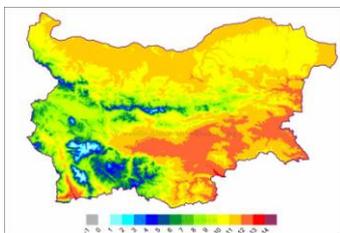
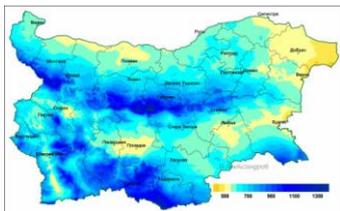


Gender Forum

Empowerment of Women: Foundation for Successful Transnational Water Cooperation

August 19, 2013

Mobilizing Rural Communities for Sustainable River Basin Management, East Aegean River Basin, Bulgaria



East Aegean River Basin spreads on 35 230 km² across Central Southern Bulgaria (32% of the territory of the country). It incorporates the catchment areas of 3 large (for the scale of the Balkan Peninsular) international rivers: Maritsa, Tunja and Arda. Except them, all the other rivers are small and get dry almost each summer. Similar is also the situation in the neighboring countries. According to bilateral agreement with Greece, Bulgaria provides 186mln.m³ of irrigation water annually to Greece.

Along the broad river valleys and hilly mountain outskirts, some of the most fertile soils of Bulgaria are located. This creates predisposition for intensive agriculture and significant density of rural population. 30% of country population lives on the territory of the river basin - with 75% of rural aging and predominantly female population.

The proposed case is based on the analysis of the existing situation and prioritizing on water management issues heavily influenced by the life style and economic activities of rural communities, as well as individual good will and decisions on the level of individual household: inappropriate solid waste and wastewater management; overuse of water of drinking quality for various purposes; lack of capacity to apply good agricultural practices; insufficient measures for protection of water resources, etc.

The proposed activities, among others, are: to mobilize rural community centers; to train women community activists; to train local constructors in efficient affordable drainage and sanitation infrastructure; to involve youth and local schools; to establish and operate rural resource and training center for sustainable water and sanitation management and good agricultural practices offering training and information focused on household-centered bottom-up approach and measures.

Expected results include: increased awareness of rural communities with emphasis on women and youth; expand the capacity of rural community centers; to operate well-positioned resource and training center to serve more and more communities and citizens specialized in decentralized approaches.

Project partners: NGO Earth Forever, East Aegean River Basin Directorate, Plovdiv; regional governments; municipalities, village community centers and schools.