

Water supply and management of wastewater

In order to improve water supply and wastewater services for all, Sida acknowledges that technically appropriate and affordable solutions are necessary but not sufficient. It is important that technology is accompanied by institutional, administrative and financial reforms. Sida's support aims at promoting reforms in partner countries to build more democratic and efficient institutions.

Access to safe water and a healthy environment contributes to enhanced human wellbeing and helps to create conditions for economic and social development. Yet, water supply and wastewater treatment systems in developing and transitional countries are often characterised by intermittent, inefficient, unsustainable and costly services. Generally, poor segments of society receive the poorest quality services. Improved services for all, particularly poor women and men living in urban, peri-urban or rural areas, is a priority for Sweden.

This brief provides a general overview of Sida's engagement in the area of water supply and wastewater management, and highlights a few examples relevant to the theme.

MAJOR CHALLENGES

Lack of financial resources and institutional capacity for operation and maintenance are major bottlenecks often contributing to malfunctioning services. In some countries the low quality services are accompanied by a tradition of non-payment. Water and wastewater utilities in developing and transition countries face a complex and sometimes rapidly changing context. Population growth, high urbanisation rates and increasing economic activities contribute to higher demand for the services. Current challenges, such as unsustainable use and pollution of the

water resources, are expected to increase with climate change.

SWEDEN'S ENGAGEMENT

As a response to these challenges, Sweden provides support through both multilateral and bilateral channels to promote efficient, sustainable and equitable use of the water resources as well as affordable technology options. Capacity strengthening is a priority. Sweden applies a pro-poor and rights-based approach, with a special focus on the role of women in development. Sida sees water, sanitation and hygiene as interlinked and mutually enforcing.



Improving wastewater treatment in Serbia through construction of a new plant. Photo: Victor Brott/Sida

At global level, Sida supports knowledge management and international policy development. Sida's bilateral support focuses on assisting partner countries in their efforts to improve water supply and wastewater services, through reforming and decentralising the sector and selective infrastructure investments. Support is provided through different financial instruments, such as grants, credits or guarantees.

Examples of Swedish support related to water supply and wastewater

UPSCALING INVESTMENTS IN EUROPE

Sida and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) has joined forces in the Environment and Climate Programme in Eastern Europe, to promote sustainable use of natural resources and protection of the environment as part of the EU-integration process. The cornerstone is a trust fund used for technical cooperation and investment grants combined with EBRD loans for the financing of municipal environment and climate projects. The objectives are achieved through institutional improvements (such as appropriate tariff systems, water metering, efficient billing/collection, and cost recovery reforms) and selective investments in rehabilitation and replacement of deteriorated water supply and waste water systems.

Sida and EBRD have a history of extensive cooperation in the field of municipal and environmental infrastructure in the Baltic Sea Area, but also to some extent in Caucasus and Central Asia. The cooperation builds on their respective experience. EBRD is the most important development financing institution in Eastern Europe when it comes to reforming municipal environment systems. By combining forces with EBRD, Sida is able to make interventions on a scale that otherwise would not have been possible.

EFFICIENT UTILITIES IN THE MENA REGION

Water is a human right but access is uncertain in many places. The countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region suffer from multiple challenges such as water scarcity, weak water and environmental policies, high investment needs, lack of management and technical capacity, over-exploitation, deteriorating water quality and services, increasing demand due to growing populations, and conflicts. The Arab Countries Water Utilities Association (ACWUA) is a regional NGO aiming at improving the performance and service provision by water and wastewater utilities in the Arab region. Sida provides support to ACWUA's work program in the areas of 'utility reform' (such as commercialisation of water utilities, decentralisation and private sector participation) and 'utility management' (including asset management, cost recovery, energy efficiency, tariff structure, and water for the poor).

WATER SECTOR BUDGET SUPPORT FOR IMPROVED SERVICE DELIVERY

Achieving the millennium development goal (MDG) targets for water and sanitation in Burkina Faso is hampered by several constraints, such as little devolution of responsibility and resources to municipalities, low implementation capacity of the private sector and high population growth. Sector budget support has proven to be a useful engine to build dynamic and inclusive sector dialogue. As part of the water sector budget support, Sweden (together with Denmark and EU) supports Burkina Faso to implement its ten year national water supply and sanitation programme. Institutional capacity development, sector reform support, and strengthening the sustainability of investments, are integral parts of the support. Expected results include attainment of the MDGs, improved quality and reduced regional disparities of the services and improved public health.

IMPROVING WATER SUPPLY AND SANITATION GLOBALLY

The Water and Sanitation Program (WSP) is a multi-donor partnership administrated by the World Bank and co-funded by Sweden and other international donors. WSP's mission is to support poor people in obtaining affordable, safe and sustainable access to water and sanitation services. WSP works directly with client governments to scale up improved water supply and sanitation services and hygiene programs in rural and urban areas. WSP is orienting its efforts to support poor-inclusive sector reform and creating sustainable services through domestic private sector participation. In addition, WSP contributes to capacity strengthening in fragile states and to mainstream climate smart water supply and sanitation planning.

Policy direction – water and sanitation

Sweden promotes efficient, fair and sustainable management of water and sanitation. Sida's interventions are guided by the Swedish Policy for environment and climate issues in Swedish development cooperation, 2010-2014, as well as by cooperation strategies at country, regional and global levels.

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