

## Presentation of the Swiss Development Cooperation Sector Policy on Water Supply and Sanitation

### Towards a Balanced Development in Water Supply and Sanitation

#### Sector Policy - An Operational Management Tool

The Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) formulates a sector policy for each of its key sectors<sup>1</sup>. These policies form part of SDC's operational management tools and contain directions for the development assistance in a given sector. The ideas behind the strategies and the proposed operational principles serve as references. However, they are not a recipe book for the formulation of programmes and projects. It is an indisputable fact that each development concept must take into account the specific local situation and sociocultural context.

The object of the sector policy "Water Supply and Sanitation", is the use of water to cover immediate human needs, the disposal of waste water, excreta and solid waste, as well as hygiene education.

Answering to the call «Some for all rather than more for some» SDC's support in the sector focuses on the permanent availability of sufficient clean drinking water for all and the access to appropriate sanitation measures. Thus SDC follows the principles and the holistic approach for action as outlined in chapter 18 of the Agenda 21. Key words are: fostering partnership, gender perspective, financial sustainability and appropriate technology. The integration of the Water Supply and Sanitation (W&S) sector into national strategies for water resources management and environmental protection sets the framework.

#### Water Supply and Sanitation are elements of structural improvements

Water Supply and Sanitation projects serve to fulfil basic human needs and can contribute to a rationale use of water and to its protection as a natural resource. Measures taken in the field of W&S are important elements of public health. They reduce in particular the risk of transmission of water and waste-related diseases. Overall access to safe water and environmental sanitation is one of the key contributors to a sustained improvement of the livelihood and thus to poverty alleviation.

<sup>1</sup> The sector policy of Swiss Development Cooperation is published as 'SDC Sector Policy on Water Supply and Sanitation', SDC Series of Sector Policies, May 1994, SDC, Bern, Switzerland, 52 pp.

## **Objectives**

SDC has set itself the following objectives for its support in the W&S Sector:

- to secure and to promote actively the access to qualitatively and quantitatively sufficient drinking water for all;
- to promote low-cost, environmentally sound installations for excreta and waste water disposal;
- to develop and implement municipal waste management schemes which protect the resources and the environment;
- to promote improved hygiene behaviour in the population concerned;
- to secure training and long-term support within the frame of W&S programmes.

## **Strategy for a Balanced Development**

SDC lays strong emphasis on the recognition of the specific socio-cultural and natural context in which collaboration and partnership takes place. Failing to recognize these factors properly is - in our opinion - one of the key causes of the unsatisfactory performances of services and utilities. Use of drinking water, disposal of liquid and solid waste and hygiene behaviour of the population, are all part of the sociocultural and natural context.

The strategy of a balanced development takes into account these important contextual conditions. It shows adequate solutions for the development, implementation and operation of balanced and sustainable W&S systems based on a holistic understanding of W&S programmes embedded in their sociocultural and natural environment.

The strategy of balanced development demands a harmonious consideration of five interconnected fields, all of which interact towards sustainability of W&S systems.

### ***Participation and motivation of all parties involved in W&S projects are decisive***

We have to provide the people with what they want and not what we think is best. Mobilization for participation is required but fair negotiation of the terms for operating facilities is the basis for efficient management, whether it is by an utility company or community-based. Gender-balanced approaches are a must.

### ***Clarification of the role of the different actors is necessary***

The transfer of the role of governments from provider to enabler and regulator is crucial but has to be coupled with the strengthening of the role of communities, NGOs and the private sector.

### ***Adequate financial participation of the users is required***

This implies that tangible advantages for the users must derive from their contribution to water supply and sanitation. Projects should be designed to enable users to choose and pay accordingly to their choice. Upgrading the level of services in stages may be another requirement of a demand oriented approach.

### *Appropriate technologies should reflect the users' preferences*

A reliable and sustainable W&S infrastructure depends on appropriate technologies and the promotion of local construction. Choosing a technology also means being aware of the potential new risks to cope with. While ecological and health risks may in the first instance be lowered, economic (operation and maintenance costs), political (dependencies) and social risks (weakening of existing exploitation systems) may be detrimental.

### *Sustainability depends on the ability of the users to cope with new problems*

Training for new skills has to be based on reinforcing the existing problem-solving capacities. The right information and appropriate communication tools to transfer know-how are basic. Many networks exist already which need to be coordinated and strengthened.

## Cooperation with bilateral and multilateral institutions

SDC general operational principles are formulated in the 'Principles of SDC' Organisational Development'. Specific considerations for operational project and programme implementation in the W&S sector are spelt out in the policy paper and can be read in the publication mentioned in Footnote 1]

### *SDC's Experiences with collaboration with UNICEF*

International exchanges of practical and scientific experiences are key elements to foster institutional integration like the promotion of national coordination among donors and between governments and donors and to achieve synergies through selective collaboration with other bilateral and multilateral institutions.

UNICEF and SDC have a longterm experience as partners in several projects and programmes:

As an example for the experiences out of this collaboration, the case of the cooperation between the Government of Bangladesh, DANIDA, SDC and UNICEF is presented separately<sup>2</sup>.

Other experiences of cooperation are earlier cofinancing activities in Moçambique and Lesotho and the ongoing collaboration in Central America. In the latter context, the support to the Regional Water and Sanitation Network in the framework of the UNDP/WB Water and Sanitation Program is an interesting example towards the strengthening of country level collaboration.

The assessment of the collaborations at project level in Africa and Latinamerica are not given here. They coincide to a large extent with the conclusions and recommendations given in the assessments of UNICEF's performance in the 'AIDAB, CIDA, DANIDA, SDC (multidonor evaluation): Water and Environmental Sanitation UNICEF, Evaluation of UNICEF, Working paper: Sector report, 1992.

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<sup>2</sup> By Mr. Walter Meyer, future senior sector advisor at the Swiss Coordination Office at Dhaka.

*Future perspectives of collaboration:*

Given the consultative nature of the meeting at The Hague on one side and the operational principle of SDC that collaboration within the W&S sector in a given partner country is part of a process that is highly dependent on the political, institutional and technical potentials and limits of the partners concerned on the other side, the extent of future collaboration can not be indicated here. As stated above, the collaboration in Bangladesh is at a preparation stage for future support to the DPHE.

**Linkages of SDC's policy with the strategy proposed by UNICEF**

Written comments<sup>3</sup> on the 'draft for comments' are under preparation by SDC and will be handed over to the WES section after clearing by SDC.

Swiss Development Cooperation

P. Peter (Head)

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<sup>3</sup> Given the short notice, an issue paper commissioned on March 9, 1995, by the Water and Infrastructure Service of SDC with R. Schoch is available as draft only and will be finalized after the consultation. (Mr. Schoch is a consultant who was involved in the multidonor evaluation of UNICEF)