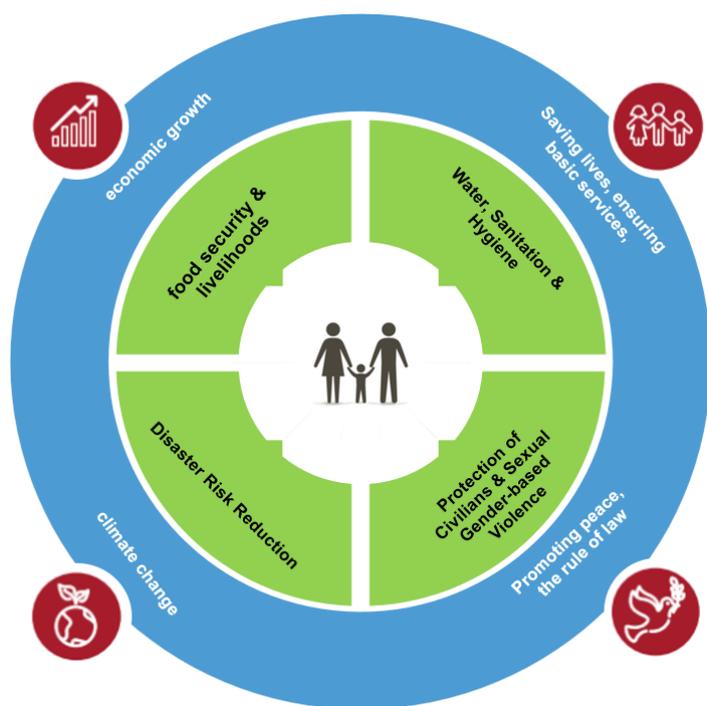


# Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit operational concept 2030

Humanitarian Aid September 2022

## Management Summary



The present concept sets out the strategic and operational framework of the Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit (SHA) until 2030 and establishes it as the operational instrument for the humanitarian activities of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). The framework for implementing Switzerland's global humanitarian aid mandate – aimed at saving lives and alleviating suffering – provided for in the concept is based on the humanitarian principles and international humanitarian law (IHL) as well as Switzerland's Foreign Policy Strategy 2020–23 and International Cooperation (IC) Strategy 2021–24.

### 1. Introduction

The aim of the current SDC reorganisation is to scale up and merge Switzerland's humanitarian aid and development cooperation instruments with a view to optimising the effectiveness of the SDC's work in mostly fragile contexts, which require a humanitarian-development nexus approach. The goal is to improve the living conditions of the world's poorest people in a sustainable manner, by using innovative methods and working together with the SDC's networks.

### 2. Humanitarian challenges

The issues facing the humanitarian sector are manifold. The need for assistance is growing while funds are stagnating and multilateralism is being challenged. IHL is also being disregarded and humanitarian access in protracted conflicts increasingly restricted. The effects of climate change are becoming even more extreme, and the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the world's vulnerability to epidemics. Humanitarian contexts are also increasingly shaped by the localisation of aid, urbanisation and digitalisation – providing new opportunities but also risks. To respond to these challenges, humanitarian aid must reach a better, more efficient and more effective standard. The present concept is part of this new orientation.

### 3. Humanitarian Aid at the SDC

To carry out its global mandate, SDC's Swiss Humanitarian Aid takes on three different roles: as an actor – implementing its own projects on the ground, as a donor – providing funds that are reliable and flexible, and as an advocate – for civilian protection and better compliance with IHL.

### 3.1 Priority areas

The SDC's humanitarian engagement has four focus areas:

- 1) Protecting the most vulnerable – refugees, internally displaced persons, people who are risk of sexual and gender-based violence, children living in conflict zones and people with disabilities. Access to education in emergencies should also be guaranteed for all.
- 2) Ensuring access to water, sanitation and hygiene.
- 3) Improving food security and livelihoods.
- 4) Disaster risk reduction (DRR) and sustainable reconstruction, including measures to reduce the environmental footprint of humanitarian aid.

### 3.2 Nexus

Swiss Humanitarian Aid will continue to provide relief aid to people in need as set out in its global mandate. At the same time, the increase in the number of protracted crises and conflicts calls for more synergies between humanitarian aid, development cooperation and peacebuilding. The nexus between these fields of activity has already been established in many SDC priority countries. The goal of the SDC's reorganisation, completed in September 2022, is to further strengthen these synergies. The SHA is also actively supporting this process.

## 4. The SHA

The SHA is made up of some 550 specialists who, in addition to their own professional activities, are on standby for deployment in a wide range of humanitarian fields of action. SHA missions can be short, medium or long-term assignments. As its operational arm, the SHA is integrated into the SDC, also to contribute to the implementation of SDC programmes, particularly in fragile contexts.

### 4.1 SHA expert groups

The SHA has 11 expert groups, which are divided into two categories: programme-related and support. The first five groups that are programme-related work around the priorities of the IC Strategy 2021–24.

Programme-related groups	Support groups		
Protection	Logistics /Support	Information	Security
Water sanitation and health (WASH)			
Disaster risk reduction and environment			
Cash (incl. Food and Livelihoods)			
Medical/Health			
Construction			
Rescue			
Coordination/Administration			

The expert groups carry out tasks as required by Swiss Humanitarian Aid. This work is coordinated by the Operations Section of HA, which also ensures that the SDC's geographical, multilateral and thematic divisions are involved in the process in order to strengthen the links between the SHA and the SDC. HA Operations Section reviews SHA activities based on the concepts and annual reports drawn up for the expert groups, and is in charge of approving the SHA's budget.

The heads of the expert group assist in the recruitment, deployment planning and further training of SHA members. Each head is responsible for supervising the activities and knowledge management within their group. They also provide the SDC access to their own networks within academic institutions and the private sector.

### 4.2 Types of SHA deployment

The type and length of SHA missions depend on the context and the three criteria set out in the IC Strategy 2021–24: needs on the ground, added value of Swiss support, and Switzerland's interests, whereas emergency relief operations are mainly taking into account the needs and the Swiss added value. There are four types of SHA mission:

- 1) **Rapid response** – Swiss Rescue and rapid response teams (RRTs): SHA members are deployed all over the world during emergencies – natural or technological disasters, crises, conflicts or other exceptional occurrences. The Federal Council delegate for humanitarian aid, who is the head of Swiss Humanitarian Aid and the SHA, decides on mission deployment and implementation. Swiss Rescue, which is continuing to be deployed after earthquakes, will be modularised to become more flexible.
- 2) **Direct actions**: These are projects implemented by the SDC using SHA expertise and in cooperation with local specialists. Direct actions follow the SDC's project cycle management (PCM) and can run from a few weeks to several years depending on the context.
- 3) **Secondments**: The SDC provides SHA expertise to local, national and international organisations. This also helps influence UN agencies dealing with issues of strategic importance to Switzerland, such as the protection of civilians.
- 4) **Support for external representations/head office**: SHA members can assist SDC divisions both abroad and at head office, providing tailored advice on implementing projects that require humanitarian expertise. SHA members assigned to these types of missions need sound knowledge of the SDC and its processes. The SDC divisions concerned can provide them with training e.g. PCM.

In regions with recurring or long-term humanitarian needs where Swiss Humanitarian Aid has been active for a certain length of time, pools of local humanitarian experts with a connection to Switzerland will be created with a view to internationalising the SHA.

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## 5. Resource management

The SDC's reorganisation means that its expertise in the different geographic, thematic and multilateral fields will be better linked, creating greater synergies between humanitarian aid, peace building and development cooperation. The division of work between head office and units in the field will continue as before. Head office is in charge of the strategic orientation of cooperation programmes, steering and quality assurance. Swiss cooperation offices are responsible for implementing programs and projects. The delegate for humanitarian aid may also mobilise staff from any SDC division in the event of a crisis or disaster. These rapid response missions are led by the SDC's Operational Control Group to make sure that Switzerland's humanitarian interventions assisted by the SHA are principled, need-based and fast.

### 5.1 Financial resources

Every four years, Parliament decides on the framework credits for Switzerland's international cooperation work. The SDC has an overall budget of CHF 11.25 billion for the 2021–24 period. Of the CHF 2.145 billion from this total that has been allocated to humanitarian aid, 80% is earmarked for emergency relief and 20% for reconstruction and prevention. The global budget has been used to cover operating and material expenses since 2017, which includes personnel costs for the SHA – around CHF 26 million for salaries and CHF 4 million for incidental costs per year.

### 5.2 Personnel resources

Swiss Humanitarian Aid Field Resources Section remains responsible for the operational readiness and deployment of SHA personnel, who will continue to fulfil their key function as the SDC's humanitarian aid operational arm after the reorganisation. Positions that bolster the humanitarian-development nexus such as durable solutions specialists and nexus advisers will also become more important.

The volatile nature of crises means that SHA missions can only be planned to a limited extent. Although this requires a high degree of flexibility from both the employer and the employee, it can also be an opportunity to pursue a versatile career and way of life. SHA missions can also act

as a stepping stone to a career in IC or as an additional activity to one's career in the private sector. HA Field Resources also supports and finances targeted and individual further training as well as advising SHA members on career planning. The section is also responsible for ensuring compliance with the Ordinance on Personnel for Peace Support, the Promotion of Human Rights and Humanitarian Aid (POPHAO).

In addition, the SHA's Twinning Team junior staff programme is to be given a higher profile in future with the SDC's geographical divisions being required to create 6 to 12-month twinning positions for young staff (1 to 2 positions per section).

Although the percentage of women joining the SHA has risen steadily over the past 10 years – from 20% in 2011 to 33% in 2021 – a target of 50% is to be reached by 2030 in the interests of gender balance.

Working and living conditions in fragile contexts can be difficult, which is why Swiss Humanitarian Aid provides SHA members with individual, free and anonymous counselling and support services. There are also plans to expand psychosocial support, including more psychologists with the right profiles for the SHA's pool.

Through their engagement, SHA members help promote a positive image of Switzerland's humanitarian aid efforts. The identity of the SHA is also continuously being fostered and reinforced through the different activities of the various expert groups, specialist and interdisciplinary further training, and regional and annual meetings.

### 5.3 Material resources

Emergency aid operations rely on the rapid mobilisation of relief supplies. Swiss Humanitarian Aid independently manages the required material and logistical resources through its HA Equipment and Logistics Section, which ensures that these resources are maintained and ready for deployment. The section works together with the SHA's expert groups to evaluate the procurement of materials, support the training of SHA members, and provide technical assistance during operations. It manages a warehouse in Bern and cooperates with the UN's Humanitarian Response Depot (UNHRD) to ensure targeted and rapid relief supplies around the world.

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## 6. Communication

Swiss Humanitarian Aid works together closely with FDFA Communication to present the Swiss public with

information on its activities in a professional and engaging way. In line with its concern for respecting people's dignity, the division takes care not to publish content that might contain stereotypes or violate a person's integrity. It also strives to ensure good communication within the division and that its mandate is supported by all SDC staff, as well as keeping SHA members up to date on SDC developments. The SHA's staff magazine 'The Humanitarian' and online informational events (H Info) create visibility for the unit's work within the SDC and FDFA as a whole.

## 7. Monitoring

The implementation of the SHA's operational concept is monitored based on the following indicators and objectives:

Types of SHA deployment	Indicators (FTE/year)	Based on (2017–19)	Target (2030)	Basis
Rapid response team (RRT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No. of SHA members on RRT missions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 FTE</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1-2 FTE</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HA Field Resources statistics</li> <li>SDC HA steering report</li> </ul>
Direct actions (DA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No. of SHA members on DA missions</li> <li>DA investment % in relation to humanitarian aid framework credit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>13 FTE (2021)</li> <li>7%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>15 FTE</li> <li>12%</li> </ul>	
Secondments (abroad)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No. of SHA members on secondment abroad</li> <li>% strategic secondments abroad</li> <li>No. of SHA members on secondment to UN <math>\geq</math>P4</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>43 FTE</li> <li>~ 80%</li> <li>~ 10%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>40 FTE</li> <li>85%</li> <li>15%</li> </ul>	
Support for external network/field offices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No. of SHA members on support missions for external network</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>49 FTE (incl. DA)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>45 FTE (excl. DA)</li> </ul>	
Support for head office/Geneva (incl. CH secondments, consultants, expert group heads)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No. of SHA members on deployment in Switzerland</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>33 FTE</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>25 FTE</li> </ul>	
Junior staff programme (Twinning Team)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No. of Twinning deployments per year</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6 FTE</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10 FTE</li> </ul>	
Gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>% active SHA members (women)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>32.5%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>50%</li> </ul>	

### IMPRESSUM

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