

CASE STUDY 25

ACCESS TO SAFE DRINKING WATER IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Author: Olivera Tanackovic
Country: Bosnia and Herzegovina
Sector: Water

CONTEXT

In Bosnia & Herzegovina access to safe drinking water is much worse than one might expect from a country on its way to EU membership. Bosnia & Herzegovina faces the challenge to focus on social and economic development while preventing the further degradation of its ecosystems.

Safe, efficient and reliable water supply for all citizens is a basic precondition for sustainable development. In order to provide a sustainable water supply system and to ensure long-term reliability of water service delivery, there is a clear need for further development of the water authorities in Bosnia & Herzegovina at all levels. They face numerous challenges, both institutional and legislative, including a lack of knowledge of public water awareness, financial constraints, inadequate capacities of local water authorities, obsolete and insufficiently maintained infrastructure and unreliable water data.

Fifty five percent of the population in Bosnia & Herzegovina is connected to public/municipal water utilities and that is well below the EU ninety percent average. Approximately ninety percent of the urban population is connected to the public water supply systems while in rural areas that figure is significantly smaller. Drinking water supply in terms of quantity and quality is only satisfactory in urban areas, where its supply is under the authority of public water supply companies.

Available data regarding the present state of drinking water systems only reflect urban areas. There is no cadastre of drinking water resources and/or drinking water pipelines/systems in the rural areas. Drinking water pipelines in rural area are mainly built by local people; they have never been incorporated into wider drinking water systems and the rural population still largely depends on its own local sources with small water supply systems. The communities are responsible for maintenance, management and monitoring of their drinking water systems. There is no information available regarding the water quality, nor for monitoring and protection of water resources. This lack of data hinders efforts to achieve improved water supply in rural areas.

This indicates that major challenges exist with regard to safe drinking water supply in the rural areas. An existing gap in the safe supply between urban and rural areas contributes to a disadvantaged position of the rural people and lessens potential for poverty reduction and overall rural development.

As water sustains life and is a basic human right, it is of crucial importance to provide access to water for all and to lay a foundation for sustainable but effective management of drinking water.

In order to overcome all these challenges, municipal water authorities in Bosnia & Herzegovina require wide-ranging and systematic support. This case study summarizes SNV's intervention in regard to the registration of rural water supply systems in Travnik municipality, Mid Bosnia Canton.

CLIENTS

The overall improvement of the current drinking water services is one of the main priorities in Mid Bosnian Canton, and in particular, in Travnik municipality. Through a signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Cantonal Ministry of Forest, Agriculture and Water Management and Travnik Municipality, SNV has been providing advisory support in drinking water related issues through several assignments in the last three years.

INTERVENTION LOGIC AND METHODS

The new Water Law of Mid Bosnia Canton is harmonised with the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD). It obliges the Ministry and Municipalities to establish and continuously maintain a register of rural drinking water supply systems. The Travnik municipality was one of the first municipalities in Bosnia and Herzegovina that adopted a Decision to register available drinking water resources and rural water supply systems in the entire territory of the municipality.

The following issues underpinned SNV's commitment to generate and contribute to lasting impacts on the lives of rural poor:

- weak capacities and performance of local water stakeholders to bring desired change;
- a need for improved access to safe drinking water and thus effectively contributing to the realisation of poverty alleviation;
- a need to professionalise and modernise rural drinking water management systems thereby integrating EU standards and best practices; and
- an urgent need to expand drinking water distribution systems in rural areas and to secure natural water resources.

SNV's decision to cooperate with Travnik municipality was supported by the recognition, that apart from legal obligations, the establishment of a register of rural drinking water supply systems is a necessary strategic step to water supply and contributes to sustainable rural development. The Municipality's focus on the poor segment of the community and search for compliance with EU standards were the main selection criteria for cooperation. From the outset, the challenge for the Municipality was to harmonise its Decision with the new Cantonal Water Law and to begin its practical application.

SNV's intervention logic was to begin with rural communities in a pilot zone (Billa Valley in 2009) and then continue in the rest of the municipality (Turbe area in 2010). This would be achieved by connecting various actors (Cantonal Ministry, Travnik Municipality, water utility companies, LCB and rural communities' representatives and activists).

SNV applied a socially inclusive approach while supporting the Municipality in the mapping and registration of existing springs and rural water supply systems.

During this process consideration was given to rural people's knowledge and experience regarding their own drinking water systems. For rural people to have a continuous supply of safe drinking water, guidance was offered for making informed decisions concerning future drinking water management. This would allow them to freely choose whether to manage their drinking water systems independently under prescribed rules, or to join the public water supply system. The approach of SNV was to support the municipal water authority to effectively prepare and conduct measures that would contribute to the implementation of legal obligations with regard to rural water supply systems. Improved communication and cooperation with rural water consumers was key to this.

The support to the client included the following:

- Harmonisation of the Municipality's decision with the new Cantonal Water Law;
- Selection of the pilot zone, LCB and local consultant;
- Preparation of the questionnaire for the registration of drinking water sources and systems for future water management (in compliance with Cantonal Water Law).

OUTCOME

Improved performance of the municipal water authorities in achieving sustainable drinking water supply in rural communities in accordance with EU principles. The Client's (Municipality) service have become more pro-poor oriented. Communication and consultation with rural communities' were intensified (meetings, field visits, written communication).

SNV supported the Municipality in the preparation of measures and activities to implement the legal obligations for rural water supply. This resulted in the

integration of the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) into local legislation and practice.

SNV also ensured efficient and effective two-way communication and cooperation between public water service providers and rural water consumers. This ensured a sense of local ownership and responsibility.

A conducted measurement of the water sources capacity in Travnik municipality was key factor in the determination of jurisdiction and issuing of water permits. In this regard both the Municipality and rural communities have benefited from it.

The survey and mapping of rural water supply systems produced data on the availability of water pipes and other water facilities, water sources capacity, irregular or inexistent water quality control, illegal connections and water systems in disrepair. These are some of the main problems associated with rural drinking water systems as well as information on what data and documents are missing in specific rural communities (e.g. water permits and decisions, project documentation).

Overall, we can conclude that the intervention led to effective and transparent water governance, leading to better access to safe drinking water.

IMPACT

This assignment contributed to the achievement of the following results:

- Minimizing the gap between rural and urban areas with regard to drinking water issues;
- Protection of drinking water sources;
- Increased access to safe drinking water for the rural population in Travnik municipality.

The survey demonstrated that the population of one rural community (MZ Ilovaca, 40 households) expressed their preference for their water supply systems to come under the authority of Travnik public water supply company (JKP Basbunar). A meeting of the rural community Council confirmed the decision of the Safe Drinking Water management transfer. The community is now engaged to meet the requirements for connection to the municipal water utility. This will secure safe drinking supply for this community in a way that can be sustained over the long run.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Throughout this process it was found that activities that require personal involvement of citizens, based on their good will and motivation, is still a challenging task in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- The motivation of rural communities to engage in drinking water related issues is still low, even though investments in rural water supply systems can have profound impact on local economic development and the life of rural poor.
- There must be a focus on what users want, what level of service they are willing to pay for; and, crucially, what they can sustain.
- It is essential that cooperative behaviour and willingness of relevant stakeholders to commit and engage exists.
- Finally, there is still a perception that access to safe drinking water and sanitation services are technical and infrastructural issues, while the governance aspects are undervalued.

SUSTAINABILITY

Travnik Municipality has now better insight in rural water supply systems. This provides a solid base for the further completion of the legally obliged drinking water register. Apart from securing the financial means, improved communication with rural communities is likely to provide mutual understanding in overcoming future safe drinking water challenges.

Travnik Municipality is now the only municipality in Mid Bosnia Canton that initiated the registration of its water supply systems in rural communities. Its experience should be shared with other municipalities in the Canton.

Standard data:

Start and end date of the contract:

- 10 March - 31 December 2010

Composition of the team:

- SNV staff: Olivera Tanackovic, Aleksandra Ploco;
- LCB: Vrbas d.o.o.

Number of PP-days already invested and planned to be invested per category:

- SNV PPDs: 88
- LCB: 70
- Consultant: 0

Relevant partnerships: None

The financial resources invested: 15,000 BAM (=EUR 7,670)

Client satisfaction and enhanced capacities:

- Output: Client appreciation- very satisfactory (20 out of 20);
- Outcome: Satisfactory score (3,5) Outcome measurement

Quote:

Amra Đelilbašić, Head of Economic Development Department, Travnik Municipality:

"SNV services and support targeted our needs and wishes from the very beginning of our overall cooperation. Achieved results within this assignment shows that SNV successfully addressed our priority need in regard to rural water supply systems as prescribed by the Water Law."

Photos:

