

GWP CACENA in July 2008

On 15-18 July the ToolBox Training “IWRM aspects on Water Supply and Sanitation at country level” was held in Baku, Azerbaijan

This training was a preparatory step of the GWP CACENA initiative on Water Supply and Sanitation (WS&S) which aims at describing the status in each of the countries in an IWRM context and to identify the role of GWP. The compilation of data for all eight countries is part of the regional work programme, which is planned on the basis of support from DFID.

Seven countries (of eight) participated to discuss their preliminary results and to agree on the structure of a final report to be ready by the end of 2008. This was a small and target oriented group of around 30 experts (of which 20% were women).

The Azerbaijani hosts showed their convening capacity by involving the deputy chair of the governmental agency of irrigation (the former ministry of water resources) and the chair of the environmental committee of the Azerbaijani Parliament. Both high-level members confirmed the relevance of WS&S as a key issue in the water resources management.

The meeting chair and GWP CACENA Regional Coordinator, Vadim Sokolov, stated that this was the first time the region organized a meeting on WS&S. There is a reason to learn from Europe (GWP CEE) and how they deal with the 20 million people who lack proper sanitation.

The regional ToolBox Regional Coordinator, Mr. Arslan Berdiyev, led the training in a very interactive way. National reports that were presented by the country experts served as basis for a continuous plenary discussion. In this way experiences were effectively exchanged and active participation and ownership was kept throughout the meeting - an example of GWP's new meeting culture.

Issues shared and discussed:

- Action must be taken to prevent a collapse of the great Balkhash Lake in Kazakhstan to avoid the fate of the Aral Sea due to too high water demand from all sectors, where water supply to urban areas and industry add significant pressure
- GWP has to put pressure on governments to solve the Syrdarya water resources problem
- Role of River Basin Councils to set rules and regulations, i.e. limits to water use
- In Azerbaijan the Ministry of Health is responsible to supply rural people with 20 l per day and person of safe drinking water. In a pilot project 65 rural settlements (Districts) will be supplied with WS&S systems
- In Georgia the water works and wastewater treatment plants in the three biggest cities were sold out to a Swiss company. There is a fear of increased economic burdens of the water users
- In Kazakhstan the WS&S was taken back to public operation and maintenance from a French company. Wastewater ponds serve as sources for irrigation.

- In Kyrgyzstan drinking water is free of charge
- In general drinking water supply in CACENA region has to be given a quality guarantee. In many rural cases the common drinking water source is irrigation canals which often are polluted

All aspects will be compiled by Arslan in a summary document of the meeting.

On the third day an excursion was done for visits to the water works and water reservoir of Baku City, supplying around 1 million people with drinking water. A visit to a unique project to store water in a new reservoir and reconstruction an old, 200 km long water supply canal with water from the transboundary river on the boarder with Russia was visited. This will supply the water to Baku by gravity and save huge pumping costs that exist today.

In Conclusion

GWP Chair Nino Chkhobadze:

- The new situation today makes it important for GWP CACENA to take on WSS
- Strong cross-sectoral participation, i.e. health, environment, irrigation (agriculture)
- It is time for GWP to move into practical application of the IWRM concept

Network Officer Björn on the added value of GWP in Water Supply and Sanitation. GWP helps:

- to promote political will in a forgotten area of national politics, in particular sanitation
- to bring in an IWRM approach to WS&S in the Millennium Development Goals' context
- to promote sustainability aspects, which are documented in the CEE book

On 18 July in Baku was held Regional Council Meeting – Strategy Preparations

Members of the GWP CACENA regional council met to discuss the new situation of IWRM with respect to the situation in the region and also in the framework of the new GWP strategy. There is a general consensus to bring in IWRM assistance at the country level on real issues such as WS&S, IWRM plan implementation, etc. There is an upcoming demand in the region to support the government in the water resources policies. In particular there is a decrease in transboundary cooperation in Central Asia, which needs coordination and facilitation.

Next steps:

- GWP CACENA will elaborate its own strategy in the framework of the global strategy
- GWP CACENA will send a well prepared delegation of six persons to participate in the CP in Stockholm
- Regional Seminar on the status analyses of WS&S in CACENA countries to be held in Yerevan, Armenia, 23-25 September