:

- Since March 2018, Azersu implemented water restoration projects in more than 100 villages (the objective is to provide access to water in 120 villages) and drilled wells (the objective is to drill 260 artesian wells). Some additional water treatment systems were built.
- Public awareness campaigns were launched in 2017, in cooperation with Norway, on Water Safety Plans.
- A decree was adopted, based on international standards, which requires cooperation between the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources and the Ministry of Justice to improve water and sanitation infrastructures in penitentiaries.

Further actions to be taken include:

- The need to do on-site checking of a selective set of information received through answers to the Score-card questionnaire, as scores seem quite high (the policy framework – laws and regulations - is not always implemented, hence the need to validate some data).
- Communication of the Equitable Access Score-card assessment findings and scores, and use of media to promote such findings and increase awareness of the problems.
- The need to confirm responsibilities and measures to eliminate disparities in access. In particular, the Ministry of Education should be more involved.
- Assessment of households lacking access to water and sanitation, in cooperation with social services.
- Decentralization of water and sanitation services from Azersu to local authorities and municipalities could be a solution (a target on decentralization of water and sanitation management by 2025 has been included in national Protocol targets)
- The need to develop a plan of activities (including short / long term measures) to contribute to SDGs implementation.

Session 3 – Towards an improvement of equitable access to water and sanitation in Azerbaijan

Ms Demilecamps noted that similar assessments had been carried out already in 11 countries from the pan-European region and had prompted changes in legislations, concrete measures to be adopted (such as schools toilets renovations, awareness raised, media campaigns, dedicated Equitable Access Action Plan being adopted and progressively implemented, etc).

At the end of the meeting, participants discussed a possible roadmap to improve equitable access to water and sanitation in Azerbaijan under the framework of the Protocol on Water and Health. They highlighted that such strategic roadmap would have sectoral obligations. Mr Mamadzhanov highlighted that several recommendations stemming from the equitable access assessment had already been addressed while setting Protocol targets, and that support could be provided under the EUWI+ should such specific need be raised by Azerbaijan.

Participants recognized the need to validate the findings and scores of the equitable access assessment report and to promote the findings broadly.

Closing of the meeting

Mr. Vaqif Abdullayev closed the meeting by recognizing that the question of access to water and sanitation was one of the most important topics for the country. He commended the different institutions involved for their coordination efforts. He acknowledged the definition of national targets under the Protocol and the assessment of the situation of equitable access to water and sanitation as important steps toward improving water and health conditions in the country.



Annex 1

Consultation Meeting/workshop on the Protocol on Water and Health and equitable access to water and sanitation in Azerbaijan

Programme

5 July 2018, Caspian Plaza Hotel, Baku

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| 9:00-9:30 | Registration of participants and welcoming coffee |
| 9:30-9:50 | <p>Welcome and opening remarks</p> <p><i>Mr. Mutallim Abdulhasanov, Head of Department of the Environmental Policy Subdivision, Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources</i></p> <p><i>Mr. Vaqif Abdullayev, Deputy of Hygiene and Epidemiology Centre, Ministry of Health</i></p> <p><i>Mr. Alisher Mamadzhanov, EUWI+ Regional Coordinator, UNECE</i></p> |
| 9:50-10:15 | Introductory tour de table |
| | <p>Session 1 – The Protocol on Water and Health: driving progress to improve access to water and sanitation</p> <p><i>Chair: Mr. Vaqif Abdullayev</i></p> |
| 10:15-10:30 | <p>Introduction of the UNECE-WHO/Europe Protocol on Water and Health and its linkages with the Sustainable Development Goals</p> <p><i>Mr. Alisher Mamadzhanov, UNECE</i></p> |

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| 10:30-11:00 | <p>Implementation of the Protocol on Water and Health in Azerbaijan: targets set to improve access to water and sanitation <i>Ms. Leyla Taghizade, Hygiene and Epidemiology Centre, Ministry of Health</i></p> <p>Questions and answers, including comments from the representatives from different regions of Azerbaijan</p> |
| 11:00-11:20 | <i>Coffee break</i> |
| 11:20-11:50 | <p>Experience of Hungary in implementing the Protocol on Water and Health <i>Skype presentation by Ms. Marta Vargha, National Public Health Institute, Hungary</i></p> |
| 11:50-12:30 | <p>How to achieve the targets set under the Protocol in Azerbaijan? <i>Interactive discussion with the audience moderated by Leyla Taghizade:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implementing bodies and responsibilities - Funding of measures - Review and assessment of progress - Coordination with other national processes (SDG, national programmes, intersectoral coordination...) |
| 12:30-13:30 | <i>Lunch</i> |
| | <p>Session 2 – Applying the Equitable Access Score-card: methodology & outcomes of the national assessment</p> <p><i>Chair: Mr. Mutallim Abdulhasanov</i></p> |
| 13:30-13:50 | <p>Introduction to the work on equitable access to water and sanitation under the Protocol on Water and Health <i>Ms. Chantal Demilecamps, UNECE</i></p> |
| 13:50-14:05 | <p>Self-assessment of equitable access to water and sanitation in Azerbaijan: background, main objectives and general approach <i>Ms. Leyla Taghizade, Hygiene and Epidemiology Centre, Ministry of Health</i></p> |
| 14:05-14:40 | <p>Main outcomes of the Equitable access assessment: main findings from the assessment (scoring, analyses, comments) <i>Ms. Gunel Gurbanova, National Monitoring Department, Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources</i></p> <p>Questions and answers, including comments from the representatives from different regions of Azerbaijan</p> |
| 14:40-14:50 | <p>Introduction to the group discussion <i>Ms. Chantal Demilecamps, UNECE</i></p> |
| 14:50-16:45 | <p>Discussion on the main challenges to ensure equitable access to water and sanitation in 4 groups</p> <p>Group 1: Steering governance frameworks to deliver equitable access to water and sanitation (Section 1) <i>Facilitated by a representative from “Azersu” OJSC</i></p> |

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| | <p>Group 2: Reducing geographical disparities (Section 2) <i>Facilitated by Ms. Gunel Gurbanova, National Monitoring Department, Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources</i></p> <p>Group 3: Ensuring access for vulnerable and marginalized groups (Section 3) <i>Facilitated by a representative from the State Committee for Affairs of Refugees and Internally Displaced People of Republic of Azerbaijan</i></p> <p>Group 4: Keeping water and sanitation affordable for all (Section 4) <i>Facilitated by a representative from the Ministry of Emergency Situations</i></p> <p>In each group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Validation of scores assigned and identification of main challenges (14:50-15:30) - Discussion on priority actions to reduce inequities in access to water and sanitation (15:30-16:15) <p>In plenary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reporting back (16:15-16:45) <p><i>Including coffee break</i></p> |
| | <p>Session 3 – Towards an improvement of equitable access to water and sanitation in Azerbaijan</p> <p><i>Chair: Mr. Vaqif Abdullayev</i></p> |
| 16:45-17:00 | <p>International experience: Outcomes of the equitable access self-assessment in other countries and steps taken after the self-assessment <i>Ms. Chantal Demilecamps, UNECE</i></p> |
| 17:00-17:15 | <p>A roadmap to improve equitable access to water and sanitation in Azerbaijan under the framework of the Protocol on Water and Health <i>Plenary discussion, building on the outcomes of the group discussion, moderated by “Azersu” OJSC</i></p> |
| 17:15-17:30 | <p>Closing of the meeting Mr. Vaqif Abdullayev</p> |

Annex 2

List of participants

| N | Name | Organization | Position | E-mail |
|-----|-----------------------|---|---|---------------------------|
| 1. | Vaqif Abdullayev | Hygiene and Epidemiology Centre, Ministry of Health | Deputy Head | |
| 2. | Mutallim Abdulhasanov | Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources | Head of Subdivision | mabdulhasanov@gmail.com |
| 3. | Leyla Tagizadeh | Ministry of Health | Focal Point of Protocol | leylatagizadeh@yahoo.com |
| 4. | Eldar Abdullayev | Ministry of Health | Head of Department | |
| 5. | Aygun Aliyev | Ministry of Health | Doctor-hygienist | |
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| 8. | Rakhman Mukhtarov | Ministry of Health (Masali-region) | Doctor | |
| 9. | Yaqub Tagiyev | Ministry of Health (Sabirabad-region) | Doctor | sabirabad_gem@esehiyye.az |
| 10. | Alishad Qudratoglu | Ministry of Health (Zaqatala-region) | Doctor | zaqatala_gem@esehiyye.az |
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| 23. | Lamiya Zeynalova | Ombudsman | Expert | zlamiye72@mail.ru |
| 24. | Rana Lazimova | The State Statistical Committee of Republic of Azerbaijan | Head of energy & environment statistics dept | renal@azstat.org |
| 25. | Ahmad Mammadov | Baku State University | Expert | ahmadmammadov@hotmail.com |
| 26. | Sultan Qurbanov | Penitentiary Service of Azerbaijan | Advisor | si-1960@mail.ru |
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| 35. | Chantal Demilecamps | UNECE | co-secretariat of the Protocol on Water and Health | Chantal.demilecamps@un.org |
| 36. | Rafiq Verdiyev | EUWI+ | Local Representative in Azerbaijan | rafig2000@mail.ru |