



## **SDC/HA Operational Concept 2017-2020 Water and Sanitation (WASH)**



## 1. Introduction

Three recent changes in the global framework will strongly influence the Water and Sanitation (WASH) sector in the coming years: 1) the decision to make WASH a priority theme of Swiss Humanitarian Aid in the dispatch to Parliament 2017-2020; 2) Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG 6) on Water & Sanitation adapted in September 2015; and 3) the fact that since 2014 a majority of the Earth's inhabitants have lived in cities.

Globally, the WASH sector is anticipated to go through a profound change, shifting from an approach based on drinking water supply and provision of basic sanitation infrastructure to an Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) perspective, encompassing upstream protection and management of water resources (SDG 6.1, SDG 6.5 and SDG 6.6), and downstream collection, treatment and recycling of wastewater (SDG 6.2 SDG 6.3 and SDG 6.6) while simultaneously increasing the efficiency of water use (SDG 6.4).

For the Swiss Humanitarian Aid Department and the Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit (SHA), the paragraph referring to water and sanitation in the current dispatch to Parliament states: "Access to sufficient water is crucial for survival, which is a challenge before, during and after disasters, crises and conflicts. The involvement of Swiss Humanitarian Aid focuses on giving access to water, the improvement of its quality as well as rehabilitation of distribution and sanitation infrastructures, which does not only have a direct impact on the survival of affected populations, but also has a strong public health component". By building resilience of communities, WASH projects contribute to the Protection and DRR thematic priorities. The road map for the further development of the WASH sector is a continuation of the ever increasing involvement of Swiss Humanitarian Aid since 2008 in the water and sanitation sector, mainly implemented by experts of the WASH Expert Group (EG) of the SHA.

Two complementary papers define the orientation of the WASH sector within Swiss Humanitarian Aid: 1) the **EG concept**, which will be revised to cover the next dispatch period (2017-2020) and indicates how the EG structure will be adapted to fulfil the programmatic focus and 2) this **Concept Note**, which outlines the thematic priorities and the programming guidelines for the WASH sector.

## 2. Existing policy and legal frameworks/institutional integration

Three complementary international instruments frame the humanitarian WASH sector:

1) the provisions of the **Geneva Conventions**, more specifically articles 54 of the First and 14 of the Second Additional Protocol, which forbid the targeted destruction of water and sanitation infrastructures which could lead to starvation of civilian populations;

2) Although the **Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees of 1951** does not mention water or sanitation, numerous EXCOM resolutions and UNHCR initiatives have underlined the importance of providing sustainable access to water and sanitation services to refugee populations;

3) More globally, **UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/64/92** of 28 July 2010 declared safe and clean drinking water and sanitation a **human right** essential to the full enjoyment of life and all other human rights.

The **FDFA's Foreign Policy Strategy 2016-2019** states that "Acting on the basis of the FDFA lines of action in the field of water and security, Switzerland seeks to ensure that water does not contribute to conflicts arising and is used instead to promote cooperation". Switzerland's international cooperation is guided by seven strategic objectives, of which objective 3 "support sustainable access to resources and services for all" is directly relevant to the water and sanitation sector.

The SDC-led Community of Practice AGUASAN<sup>1</sup> was consulted extensively during the negotiations around SDG 6, in which the SDC's Global Programme Water took a leading role. SDG 6 now provides a framework for a positive evolution of the WASH sector in the coming years, with a renewed emphasis on the holistic water cycle management. Its pertinence for all SDC actors in the water sector was confirmed during the AGUASAN workshop 2016.

Successful collaboration on water and sanitation issues through the secondment of technical experts has been established for many years with the UNHCR, UNICEF and UNRWA, and more recently with the ICRC.

### 3 Strategic outlook and priorities

Building on Switzerland's extensive experience in sustainable provision of water and sanitation services, environmental protection and management of natural risks, and in partnership with a broad network of universities specialising in relevant topics such as hydrogeology or sanitation in developing countries, the strategic priorities for the Swiss humanitarian WASH sector have been set as follows:

#### Niches and Key Priorities:

**A) The SDC takes a holistic view of the water cycle, which is also a valid framework for the humanitarian domain:** Not just focusing on water supply, but including the integrity of the ecosystem, life in water and on land, and climate change, which means to close the water cycle through recycling of wastewater, or to keep nutrient cycles and water cycles separate, to reduce consumption and losses, and protect water resources from pollution or overuse. It extends into the terrestrial ecosystem: only intact catchment areas can retain and filter water resources. The SDC's water and sanitation programmes are guided by the "Blue Diamond"<sup>2</sup> concept, which interlinks social, environmental, economic, institutional, technological and cultural dimensions in order to ensure equitable, efficient and sustainable management of water resources<sup>3</sup>. To do this, critical aspects of water management have to be strengthened in SDC programmes. Additional focus should be placed on: 1) protection of water resources and catchment areas, groundwater monitoring, groundwater survey; 2) measures towards conjunctive use of groundwater such as artificial recharge of aquifers, retention and infiltration of runoff water; 3) wastewater collection, treatment and recycling; 4) increased irrigation efficiency and safe water for food production; 5) solid waste final disposal. The SDC's goal is to develop and implement projects in specific niches having a medium- to long-term impact on the improvement of water management. Whenever possible, governance and legislation reinforcement should be linked with the projects.

**Linking hydrogeology and drinking water supply:** Following information from the UNHCR that the groundwater level was dropping and that water salinity was increasing, threatening the water supply of more than 400,000 refugees in **Dadaab (Kenya)**, the SDC/HA funded a thesis to model the groundwater dynamics and implement real-time monitoring of water quality. The thesis demonstrated that the current water consumption has a minimal effect on water quality and quantity, and also proposed a more sustainable water exploitation scheme.

<sup>1</sup> AGUASAN is a community of practice established since 1984 and coordinating Swiss WASH actors (SDC and NGOs) with their international partners. Every year, a workshop with 40+ participants explores new topics, methods or visions related to the WASH sector with the regular attendance of some members of EG WASH.

<sup>2</sup> See [https://www.shareweb.ch/group/Monitoring-Botschaft-2017-2020/Freigegebene%20Dokumente/Strategie%20Frameworks%20und%20Strategien%20\(Netzwerke,%20Globalprogramme\)/Strategie%20Framework%20GPWI\\_EN.pdf](https://www.shareweb.ch/group/Monitoring-Botschaft-2017-2020/Freigegebene%20Dokumente/Strategie%20Frameworks%20und%20Strategien%20(Netzwerke,%20Globalprogramme)/Strategie%20Framework%20GPWI_EN.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Hygiene promotion and related behaviour change are activities mainly implemented by SDC-funded partners and usually part of a multi-sectoral response.

**B) Sustainable WASH for all:** the SDC's approach aims to ensure the sustainability of its activities by tailoring its response to favour national resilience, to empower local communities and to provide, by a community-based approach, an adequate response to mitigate the tragic impact of humanitarian crises. With an Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) perspective, the SDC aims to develop an approach fostering inter-sectoral synergies (with protection and livelihood, for example) and alleviate tensions related to the multiple needs for a common resource: water. Agriculture has a crucial impact on natural resources and consumes the largest amount of water. A change in agricultural practices has the greatest potential to change the availability of water and the evolution of its quality as practices change, such as safe re-use of treated wastewater or faecal sludge, which may increase the overall resilience of the country and contribute to a better humanitarian response, while reducing the negative impacts of the massive arrival of thousands of refugees fleeing conflict zones in neighbouring countries. In addition, advocating for sustainable water usage by the end users, primarily in urban areas, is paramount.

**Linking DRR and WASH:** The SDC/HA WASH for All programme in DPRK contributes to better access to water and sanitation services. Besides building gravity-fed systems which require no energy for providing drinking water to rural communities, the programme includes the construction of household latrines. Rather than disinfecting the drinking water, the SDC/HA has successfully introduced the Swiss method for defining protection perimeters around water sources. The WASH programme thus makes a substantial contribution to the DRR programme, while the reforestation efforts carried out in the DRR programme make a direct contribution to improved water quality.

**C) Knowledge management and a coordinated approach at a regional level** is clearly an added value of the presence of SDC water experts in a given region. The Swiss approach, systematically linking sustainable water resource management and equitable access to water and sanitation services, is fully aligned with SDG 6 and is a specificity which has the potential to greatly influence the water sector in many contexts. Such a regional perspective is also at the centre of the water security<sup>4</sup> approach from the Global Programme Water initiatives (GPWIs). Topics of regional relevance can be addressed through regional workshops, active knowledge management and lively exchange among all Swiss water experts and partners deployed in a region, favouring exchange on the water, food and energy nexus, wastewater management, or successful approaches in capacity-building. Practitioners and policymakers of countries facing similar challenges could thus be brought together and for example discuss good practices with respect to WASH, waste management in refugees camps, or IWRM experiences in targeted basins. Whenever deemed appropriate, more formal research can be conducted along the SDC principle that research activities are only conducted when an integral part of or linked to a specific project.

**Middle East regional WASH programme:** the regional strategy 2015-2018 defined Water and Sanitation as one of its three domains of intervention. Numerous WASH experts have been deployed in the region, as secondees to the UNHCR, UNICEF or UNRWA or as Programme Manager for SDC/HA direct action. E.g., in May 2016, a regional WASH workshop attended by all SDC experts deployed in the region as well as by WASH experts from the UNHCR, UNICEF, ICRC, World Bank and NGOs allowed a common understanding of regional WASH challenges to be developed and contributed to a more harmonised approach among the WASH teams of Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria.

<sup>4</sup> As defined by the UN, water security is “the capacity of a population to safeguard sustainable access to adequate quantities of and 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.”

**D) Water diplomacy and governance at regional level:** the SDC contributes to better water governance, to sustainable management of water resources and to peace promotion, *inter alia* through the Blue Peace initiatives carried out by the GPWI, which has e.g. demonstrated in the Middle East that water is an issue that cannot be solved unilaterally. Water seems important enough to serve as a starting point for dialogue, to revive stalled processes or to address socio-economic development and peace in the region.

**Linking WASH and Protection:** The civil war in Eastern Ukraine has resulted in massive displacement of populations as well as reduced access to drinking water. The regional water utility keeps distributing water to the two sides of the front line and requested material assistance from SDC/HA. Several convoys of dozen of trucks have been organised by SDC/HA to provide much-needed chemicals for treating and disinfecting drinking water for an estimated population of more than 3 million people. While this humanitarian action clearly targets civilian populations in need of drinking water, it has also a crucial advocacy component.

**E) Stakeholder coordination:** At national level, strong coordination of the sector is much needed to ensure an efficient humanitarian response and to meet development-specific objectives. The SDC will support national coordination through secondment of WASH coordinators to UNICEF, which has global responsibility for the WASH sectorial cluster coordination, or through specific projects aimed at increasing the capacity of governments in sectorial coordination. WASH secondments to UN agencies are aimed at supporting the refugee and IDP populations and do not address overall regional water resources, wastewater and solid waste issues. To increase the government's capacity and render them more WASH-conscious, advisers at the government level in specific agencies could be envisaged.

**Systemic support to the WASH sector:** SDC/HA provides financial support to the Global WASH cluster (GWC) deputy coordinator position. In 2016, SDC/HA won a bidding process and will take over the responsibility of managing the Field Support Team of the GWC, a mechanism through which WASH cluster coordinators are deployed all over the planet following a natural disaster to ensure an efficient cluster coordination is in place within days of a natural disaster occurring.

**Areas in which Switzerland will leverage existing strengths:** Integrated Water Resource Management, including environmental and technological aspects, water-quality management as well as institutional development along the Swiss decentralised model and the philosophy “water pays for water”<sup>5</sup> will be actively promoted whenever appropriate. This approach also contributes to reducing the risks of natural disasters related to water, as better management of surface and groundwater reduces the risks of floods and droughts and thus contributes to the DRR endeavours of SDC/HA.

**Aspects where Switzerland will increase its own engagement to fill voids:** Direct action will be conducted in countries going through an acute or protracted crisis and hosting large numbers of refugees and IDPs or recently hit by a natural disaster and facing severe pressure on limited water resources requiring a holistic water management approach. The technical expertise available within SHA will be provided to Swiss and international partners through secondments and backstopping mandates, in areas such as real-time groundwater monitoring, use of satellite imagery for assessing water potential and dissemination of the Swiss methodology for defining protection parameters. Training modules to disseminate

<sup>5</sup> **Water pays for water** means that all costs related to water catchment, disinfection, distribution, and later collection and treatment of wastewater are borne by the water user, making the water utility the sole responsible authority for access to water and sanitation services.

SHA expertise on IWRM will be developed and will include innovative approaches to link more systematically IWRM and WASH. In Switzerland a partnership will be built to support these efforts, while SDC offices will decide on the best adapted institutional settings.

From a **thematic perspective, sanitation** must be developed to reach the same maturity that is available in the water sector. This will be done through a backstopping mandate to EAWAG to support the design of innovative sanitation programmes as well as train WASH experts on-the-job on state-of-the-art technologies.

#### 4 Operational procedures and intervention guidelines

The WASH response of Swiss Humanitarian Aid relies mainly on the expertise within the EG WASH, which in close coordination with other SHA EG such as EG Construction and EG DRR/Environment fulfil three complimentary roles through an extended network of experts: 1) **Provide experts for rapid response or long-term missions** taking over project management or coordination functions; 2) **Provide technical or scientific expertise** to support humanitarian responses through backstopping or ad hoc advice and 3) **Disseminate knowledge** through continuous training for internal or external audiences, capitalisation of experience and sharing of lessons learnt. **SET, Rapid Response and Rescue Chain** functions will be filled with selected members of EG WASH regularly trained to fulfil these difficult tasks. SET modules for emergency water treatment and distribution will be maintained operational with the support of H Log and will be completed with Off-the-Shelf training modules. The availability of experts and material for rapid response interventions will result from a continued excellent collaboration with HR Feld and H Log.

**All modes of Swiss humanitarian intervention** will be used: The multilateral component will be developed by increasing the number of **strategic secondments**<sup>6</sup>, such as national cluster coordination positions as well as global positions based at head office.

**Bilateral funding of (I)NGOs** active in the WASH sector will be done with quality control performed by the Programme Officer<sup>7</sup> based at head office. **Direct action** will be implemented whenever directly implemented SHA activities on the ground have a clear added value, such as enhanced technical integrity of the project, positioning Switzerland to accomplish more efficient advocacy work for humanitarian access or opening possibilities to work on capacity-building of a local water authority after a conflict or a natural disaster. At least six direct actions should be implemented within the duration of the dispatch for 2017-2020. **In-kind donations** such as water-testing laboratories or real-time monitoring devices will be made within the framework of bilateral or multilateral contributions when it is deemed appropriate.

To increase the coherence, impact and relevance of the sector, a **working in the triangle** relation will be maintained with the **SDC offices** (through technical or programmatic advice, deployment of experts and backstopping missions), with the **geographical divisions** through a regular exchange on technical issues and a Quality Control function during H Operational Committees with the **multilateral division** through a substantial contribution to

<sup>6</sup> **Entry level** includes WASH engineer in a technical adviser function at local level or in a team based in the capital; **Medium level** covers WASH coordination positions at local level or Deputy National Cluster Coordinator at national level.

<sup>7</sup> Ideally, at least one regional wash PROGRAMME Officer position is created in each geographical division to ensure the technical integrity of the Credit Proposals prepared in the field.

the institutional dialogue with the most relevant partners, i.e. UNHCR, UNICEF, UNRWA and ICRC<sup>8</sup>.

**Coordination**, advocacy and **contribution** to the **global development** of the humanitarian WASH sector will be done through an annual meeting with like-minded donors during the World Water Week in Stockholm, through a regular contribution to AGUASAN workshops and meetings with the SDC's Global Programme Water Division and links with the SDC Network ResEAU.

**Innovations, Knowledge Management and "Action Research"** will mainly be taken care of by the Facharbeitsgruppe FAG<sup>9</sup> of EG WASH, the academic partners as well as international networks such as the International Sustainable Sanitation Alliance SuSanA with which SHA experts collaborate on an *ad hoc* basis.

Swiss Humanitarian Aid contribution to the **international WASH policy dialogue** will be made through continued active participation in the World Water Week in Stockholm as well as joining the Global WASH cluster meetings held twice a year.

In line with the Protection and SGBV priorities, a specific effort will be made to include a Conflict-Sensitive Programme Management (CSPM) approach as well as ensure that due attention is given to the specific needs of women and men of all ages.

## 5 Institutional set-up and resources

A Programme Officer based at head office in Bern is tasked with providing technical guidance to the field and implementing a quality control system for all relevant credit proposals submitted to operational committees. He will also advise the approximately 20+ WASH experts deployed in field operations and has the responsibility to lead the EG WASH, which comprises slightly less than 90 members. A temporary Assistant Programme Officer for a duration of 2 years will be filled by a WASH expert, whose TOR will mainly be the development of a robust but lean monitoring system for the WASH sector, as well as developing the sanitation and urban thematic through the development and monitoring of up-scalable pilot projects. Whenever possible, early coordination with the South Cooperation Department or Global Cooperation Department or Cooperation with Eastern Europe Department will be made for a possible handover of activities once the humanitarian assistance phase comes to an end. Financial resources for the development of the sector are estimated at CHF 400,000 per year, which will fund three complementary initiatives:

- 1) Support for the **International Humanitarian Infrastructure Partnership**, aimed at developing tools for more efficient humanitarian responses in complex urban settings. The financial contribution required is estimated at CHF 150,000 per year;
- 2) A **backstopping mandate** to boost the sanitation capacity of the EG WASH and the WASH sector within the Swiss Humanitarian Aid Department at an estimated cost of CHF 150,000 per year;
- 3) Support for **Swiss humanitarian NGOs**<sup>10</sup> through the provision of expertise from members of EG WASH, for a total budget estimated at CHF 100,000 per year.

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<sup>8</sup> No multilateral funding will be earmarked at sector level as recommended by the Good Donorship principles and will thus not be monitored separately from the Core Contribution Monitoring

<sup>9</sup> The FAG includes representatives of H Log, HR Feld, GP Water, as well as 9 experts in topics covering the whole range from microbiology and chemistry to urban engineering, sustainable sanitation and applied hydrogeology and meets 3 to 4 times a year.

<sup>10</sup> A Swiss WASH network will regroup all Swiss humanitarian WASH actors and collaborate on common standards and knowledge exchange

## 6 Partnerships

**Synergies - partnerships - networking:** Whenever possible, the SDC aims to develop partnerships with key actors in the WASH sector in regions of interest. These partnerships enable synergies and complementary approaches to be developed with the other departments of the SDC. When feasible, Swiss academic institutions such as EAWAG will be involved in the assessment, monitoring and evaluation of WASH projects, while private Swiss firms will be approached for ad hoc support or advice. A broad presence of Swiss experts deployed in different positions aims to reach the critical mass necessary to influence the WASH sector. This will be done through (1) experts seconded to humanitarian organisations who can influence WASH activities for refugees, IDPs and host communities, and (2) experts working as advisers to governmental institutions, who can assist in developing the country's water policy.

**Governmental counterparts:** As a governmental agency, the SDC has a preference for establishing working relationships with governmental counterparts. The main aim of the collaboration with governmental partners is to support their crucial coordination role of the WASH sector and to ensure an equitable and sustainable access to water and sanitation services. When project duration permits, **institutional development** will be carried out through on-the-job training and activities implemented with the support of external experts.

**Multilateral partners:** In close collaboration with Multi H, the multilateral partnership will focus on four partners relevant to the water and sanitation sector, i.e. UNICEF, UNHCR, UNRWA and ICRC. UNICEF has been tasked with taking global responsibility for the proper functioning of the WASH cluster, and has generally a separate WASH programme. In accordance with the Refugee Convention of 1951, the UNHCR has received the mandate to take care of refugees in asylum countries in close collaboration with the respective governments. The UNHCR mainly focuses on refugees, but can also be tasked with providing assistance and protection for IDPs. UNRWA has been established to take care of the refugees from Palestine, who are excluded from the Refugee Convention. These three organisations will benefit in priority from secondments of SDC WASH experts.

**Sharing SDC/HA WASH expertise with multilateral partners:** The ICRC has expressed interest in the groundwater monitoring projects implemented by the SDC and requested technical assistance to monitor the quickly receding water levels. Based on the successful groundwater monitoring and mapping experiences in Tunisia, Kenya and Chad, Swiss Humanitarian Aid experts will collaborate to develop a groundwater monitoring system for Yemen, and if successful expand the geographical coverage of this tool to other conflict zones. This complements the secondment of a senior SHA expert who is deployed as corporate hydrogeologist to UNHCR HQ.

Collaboration with an extended group of multilateral partners aims 1) to support the overall coordination of the WASH sector through secondment to UNICEF, which is the cluster leader; 2) to support the endeavours of the UNHCR, UNICEF and UNRWA to provide water and sanitation services to the largest possible population of concern, either through technical advice from SCO-based SDC experts or through secondments; 3) to benefit from specific expertise available within agencies such as FAO, UNESCO, WMO<sup>11</sup>. Usually, at field level, the SDC regularly participates in WASH coordination meetings organised by UN agencies.

<sup>11</sup> In accordance with SDC/HA multilateral strategy, multilateral/bilateral funding will mainly be agreed with the five main partners (ICRC, UNHCR, WFP, OCHA and UNICEF). When opportune, ad hoc collaboration with other multilateral partners can be developed but will not be systematised in all countries.

**Non-governmental partners:** Local or international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) with specific expertise and added value related to water may be considered for co-funding if their programme objectives meet with the objectives as outlined in this concept note. Proposals are thoroughly reviewed by SDC water experts and only considered if they respect state-of-the-art technical standards and respond to critical needs while respecting the humanitarian principles of impartiality and neutrality.

## **7 Accountability (monitoring & reporting)**

The operational responsibility and the decision to engage or not in water and sanitation activities remains with the geographical divisions and the field offices (cooperation offices), which also decide which modality is the best adapted to the context, while overall responsibility for the technical and scientific coherence of the WASH sector has been tasked to the thematic Programme Officer and Head EG WASH. There are two parallel **reporting lines**: the Head EG WASH reports directly to the Delegate for Humanitarian Aid / Head of SHA while the thematic Programme Officer reports to the officer responsible for thematic priorities within the Africa Division.

**Key performance indicators** to monitor the implementation of this concept note have been maintained to a small number of highly relevant and SMART indicators:

- # of direct action in which IWRM is an important component
- # of projects with an innovative sanitation approach (decentralised treatment of wastewater, final use of organic material, production of alternative energy)
- # of missions and days of staff deployment abroad in strategic positions

The WASH activities undertaken by Swiss Humanitarian Aid contribute to the following aggregated reference index (**ARI**):

- W2: # of water-related policies, laws, strategies and plans developed at national level
- W3: # of people (M/F) gained access to safe and affordable drinking water
- W4: # of people (M/F) gained access to adequate and equitable sanitation from a better access to water services

The financial monitoring of implementation of the thematic priority WASH is relatively easy as SAP markers already exist and make a close follow-up of activities possible with a reasonable time to invest in financial reporting. The reporting on resource allocation, including advisory services, will be the object of an annual financial report.