



# Water

A SDC Global Programme



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
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Confederazione Svizzera  
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Swiss Agency for Development  
and Cooperation SDC

# Why water is a key issue for the SDC

- ▶ The water crisis is one of the biggest challenges of this century. Global problems need global solutions.

Population growth, changing production and consumption patterns and climate change are affecting our water resources. Managing this limited resource is central to sustainable development; it is important for health, food security and energy production, to protect ecosystems and to enable us to adapt to climate change. Water management presents major challenges for all countries. Efficient, equitable management of water resources is a precondition for prosperity, stability and peace.

- ▶ Clean drinking water and adequate sanitation are a human right and essential for people's dignity, health and productivity.

In many places, people do not have access to clean drinking water or proper sanitation. This basic service tends to be available in urban areas. Two-thirds of people without access to adequate sanitation live in rural areas. More efforts are needed to close this gap and reduce its impact in terms of poverty, gender inequality and inequalities between ethnic groups.

- ▶ Switzerland's duty to help solve global water-related challenges.

Switzerland has adequate water resources of the highest quality, but that does not mean that it is unaffected by global water-related challenges. It takes a lot of water to produce many of our imported goods: Switzerland leaves 82% of its water footprint (total volume of freshwater that is used to produce goods and services consumed in Switzerland) in other countries, often in regions with scarce water resources. Switzerland therefore works to solve global water issues not just out of international solidarity in fighting poverty, but also to act responsibly.



# Global Programme Water (GPW)

The programmes, projects and contributions of the GPW address important global challenges in connection with the management of water resources, e.g. access to drinking water and water use in agriculture, industry and households.

The initiatives target inequality and poverty and help to reduce global risks to ensure water security for all.

To achieve this, the GPW:

- ▶ influences political decisions and measures such as institution building in the water sector in Switzerland and at the global level
- ▶ promotes innovative concepts, approaches and technologies that address the world's water problems

- ▶ forms partnerships that allow for additional financial resources and more effective lobbying and reporting, which can lead to major improvements in water services and in the management of water resources
- ▶ promotes strategic, practical knowledge management on water issues through thematic networks and communities of practice

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*“The water crisis is a global challenge, which is why we need global solutions. The actions of one country alone cannot solve a problem of this complexity. Switzerland recognises the need to seek global commitment, to ensure swifter action is taken and to coordinate solutions.”*

Didier Burkhalter,  
Federal Councillor

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# The four pillars of the Global Programme Water (GPW)

- ▶ **Water security at the top of the international development agenda**

In an unprecedented joint effort led by the GPW, Switzerland lobbied successfully for the inclusion of a goal on **water security for all** as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The GPW intends to use innovations in project financing and the development of global monitoring systems to help achieve the goal.

- ▶ **International cooperation for the sustainable management of resources**

Switzerland is working in water crisis 'hotspots' e.g. in the Middle East, Central Asia and the catchment areas of the Mekong river for sustainable, peaceful water resources management. The GPW advocates the use of water diplomacy linking political dialogue between countries at the highest level with joint water management measures. This evidence-based cooperation builds trust and makes it possible to settle conflicts surrounding water resources.

In addition, the GPW's portfolio includes a number of projects that assess the benefits of water to economies both local and global. The GPW develops and uses new concepts and tools (e.g. the water footprint concept, remuneration to maintain catchment areas) and builds new platforms for cooperation between various stakeholders, including the private sector.

- ▶ **Better access to water, sanitation and hygiene; more water for smallholder farming**

The GPW supports global monitoring and evaluation efforts. Donor countries use the results to ensure their aid targets the most disadvantaged communities. A number of innovative projects aim to improve technologies, business models and funding processes to give people access to water, sanitation and more efficient irrigation.

- ▶ **Switzerland leading the way in addressing global challenges in the water sector**

The GPW is using Switzerland's extensive knowledge in water and development to improve the effectiveness of its efforts at global level. It discusses cutting-edge technologies with water experts, provides training opportunities within the SDC's water network and supports the Swiss government's strategy in the water sector, making Switzerland's voice heard in international debates and conferences.

## Examples of Global Programme Water activities

**Water footprint** assessment is a globally accepted method to determine the volumes of water consumed and polluted in the production of goods and services. It allows us to measure the impact on the environment and to manage risks. The GPW played a leading part in the drafting of ISO 14046 on the water footprint. Water footprint assessment is practised in the Vietnamese coffee sector and by water authorities in the Andean region, which have included it in a number of programmes. In Colombia, Peru and Chile collaboration with 21 leading companies reduced the water footprint of production systems. In a collaboration project with six companies Colombia was able to save 77,000m<sup>3</sup> of consumable water per year, the annual direct water consumption of around 1,100 people.

In its **Blue Peace initiative in the Middle East** Switzerland has opted for a new form of cooperation linking peacebuilding with sustainable management of shared water resources. Under the leadership of the GPW, the initiative generates strong commitment among senior policy- and decision-makers, who work for sustainable cooperation between neighbouring countries. From this process emerge regional consensus solutions that lead to specific activities in the various aspects of the joint management of catchment areas. Meanwhile, Blue Peace's media network works to raise public awareness and generate political interest.

Established in 2008, the **Global Sanitation Fund** collects donor country contributions and directs the funding to countries where people have hardly any access to basic sanitation. Switzerland, one of the fund's founders, contributes approximately CHF 2.5 million a year to nationally-led sanitation programmes. This contribution and those of other countries have helped to ensure that 8.2 million people in 13 countries have access to sanitary facilities and no longer have to relieve themselves in the open. In approximately 36,500 communities, open defecation is a thing of the past.



The most water is used in agriculture, which consumes 70% of freshwater worldwide. More **efficient and productive** use of water is therefore essential to mitigate water scarcity, increase food security and raise the incomes of smallholder farmers. This project run by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the Agricultural Water Partnership for Africa is developing evidence-based methods and best practices, and investing in sustainable agricultural water management in Burkina Faso, Morocco and Uganda. It links concrete efforts with national and continent-wide political processes.

Recovering and reusing treated wastewater, nutrients and energy from sanitation facilities is a high priority where water is increasingly scarce and competition for agricultural inputs is growing. The GPW's **Safe Resource Recovery and Reuse Project** seeks to promote recycling of resources as a potential business model for local entrepreneurs. At the same time, the project is developing safety plans specially designed to eliminate health risks that can arise through the use of recycled waste products.

The **Swiss Water Partnership** launched by the GPW in 2011 brings together Swiss organisations from academia, civil society, and the public and private sectors to find innovative solutions for water challenges in developing and transition countries. More than 70 member organisations and experts from across different sectors are working to develop integrated solutions for the management of the water-food-energy nexus. The Swiss Water Partnership extends its vision beyond the water sector, supporting partnerships large and small across all sectors.

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*“Water can create tensions and is an issue in intergovernmental negotiations, but it is primarily an opportunity for cooperation and rapprochement between countries with transboundary water resources.”*

Peter Maurer, president of the International Committee of the Red Cross

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## New impetus

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

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

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*“It has changed our lives. We are able to keep our house clean, we have water to drink and for cooking. Without water, you can’t do anything. No community can live without water. Now we plant fruit and vegetables, which we use to earn a living. We sell what we grow and buy other important foods.”*

Yamilet Paiz Santana,  
smallholder farmer, Nicaragua

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# Facts and figures

- According to UNICEF and the WHO, between 1990 and 2015 2.6 billion people gained access to a better drinking water supply. However about a third of the world's population still does not have access to safe drinking water.
- Between 1990 and 2015, 2.1 billion people gained access to improved sanitation. Nevertheless, 2.4 billion people live without proper sanitation and nearly one billion practise open defecation (UNICEF, WHO).
- Every year, inadequate access to clean water and sanitation and hygiene facilities kills an estimated 3.5 million people worldwide.
- Worldwide, approximately 80% of the wastewater from communities and industrial plants flows completely untreated into the environment – with negative effects on human health and ecosystems.
- In the 20th century the world population tripled, while water consumption in households and production operations has risen sixfold.
- There are 276 transboundary watercourses worldwide. In addition, 200 transboundary aquifers have been identified to date. Nearly 450 international water agreements were signed between 1820 and 2007.
- Every year Switzerland invests around CHF 160 million in improving global water security, CHF 38 million of which is allocated to the Global Programme Water.

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*“We’re here because we know that water is not just a basic need – it is a human right. There is no life without water. Even so, hundreds of millions of people have no access to safe, clean water.”*

Ban Ki-moon,  
Secretary-General of the  
United Nations

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