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## AWHHE action on WASH

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### Short summary

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In recent years, the topic of water and sanitation has become the main priority of the NGO Armenian Women for Health and Healthy Environment (AWHHE). Since 1999, AWHHE has implemented more than 90 projects on promotion of sustainable sanitation, improvement of water supply, monitoring of the state implemented project, involvement of local people in the projects and strengthening their participation in decision making processes, etc.

Between 1992 and 2010, Armenia reported 104 waterborne outbreaks with almost half of them in rural areas. Of the 915 communities, 560 are historically self-supplied through local springs and other sources. Being outside of the service areas of large water supply companies, these communities cannot benefit from national projects. Some of the most urgent water related challenges Armenia is facing are: deteriorated drinking water supply system; lack of sanitation supply system in rural areas; lack of proper management of drinking water supply and sanitation systems; lack of awareness in dangers of inadequately managed systems and related health risks; weak communication to policy makers; and deteriorated basins and pumps.

The AWHHE projects are designed to help address water and sanitation related challenges in rural communities in Armenia.

### Key words:

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*Reduce economic losses ; Protection of the poor and vulnerable; Universal and equitable access to drinking water ; Safe drinking water ; Affordable drinking water ; Adequate and equitable access to sanitation for all.*

## Issues addressed:

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### **WASH (inequalities, schools, health centres, refugee camps, women and girls)**

Drinking water is less available in rural areas. Although in recent years the water supply system has improved, the supply is insufficient for small and medium towns. There are also dozens of remote villages and resorts in the country, where water for drinking and domestic purposes is taken immediately from the upper reaches of rivers without any treatment.

In many schools, especially in rural areas, the drinking water and sanitation system often is available, but it does not operate because the village itself lacks this system.

### **Water resources management (water-use efficiency, integrated water resources management, transboundary cooperation, sustainable extraction and supply of freshwater)**

75-85% of drinking water is lost on its way from source to consumers because of pipe deterioration and other reasons.

### **Water quality (pollution, dumping of toxic materials, wastewater management, recycling, reuse, restore ecosystems and aquifers, microbial contamination)**

In 2012, from 70 522 drinking water samples 13730 (19.5%) did not meet the standards due to microbial contamination.

### **Risks (mortality, economic losses caused by natural and human-induced disasters)**

The local outbreaks in Armenia occur from time to time, but do not turn into an epidemic. Mainly water-related and food-related intestinal infections are being recorded (mainly accidents occurring occasionally in the water and sewerage networks).

## Tools for implementation:

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### **Capacity development**

- Construction of drinking water supply and sanitation systems,
- stakeholder involvement,
- awareness raising campaigns,
- strengthens the participation of women in decision making at local and national levels.

AWHHE constructed school ecological toilet buildings (ecosan); ecosan household toilets; drinking water supply; water-meter installations; septic tank for a school.

AWHHE developed many leaflets, booklets and other information materials for general public. Many seminars and trainings were organized. Mass media was widely involved.

Active women were involved in all activities implemented by AWHHE.

**Who is involved?** Governmental authorities, local authorities, villagers, schoolchildren, mass-media

**What were the objectives of the intervention?** Improve the access to safe drinking water supply and sanitation in rural areas in Armenia.

**Implementation challenges**

- Lack of financial and human resources
- Political will of local authorities

**Main task/activities undertaken / Tools used**

- The rehabilitation of the old drinking water systems with increased access to safe drinking water,
- Construction of ecological toilet buildings for schools
- Construction of septic tanks for school
- Stakeholder involvement in the development and implementation of the UNECE/WHO Water Safety Plan,
- Awareness raising campaign of health risks associated with unsafe drinking water.

**Main outcomes / impacts (what has changed?)**

- Increased access to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation
- Increased understanding and awareness of public sector and other interested stakeholders on addressing water-related risks
- Strengthened capacity of the community in provision of safe drinking water and sanitation
- Increased role of women on communication on water and sanitation related issues and participation in decision making processes

## Lessons Learned:

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**Triggers:** Situation in rural areas

**Drivers:** To improve rural people well-being, especially for children.

**Barriers:** Mainly financial.

**What has worked well?** Cooperation of stakeholders.

**What can be improved?** Community mobilization.

**The way forward:** To reach AWHHE vision: Healthy environment for our children - Healthy generation for Armenia.

**Links:**

[www.awhhe.am](http://www.awhhe.am)