



# Water Initiatives

A SDC Global Programme



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
Confédération suisse  
Confederazione Svizzera  
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Agency for Development  
and Cooperation SDC

# Why water is a key issue for the SDC

- ▶ The water crisis is one of the key challenges of the century, but can be tackled in a global effort.

Population growth, changing production and consumption patterns, and climate change are impacting our water resource. The management of this limited resource is at the core of sustainable development. It is key in ensuring health, food and energy security, in sustaining ecosystems and in climate change response. Water management is a challenge for all countries. Stability and peace depend on effective management and sharing of the water resources and their benefits.

- ▶ Safe drinking water and adequate sanitation is a human right and essential for dignity, healthy human living and productivity.

Yet, lack of access to drinking water and proper sanitation is widespread. Access to such basic services is better in urban areas, whereas for example two thirds of the people lacking access to improved sanitation services live in rural areas. More needs to be done to reduce those disparities as well as the related inequities associated with poverty, gender, and ethnicity.

- ▶ Switzerland has a responsibility to contribute to solving global water issues.

Switzerland is blessed with plenty of high-quality water resources, but that does not protect it from global water problems. Many imported products are water-intensive: 82% of the Swiss water footprint (total volume of fresh-water used to produce the goods and services consumed by the inhabitants) occurs outside its borders, often in regions with scarce water resources. Hence, the Swiss commitment to solve global water issues is not only about international solidarity in poverty reduction, but also about assuming responsibility.

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*“Because the water crisis is a global challenge, we need a global response. The behaviour of a single country cannot solve such a complex problem. Switzerland has recognized the need to foster global commitment, accelerate action, and coordinate responses.”*

Didier Burkhalter,  
Swiss Federal Councillor

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# The Global Programme Water Initiatives (GPWI)

The programmes, projects and contributions of the GPWI meet key global challenges related to the management of water resources, including access to drinking water, and the use of water for agriculture, industry and households.

By focusing on inequity and poverty, the initiatives contribute to the reduction of global risks and the realization of a water-secure world<sup>1</sup>.

To achieve this, the GPWI:

- ▶ engages in political/policy influencing and institution building within the water sector in Switzerland and at global level
- ▶ promotes innovation in concepts, approaches and technologies that tackle global water challenges

- ▶ builds partnerships through which additional funding, influence and coverage can lead to large-scale improvements in water services and water resource management.
- ▶ fosters strategic and action-oriented water knowledge management by means of thematic networks and communities of practice.

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*<sup>1</sup> Water security is the capacity of a population to safeguard sustainable access to adequate quantities of acceptable quality water for sustaining livelihoods, human well-being, and socio-economic development, for ensuring protection against water-borne pollution and water-related disasters, and for preserving ecosystems in a climate of peace and political stability.*

UN-Water, 2013

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# Four pillars of the Global Programme Water Initiatives (GPWI)

- ▶ **Global Water Sector Dialogue: pushing water security into the fore of the development agenda**

In a unique joint advocacy effort led by the GPWI, Switzerland has pushed for enshrining *A Water-secure World for All* as goal in the new global sustainable development agenda. To achieve this goal, GPWI leads innovation in aid finance and global monitoring systems.

- ▶ **Water Governance: encouraging water cooperation and promoting socio-economic development**

Switzerland engages in sustainable, peaceful water resources management in “hotspots” of the water crisis, e.g. in the Middle East and the Nile and Mekong river basins. The GPWI applies a water diplomacy approach that combines high-level policy dialogue among the countries with collective action on data gathering and river basin management. Such evidence-based cooperation builds trust and creates opportunities for solving water-related conflicts.

Moreover, the GPWI portfolio encompasses a range of projects that value water from the local to the global economy. It develops and applies new tools and instruments (e.g. water footprint concept, payment for watershed services) and establishes new cooperation platforms with various stakeholders, including the private sector.

- ▶ **Equitable Access: scaling up water supply, sanitation, hygiene and water for small scale agriculture**

On the international level, the GPWI supports the global sector monitoring and assessment efforts. The findings influence the donor community to direct their investments more effectively towards the most disadvantaged populations. The portfolio also includes a wide range of innovative projects that are improving technologies, business models and funding mechanisms to accelerate access to basic water and sanitation, and efficient irrigation.

- ▶ **Swiss Voice: positioning Switzerland at the forefront of the international water challenges**

To enhance the relevance of its global influence, the GPWI taps the diversity of Swiss know-how in water and development. It attends to cutting-edge sector topics with water experts, enables learning within the SDC water network, and promotes common governmental positions in the sector. This allows Switzerland to present itself with one strong voice in international debates and summits.



# Examples of Global Programme Water Initiatives activities

With its **Blue Peace Initiative in the Middle East**, Switzerland ventured into a new form of cooperation that **links peace promotion with sustainable management of shared water resources**. Led by the GPWI, the initiative builds high-level commitment of political leaders and decision-makers to support mechanisms for sustainable water cooperation amid the neighbouring countries. In the process, consensual regional solutions are identified, followed by concrete actions related to collaborative river basin management. Furthermore, the Blue Peace Media Network intends to inform the public and to mobilise political will.

Initiated in 2011 by the GPWI, the **Swiss Water Partnership** is a multi-stakeholder platform bringing Swiss actors from **academic, civil society, public and private sectors** together to find innovative solutions for water challenges in developing and transition countries. With over 70 member organisations and experts, the partnership promotes integrated solutions for water, energy and food security management and nurtures alliances across sectors and scale beyond a narrow water sector vision.

Agriculture is the biggest water user, accounting globally for 70% of freshwater withdrawal. **Strengthening Agricultural Water Efficiency and Productivity** is hence imperative to **mitigate water scarcity and increase food security and income of small scale farmers**. Implemented by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization and the Agricultural Water Partnership for Africa, the project establishes evidence-based policy, good practice and investment in sustainable agricultural water management in Burkina Faso, Morocco, and Uganda. It links catalytic practical actions to the national and Africa-wide policy processes.



The **Water Footprint** is a state-of-the-art method to quantify the water used to produce goods and services, to assess the environmental impacts and to manage its risks. At global level, the GPWI led the design of the water footprint ISO Standard 14 046. In the field, **collaborations with dozens of leading companies occur to reduce the water footprint of their production systems**. E.g. in Vietnam, the world's main *Robusta* coffee producer, a study showed that the amount of irrigation water can be reduced by up to 60%. The method is now practised by 50,000 farmers and will lead to vast savings of energy and labour, and the equivalent water needs of 2.5 million people per year.

Established in 2008, the **Global Sanitation Fund** pools contributions of donor governments to focus them on countries where the people have poor access to sanitation. Switzerland, co-initiator of the Fund, contributes with about CHF 2.5 million annually to its national sanitation programmes. Through this it has, among others, assisted in helping 3.7 million people in 11 countries to move from open defecation to safe sanitation practices. As a result, some 22,500 communities are now "open defecation free".

As water scarcity increases and inputs for agricultural production become more limited, **reusing waste-water, nutrients and energy generated from sanitation systems** becomes a high priority. The strategy of the GPWI's **Safe Resource Recovery and Reuse Project** is to promote resource reuse as viable business model for local entrepreneurs. At the same time it strives to eliminate the health risks associated with the use of recovered waste through sanitation safety planning.

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*“Although water can be a source of tension and an issue of negotiation among states, more than anything else it forms the basis for cooperation and rapprochement between countries that share water resources beyond their borders.”*

Peter Maurer  
President of the International  
Committee of the Red Cross

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*“Today our life is different. We can keep the house clean, we have water to cook with and to drink. You cannot do anything without water. No community can live without water. Today we grow plants. This helps us to survive because we sell their fruit and buy other food we need.”*

Yamilet Paiz Santana  
Smallholder farmer, Nicaragua

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## New impetus

Since 2008, the SDC has been breaking new ground with its global programmes on climate change, water, food security, migration and development, and health.

In addition to existing bi- and multilateral work, this approach makes it possible to develop solutions to global challenges through worldwide political dialogue and concrete projects. In the context of water and development, SDC brings hands-on field experience to the international policy dialogue table. It has been successful in ensuring that innovative approaches are discussed and implemented in practice. Moreover, by linking dialogue and action, the GPWI explicitly promotes the development and exchange of knowledge on the multifaceted interplay between water and development.



# Facts and figures

- Between 1990 and 2012, 2.3 billion people gained access to an improved drinking water source. Yet, roughly one third of the world population still does not enjoy a safe drinking water supply.
- 1.8 billion people gained access to improved sanitation facilities between 1990 and 2012. Yet, 2.5 billion people live without improved sanitation and nearly half of them practice open defecation.
- Approximately 3.5 million people worldwide die each year due to inadequate water supply, sanitation and hygiene.
- Globally, about 80% of wastewater from human settlements and industries are discharged into the environment without any treatment – with detrimental effects on human health and the ecosystems.
- In the 20th century, the world population tripled while freshwater consumption for domestic and productive uses grew sixfold.
- There are 276 transboundary river basins in the world and 200 transboundary aquifers have been identified so far. Almost 450 agreements on international waters were signed between 1820 and 2007.
- Switzerland invests about 160 million Swiss francs every year, including 38 million Swiss francs devoted to the SDC Global Programme Water Initiatives to improve global water security.

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*“We are here because we know water is not only a basic necessity, it is a human right. Without water, there is no life. Yet hundreds of millions of people do not have access to safe, clean water.”*

Ban Ki-moon  
Secretary-General of the  
United Nations

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## Would you like to get more information?

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