

Goal 7: Ensure Environmental Sustainability

The water supply system will be improved in the next three years

For more than four years the problem of drinking water in Hancesti has been a top priority. Until recently, the town was supplied with water from the Costesti lake, Ialoveni. Last year only 26% of the town was supplied with water. Water is supplied to flats based on a graphic: two hours in the morning and two in the evening. Usually water comes from springs or from wells. If you think that well water is pure and safe to drink, you are completely wrong. 139 cases of diarrhea and 49 cases of hepatitis were registered in the first six months of 2003 at the Prophylactic Medical Centre in Hancesti. The town hall is seeking financial resources to build the new water duct Farleni-Hancesti in order to be able to solve the water supply problem.

The Starinschis have been living in Hancesti for 5 years now. Newly weds, they bought an apartment on the fifth floor in one of the town blocks. Water is supplied in a limited quantity but hardly a drop reaches their taps. 'Pressure in the pipes is very low and water doesn't run from the taps. When it does, it is impure and impossible to drink. Cooking and washing is impossible. Since we have no water meter every month we pay for 15 cubic meters. In Hancesti it is impossible to have that much water. Wells are our only survival, but water in them is briny and a great part of Mendeleev's chart is in there,' says the young woman.

The same problem confronts not just the town people, but also the rural areas of the district, that gets its water from wells. Oleg Startev, chief epidemiologist at the Prophylactic Medical Center in Hancesti, tells us that over 16% of the water supplied to the town lacks hygienic requirements and cannot be used in nutrition. It is not by chance that the number of acute diarrhea cases doubled since last year. In 2002, due to the infected water supplies a hepatitis A epidemic broke, every tenth well having the virus that caused the disease. This summer things got worse, the virus extended to every other well.

The only hope for Hancesti and Moldova is to build water ducts and modern water supply systems, to ensure the increase and safety of supplies, to improve the quality of the water, and modern management of the country's water potential. Eighty-one percent of the urban population and only 17% of the rural population benefit from water through the main centralized system. The other consumers are supplied from 150,000 wells and springs. Over 50% of the phreatic waters do not meet quality standards and have hardness, high fluorine, iron, ammoniac, sulphured hydrogen, chloride, sulphur, etc. Only 250 out of 832 water supply installations function.

To provide consumers with safe drinking water in April 2002, the Government of Moldova adopted the Sustainable Water Management National Program (valid until 2006) aiming to contribute to the seventh Millennium Development Goal: to halve the proportion of the population that does not have constant access to drinking water. Mihai Vieru, Environment Vice-minister told us that 'the former programme for the water supply was not accomplished. The pipes and structure for drinking water supply are ancient; they have been used for the past 35-40 years. The water basins are intensively polluted with unfiltered waste. The traditional technology for filtering drinking water and waste water are not efficient anymore because of the degrading water supplies and lack of environment protection.

Internal resources and foreign investments have been used to elaborate the governmental program. 'To improve the living standard, the health of the population and environment protection, 1 billion 243 million lei is needed. Besides the funds from the budget, 600 million lei are provided from international organizations. Moldova cooperates with FISM, the Swiss Division for Development and Cooperation, Switzerland, Japan, World Bank, EBRD, etc,' said Valeriu Croitoru, Vice director in the Ministry of Environment, Territorial Development and Constructions, mentioning that the first steps have been taken. Water supply systems have been renovated in 25 places; at Soroca and Balti new filtering stations have been built and the Balti-Soroca water duct was built. Future plans consider building inter-district water ducts to ensure water supply for the population in need and to expand the main drinking water centralized system. Grigore Friptuleac, chief of hygiene section at the 'Nicolae Testemitanu' Medicine and Pharmacy State University believes that 'the national economic development perspective and the health of the population depend on water sources. Lack of water is a big problem for the towns of Straseni, Cainari, Cantemir, Leova, Soroca, Rezina, Taraclia. By consuming spring water, the population's health is subjected to a number of risks. The 50 mg/l nitrogenous content in underground waters causes methemoglobinemia in children under 3. Highly polluted are the Floresti, Drochia, Rascani, Cantemir, Hancesti, and Vulcanesti districts. One of the delicate problems is the high fluorine that causes dental fluorosis. This occurs in Balti, Taraclia, and the autonomous territorial unit Gagauzi-Yeri.'

Up to 80% of the diseases are determined by poor quality of drinking water, according to the WHO. The 'Water and Development' logo could become of vital importance for Moldova; the international community focuses on the water issue and highlights it as one of the keys of sustainable development.

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