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Water safety plan:

a field guide to improving
drinking-water safety in
small communities

Abstract

The WHO *Guidelines for drinking-water quality* recommend the water safety plan (WSP) approach as the most effective way of ensuring continuous provision of safe drinking-water. The challenges related to drinking-water supply in rural areas and small towns are of notable concern across the entire WHO European Region, but the WSP approach has been proven to work effectively in small-scale water supplies. This field guide aims to support WSP implementation in small communities by providing brief explanations of the WSP process and practical templates for field use.

Keywords

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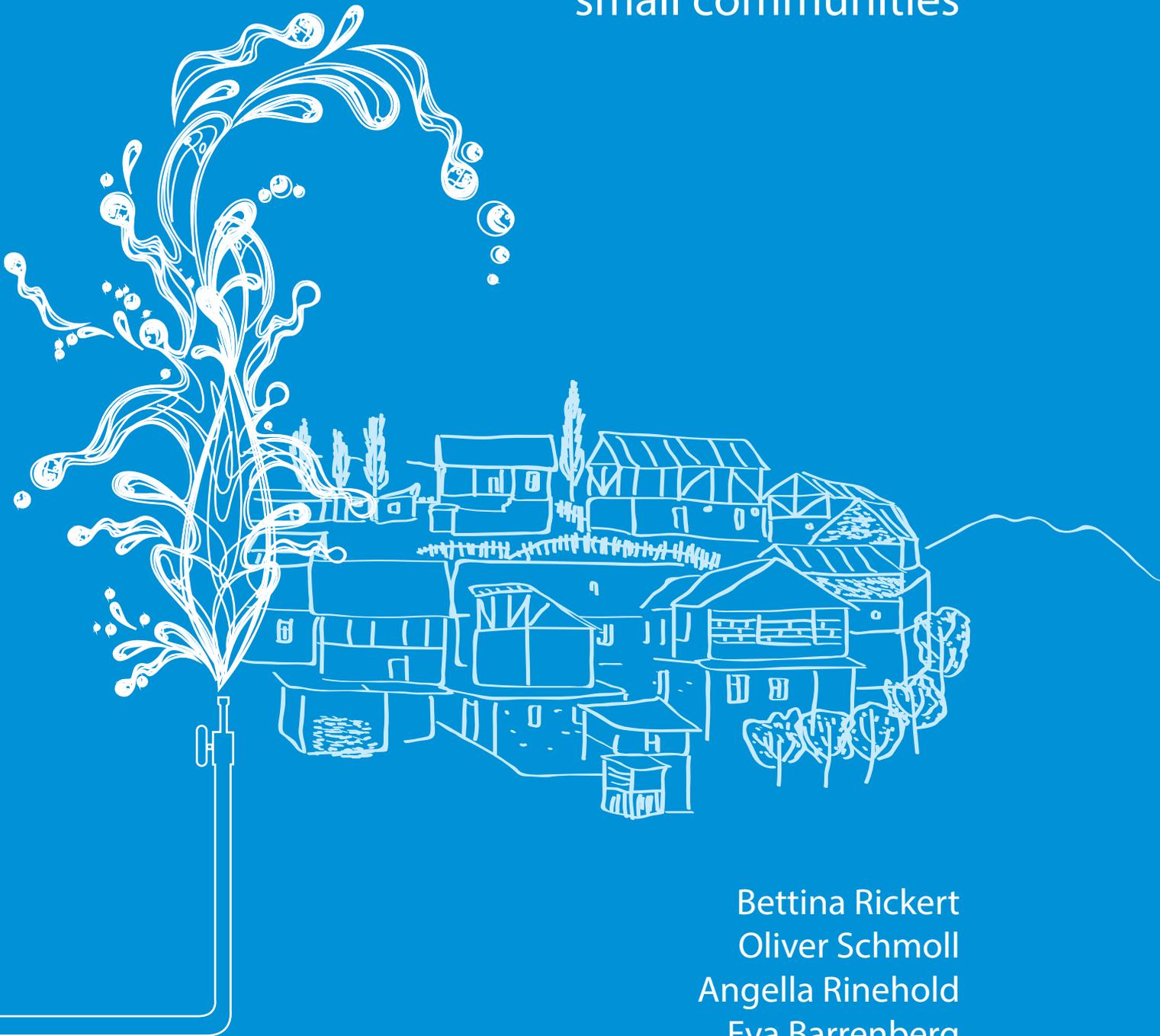
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Foreword

The water safety plan (WSP) approach, recommended by the WHO (2011) *Guidelines for drinking-water quality*, is the most effective way of ensuring continuous provision of safe drinking-water, regardless of the size of the supply or the level of development in a given setting.

In the Parma Declaration on Environment and Health (WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2010), European governments declared one of four regional priority goals to be “ensuring public health by improving access to safe water and sanitation”. The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and WHO Regional Office for Europe (2006) Protocol on Water and Health is the first international legal instrument that aims at the protection of human health and well-being by linking the prevention and reduction of water-related diseases and the sustainable management of water resources in the European Region.

The challenges related to drinking-water supplies in rural areas and small towns are of notable concern across the entire European Region. The Protocol recognizes that improving the situation of small-scale water supplies is thus a priority area of work. This particularly includes continuing advocacy for adoption and scale-up of WSPs and ongoing capacity building, as well as providing tools – such as this field guide – to support local WSP uptake and implementation.

Improving access to safe drinking-water in small communities will improve community health and thereby enhance opportunities for sustainable livelihoods, poverty reduction and educational and economic development. It will thus contribute to the development of resilient communities, in line with the WHO Regional Office for Europe (2013) Health 2020 public health policy framework.

The evidence shows that the WSP approach works effectively in community-managed supplies. This field guide is designed to be used by community members working with this approach. It contains short explanations of the water safety planning process and practical templates that support WSP development and implementation on the ground. Local government authorities, health and water supply offices and nongovernmental organizations can also use it to support community members in implementing their WSPs.

This field guide aims to support the implementation of the WHO (2011) *Guidelines for drinking-water quality*. It is based on and complementary to the WHO (2012) manual *Water safety planning for small community water supplies: step-by-step risk management guidance for drinking-water supplies in small communities*, which primarily targets professionals working in and providing assistance to small communities. The manual provides additional guidance, with case study experiences and examples, and is a valuable resource for further background reading.

The experiences and lessons learnt from WSP pilot projects in rural Tajikistan undertaken in 2011 and 2012 by the WHO Regional Office for Europe formed the basis for development of this field guide. Although developed in the European context, however, the guide is applicable to small community water supplies worldwide.

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