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Regional Water Team Days 2017 Sub-RésEAU Eastern Europe and Central Asia

Face-to-face meeting and field visits, Macedonia, 4th to -6th of April 2017

Summary and Documentation



Summary

The Regional Water Team Days 2017 was the second face to face meeting of the Sub-RésEAU Eastern Europe and Central Asia, after a first meeting in Moldova in 2015.

More than 30 members of SDC's water network in the Eastern region gathered for 3 days around the Lake Prespa and the city of Bitola in Macedonia.

Half of the time of the event was dedicated to field visits, during which the participants were introduced to the approach and success of the SDC funded, UNDP implemented project "Restoration of the Lake Prespa Ecosystem".

The other half of the event consisted of a workshop, where the participants discussed three main topics: river basin management, universal and equitable access to water and sanitation services and future exchange and sharing of experiences in the network.

Success factors and challenges of River Basin Management programmes

The participants discussed in detail the learnings from the visits to the Lake Prespa project, and also discussed further SDC projects in the Bregalnica basin (Macedonia) and the Ferghana valley (Tajikistan). The participants analysed the challenges that the different programmes are facing and focussed on identifying the success factors for river basin management programmes.

Key takeaway points from the discussions:

- **Use showcases:** The Lake Prespa project is a nice example of a project that achieved visible results (better water quality of the lake) in the project's life time. Of course this is also thanks to the small scale of the basin, with a simple institutional framework (the municipality is responsible for most tasks), and clear cause-effect relations that can be concretely tackled. In larger or even transboundary basins, water resources management is a very complex task and visible results are very difficult to achieve in short time. However, it may be a good idea for projects working in large basins to also include activities on a more limited scale, e.g. on sub-basin or catchment level, where "quick wins" and visible results can be achieved. This "bottom-up" element will likely help creating awareness and increase the understanding of stakeholders of the importance of water resource management.
- **Long-term approach:** Due to the complexity of water resources management and the challenges of developing the institutions needed for this, a long-term approach of projects is crucial (minimum 10 years). It is recommended to have several project phases in order to be able to pilot activities in one phase, adapt them to reality and do scaling-up in following phase(s).
- **A truly participatory approach** is essential for the elaboration of the basin management plan, only then ownership and acceptance for the measures will be in place.
- River Basin Plans are a powerful tool for **policy influencing** and agenda setting on a local, regional and national level, Switzerland can and should play an active role in promoting IWRM.

Services beyond utility reach / How to achieve universal and equitable access

The second main topic of the workshop was the question of how universal and equitable access to water and sanitation services, as stipulated by the SDG 6, can be achieved, and what approaches would be most appropriate in the sub-regions of the Western Balkans, Moldova and Central Asia.

Key takeaway points:

- **Awareness raising needed:** In the Western Balkans and Moldova, government and donor strategies are clearly dominated by the EU framework, the MDG/SDGs of are much less of importance. While EU and SDG objectives are largely congruent in some parts - e.g. wastewater treatment and integrated water resources management - the aim of universal and equitable access to safe and adequate water supply and sanitation is strongly stipulated by the SDGs 6.1 and 6.2, but not in EU frameworks. Consequently, awareness for the need of achieving universal access is currently rather low among governmental agencies in these countries. Any support by SDC to implement the SDGs in

these countries therefore needs to start with strong efforts on awareness raising among governmental and civil society stakeholders.

- The topic of “**inclusion**” needs to be addressed and methodologies need to be developed to deal with “social cases”, vulnerable groups such as poor people or ethnic minorities (e.g. Roma) that face access barriers within areas covered with services.
- **Support data collection**: A major obstacles is that most countries in the region do not have good disaggregated data on the access gaps, quality of services etc. Supporting data collection, data management, the establishment of monitoring systems etc. can be a good entry point for Swiss support.
- **Innovative solutions** to deal with services beyond utility reach, hence for smaller villages and (remote) rural areas, need to be developed and promoted. Successful examples, such as those developed in Moldova should be replicated / up-scaled. However it needs to be acknowledged that every case is different and there is no common blue-print, hence contextual adaptations are crucial.
- It is not only about access to services but also about **performance and sustainability of services** provided. If existing services are not improving as well (or in parallel) we will never reach the goal of reaching all with a reliable service.

Priorities and activities in the Sub-RésEAU

The workshop concluded with the identification of the members' needs and priorities for future exchange and sharing of experiences in the network.

Key takeaway points:

- There is a growing demand for such kind of exchanges and discussions, supporting the scope of work of each participant.
- The wider region of SDC's Eastern Cooperation and of the Sub-RésEAU has distinct subregions, e.g. Central Asia or the Western Balkans. The Sub-RésEAU should promote activities within these sub-regions, while maintaining certain activities covering the entire region (e.g. RWTD)
- Moldova and Ukraine are somehow stuck between the two regions of Western Balkan and Central Asia, not really belonging to either of them and hence not profiting from any support of a Regional Advisor. One institutionalised support per year by a regional adviser would already help a lot.
- E-discussions, virtual F2F events and webinars could be used more frequently in order to have a more dynamic Sub-RésEau. These exchanges can take place on the sub-regional level or include the whole Sub-RésEau.
- Availability of a list of specialists / existing specific sector expertise would be helpful for knowledge, information and idea exchange, and in the search for consultants.
- It is important to maintain a balance between keeping “traditional” water knowledge among RésEAU members alive and introducing new trends in the sector needs.

Next steps:

- The priorities identified will be translated into activity plans for the Sub-RésEAU. Planning will start in detail after June 2017, once the new regional water advisors (André Wehrle, Cliff Hammer) will have taken up their positions.

Documentation and summary of results

1. Success factors and challenges of River Basin Management programmes

Restoration of Lake Prespa Ecosystem	Bregalnica River Basin Management Plan project	National Water Resources Management Project, Tajikistan
Main elements of the project		
<p>Objective: Restore the ecosystem of the lake Prespa (improve water quality in the lake)</p> <p>Main actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thorough analysis of basin, ecosystem services, and pressures and effects (monitoring, modelling) • Broad and early participation of concerned stakeholders, i.e.: analysis of different users' perspectives and priority uses • Translation of political EU directives into technical plan and piloting of directives • Integrated support measures in the areas of agriculture, tourism, forestry, fisheries, wastewater and waste management, river restoration, industrial pollution implemented, some of the strategies are transboundary (tourism). • Support community action and establish partnerships and networks established <p>Presentations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restoration of the Lake Prespa Ecosystem (presentation by Dimitar Sekovski) • Drini-River Initiative (presentation by Vladimir Stavric) 	<p>Objective: Support River Basin Management according to the EU WFD in the Bregalnica Basin</p> <p>Main actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop the Bregalnica River Basin Management Plan • Implementation of Small Water Infrastructure Projects • Support the creation of adequate administrative structures for water resources management (Bregalnica RBM Planning Group and Advisory Council); organization of the Policy Dialogue • Support public participation and awareness of the population in the Bregalnica region on water issues <p>Presentation and plan document:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bregalnica River Basin Management Plan project (presentation by Marija Doichinova) • Bregalnica River Basin Management Plan (link to the full plan) 	<p>Objectives: Support the implementation of the national water sector reform in the Syrdarya basin in Tajikistan</p> <p>Main actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support Water Sector Reform Implementation • Rehabilitation of Priority Infrastructure (irrigation) • Improved Water Productivity and Irrigation Technology • Support to Basin and sub-basin Organizations and Water User Associations • Canal Automation and Water Information System • Watershed Management and Disaster Risk Reduction <p>Presentation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Water Resources Management Project, Tajikistan (presentation by Marian Szymanowicz)
Key challenges to respond in the project (results from group work)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complex requirements and resulting legislation (EU) • Understand responsibilities of polluters and act upon • Sustainability of coordination and leadership • Reaching economics of scale • Balancing countries' interests in plan • Changing administration at local level means change of priorities • Ensuring human and financial resources in the long-term / 	<p>The main challenge is to achieve commitment of the government for river basin planning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of resources to implement the plan • Lack of approval of the developed plan by the government • Reluctance of the government to integrate trained experts in their structure • Non-functioning of government units which are responsible for basin plan implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Missing legal (and other) basis to support the Government • Dominance of Irrigation ("Irrigated WRM vs. Integrated WRM) • Each river basin covered by a different donor – difficulties of coordination • Trans-boundary issue very important, all river basins are transboundary • Integrating other uses of water • Missing data- monitoring systems do not work

<p>donor dependence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Producing cost-benefit analyses 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key issues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Political will, legal basis etc.: do we really succeed? ○ How much risk are we willing to take? ○ Cost-benefit analysis is missing ○ Presidents need to reconfirm their commitment for ICWC
<p>Success factors of the project (results from group work)</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having a legal framework (such as the EU directives) and complying with it (access to development funds) • Piloting and proving concepts on small scale first • Integrated participatory approach: involve key stakeholders: engage, empower, inform • Integrate sustainability and affordability principles • Tackle the existing and visible problems of key stakeholders first. Also collect relevant data and analyse gaps • Aim for economies of scale to achieve cost recovery of water services. Provide donor funding for small-scale systems where no economies of scale are possible. • Long-term commitment of all stakeholders • Make packages in transboundary plan for countries to pick “their favourite” • Show cost implications of “business as usual” scenario • Professional, permanent secretary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small infrastructure projects as incentives • Intensive outreach to public and local stakeholders • Good coordination to gather available data • Long-term perspective • Strong local presence 	<p>Success factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extend dialogue from Government level to basin level • Priority infrastructure implementation • Each river basin covered by a different donor – coverage is guaranteed • Modern technologies, innovative solutions • Interstate Commission for Water Coordination of Central Asia <p>Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chance for donors to push at regional level • Include civil society into the planning process • Regional advice to bring to national results up to the regional level • Role of Switzerland is crucial at the regional level

[Pin-board presentations with results of the group work](#)

2. Services beyond utility reach / How to achieve universal and equitable access

Presentations:

- [Integrated Monitoring Initiative for SDG 6 \(presentation by Hanna Capeder\)](#)
- [Beyond Utility Reach - Achieving Universal Access to Water Supply \(presentation by Susana Smets\)](#)
- [Findings of a Global Study on Sustainable Service Delivery Model \(conference report, World Bank\)](#)
- [Situation in Moldova \(presentation by Julie Bergamin\)](#)
- [Situation in Kosovo \(presentation by Arwid Hall\)](#)
- [Results of the group work \(pin-board presentations\)](#)

Western Balkan	Moldova	Central Asia
What are the main gaps in access to water and sanitation in the region within and outside the service areas?		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance of the sector?! • Political influence on the public utilities • It is not only about access but also about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Performance sustainability of services ○ Missing data ○ Missing trust in service providers ○ Costs (tariff setting, cost increase from urban wastewater treatment) ○ Water supply vs. sanitation ○ Missing investment plans ○ Involvement of civil society ○ Mandatory vs. voluntary inclusion of systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50% of the villages have no water system • In villages with water systems ca. 40% of people are not connected • Poor people tend to have less access than rich • Water quality in wells is not potable • >30% of piped systems don't deliver potable water • >40% have unimproved pit latrines • Only a small % have flush toilets (no sludge management) • Lack of awareness (both at government and people) on sanitation options other than pits and sewers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rate of waterborne diseases high • Sanitation gap wider than water gap • WASH in public institutions lacking (also in new ones) • No regulatory framework • Outdated/inappropriate norms and standards • Allocation of budgets not beneficial/appropriate. • Water tariffs not reflecting real cost • Data not consistent/accurate • No cost-benefit analysis of various scenarios • High rates of corruption (ex. in tendering process) • Unclear ownership structures • Infrastructure not maintained/disappeared • Notion of decentralized services missing in authorities • No awareness on WASH/no media coverage
What strategies and approaches can SDC apply to help closing the access gaps?		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve data collection • Specifically looking at inclusion: Methodology to deal with social cases, disaggregate data for better targeting, incentives for voluntary inclusion, targeted investments • Shift focus to sanitation, promote innovative solutions for small locations (2000-10000 inhabitants) • Strengthen civil society for better advocacy • Strategic approaches – looking at the whole cycle (water supply + sanitation), but case by case solutions • Better donor coordination, introduce conditionalities, performance based indicators, long-term engagement (maintain your values!) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support better understanding of the situation • Advocacy to address gaps in rural areas • Develop approaches to support households in upgrading their facilities (e.g. loans, subsidies) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on national strategies on sanitation • Integrated approach to drinking water and irrigation • Move from pilots to implementation: showcase success stories • Strengthen partnerships & knowledge sharing • Proposing alternative financing mechanisms • Focus on policy dialogue • Provide decision making support to governments • Focus on social accountability

3. Priorities and activities in the Sub-RésEAU

[Results of discussions, flipchart presentations](#)

What are the successes and challenges in the Sub-RésEAU?	What is the demand from members towards the RésEAU, Regional Water Advisors and Focal Point?	What are future priorities for the Sub-RésEAU
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information and exchange of ideas • Info opportunity for the newcomers and people who change positions • Knowledge Management • Face to face meetings every 2 years, but how to maintain exchange outside F2F? • Field visits and theoretical/thematic exchange complement each other • Exchange Platform (needed – Sector and Region) • How to find specific expertise? – Thematic forums? • E- Discussions (virtual: webinars, F2F) • Responsiveness • Continuity and Regularity • Prospective change beyond the limit of project, state, organisation (bigger picture) • “Eagle and chickens prospective” • Ensure the transfer of sector knowledge and experience • Get feedback • Inter-project exchange • Selection criteria for topics with relevance (RWTD, discussion) • Overview of eastern projects • Open, large membership • Availability and expertise of regional Advisor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working in the field with projects rather than only community policy papers • Coordination between projects/countries strengthened • Use resources effectively and efficiently- not visiting for only 1 project • Moldova + Ukraine do not have RA support: Institutionalise at least 1 exchange per year • Include SECO people/partners and national partners (Gov.) • Idea of a Sub-Sub-RésEAU (Western Balkans) • Exchanges (individual) of NPOs within the regions • Consultation of Sub-RésEAU members/Regional Advisors on country strategies (SDC) • Advisory service through Regional Advisor (new projects, feedbacks, lessons learnt etc.) • Face2face on rotation principle • Formalize coordination (especially for Moldova/Ukraine) and geographical coverage of Regional Advisors • Facilitate exchanges with projects • SDC innovation and news in the sector (policy influencing), mailing list • Database about expertise shared by advisors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Longer term strategic thematic focus • Relevant topics: Energy efficiency, climate change resilience, DRR • Water sector governance, Integrity management, working on the system- best practices? • Cost-benefit analysis, show cases, economic assessments • Availability of reliable data: how to get there, show cases • Project cycle management • Tools and best practices • Using in-house capacity: list of specialist from RésEAU • Follow up discussions of governance questions & sustainability • More emphasis on inclusion of management in RésEAU (deputy etc.) • Focus more as a Sub-RésEAU/ RésEAU • Public sanitation & awareness raising as topics • Income generation from sub-products created by our activities- give value to the sector

Agenda

Tue 04.04.2017	Field visits – Restoration of the Lake Prespa Ecosystem (night in Bitola)
07.45	Departure from Skopje; boarding of buses in front of the Swiss Embassy (3min walk from Hotel Solun)
11.30 - 12.15	Introduction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome (with coffee and small snack) • Introduction to the agenda • Introduction round of participants
12.15 - 13.00	Presentation on the project “Restoration of the Lake Prespa Ecosystem”, Discussion and Q&A
13.00 - 13.15	Short walk through the monitoring station and to the nearby restaurant
13.15 - 14.15	Lunch
14.15 - 17.00	Field visits (in 2 groups) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit to Ezerani Nature Park premises • Visit to Demonstration Orchard
18.00	Check-in Hotel Epinal, Bitola
19.00	Dinner in Hotel Epinal
Wed 05.04.2017	Morning: Field visits / Afternoon: RWTD Workshop (night in Bitola)
08.00	Departure from Hotel
09.00 – 12.00	Field visits (in 2 groups) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit to the composting plant in Resen • Visit to the waste water treatment plant in village of Nakolec
12.00 – 14.00	Lunch in the village of Pretor and return to Bitola
14.00 - 14.15	Introduction to workshop programme
14.15 – 15.30	Presentations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drini-River Initiative: cross-border river basin management in the Western Balkan • Bregalnica RBM project • IWRM project Ferghana Valley
15.30 – 16.00	Coffee break
16.00 – 17.30	Group work – Success factors and challenges of RBM programmes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 groups each with resource persons from the Lake Prespa / Bregalnica / Ferghana projects, defining key elements, key challenges to respond and success factors • Reporting back, 5 min per group
19.30	Dinner in Restaurant in Bitola
Thu 06.04.2017	RWTD Workshop (all day in Bitola, return to Skopje in the evening, night in Skopje or departure)
08.15 - 09.15	Introduction to topic: Services beyond utility reach / How to achieve universal and equitable access (SDG 6.1/6.2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Background on and aims of study “service beyond utility reach” (Susana Smets, WB) • Presentation of SDC HQ view on SDGs, universal and equitable access (Hanna Capeder)
09.15 - 10.00	Situation in Kosovo and Moldova <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation of survey results from Moldova (Julie Bergamin) • Presentation of survey results from Kosovo (Arwid Hall)
10.00 – 10.30	Coffee break
10.30 – 12.00	Group discussion on identifying issues and challenges in SDC portfolios in the different countries, as well as strategies and approaches to address these issues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 Groups (Western Balkans / Moldova and Ukraine / Central Asia) • Reporting back (5 min per group)
12.00 – 13.30	Lunch / Check-out from rooms
13.30 – 14.00	Free space for individual networking and meetings
14.00 – 15.00	World café: Priorities and activities in the Sub-RésEAU
15.00-15.30	Closure and departure to Skopje

Regional Water Team Days 2017 in Macedonia (Sub-RésEAU Eastern Europe and Central Asia) – Documentation

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