The Ad Hoc Project Facilitation Mechanism (AHPFM): mainstreaming international support for country action within the Protocol on Water and Health

In the 21st century, water-related diseases still affect millions of people in the WHO European Region. The Protocol on Water and Health is the first international legal instrument for the prevention, control and reduction of water-related diseases.

Within the Water Protocol, the Ad Hoc Project Facilitation Mechanism (AHPFM) promotes the coordination of international aid to recipient countries and enhances the capacity of recipient countries to access financial resources.
Most Europeans take clean drinking-water for granted, yet in the WHO European Region at least 120 million people do not have access to safe drinking-water and adequate sanitation. While western European countries have universal access, almost half of the rural population in EECCA countries lack access to safe water through household connections.

Access to water, including in western Europe, does not necessarily mean continuity or safety: in many countries drinking-water supplies are intermittent, and contamination levels remain extremely high. This makes people vulnerable to water-related diseases such as cholera, bacillary dysentery, *E. coli* infections, viral hepatitis A and typhoid.

However, over 30 million cases of water-related diseases could be prevented each year in the Region by ensuring cleaner water and better sanitation.
About the Protocol on Water and Health

The Protocol on Water and Health to the 1992 Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes is the first international legal instrument for the improvement of human health and well-being through better water management.

By adopting the Protocol, Parties to it (i.e. countries that have ratified the Protocol) are required to establish national and local targets and to take all appropriate measures to achieve adequate supplies of safe drinking-water and adequate sanitation for everyone. They are also required to protect water as a source of drinking water and provide effective systems for monitoring and responding to outbreaks or incidents of water-related diseases.

The World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe (WHO/Europe) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) provide the Joint Secretariat for the Protocol and coordinate implementation of activities.

What is the Ad Hoc Project Facilitation Mechanism (AHPFM)?

Among their obligations, Parties are required to assist each other in implementing the Protocol, with particular reference to national plans. To meet these obligations, in 2007 the Ad Hoc Project Facilitation Mechanism (AHPFM) was established to promote the coordination of international aid and enhance the capacity of recipient countries, eastern Europe, Caucasus and central Asia (EECCA) and south-eastern Europe (SEE), for funding.

How the AHPFM works

From application to selection, the AHPFM involves four steps for recipient countries to access financial resources:

1. **Application.** Interested countries can apply for funding by filling in an application form. This form has sections on project background and justification, methodology, envisaged outputs, implementation plan and timeline, monitoring and evaluation and a budget table.

2. **Selection.** Selection criteria cover eligibility, geographic scope, ownership and integration into national development efforts. Priority will be given first to Parties to the Protocol, then to Signatories and then to countries that have a strong commitment to the Protocol but have not yet signed.

3. **Project proposals.** Project proposals are prepared with the assistance of the Facilitator, who is also a member of the Joint WHO/Europe-UNECE Protocol Secretariat.

4. **Opportunities for funding.** The Ad Hoc Project Clearing House and the Facilitator identify priority project proposals and match these with funding sources from bilateral donors, global and regional financial institutions, relevant international organizations, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and international foundations.
Advantages of the AHPFM to the donor and recipient community

For donors

1. **Synergy with existing global and regional obligations**
   These include the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), the Water for Life Decade and the EU Water Initiative.

2. **Cooperation**
   The cooperative approach allows countries to undertake projects which are beyond the individual funding capacity of a single donor. Duplication of work is avoided.

3. **Oversight**
   The donor maintains direct supervision of project implementation.

4. **Quality of project proposals**
   The AHPFM guarantees to donors that projects are well prepared and politically supported.

5. **Review and assessment**
   The Meeting of the Parties assesses the effectiveness of the AHPFM to address water and health problems in the Region.

For recipients

1. **Single entry point for water and health assistance**
   The AHPFM offers one single forum to find support, thus removing the need for multiple applications for funds.

2. **Technical and scientific support**
   The AHPFM strengthens the scientific and technical soundness of the proposal.

3. **Project formulation**
   Recipients receive assistance in formulating projects thus increasing their chances of being funded.

4. **Coordination of proposals**
   The AHPFM facilitates the assessment of needs and the coordination of related proposals. This is particularly important in the case of transboundary projects.

5. **Support to national policy**
   National projects that are integrated into national development plans are prioritized, as opposed to project proposals from individual institutes or organizations. This ensures that submitted projects are in line with country needs.

Examples of eligible projects

- Preparation of water management plans in transboundary, national and/or local contexts and of schemes for improving water supply and sanitation
- Establishment of systems of surveillance and early-warning, contingency plans and response capacities in relation to water-related diseases
- Preparation of legislation needed to support the implementation of the Protocol
- Education and training of professionals and technical staff
- Research into cost-effective means for preventing, controlling and reducing water-related diseases
- Operation of effective networks to monitor and assess the provision and quality of water-related services
- Achievement of quality assurance for monitoring activities including inter-laboratory comparability
Examples of activities undertaken under the AHPFM

- Analysis of water and health-related country needs amongst the Parties to the Protocol that are suitable for international cooperation
- Analysis of existing bilateral programmes amongst donor countries, especially Parties to the Protocol
- Assistance to EECCA and SEE countries and to relevant NGOs, in drawing up project proposals
- Yearly financial reviews of the AHPFM for consideration by the Working Group on Water and Health

AHPFM supports projects on setting targets and target dates: reducing contamination of drinking-water in Moldova

In Moldova contaminated drinking-water is responsible for an estimated 20% of infectious intestinal disease reported each year and 15% of non-infectious diseases. Moldova, a Party to the Protocol, is determined to achieve target 10 of Millennium Development Goal 7 on reducing by half the proportion of people without access to safe water by 2015.

With support from the AHPFM, Moldova prepared a project proposal on setting targets and target dates with all responsible national entities. This proposal was presented to bilateral donors at the first meeting on the AHPFM in June 2008. One bilateral donor expressed an interest in funding the Moldovan proposal. Thus, the implementation of this project creates synergies between the achievement of Protocol obligations as well as of MDG 7 target 10.
More information about the Protocol Ad hoc Project Facilitation Mechanism (AHPFM) is available on the WHO/Europe water and sanitation web site (http://www.euro.who.int/watsan/WaterProtocol/20030708_3) and on the UNECE Water Convention web site (http://www.unece.org/env/water/meetings/documents_AHPFM.htm).

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