

HUSCHYNTSI VILLAGE: THE RIPPLE EFFECT OF WATER



“Our village has been using water from individual and group shallow wells for as long as I can remember. My mother uses a well which was dug back in 1902, I remember helping her fetch water buckets. But at some point due to the uncontrolled digging of wells, and also because of climate change the groundwater levels dropped critically. We were desperate - the village was on the brink of extinction because of water scarcity. Luckily, our community started a water supply project in cooperation with DESPRO, and the situation changed radically. Thanks to joint work with the project today we have 3 boreholes, and with 26,5 km of network we can provide the whole village with quality drinking water. This represents 2000 villagers.» tells Mykhailo Dovhaliuk – starosta (village leader) of Huschyntsi, in the Ivaniv amalgamated community of Vinnytsia region.

Stories like this are common in many villages across Ukraine. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, village communities were confronted with deteriorating communal water supply infrastructure and a lack of funds to develop water supply systems. Many households used traditional sources of drinking water such as shallow wells; some even had to drill individual deep boreholes. However, not everyone managed to organize clean drinking water for themselves, due to the lack of groundwater sources of good quality, or because of diminishing levels of groundwater due to uncontrolled drilling.

DESPRO developed an innovative model of operation and maintenance of decentralized water supply systems in communities. The DESPRO



Example of half-buried well for the installation of the wellhead

project approach is based on the cooperation between the local population and local government. This partnership helped communities get the resources required and develop the experience and practical skills to solve not only water supply problems, but also other important issues like solid waste management, social infrastructure, and more.

«Through our cooperation with DESPRO, we started to believe in our own abilities to solve such issues. After centralized water supply was developed, people started to show initiative, generated ideas and donated for more projects of social importance! For example, in order to build a playground in the village, villagers collected UAH 197,000 and personally supported the construction. We started applying for other projects and competitions, and won some of them.

After centralized water supply was established, the price of real estate in our village even increased! People have more free time, since they don't have to carry buckets of water from a well. Each household now has washing machines and bathrooms.

The villagers who supported the cooperation with DESPRO from the beginning are now opinion leaders in our community. They help the local government in various challenging situations», says Mykhailo Dovhaliuk.

DESPRO supported rural water supply projects not only through co-financing of implementation, but also with technical assistance, including financial, technical, and management audit of water services provision. More generally, DESPRO also supports the potential growth of partner communities through capacity development.

At the time, DESPRO co-financing for rural water supply projects could not exceed 40% of the total water supply project cost. In practice, the share of financing provided by DESPRO was even lower, 25-30%. An extraordinary level of co-financing was provided by households themselves – on average 54% of total project cost. About 16% was provided by local, sub-regional and regional governments, and sometimes sponsors.

At different stages of the implementation of rural water supply projects by DESPRO, different organisational approaches to maintain water supply systems were used, including the “service cooperatives” model. The decentralization reform, which began in 2014, significantly influenced the potential of communities to self-govern, by providing incentives for amalgamating smaller villages, and improving the overall governance situation in the country. Since then, DESPRO supports communal enterprises which are established and successfully function with direct participation of local self-governance. And communities again and again show effectiveness in solving local issues independently.

The reform of local self-government continues in Ukraine, benefiting existing amalgamated communities with more resources and powers. Nevertheless, drinking water supply continues to be a relevant problem in Ukraine. Thanks to DESPRO, successful cases such as Huschyntsi exist, but other communities affected by the lack of drinking water supply need to be supported to improve their situation.

“Our work on developing sustainable water supply for all was never paused, it was always in progress”, remembers Mykhailo. “The invaluable support that DESPRO provided helped us to start moving in the right direction. But beyond that, one third of the water supply system we constructed was financed thanks to internally mobilized resources.

We also didn’t remain idle when we discovered that there was excessive iron levels in our water. This is a common problem in our area, and it wouldn’t be solved by itself with time.

Systematically, month after month, year after year, we tried different de-ironization methods. We also involved our partners from DESPRO. It was important for us that the technology used would be effective, technically and financially affordable. Finally, we found such technology, used it and solved the issue. As they say: the road abides by the one who is always on the move”

“Other communities that don’t have quality water supply say that it is their main problem. Once this is solved, other projects can then get started. Now it’s clear for everyone - water supply is the main priority for the population”, summarizes Mykhailo Dovhaliuk.



Water from the new borehole

Thanks to DESPRO project activities over 122 000 Ukrainian rural residents directly use improved water supply, as a result of over 150 projects implemented in 7 partner regions: Vinnytsia, Sumy, Dnipropetrovsk, Ivano-Frankivsk, Poltava, Luhansk regions, and AR Crimea (until 2014)

