The Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) supports its partner countries, a large number of international institutions and multilateral initiatives to improve both access to drinking water and sanitation as well as water resource management. Thereby it contributes to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – particularly SDG 6 – “Ensure Availability and Sustainable Management of Water and Sanitation for all” as well as to the goals on food security (SDG 2), health (SDG 3) and education (SDG 4). Furthermore, our work emphasizes the importance of a holistic approach, which coherently considers the sectors water, energy, agriculture, health and education.

One major focus is the implementation of the human right to water and sanitation, which plays a central role in development and poverty reduction. Our work on access to safe drinking water and sanitation focusses on urban and peri-urban areas includes the treatment of fecal waste and sewage, and is directed to households as well public facilities such as schools and hospitals. Water Resource Management is another area of growing importance and increased focus.

At international level, Germany promotes the reform of the global water architecture. The goal is to set-up an intergovernmental United Nations (UN) platform in order to spur the follow-up, review and implementation of SDG 6. Furthermore, BMZ actively supports the implementation of an integrated, global monitoring system of the water-related SDGs, in order to foster implementation and to provide a basis for coherent political decision-making.

The water sector is one of the sectors in which German Development Cooperation has a special profile - water has been ranking among the most important sectoral engagements of BMZ for several decades in terms of financial means and the number of partner countries. For more than 10 years, Germany has been one of the three largest donors in the water sector. In 2016, Germany made commitments of approximately USD 822 million for measures and programs in the water and sanitation sector. In addition, BMZ also financially supports other actors in the water sector such as the Water Integrity Network (WIN), the Global Water Partnership (GWP) and the Sustainable Sanitation Alliance (SuSanA), the Monitoring Initiative on water-related SDGs (GEMI) and the SDG 6 Synthesis Report via the World Water Assessment Programme (WWAP).
The new BMZ sector strategy on water

In July 2017, BMZ issued a new sector strategy to support the implementation of Agenda 2030 and in particular SDG 6 and other water-related SDGs. It replaces the BMZ sector concept of 2006 and reflects the modified international agenda (Agenda 2030, Paris Climate Agreement, and the recent refugee crisis). The four core objectives of the new strategy are to support partner countries in:

1. Creating access to sanitation and drinking water;
2. Improving water resources security;
3. Mitigating and adapting to climate change;
4. Valuing water as a resource of peace and a tool to mitigate causes of forced displacement.

Efforts concentrate primarily on the following four areas: (a) human right to water and sanitation; (b) water, energy and food security; (c) sustainable and efficient water resource management; (d) minimizing climate-induced risks, and (e) conflict prevention and mitigation of causes of forced displacement.

In its strategy, BMZ commits to expanding its activities on water security by one third – to meet the demand of partner countries. In line with Agenda 2030, the new strategy takes explicit account of cross-sectoral cooperation. BMZ is in the process of publishing six SDG strategy documents on SDG interlinkages between water and other topics, in order to support the planning of development cooperation measures. The first two of these documents on “Water, Environment and Climate” and “Water, Agriculture and Energy” were released in 2018.

Water, migration and the cooperation with host communities

Water scarcity is prevalent in most countries in the Middle East, North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa. At the same time, the regions host about 8.2 million refugees and asylum seekers as well as 28.3 million internally displaced people and returnees.
Germany has initiated the global programme “Sanitation for Millions” with the aim of supporting host communities, through investing in water and sanitation infrastructure. The multi-donor initiative seeks to improve the sanitation and hygiene conditions for disadvantaged groups in countries with a high share of refugees and internally displaced persons. Implementation measures currently concentrate on public institutions with a focus on the construction and rehabilitation of sanitary installations, maintenance, trainings for teachers and muezzins as well as awareness raising campaigns for pupils.

Furthermore, the water sector can contribute to reducing structural causes of flight by strengthening livelihoods, contributing to income generation and by legitimizing public institutions.

Promoting sanitation and hygiene

The number of people without access to sanitation was underestimated for a long time. UN figures (JMP 2017) report that 4.5 billion people are affected, while previous estimates assumed 2.5 billion people. Furthermore, 3 out of 10 people – or 2.1 billion – lack access to clean drinking water at home. The promotion of sanitation and hygiene is one of the key pillars of Germany’s engagement in the water sector. Besides various regional and bilateral programmes, BMZ has been supporting the Sustainable Sanitation Alliance (SuSanA) for over 10 years, which is a network for promoting sustainable sanitation. Regular meetings provide a platform for face-to-face exchange amongst the 9,000 members and 324 partner institutions working in the sanitation sector. To date the network has reached approximately 23,700 people through regular SuSanA and 133 Working Group meetings. One of SuSanA’s successes has been the “Clean India” campaign, which approximately 130 Indian cities joined in order to commit themselves to implement better wastewater management.

Water and climate change

Against the background of diverse interlinkages between climate change and water, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) significantly influences the activities within the sector. The link between water and climate change was first acknowledged through official water days at the Conference of the Parties in Marrakech 2016 and Bonn 2017. According to a UNFCCC analysis, water is the most prioritized sector within the adaptation parts of the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). It is expected that a considerable amount of financial resources will be made available for climate change adaptation and mitigation in the future – resources that could also be used to tackle water-related challenges.

The Nexus approach

The Nexus approach has increasingly gained attention on the international agenda, exemplified through a growing number of international events. The “Bonn2011 Nexus Conference” presented how the Nexus approach can secure access to water, food and energy by increasing efficiency through finding trade-offs and building synergies across the different sectors. German Development Cooperation focuses on supporting Regional Dialogues involving various stakeholders, including national and regional policy-makers, the private sector, academia and civil society. Thereby, we aim to promote the Nexus approach and to develop concrete measures on the national and regional level. The Global Nexus Secretariat, run by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, facilitates the Nexus Resource Platform (http://www.water-energy-food.org) and supports knowledge exchange, encouraging national and international cooperation between sectors.
Cooperation with multilateral institutions

BMZ supports a wide range of international institutions and multilateral initiatives to improve WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene) and the sustainable management of water resources worldwide:

- The Water Integrity Network (WIN), which contributes to fighting corruption in the water sector;
- The SDG 6 synthesis report by the World Water Assessment Programme (WWAP) of UNESCO and the Integrated Monitoring Initiative of the United Nations (GEMI) both under UN Water, which are also involved in the debate on the global water architecture;
- The Alliance for Global Water Adaptation (AGWA), which promotes the interlinkages between water and climate;
- The Global Water Partnership (GWP), which contributes to improving integrated water resource management;
- As part of the Nexus Regional Dialogues, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (CEPAL), the League of Arab States (LAS), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Niger Basin Authority (NBA) and the International Fund for saving the Aral Sea (IFAS) are supported;
- The OECD Water Governance Initiative (WGI), which contributes to tackling governance challenges worldwide.