

Assessing equitable access to water and sanitation in Armenia , 2015-2016

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Background and objectives of the equitable access assessment

- * Although Armenia is not yet a Party UNECE-WHO/Europe Protocol on Water and Health on the Water Convention. Anyway Armenia has already set draft targets under the Protocol and recognizes the importance of the Protocol.
- * Armenia announced its intention to apply the Equitable Access Score-card at the 7th meeting of the Working Group on Water and Health in November 2014.

Process: Applying the Equitable Access Score-card

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The project was implemented by the NGO Armenian Woman for Health and Healthy Environment and coordinated by State Committee Of Water Economy, Ministry of Energy Infrastructures and Natural Resources of the Republic of Armenia.

Partners: Ministry of Health of RA, Ministry of Territorial administration and development, Public Services Regulatory Commission of the RA, Ministry of Nature Protection of RA, Ministry of Education of Sciences of the RA, Office of Human Rights Defender of RA Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs of RA, private sector, water supply companies, NGO, etc.

Process: Applying the Equitable Access Score-card

Launching workshop for ensuring involvement of the different stakeholders and explaining the objectives, process and expected outcomes of the self assessment exercise, was organized 15 Decemebr, 2015 back to back with meeting of the Steering Committee of European Union Water Initiatives National Policy Dialogue (EUWI NPD).

The workshop help to identify additional stakeholders, that later were involved in the exercise.

Second workshop to present interim results, gather additional information, identify reforms options and discuss possible recommendations was held 7-8 July, 2016.

Objectives of the self-assessment of the situation of equitable access to water and sanitation in Armenia

- * Achieve a better understanding of the situation and challenges related to equitable access to water and sanitation to facilitate the identification and prioritization of problems to be considered for the setting of targets under the Protocol;
- * Identify relevant stakeholders and create links with them;
- * Raise awareness among stakeholders on equity issues;
- * Develop a comprehensive overview of the existing policy measures to address inequities in access to water and sanitation.

The management of water sector is implemented by the following authorities

- * Water Resources Management Agency, Ministry of Nature Protection of the Republic of Armenia, which implements the management and protection of water resources
- * State Committee of Water Economy, Ministry of Energy Infrastructures and Natural Resources of the Republic of Armenia, which implements the management state-owned water systems, their safety and protection
- * Public Service Regulatory Commission of the Republic of Armenia, a body created by Law of the Republic of Armenia “On the Regulatory Authorities of Public Services”, which implements tariff policy in the water sector.

Four sections which are included in Score-Card

1. Steering governance frameworks to deliver equitable access to safe drinking water and sanitation :

- * The right of drinking water and sanitation for all is set out in the Constitution, laws and regulations of Armenia:
- * The law on “National Water Program” , November 27 2006
- * Water and Sanitation Sector Strategy and Financial Program , Protocol Decision 13 August, 2015
- * Long-term Development Strategy Program of the Republic of Armenia, 2014 – 2025
- * Rights and duties of users and other right holders- Draft Laws shall be subject to public discussion. The principle of public debate are publicity, accessibility, transparency and openness to all interested individuals and legal entities.

2. Reducing geographical disparities

Until 1 January, 2017 there are two water supply companies in Armenia. The Public Service Regulatory Commission of RA has set different tariffs for “Armenian Water and Sewerage” and “Yerevan Djur” CJS companies.

From 1st January 2017, in Armenia water supply and sanitation services provided by one operator – ‘Veolia Djur’ CJSC, French company Veolia Group, with one common tariff.

One of the main challenges is the need to find a solution to the problem relating to the water supply of 570 rural communities, that are not provided with the centralized water supply services and not serviced by water companies.

3. Ensuring access for vulnerable and marginalized groups

- * The legal framework is different group is regulated by Law and different Government Decisions of RA. The state provides funds for the provision of drinking water and sanitation services, but not all accounts address the water supply and sanitation issues separately.
- * There are different areas for this section - Users of Health and educational facilities, homeless people, retired homes, prisoners, etc.

All information available in official web sites- Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs of RA, Ministry of Health of RA, Ministry of Education and Sciences of RA, Ministry of Justice of RA, Municipalities, etc.

4. Keeping water and sanitation affordable for all

- * Social protection is one of the priority directions of the state of the Republic of Armenia.
- * The affordability of drinking water supply and sanitation is included in the Law “On Fundamental Provisions of the National Water Policy”- to ensure the affordability of water in adequate quantity and quality to meet the basic needs of population, especially of vulnerable groups.
- * Currently tariff affordable for low-income householders.

Outcomes of the assessment: lessons learnt from the process

- * Analyzing in more detail in legislation, identifying the positive and negative aspects, drawing a comparison between the Score-Card components and Laws to identify gaps in order to contribute to the solution of the problems.
- * Collecting data on the current situation of communities not serviced by centralized water supply and sanitation companies
- * Improving sanitation services with a special focus on regional disparities
- * Implementing pilot project in accordance with Score-Card components , for example, identifying the features of separate vulnerable groups due to geographical location.
- * Conducting a study on options to address affordability concern through tariffs

Planned next steps

- * At the second workshop Armenia announced its intention to develop an action plan on ensuring access to water and sanitation to be approved the government and beneficiary ministries.
- * Armenia has already develop action plan on equitable access to water and sanitation for 2018-2020.
- * Currently the Government of Armenia has already implemented amendments in Water Code of RA, to ensure equal access to water and sanitation;
- * About 579 rural settlements that are serviced by water supply company are divided into clusters according to their priorities in order to include the service area of “Veolia Djur” CJSC or new service provider.



Thank you for your attention.