BMZ Water Strategy
Key to implementing the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement

Water and sanitation are key to implementing the 2030 Agenda and the Paris climate agreement. Through its new water strategy, the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) is responding to the important role of water in these global agreements. In the strategy, the BMZ commits to contributing to creating the new momentum that is needed in the sector to reach SDG 6 and other water-related targets. The Ministry therefore commits to expand its activities on WASH, wastewater and climate-sensitive water resources management (WRM). The BMZ wants to expand its activities on water security by one third.

The strategy is a binding framework for all measures under German development cooperation in the water sector, i.e. for dialogue with partners and the development of country strategies, for German implementing organisations and for the dialogue with international and multilateral organisations. Where German development cooperation in other sectors touches upon water-related questions, it must be in line with the strategy.

Four objectives
The BMZ pursues four objectives in the sector: to contribute to:
1) creating access to sanitation and drinking water and ensuring hygiene – in line with human rights;
2) promoting water resource security and supporting the implementation of SDGs 6.3 to 6.6;
3) fostering climate change mitigation and adaptation;
4) utilising water as a resource for peace and tackling the causes of displacement.

Contributions to tackling the challenges
Human right to water and sanitation
German development cooperation in the water sector follows a human rights approach. Water and sanitation must be safe, available in sufficient quantities, accessible, affordable and provided in a socially and culturally acceptable manner. The human rights principles of non-discrimination, participation and accountability must be respected. Germany supports WASH in public places and institutions and puts new emphasis on hygiene as a field of action.

Germany welcomes the stricter SDG monitoring standards involving water quality tests, the safe management of faeces as well as the requirement that the service must be on premises. However, if resources are limited, priority will be given to serving the large numbers of disadvantaged people, as required by human rights standards and by the Leave No One Behind principle of the 2030 Agenda, instead of exclusively focusing on service on premises.

Good governance in the sector (e.g. well-managed service providers, effective regulation and monitoring, corruption-resistant financing systems and well-trained staff) as well as sustainable financing of services (socially acceptable tariff systems as a standard, and subsidies dependent on context) are key concerns.

We intend to...
... give sanitation a stronger role, e.g. by expanding the BMZ initiative “Sanitation for Millions”, which is to reach 4 million people by 2022, and through networks such as the Sustainable Sanitation Alliance and through partnerships, e.g. with BMGF;
... prioritise the human right to water in resource conflicts;
... reserve 4 to 6% of programme financing for M&E.

Water, energy and food security nexus
Water, energy and food security are inextricably linked: difficulties in one area can easily cause difficulties in another, e.g. when power plants shut down because of a lack of water for cooling. The 2030 Agenda calls for an integrated perspective. Results should not be optimised for one sector at the expense of another. Rather, we should balance trade-offs in an equitable and fair manner and look for synergies. The BMZ supports its partner countries in addressing access to services and security of supply based on an integrated nexus perspective.

Sustainable and efficient water resources management
Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) is a guiding principle for Germany’s development cooperation. Promoting good governance, i.e. effective administration, in WRM is a key precondition for success. This encompasses regulation (e.g. permits and prices), monitoring, strong basin organisations, and participation by stakeholders.

Water demand and supply must be managed. Demand management requires cooperation, specifically with the agriculture and energy sectors. Water prices are an important instrument. Supply management can involve the reuse of treated wastewater, the recharging of groundwater, the rehabilitation of ecosystems or – under certain conditions – desalination.

In order to prevent the contamination of water resources, expanding wastewater management and the treatment of faecal sludge is another priority. Germany follows a circular economy approach and promotes treating wastewater as a resource, e.g. for energy generation or irrigation. Decentralised solutions and the rehabilitation of facilities are aspects to be considered. Containing pollution from agriculture, industry and waste is a key challenge.
Engaging all relevant stakeholders is another central challenge. The agriculture and energy sectors should make sustainable water management a priority. Mitigating water-related risks that are limiting factors for industrial production and job creation is another area where Germany supports its partner countries.

Demand for goods in industrialised countries influences resource use in exporting countries. Measures to foster sustainable production and consumption need to be oriented to minimising environmental cost in terms of water and land resources as well as CO₂ emissions.

We intend to...
... increase water resources engagement from currently 10 to 20% of financing volume in the water sector, focusing on improved water storage and local water management;
... address water scarcity through reuse, rainwater management and desalination;
... protect water resources by reinforcing wastewater, waste and faeces management;
... reinforce water management in agricultural programmes.

Minimising climate-induced water risks
The BMZ supports its partners in integrating climate aspects in water policies, planning and budgeting processes. It supports National Adaptation Plans and Nationally Determined Contributions and their implementation. The BMZ focuses on the promotion of i) increasing water storage in ecosystems and infrastructure, ii) tapping new resources through reuse and desalination, iii) water loss reduction, and iv) ecosystem-based and non-ecosystem-based flood protection. The BMZ also recognises that resilience strategies at household level are of growing importance. Integrating water-related aspects in climate activities in other sectors is a decisive factor; water and climate sector experts must improve their cooperation, and better use must be made of German development cooperation experience from the water sector.

We intend to...
... focus on supporting infrastructure-related adaptation measures (NDC context);
... start a dialogue with climate financing facilities to ensure that water is better taken into account in their portfolios;
... integrate water into adaptation to climate change within international processes (climate conferences).

Preventing conflict and mitigating the causes of displacement
Germany supports measures to improve WASH in refugee camps and in communities, which host refugees. In order to prevent secondary migration, job creation measures benefitting refugees as well as the local population are integrated into programming.

In order to prevent conflict, Germany supports water-related dialogue and cooperation at the national and transboundary levels. It intends to expand its engagement in transboundary water management. Special support is given to the development of water treaties and charters, dialogue and arbitration processes.

We intend to...
... expand our engagement in transboundary water management to new catchments with severe scarcity and conflicts over water use;
... strengthen water security in refugees’ regions of origin;
... adapt our efforts so as to mitigate the causes of displacement and to support communities which host refugees in line with their needs.

Dealing with sectoral interlinkages
The 2030 Agenda makes it clear that sectoral interlinkages are highly important and that the SDGs will not be reached unless they are taken into account. Documents on six SDG clusters will assist German programming in the water sector and relevant related sectors: 1) water, education, health and nutrition; 2) water, sustainable economic development, employment and vocational education; 3) water, agriculture and energy; 4) water, environment and climate change; 5) water, good governance and urban development; and 6) water, population growth and migration.

Outlook
The BMZ will contribute to new momentum in the water sector by i) supporting partner countries; ii) putting water on the international agenda, including by fostering a new international water architecture to support SDG 6; and by iii) mobilising more financial resources, including at national levels, through innovative financing mechanisms, through better prioritisation of water in the EU and by fighting corruption.