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Meeting of the Parties to
the Protocol on Water and Health
to the Convention on the Protection
and Use of Transboundary
Watercourses and International Lakes

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Item 5 (b) of the provisional agenda

Review of past activities and discussion of future activities
in the different areas of work: Assistance to support
implementation at the national level

MOP5/WH/2019/INF.8

**Summary of the main activities and achievements under the project
“Small and safe: scaling up water safety planning and effective water quality monitoring in
rural Tajikistan”**

Tajikistan has introduced water safety plans (WSPs) to central Asia for the first time, with the recent completion of a successful pilot project, implemented by rural communities across the country.

As a health response towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal 6 on water and sanitation, the World Health Organization (WHO) recommends the introduction of a WSP for every drinking-water supply. The approach combines established risk-management principles with prevention-focused operation and monitoring practices. These principles remain the same for large urban suppliers as they do for small rural operators, and they have already been applied in over 80 countries around the world.

As part of its biennial collaborative agreement with the Ministry of Health and Social Protection of Tajikistan, the WHO Regional Office for Europe has supported the Tajik government in implementing the project to strengthen prevention of water-related health risks and to increase community resilience. WHO and the Tajik government jointly implemented the project “*Small and safe: scaling-up water safety planning and effective water quality monitoring in rural Tajikistan*” from June 2016 to November 2018.

In line with the water quality-related targets set in the context of the Protocol on Water and Health, the purpose of the project was to support the Tajik government in improving access to safely managed drinking-water supply services and strengthening drinking-water quality surveillance, particularly in rural areas. The project focused on two intervention areas:

- Facilitating long-term uptake of the WSP approach through advocating for WSPs as an integral part of water policy and programming, building broad WSP capacities and demonstrating the feasibility of WSPs in rural areas and small towns.
- Developing viable and effective approaches to and capacities in drinking-water quality surveillance at both community and institutional levels in accordance with the recommendations of the WHO Guidelines for drinking-water quality.

The project accomplished several key achievements:

- WSPs were introduced in five districts across rural Tajikistan, improving the health and well-being of communities. The WSPs generated in the course of the project can serve as models for other communities in Tajikistan and beyond.
- A national team of WSP facilitators was established. They now have the tools and knowledge to advise water suppliers and authorities on water safety planning and guide through proper risk assessment and safe operational practices.
- A national WSP roadmap now defines key steps and actions by various stakeholders in support of long-term sustainable uptake of WSPs in Tajikistan. The roadmap is the first of its kind in the central Asian context and can provide great impetus for other countries.
- The project has helped to raise water safety planning to be a national priority. The new drinking-water and sanitation law now incorporates requirements on the WSP approach. This presents a major milestone and provides a regulatory push towards long-term adoption of WSPs.
- Guidance for surveillance authorities was developed on effective risk-based approaches to drinking-water quality monitoring in alignment with WHO recommendations.
- The staff of the local, regional and national branches of the Sanitary Epidemiological Service were trained in collaboration with the Dutch National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM) on risk-based surveillance approaches and the prioritization of water quality parameters to ensure focused and cost-effective monitoring while protecting health.
- Water quality monitoring equipment was upgraded in the laboratories of partnering Sanitary Epidemiological Service offices.
- Awareness was increased in rural communities of the human right to water and the relationship between safe water, sanitation, hygiene behaviour and disease prevention.
- Two project videos were produced to summarize and promote the WSP project experiences in Tajikistan.

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