

Best practices and challenges of public participation related to the May 2015 floods

Regional Roundtable

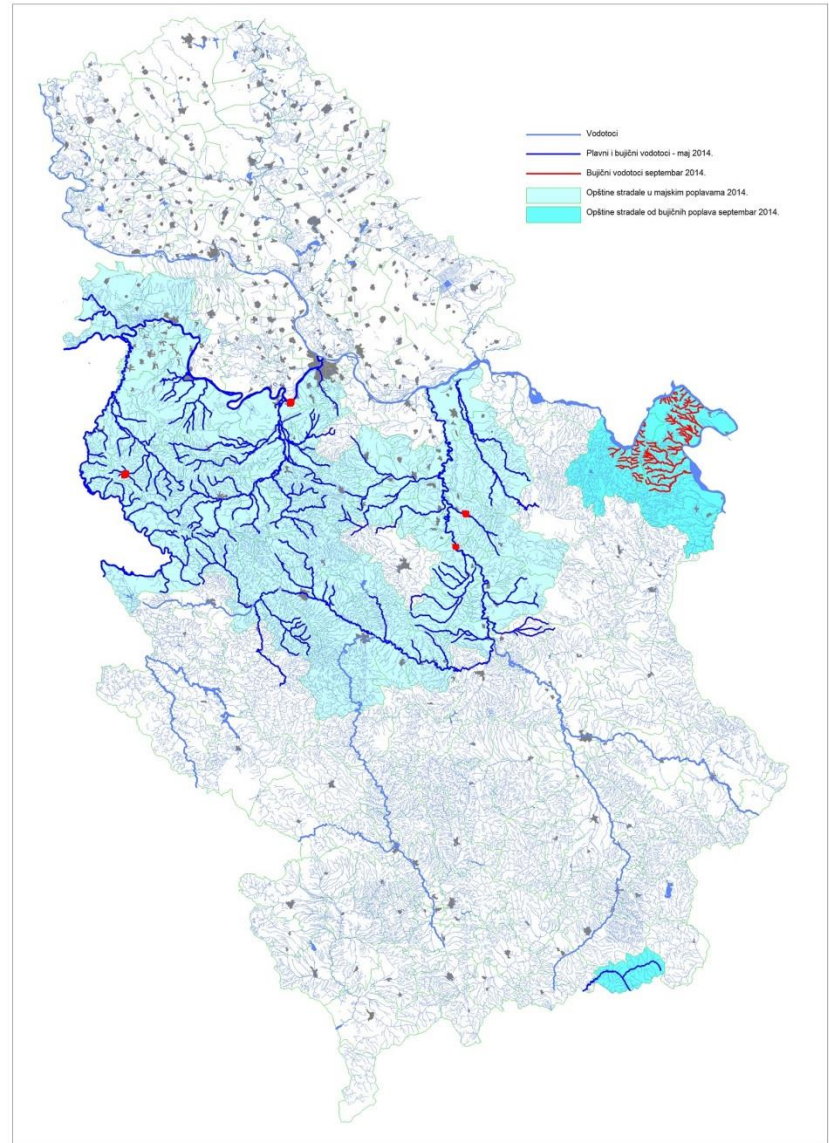
Tirana, Albania, 25-26 March, 2015



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Co-operation in Europe

Brief overview of the flooding events

- Three days of rainfall caused worst floods in 120 years, claiming lives and causing destruction
- I. High intensity flash floods resulting in the total destruction of houses, bridges and sections of roads
II. Rising water levels resulting in the widespread flooding of both urban areas and rural areas and,
III. Increased flow of underground waters leading to widespread landslides.



OSCE-supported activities related to floods

- Establishment of a Flood Risk Action Alliance for Timok river between AC for South and East Serbia and Zajecar Municipality;
- Development of an Analysis on the Impact of Floods for a Gender Perspective;
- Regional meeting on strengthening the role of Aarhus Centers in flood reduction and defense;
- Strengthening the capacities of municipal authorities and civil society in upgrading flood prevention practices.

Establishment of a Flood Risk Action Alliance for Timok river

Action plan:

Step I

Invitation of participants

Step II

Agreement on joint activities

Step III

Implementation

Establishment of a Flood Risk Action Alliance for Timok river

- *Step I*

- Identification of key stakeholders*

- *Sector for Emergency Management, Ministry of Internal Affairs*
- *State Water Directorate*
- *Republic hydrometeorological institute*
- *Public Water management Company Serbia Waters*
- *Ministry of Agriculture and Environmental Protection*
- *Chamber of Commerce*
- *Local media outlet*
- *Aarhus center for South and East Serbia*
- *I a Inviting stakeholders*
- *I b Introductory meeting and presentation of the project initiative among stakeholders held February 28th*

- *Step II*

- *Establishing the partnership during a joint meeting in Zajecar, 8th April*
- *Development of activities*

- *Step III*

- *Implementation*

Establishment of the Flood Risk Action Alliance partnership in Zajecar

14.04.2014, Zajecar



Initial meeting of AC for South and East Serbia, municipal authorities and the local department for emergency management

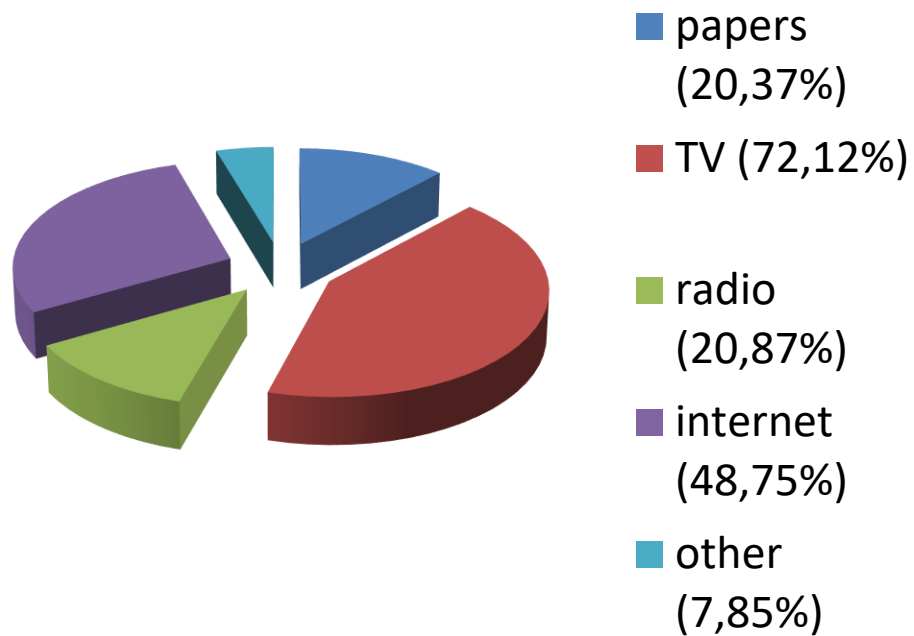
4th September, 2014



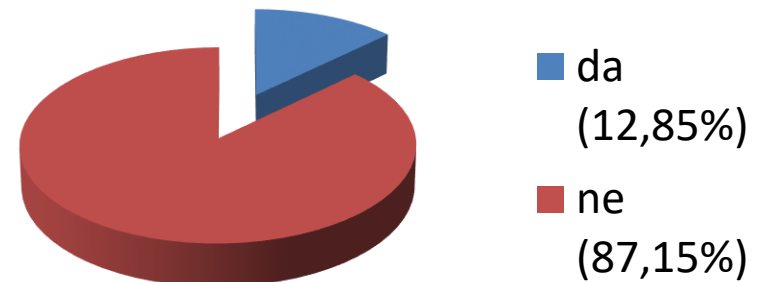
Outreach activity - Collecting information for the survey



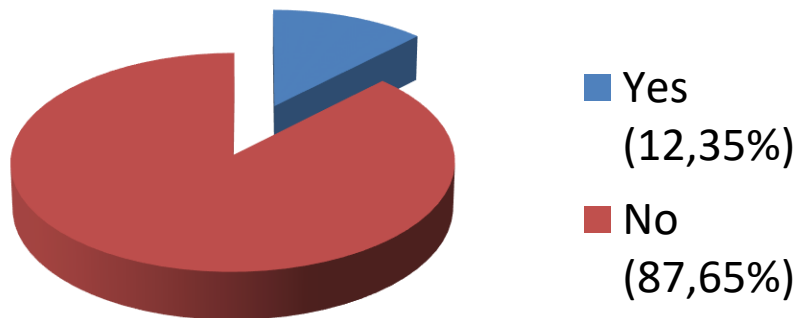
What is the main source of information?



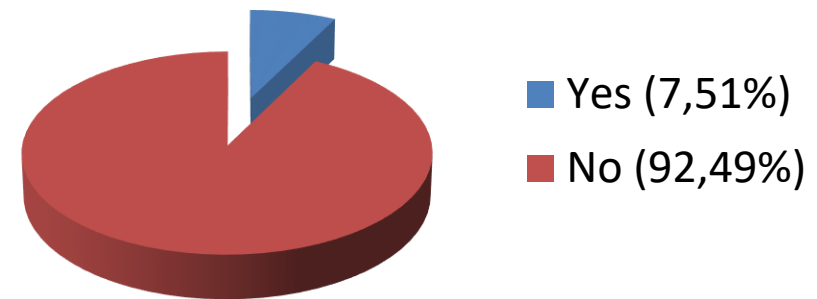
Knowledge about the Aarhus Convention



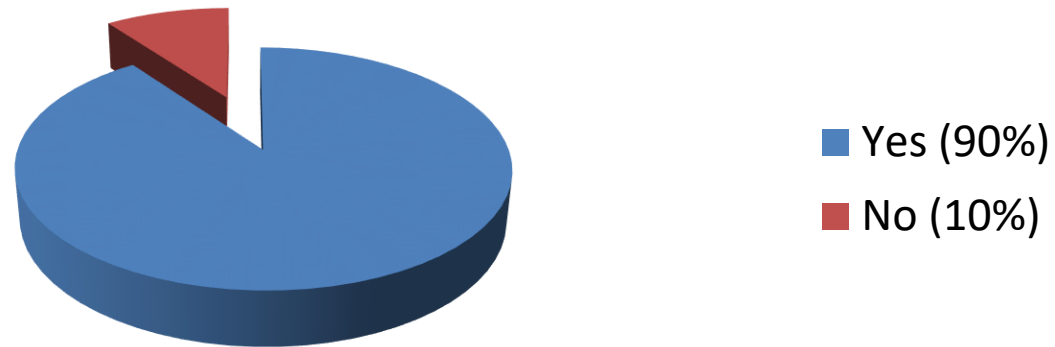
**Do you know the
commissioner for civil
protection?**



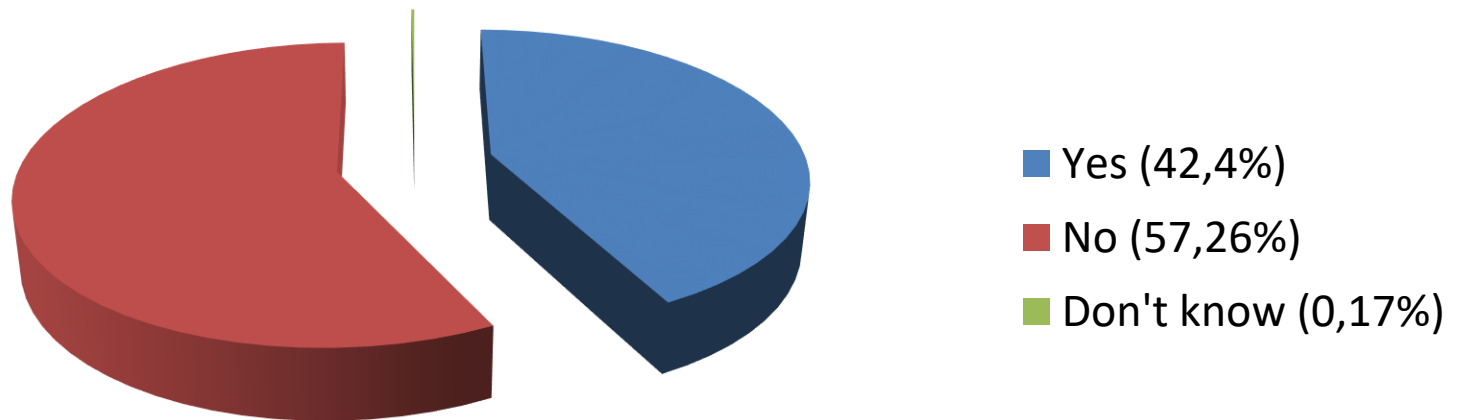
**Do you have contact with
the Commissioner for civil
protection?**



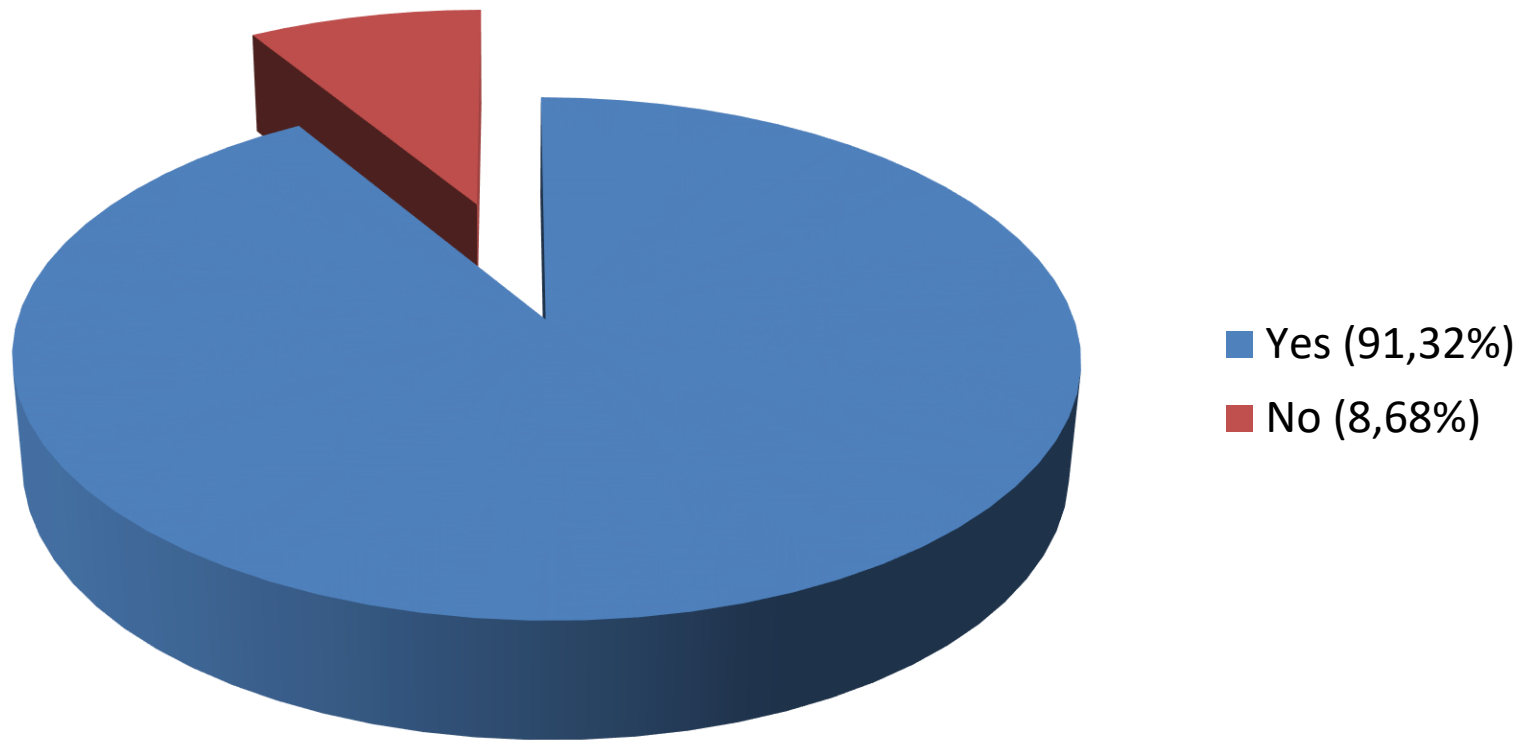
Do all the family members know the emergency call numbers?



Are you aware of the location of local rescue centers?



Would you volunteer in case of an emergency?



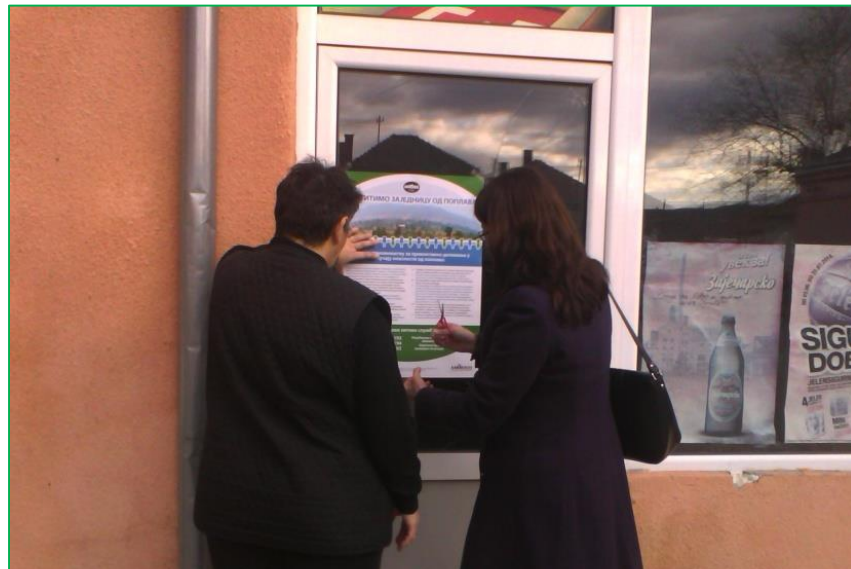
Public forum – capacity building of Commissioners



Promotional campaign



Placing posters in municipal buildings





Impact of 2014 floods in Serbia from a gender perspective

Research conducted to determine :

Gender-specific differences related to flood hazards;

Gender-specific differences related to risk exposure and needs during imminent danger;

Goal: To produce recommendations for gender-sensitive planning of DRR activities

Methodology

- Information collected in the following ways:

1) through in-person interviews conducted by AC Kragujevac and Novi Sad with 78 residents from affected communities (46 women and 32 men) through random sampling;

- 16 from Obrenovac
- 25 from Paracin
- 25 from Svilajnac
- 12 from Krupanj

2) through a group discussion comprised of volunteers that were engaged in reception centers;

3) secondary information provided by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Sector for Emergency Management .



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Comparison of gender-related indicators

- Access to information;
- Means of evacuation;
- Biggest challenge during evacuation;
- Evaluation of activities of the rescue teams;
- Major concern following imminent danger;
- Behavioral patterns in collective centers;
- Challenges in collective centers;
- Biggest obstacles after returning to the affected property.



Findings

Access to information

- Both men and women lacked information;
11.5% respondents were informed, through informal channels, about the onset of floods and imminent evacuation (6 women and 3 men);
- Warning system failed;

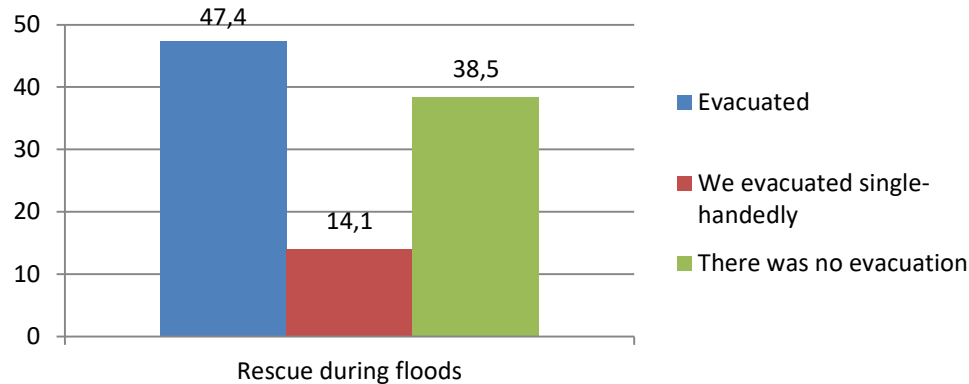
Difference: sense of “helplessness”, which prevailed among women more than men;

- Preferred emergency alert: women -media broadcasts (67%) and men – sirens (42%);
- Women preferred receiving official flood warning, men agreed to unofficial information (former military training);

Difference: women were more reliant on rescue services than men.

Findings

Means of evacuation



- Out of a total of 78 respondents, 37 were evacuated - 21 women and 16 men, mostly from Obrenovac;
- Women living alone more active in rescue efforts;
- Families with male members organized evacuation themselves;
- The disabled, elderly and women living alone were particularly affected;
- Boat owners and informal rescue teams were mostly men;
- Men living alone, more than women, evacuated farm animals and pets;
- International rescue teams (Denmark) included skillful female rescuers;
- Overall, women lacked initiative to participate in rescue efforts.

Findings

Biggest challenge during evacuation

- 73 % leaving property behind (more men than women)
- 12% entering into the boat (women only);
- 13% wading through the flood water (13 women and 6 men)

Concern about disease outbreak

Men less likely to recognize danger and more often refused evacuation;

Women and men equally concerned about the well-being of their children and other family members.

Elderly residents, single mothers and PWD were most affected.

Evaluation of activities of the rescue teams

Finding priority groups slowed the rescue process - men more critical toward the rescue system;

Local community members need to be more closely involved in disaster planning;

Female rescuers equally skillful as male.

Findings

- **Major concern following imminent danger**

Impossibility of returning;

Sense of uncertainty because of lack of information about return.

- **Behavioral patterns in collective centers**

More women housed;

Women less willing to interact and more aware of limited contribution in the immediate aftermath of the return;

Men were more pro-active and less patient about return.

Findings

- **Challenges in collective centers**

Collective centers are a possible security risk for women (poor lighting, isolated location).

Women more in need of psychological support than men.

Language barrier pronounced among Roma women.

- **Biggest obstacles after returning to the affected property**

Removal of bulky debris, mortar and rubble carried out by men;

Women engaged in clean-up and less strenuous work, alongside with men.

Single mothers, elderly households and families without male members resorted to paying the cleaning works.

Women's unpaid workload increased.

Recommendations

Access to information

- Develop an effective alert systems accessible to households without electricity, the illiterate, disabled persons and women that spend most of their time indoors;
- Develop outreach campaigns on how to act during emergencies – ensuring participation of women - and include promotional material;
- Organize awareness raising media campaigns focusing on activities during emergencies, targeting women and the elderly.

Exposure to risk, protection and rescue

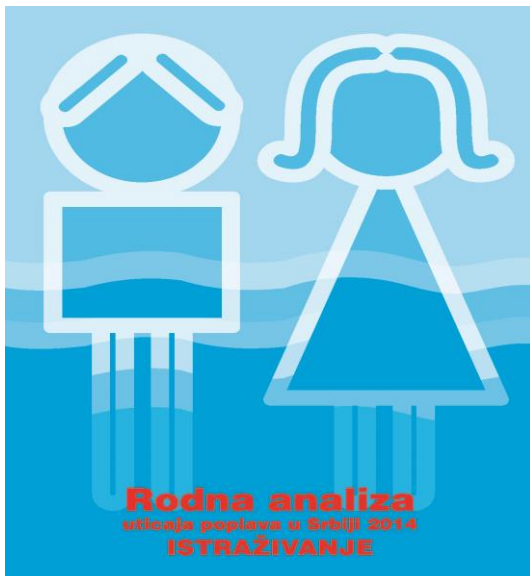
- Develop a register of multiple vulnerable citizens, that will facilitate evacuation;
- Support development of the re-established general purpose civil defense system, involving active participation of women;
- Provide evacuees, especially women and children with professional psychological support.



Recommendations

Return and rehabilitation

- Conduct a gender-sensitive analysis of the economic impact of floods, record and compile work plans, developed by individual households to compensate for the loss.
- Develop a system of paid assistance, in form of public works, intended for households that are unable to repair the damage on their own (elderly household, single parents, disabled);
- Ensure gender-sensitive distribution of aid and equality in disbursement of financial assistance and donations.



Regional meeting aimed at promoting best international practices for building disaster resilient communities among WB countries

November 2014



Strengthening the capacities of municipal authorities and civil society in upgrading flood prevention practices



Challenges to public participation

- **CSOs are experienced in:**
 - **Public outreach activities**
 - **Awareness raising campaigns**
 - **Education**
- **Provide for citizens to continuously:**
 - **articulate**
 - **Defend and**
 - **Promote their legitimate interests**
- **Provide support to implementation of programs at state and local levels**
- **Contribute to strengthening multi-sectoral cooperation**
- **Contribute to formulating and strengthening public policies related to environmental protection**
- **Assist elected authorities in increasing the efficiency of their work**
- **Increase participative democracy**
- **Challenges: Absence of established infrastructure due to which frequent political changes affect the partnerships;**
- **Improved communication between CSOs and authorities;**
- **Establish a database with result-based activities that will promote further cooperation.**

Thank you for your attention

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