

System for Environmental Decision-making in Gazi Baba, Centar and Zelenikovo municipalities

Implemented by NGO ORT Training for Sustainable Development

Implementation period: Dec 2005-Nov 2006



Project background

While environmental issues vary for the Municipalities of Gazi Baba, Centar, and Zelenikovo, they all face one similar problem: citizens and administrators do not communicate when it comes to addressing environmental issues. With the support of the Mayors of each municipality, Training for Sustainable Development will work with administrators, citizens, and other stakeholders in one pilot municipality to implement a System for Environmental Decision-Making (SEDM) in line with the Aarhus Convention. The pilot system will enable effective public participation by ensuring public access to local decision-makers and documenting monitoring public input. Once piloted, the lessons learned will be summarized in a SEDM Handbook.

Activities implemented



- A Working Team with the Focal Points has been created in three Municipalities; the goal, objectives and activities of the project and also the duties of Working Team have been presented
- The PC Database and the Mailbox for the environmental concerns has been designed: the Database helps the employees of the local government to have a review of the most requested issues and priority problems. It helps to identify -
 - Number of persons who turned to municipality
 - Type of requests, appeals or suggestions sent to the municipality
 - Type of environmental problem concerned
 - Responses from municipality, Inspectorate or Council
 - Suggestion from the stakeholders for joint environmental action
- Promotional materials are designed and distributed
- Media campaign with successful results has been carried out
- In order to open up the local governments to the citizens' interests, training workshops were held for the local government staff, Council members, Working Team, and the Focal Point in each of the municipalities. During the workshops,

the priority needs regarding the environmental conditions within the municipalities were identified and written conclusions were sent to the Mayor and the Council together with the request for possible realization of planned activities

- The document, System for Environmental Decision-making has been drafted by the Working Team and tested in the decision-making process of Baba Gazi municipality (EIA study for constructing the highway). Two public debates, two environmental actions, art exhibition and a public hearing for the EIA Study has been conducted
- Several meetings with the Council of Municipality Gazi Baba have been organised in order to present public opinions on specific environmental problem. As one of the most critical issues which need to be solved is the situation with Park-forest Gazi Baba, the latter was selected as a main priority to work on within the frame of the pilot project. Before the meeting, a few preparatory meetings were held with the members of the working team and representatives of the Association of citizens in order to discuss the agenda, performing and choosing of the topics to be discussed. It was created a list of priority issues that will be arisen for discussion during the meeting. The Association made several suggestions for improving the situation regarding the forest park, many of the suggestions were taken to the further consideration by the officials of the Gazi Baba. It was concluded that the Working team, together with Department for Environment will prepare an Action plan for further activities. This priority problem is also included in LEAP Action plan and Local Economic Development plan of City of Skopje. The representatives from Association will be involved to give some opinions and suggestions
- The working team has actively fulfilled the database of the citizen's needs and complains. With an aim for bigger affirmation of this activity, Coordinator of the project has sent letters to the media and municipality's bulletin in order to encourage the citizens to send letters with their requests, suggestions and proposals. According to database, almost 100 persons have submitted their requests in the Department of Environment. The requests from citizens were mostly about waste and air pollution, degradation of Park-forest, problems with sewerage and water-supplying system in communities, asphaltting of roads and many others. A Report was prepared and submitted to the Mayor
- Additionally, the Mailbox for environmental issues has been set up
- The project team has regularly informed the citizens about environmental conditions, with an aim for larger media promotion of the project, the project team as well as the officials of the selected municipalities were participated in several TV programmes, and gave interviews to the newspapers
- Research about public opinion and concerns of their living environment in municipality Gazi Baba has been performed in all local communities, by distribution of the questionnaires. Based on results, most urgent activities were identified, including the:
 - building of primary and secondary sewerage system
 - protection of the Park-forest Gazi Baba
 - announcement the Park-forest Gazi Baba as City Park, to increase it's level of protection
 - establishment of Public Communal company, responsible for collecting waste and maintenance of green areas in the rural communities

- organization of various public events to increase the awareness of environmental protection
- applying of the Laws for Protection of Environment and punishment for those that violate them
- Handbook for Active Implementation of the System for Environmental Decision-Making (SEDM), containing descriptions of practices, lessons learned during the project, achievements, and guidelines from other municipalities in terms of how to implement the Aarhus Convention were drafted and published (250 copies). The Handbook is a guide for establishing communication and cooperation with citizens and involving citizens in activities regarding the preparation of local public environmental policy. The Handbook is published and promoted on the Closing Conference of the project
- Closing Conference has held on 15th of November in order to disseminate the know-how to partner municipalities to promote the SEDM Handbook and to share results with local governments
- Additionally many other activities, not mentioned in the project proposal, were carried out in order to serve the effectiveness of the project. These activities contain coordinative meetings with the working teams and Mayors and served as a point for discussion of future tasks connected with the project, also served for working on the reports of the citizens dealing with environmental issues.

Final results and outcomes



Quantitative results

- Experienced Team of 14 people
- 60 persons from the Municipalities trained
- Publications in 4 types to promote the project
- Three Databases of environmental documents, lodges, decisions
- Mailbox for the environment
- 100 personal lodges, letters or application to Municipality and responses
- Four public events
- 100 visits
- Closing Conference for promotion of the Handbook.

Outputs:

- Increased public participation to environmental decision making in three Municipalities,
- Increased knowledge, skills and capacity of the Municipality staff regarding the requirements of the public participation,
- Openness of the Local Government to citizen's environmental lodges,
- Regular System for effective interactive public participation in Pilot Municipality,

- Raised public awareness for environmental problems,
- Raised awareness for rights on information and to participate to the decision making,
- Declaration for joint action of the Council, NGOs and other stakeholders
- Experienced Municipality and Council staff regarding Aarhus Convention
- Defined priority environmental problems, and determined possible solutions
- Experienced group of 10 citizens who participate on Council Meeting and advocate community's opinion.

The Municipality of Gazi Baba has implemented the SEDM successfully, taking into consideration their low previous experience, capabilities and knowledge of environmental issues. The good management structure, established by ORT at the beginning of the project allows very good implementation of activities and achieving results till the end of the project.

The Pilot Municipality continues the implementation of the System of Environmental Decision Making - SEDM, as a regular mechanism for implementation of the Aarhus Convention and related domestic legislation, after the end of the project. It will use its own personnel, Focal Point and the Team Members, who will practice the SEDM inside of their daily job description. Two other Partner Municipalities will implement the System of Environmental Decision Making – SEDM, within next 5 months. The implementation is in the budget plan of the Municipality.

After implementation of the SEDM into two new municipalities and by learning new experience with newly learned lessons from their communities (bear in mind the difference of lifestyle in rural, urban and semi rural community) the SEDM Handbook will be revised.

The SEDM could be implemented further in other Municipalities with some improvements.