

# 6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION



## SWEDEN AND CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION

### MAIN MESSAGES

- **Good governance.** Creating an enabling environment that contributes to inclusive and informed decision-making, and planning of water resource management, is a top priority. This will be possible through coherent policies, legal frameworks, dedicated financing, strong institutions and partnership with, and involvement of, all the relevant stakeholders in society. Transparency and accountability are crucial, in order to achieve openness and to reduce corruption.
- **Integrated water resource management.** Sustainable management of water resources generates positive results for water-use efficiency, water quality, the circular economy and many other sectors. Water supply and sanitation must be seen as an essential part of integrated water resource management. A holistic approach is necessary to restore and protect ecosystems and the services that they provide. Promoting the 'source-to-sea' approach and improving cross-border cooperation on transboundary waters is important, in order to protect the quality and quantity of water, and to prevent tension and conflict.
- **Equitable access for all to water and sanitation services.** Achieving higher levels of sustainable and equitable access to safe drinking water, adequate sanitation and hygiene are major challenges. Given the inequalities in access to water and sanitation, a human rights-based approach must be at the core of all efforts, in order to ensure that the most marginalised populations are reached and that no one is left behind. Attention also needs to be given to access to water and sanitation, in schools, and to the inclusion of safe water, sanitation and hygiene, in universal health coverage systems and hygiene education, with an emphasis on safe reproductive health, and the situation of women and girls.

# SWEDEN ON TARGET FOR SDG 6: GOOD GOVERNANCE AT THE HEART OF IMPLEMENTATION

Good governance is key to be able to tackle most water challenges and is key to the successful implementation of SDG 6 and all other SDGs, of the 2030 Agenda. The value of water and the ecosystem services that freshwater ecosystems provide in all affected sectors, should be stressed. Institutional aspects and governance, coherent policies, legal frameworks and adequate financing are fundamental to achieving the SDGs. Openness, planning and partnership are key. This includes creating effective, accountable and transparent Institutions, to ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making, at all levels.

## Sweden at work nationally

Access to clean water and sanitation for all inhabitants in Sweden is considered to be met. Regarding the global indicators, the preliminary assessment is that Sweden fulfils the targets. Legislation and directives adequately cover the majority of the targets that relate to this SDG, including several of Sweden's environmental objectives.

Sweden performs well on network performance and connection measures for water supply and sanitation. The percentage of the population in Sweden that is connected to

wastewater treatment systems is among the highest in European countries. All wastewater treatment plants provide secondary or tertiary treatment.

However, pollution challenges remain, for example, from chemicals (including pharmaceuticals), nutrients that cause eutrophication, and microplastics. Sweden has several longterm programmes for monitoring and assessing the status of water in lakes, watercourses and groundwater. These programmes are crucial for discovering changes in these water systems and provide an important basis

for decision-making. To improve and protect the quality of both surface water and groundwater resources, Sweden has an ongoing programme of measures, in order to achieve the objectives of the EU Water Framework Directive. Working on measures at local level, with local communities, is key.

Sweden is also developing measures to address microplastics, and urban and stormwater discharge into rivers, and cost-effective mitigation measures to reduce legacy pollutants and contaminants of emerging concern, including pharmaceuticals. In 2017, Sweden introduced a ban on microbeads in cosmetics. In the coming three years, SEK 600 million (USD 70 million) will be invested to build and restore wetlands. This relates to several ecosystem services and contributes to achieving SDG 6.

Sweden has taken steps to promote the safe reuse of wastewater resources, with wastewater certification schemes and innovative sanitation systems for wastewater recycling, which have been guided by a national ambition to reuse nutrients and a ban on organic waste going to landfill.

## Sweden at work globally

Through its international development cooperation, Sweden is working internationally to improve access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene, especially for women and children. In 2015, support for water and sanitation interventions amounted to approximately SEK 790 million (USD 95 million).

In 2015, Sweden made a commitment to support efforts to improve access to sanitation for 60 million people throughout the world by 2030. Swedish support includes: technical assistance for water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) sector reforms; capacity-building of relevant ministries at national, provincial and local level; public-

private partnerships for WASH services; improved sludge management, health and sanitation campaigns; engaging local communities in producing latrines; promoting 'open defecation free' areas; and establishing local and national monitoring systems.

Sweden has taken steps to integrate WASH as an important tool for securing sexual and reproductive health and rights. This is a priority area for Swedish feminist foreign policy and the policy framework for Swedish development cooperation and humanitarian assistance.

Sweden is also working on sustainable water resource management through the UN Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes and through bilateral efforts. These include support for the source-to-sea platform. Many Swedish government agencies are contributing to these efforts, including the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management, the Swedish Meteorological and Hydrological Institute and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida).

Several Swedish government agencies are engaged in bilateral cooperation to support knowledge exchange, capacity-building and strengthening efforts to contribute to sustainable and integrated water resource management in a number of countries.

In the UN Security Council, Sweden has also highlighted the importance of conflict-prevention measures, as part of transboundary water management to achieve global development (SDG 16).

## Connecting the dots<sup>1</sup>



Source: Stockholm Environment Institute

While SDG 6 relates specifically to human access to water and sanitation, its set of targets reflects the intimate connections between these services, social equity, human and environmental health, and sustainable resource management.

More than two thirds<sup>2</sup> of the world's population lives in areas suffering severe water scarcity at least one month a year<sup>3</sup>, and changing climate patterns, combined with deteriorating water quality and increasing demand, are exacerbating this precarious situation. A similar number of people lack access to safely managed sanitation,<sup>4</sup> creating a huge health and pollution burden that affects mainly the poorest people.

Even in high-income regions, water and sanitation still pose major sustainability challenges,

with infrastructure demanding high energy inputs and being poorly suited to achieving efficiency gains and the control of emerging pollutants, or the recycling of water, plant nutrients and other essential resources that are abundant in wastewater.

### Safe and inclusive services

Access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene is a prerequisite for escaping poverty (SDG 1), protecting public health (SDG 3), ensuring equal access to education (SDG 4) and ensuring sustainable cities (SDG 11). Taking into account the needs of underrepresented and vulnerable groups, such as women, indigenous peoples and the disabled, in providing these services, will also help to reduce major

inequalities (SDGs 5 and 10). Various layers of inequality remain, concerning access to water, sanitation and hygiene that need to be addressed through good governance and strong institutions (SDG 16), strategic planning, adequate financing, inclusion and empowerment of different parts of society, and smart and sustainable long-term solutions.

### Waste management for health and the environment

Protecting people from contact with untreated Excreta, is also essential for liveable human settlements (SDG 11) and health (SDG 3). However, approaches focused only on access and waste disposal, risk contributing to water scarcity, greenhouse gas emissions and more direct ecosystem damage (SDGs 13, 14 and 15). Nearly half of the targets in SDG 12 require improved management and governance of water resources and waste treatment, including related infrastructure (SDG 9).

### Recycling for agriculture and energy

The provision of water and sanitation services must also be seen in the context of resource management. Rainwater harvesting and recycling water, nutrients and organic matter in wastewater, can shore up agricultural production (SDG 2) and produce clean energy (SDGs 7 and 13). It can also contribute to green jobs (SDG 8) and cleaner production (SDG 9).

Energy and water systems are highly interdependent, as water is required for almost all steps of energy production, and energy is required for most steps of water supply and treatment. Nevertheless, energy and water systems have been developed, managed, and regulated independently, both at national and international level. Future water and energy systems must address these interlinkages. Ambitious energy- and resource-efficient solutions tailored to social, geophysical, climatic and economic contexts, will maximise opportunities and minimise negative interactions.

<sup>1</sup> This section is based on an analysis by Stockholm Environment Institute. For more information on SEI's SDG work visit the following website: <https://www.sei.org/sdgs-agenda-2030/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://advances.sciencemag.org/content/2/2/e1500323.full>

<sup>3</sup> Mekonnen, M. and Hoekstra, A. (2016). Four billion people facing severe water scarcity. *Science Advances*, 2(2). DOI: 10.1126/sciadv.1500323.

<sup>4</sup> WHO and UNICEF (2017). *Progress on Drinking Water, Sanitation and Hygiene: 2017 Update and SDG Baselines*. Geneva: WHO and UNICEF. <https://washdata.org/report/jmp-2017-report-final>





## Sweden and the transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies

Sweden's transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies is well under way and is taking place throughout the country. More and more people in Sweden say that concern for sustainability affects their consumption decisions. Municipalities and county councils are committed to sustainable development. Large parts of the Swedish business community see sustainability as a competitive advantage. Civil society is paving the way through its own efforts and by pushing decision-makers. Young people are key for transformative change. The Swedish research community contributes cutting-edge research on sustainable development. Many Swedish public agencies have agreed on a joint declaration of intent to implement the 2030 Agenda.

On 14 June 2018, the Swedish Government presented its action plan for implementing the 2030 Agenda during the period 2018–2020. Sweden has the ambition to be a leader in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Implementation involves a step-by-step approach towards a modern and sustainable welfare nation at home, and as part of the global system. This transformation must take place jointly, in partnership.

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