

## Sustainable sanitation

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Adequate sanitation is crucial for poverty reduction and for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Nonetheless, sanitation has not received the level of attention and priority it deserves. Inadequate policies and lack of investments translate into unnecessary diseases and human suffering, constrain economic activity and pollute the environment. Sida supports advocacy, investments and institutional capacity to promote sustainable sanitation through a rights-based approach.

Access to improved sanitation contributes to human health, dignity, security and wellbeing. In addition, it can also contribute to the generation and sustainability of livelihoods and an improved environment. Yet, 2.6 billion people lack access to adequate sanitation. It is a major cause of child mortality and every 20 seconds a child dies as a result of poor sanitation according to UN Water. Promoting access to water and sustainable sanitation is a prioritised area for Sweden. Sustainable sanitation refers to economically viable, socially acceptable sanitation solutions that protect human health without contributing to environmental degradation. This brief provides a general overview of Sida's engagement in the area of sustainable sanitation and highlights examples relevant to the theme.

### CULTURAL AND FINANCIAL CHALLENGES

Although the percentage of the population with access to adequate sanitation facilities has improved in all regions, the number of people without access has increased due to population growth and insufficient investments. A larger share of the urban population has access to adequate sanitation compared with rural areas. However, sanitation problems are more complex in urban areas and rapid urbanisation poses an enormous challenge on water and sanitation infrastructure and health.



*Training of journalists is a way to enhance public awareness and promote investments in sanitation. David Jacobs, the council chairman of Clara Town, Liberia, is interviewed by a WASH trained journalist (WASH=Water, Sanitation and Hygiene). Photo: WSSCC*

Although African countries yearly lose the equivalent of 1-2.5% of GDP due to poor sanitation, the political interest and societal debate generally remains limited. The poor, particularly women and girls, bear the largest burden of inadequate sanitary conditions. Similarly, cultural reluctance towards productive sanitation, or the recycling of nutrients from households, limits its use as fertiliser despite proven prospects of improving agricultural yields. In addition the rules, regulations and responsibilities relating to sanitation and hygiene are often incomplete or overlapping which often constrain efforts to increase access to sanitation.

### SWEDEN'S ENGAGEMENT

Sweden has an integrated view on water, sanitation and hygiene. Raising awareness on the benefits of sustainable sanitation is a strategic objective and Sida uses multiple channels to promote sustainable sanitation. Both financial and institutional capacity is necessary but without political interest little progress can be expected. According to Sida, therefore, advocacy and outreach activities are vital.

## Examples of Swedish support related to sustainable sanitation

### STIMULATING LEADERSHIP AND INCREASING INVESTMENTS

Leadership on sanitation issues is needed to reach the Millennium Development Goals, in particular goals for sanitation and reduction of child mortality. The Sanitation Leadership Program is an advocacy, capacity and information program undertaken by the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council, WSSCC. The council is a global multi-stakeholder partnership organisation within the UN system. The campaign “the world’s longest toilet queue” is organised to raise awareness of the links between sanitation, health and education. The WSSCC also operates the Global Sanitation Fund, to finance investments in improved sanitation and hygienic behaviour in countries where needs are particularly large. In 2011 more than 100 000 people in Africa and Asia were provided with improved toilets thanks to the Fund. Sweden provides non-earmarked program support for the implementation of WSSCC’s Medium term strategy.



*Disabled persons participate in the campaign “The world’s longest toilet queue” in Burkina Faso. Photo: WSSCC.*

### SUPPORTING LOCAL GOVERNANCE OF WATER AND SANITATION SERVICES

The urbanisation rate in Bolivia is high and increasing. Most of the people moving into urban areas will live in peri-urban areas with poor access to water and sanitation. Together with EU, Sida provides support to the Bolivian government to implement its water and sanitation development plan. The plan aims to increase access to water and sanitation services in peri-urban areas and improve water resource management while also ensuring that systems are climate resilient. As a complement,

Sida also provides support to water committees and water user groups that plan, administer, and maintain water and sanitation service systems in poor areas.



*Providing adequate sanitation in rapidly growing urban areas like Dhaka, Bangladesh is a great challenge. Photo: Thomas Sennett/World Bank.*

### URBAN WELLBEING AND DIGNITY

A large share of the urban population in Bangladesh lack access to adequate sanitation. Poor slum dwellers are to a significant extent excluded from water and sanitation services. This has implications for health status, economic wellbeing, human dignity and the environment. Sweden supports a program to increase access to safe drinking water, improved sanitation and adoption of better hygiene practices while promoting a rights-based approach. The program is implemented in low income communities in Dhaka and Chittagong and Khulna by WaterAid in partnership with four local NGO’s. For example, more than 150,000 people are targeted for hygiene promotion campaigns and about 1.7 million people, mostly commuters, will be served through mobile and public toilets.

#### 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.