

# Ukraine

Civil society organisation involvement in urban water sector reform





*Ukrainian water services went into decline after the collapse of the USSR, leaving many to collect water at public standposts.*  
Andrey Lomakin

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This is one of a series of nine case studies outlining civil society organisations' (CSOs) involvement in urban water sector reform. The other case studies cover the following locations:

- **Bangladesh (Chittagong and Dhaka)**
- **Brazil (Recife) and Venezuela (Caracas)**
- **Ghana (Accra)**
- **Kenya (Kisumu, Nairobi and Mombasa)**
- **Nepal (Kathmandu)**
- **Pakistan (Karachi)**
- **Philippines (Manila)**
- **Uganda (Kampala)**

The case studies accompany the guidance manual ***Our water, our waste, our town***, which offers support to civil society in engaging in urban water and sanitation reforms.

The manual and case studies can all be downloaded at:  
**[www.wateraid.org/urbanreform](http://www.wateraid.org/urbanreform)**



WaterAid's mission is to overcome poverty by enabling the world's poorest people to gain access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene education.

## Section one: Background and problem

Ukraine had good coverage of drinking water services during the Soviet period. There was virtually complete coverage in urban areas and 94% coverage in rural areas, although coverage levels for sewerage were considerably lower.

Water and sanitation services went into decline after the collapse of the USSR. During the years of post-Soviet independence, the state withdrew from water and sanitation services, delegating responsibility to local authorities, who found themselves without the resources to take on this new task.

In 2000, 'centralised' (ie reticulated) water services were available to only 65% of the population, and sewerage to 53%. Between 12% and 15% of water samples did not meet state standards. By 2002, 40% of water purification plants needed renovation or replacement, along with 22% of water mains. Water losses were officially recorded as 25 to 40%, but independent analysis produced higher estimates. Average duration of supplies is currently only 17 hours a day. From 1992 to 2001, water prices charged to consumers rose 16 times more than general price increases.



*Public water standposts.  
Andrey Lomakin*

## Section two: What CSOs have done

### MAMA-86

The involvement of women's pressure group, MAMA-86, and local civil society 'stakeholder committees' in improving provision of water and sanitation services in towns all over Ukraine is one of the most successful examples of CSO influence, both in terms of impact at local and national level, and in terms of the duration of that effect. In fact, the impact seems to be continuing to grow.

The creation of MAMA-86 in 1990 resulted from the 1986 Chernobyl disaster and coincided with the collapse of the USSR. The group was set up to campaign for better environmental safety, particularly in relation to the impact of water supply contamination on children. Its development was sparked by fears about the contamination of water supplies downstream on the Dnieper River and concern about

*MAMA-86  
campaigned for  
improved drinking  
water quality.*  
Andrey Lomakin



the reluctance of the authorities to acknowledge the severity of the Chernobyl disaster.

MAMA-86's original mission was to campaign for good quality water and greater public disclosure of tests. However, it spread from this relatively narrow beginning to other areas of concern regarding the management of the entire water sector. From 1997 onwards, the campaign extended its operations to 11 localities with three principal activities: information and education, implementation of local pilots and public participation in decision-making.

### Drinking water project

In 1997, MAMA-86 started a drinking water project, developing water testing and purification systems and testing the quality of water in places frequented by a lot of children, such as kindergartens and hospitals. They also carried out a survey that found 71% of the public in five cities did not believe official information on drinking water quality.

### Legislation

From 1998, MAMA-86 participated in the National Health Action Plan and drafted a paper on public participation. They then went on to draft legislation which passed into law with the new Drinking Water Law in 2000.

They were also involved in the drafting of the Almaty Principles in 2000, which recognised the right to public participation in the water sector in much of the former Soviet Union.

### Protests

MAMA-86 also campaigned against 'spontaneous privatisations' (seizure of control of rivers by private companies). Between 2000 and 2002 they protested against a proposed project, involving a large loan from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, for the delivery of water supplies in the city of Odessa to be contracted to the multi-national water company, Suez. Concerns developed about the ability of consumers to pay for the project and the procedure for the tender, for which there was only one bidder.

### Pilot programmes

With help from Oxfam and the Dutch water service, between 2001 and 2003, MAMA-86 set up a number of pilot programmes intended as demonstration projects of good practice for other localities. The programme of work concentrated on efficient water consumption, water meters and the 'water consumption culture'; drinking water in rural areas; and alternative solutions to drinking water problems.

In the short-term, activities carried out included: analysis of drinking water quality, public opinion surveys, gathering and dissemination of information, facilitation of multi-stakeholder dialogues, exchange of good practices, organisation of public hearings, implementation of technical pilot projects, development of international partnerships and participation in international conferences to publicise the situation in Ukraine.

The long-term objectives, which are still ongoing, include: raising public awareness of water and sanitation issues, including hygiene, environment and resource issues; influencing decision-making at local, national and international level; and promoting integrated water resources management.

### Lobbying

MAMA-86 have become ever more sophisticated in their lobbying techniques. They have carefully worked out positions on water sector reform which have had significant influence throughout Ukraine.

In December 2003, they presented a petition to the parliamentary deputies. It recognised the need for water tariff increases to aid the reform of the sector, and insisted on the right to public consultation. It also suggested that privatisation of services be stopped; service providers be required to enter into direct consumer contracts, without which no tariff increase should be approved; the vodokanal (water service) be required to submit proper annual reports and accounts; public participation mechanisms be developed in rate-setting procedures; and all city council decisions be properly recorded and published.

Furthermore, in a 2002 paper, Anna Tsvetkova, on behalf of MAMA-86, called for improved water contracts in all the former Soviet countries. In particular, the paper called for strict separation of spheres of responsibility, so that consumers

know where to file claims; a clear statement of liability for non-compliance for service providers; and verification of quality of service.

The influence of MAMA-86 can be seen in the development of local stakeholder committees often in the same locations where the organisation has been active.

### Stakeholder committees

Local stakeholder committees have been widely developed in Ukraine in recent years, with considerable assistance from the USAID and EC-TACIS programmes. They involve quite sophisticated processes including public hearings, drafting of investment plans and public information campaigns. Such processes are gradually becoming requirements for reforming municipalities.

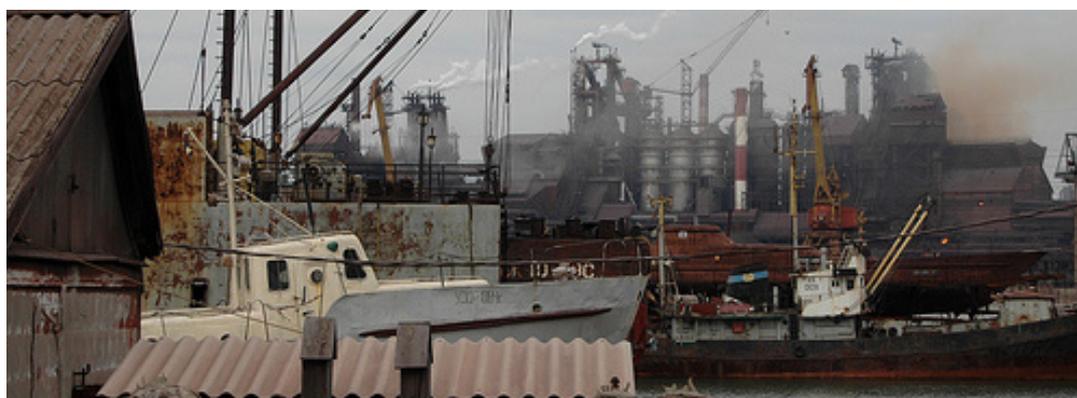
## Section three: Challenges and outcomes

CSOs have had an uphill battle, given the severity of water problems in Ukraine. The work MAMA-86 and the stakeholder committees have done has improved public participation in the water sector, but this work still has a long way to go. According to the Ukrainian consultancy group PADCO, many cities in Ukraine still have no experience of mechanisms for inviting the public to engage in their development processes, and public awareness and participation is almost non-existent.

One highly localised pilot project MAMA-86 did with individual families in three big cities presented a challenge. The objective of the project was to look at how more efficient consumption of water could be achieved. MAMA-86 tested economic tools such as metering and educational materials. This resulted in a 20 to 30% reduction in consumption. However, some of the reduced consumption figures (the

reduction was more than sixfold in one case) gave grounds for concern. Metering was found to be expensive and the recalculation of the bills was used by the local vodokanal (water service) in Odessa to extend to everyone else's bill, with the result that water charges rocketed. MAMA-86 solved the situation by mediating between the residents and organisations involved.

Being downstream of the industrial Donbass zone, the Mariupol city branch of MAMA-86 had to tackle major problems of pollution when cleaning up the town's water supply. The project pulled together all those bodies with water testing capacity to test water in the city. The results showed excessive levels of dry residues, sulphates and chlorides. A city-wide meeting was convened and MAMA-86 conducted its own tender to find an operator to improve water treatment to supply the local sanatorium.



*The city of  
Marioupol.  
Daniel Zolli*

## Section four: Lessons learnt and top tips

### Lessons learnt

MAMA-86 started out opposing a particular water privatisation project in Odessa, but their activities have had a much wider impact than this. Their achievements include the preparation of national legislation on public participation in the water sector and the drafting of the Almaty principles.

The major lesson of MAMA-86's work is that their success in promoting public participation in the water sector in some cities has helped develop CSO engagement in other cities in Ukraine. Cities such as Snejnoe, Izum and Ujgorod have not taken part in any MAMA-86 programmes but are still very much aware of the importance of public participation.

### Top tips

- 1. Be flexible.**  
MAMA-86's original aim changed from campaigning for good quality water and greater public disclosure to working for better management of the entire water sector.
- 2. Be practical.**  
MAMA-86 went out into local communities to collect evidence to prove their points to the government and others. For example, they tested water quality in kindergartens and hospitals.
- 3. Be versatile.**  
MAMA-86 has been involved in everything from drafting legislation to group research, tendering and lobbying.
- 4. Be patient.**  
Urban water sector reforms can be complicated. Your CSO will need to build up its knowledge over time. MAMA-86's lobbying, for example, has become more sophisticated over the years. A petition from the CSO presented to parliament in 2003 calling for better public participation in urban water reforms in Odessa was able to capitalise on the wealth of knowledge they had built up over the years. They quoted consumers and national legislation, and referred to the impact of privatisation on international urban water systems.
- 5. Don't forget who you are representing.**  
MAMA-86 have worked hard to set up a number of systems, such as advisory boards, stakeholder committees and working groups, in order for consumers to have their say on reform issues.

Water and sanitation services in Ukraine went into decline after the collapse of the USSR. The result was drops in water and sanitation coverage, higher prices for consumers and increased concerns about the quality of drinking water.

This case study outlines the roles that women's pressure group, MAMA-86, and stakeholder committees have played in improving public participation in the urban water sector and demonstrating good practice in water service delivery.

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