

Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability

The waste dump in Tantareni - a ticking bomb

On the outskirts of Tantareni in the Anenii Noi district all the waste collected in Chisinau is dumped in an enormous hole. Every day, tons of waste is being dumped there. For years, the villagers in Tantareni have been asking for the destruction of the dump, fearing an ecological catastrophe. Their anxiety increased after the embankment wall surrounding the dump collapsed two years ago and the village risked being flooded with waste.

Even though the village is separated from the dump by a large plain, the villagers get a whiff of the unpleasant smell of the decomposed waste when wind blows. On days like this, some people do not leave their houses. 'I suffer from asthma and cannot stand any foul odors. On windy days I try not to leave the house because I get sick. I can't stand this waste dump which is a curse on all of us,' says Vasile Malai, one of the villagers of Tantareni. He also claims that because of the waste dump the water in some of the village wells is polluted and has a bad taste. 'It is very hard for us to work the land because plastic bottles and bags are blown by the wind on our land. There are times when the ground is snowed under with bottles and bags,' says Maria Mazureanu, another villager in Tantareni.

The village people with the support of the ecologist NGOs from the Republic of Moldova have repeatedly appealed to the authorities to destroy the dump and to build a factory to process waste. This is the only solution to the problem. The management of the capital supported the initiative to build this factory that requires considerable financial means that are not available in Chisinau. A German company offered to invest 100 million dollars to build the factory and then walked away. 'The potential German investor left because of the bad policy of the current government. At least this is what he told me when he left,' said Serafim Urechean, mayor of Chisinau. According to him, the construction of this factory represents an urgent need because 'the waste dump in Tantareni can become a bomb due to overheating.' The Moldovan authorities have obtained the approval of an American company which intends to finance the construction of a waste processing factory. The capacity of the dump in Tantareni is of 40 million cubic meters and could be emptied somewhere near 2015-2017. Annually, in Chisinau some 700 thousand cubic meters of domestic waste are being collected.

'The waste dump in Tantareni will be an imminent threat to the locals in a few years. Actually, even now the negative consequences are felt. Due to the high concentration, some domestic waste ignites and the emissions are extremely toxic, including dioxin and furan. It is highly possible that in time the embankment wall could fissure and collapse under the weight of the 30 million tons of waste accumulated at Tantareni,' claims Vladimir Garaba, the chairman of the Chisinau Territorial Organization of the Ecologist Movement. Annually 300,000 lei are spent on consolidating the embankment in Tantareni. A capital repair would require 1,700,000 lei.

Another issue is that at the moment there is no way to dispose of toxic waste in Moldova. That is why some of the waste is being transported to domestic dumps without the approval of the institutions in charge. A year ago, the representatives of the State Ecological Inspectorate revealed that paraformaldehyde is buried in the Tantareni dump. This is an extremely toxic substance used to produce explosives.

The National Plan for Action on Environment approved by the government of Chisinau in June 1996 declared waste management a top priority. The Strategy for Social-Economic Development of the Republic of Moldova until 2005 says there is a necessity 'to reduce to a maximum the accumulation of domestic waste, to select, and to use them as secondary raw material.' The National Programme for the use of industrial and domestic waste also underlines the importance of processing waste in view of their future use. Ensuring the durability of the environment represents one of the eight Millennium Development Goals that the Republic of Moldova committed to accomplish by the year 2015.

Statistics:

- Ø Some 30 million tons of industrial and domestic waste accumulated by the year 2000 in the Republic
- Ø The total area for depositing waste is 1,144 hectares
- Ø Only 18% waste is recycled in the Republic of Moldova
- Ø According to the data provided by the State Ecological Inspectorate, out of the 1,784 storage and neutralization platforms 1,453 are not adequate
- Ø Every inhabitant of Moldova produces 400 kilograms of domestic waste annually
- Ø Chisinau residents dispose annually of 8,400 tons of paper
- Ø Two cubic meters of domestic waste contains on average 4 kilograms of polyethylene remains. One ton of recovered polyethylene saves about 8 tons of petrol

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