

Sustainable sanitation

Adequate sanitation is crucial for poverty reduction and for people's wellbeing. Inadequate policies and lack of investments translate into unnecessary diseases and human suffering, constrained economic activity and environmental pollution. Sida supports advocacy, investments and institutional capacity to promote improved sustainable sanitation through a rights-based approach.

Access to improved sanitation is a human right and contributes to human health, dignity, security and wellbeing. It can also contribute to the generation and sustainability of livelihoods and an improved environment. Yet, 2.5 billion people lack access to adequate sanitation and 1 billion people still practice open defecation. Unsafe sanitation is a major cause of child mortality. Promoting access to water and improved sustainable sanitation especially for women and children 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

The number of people without access to proper sanitation and hygiene facilities 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, rapid urbanisation poses an enormous challenge on water and sanitation infrastructure and health. 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 and can lead to increased vulnerability to harassment and violence, including sexual violence, especially for women and children.

Productive sanitation, i.e. to recycle nutrients from human excreta and wastewater and to be used as fertilisers in agriculture, has proven prospects of improving yields. However, cultural reluctance has limited its application. 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.



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

SWEDEN'S ENGAGEMENT

Sweden has an integrated view on water, sanitation and hygiene, and Sida uses multiple channels to promote sustainable sanitation. Both financial and institutional capacity is necessary. Between 2013 and 2016 Sida has set aside 1,6 billion SEK for improved water and sanitation. UNICEF will receive 800 MSEK for their work to improve water supplies and sanitation facilities in schools and communities, and to promote safe hygiene practices.

Examples of Swedish support related to sustainable sanitation

GOVERNANCE AND ADVOCACY

Nearly half the world still lacks access to improved sanitation – creating a crisis in public health. The Water and Sanitation Program (WSP) is a multi-donor partnership program of the World Bank to support poor people in obtaining affordable, safe and sustainable access to water and sanitation services. WSP supports governments in 25 countries in the reforms of water and sanitation sectors in order to achieve institutional change and improved governance. They provide technical assistance, facilitate knowledge exchange, and promote evidence-based advancements in sector dialogue. WSP are able to share best practices across regions and to place a strong focus on capacity building by forming partnerships with academia, civil society organizations, donors, governments, media, private sector, and others.

In the last three years, WSP has supported 13 governments to increase access to improved rural sanitation for 22 million people.



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

LOCAL GOVERNANCE OF WASH

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 the 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 development countries lack access to adequate sanitation. The urban poor and their support organisations are at the same time often unable to access affordable loans from financial institutions to invest in e.g. water and sanitation solutions. This has implications for their health status, economic wellbeing and human dignity as well as the environment. Sweden supports the Community-Led Infrastructure Finance Facility (CLIFF) which works to reduce poverty by increasing the access for the urban slum dwellers in Africa and Asia to public, private and civil society sector resources for housing and basic service delivery. Sustainable sanitation efforts which focus on women and children are an essential component of the program. CLIFF funding helps partners establish their own loan funds to finance slum redevelopment demonstration projects and become financially sustainable as they move towards implementing more and often bigger projects. CLIFF is coordinated by Homeless International.

Policy direction – water and sanitation

Sweden promotes efficient, fair and sustainable management of water and sanitation. Sida’s interventions are directed by the results strategies at country, regional and global levels.