

DGD Water Policy Paper

This policy paper was drawn up with the Water Nexus research consortium (<http://www.waternexusbelgium.org/>) and in consultation with Belgian actors involved in international cooperation and water. It is based on the main challenges related to water management and sanitation in the Belgian partner countries and the Belgian development cooperation actors' domains of expertise. This policy paper will be monitored annually by a team of different actors (DGD, Belgian technical cooperation embodied in ENABEL, and NGOs whose core programs revolve around or are impacted by water) and adjusted if necessary. Although being a document primarily designed to steer DGD programs, it is also an invitation to collaborate for all Belgian water actors.

DGD Water Policy Paper

1 Introduction

There is no life without water. Water is a driver for development and plays a crucial role in alleviating poverty: it is vital for human nutrition and health and essential for ecosystem management, agriculture, energy, economic development, peace, and security. The United Nations see access to water and sanitation services as a fundamental human right. It obliges countries to ensure that drinking water and sanitation services are available, accessible, quality, and affordable. Moreover, water is at the center of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with its own sector goal (SDG 6) that envisions availability and sustainable management of water for all by 2030, and the targets under SDG 6 are highly interlinked with most of the other SDG targets. Yet, the water sector remains underfunded, and it is predicted that, at the current rate, SDG6 will not be achieved in 2030 (UN-Water, 2016).

This DGD Water Policy Paper define the contribution of the Belgian development cooperation to respond to this concern and outlines how it will support governments and a broad set of stakeholders to address the ambitious sustainable development agenda's challenges. Although the water sector as such is not anymore an explicit priority sector of the Belgian governmental cooperation, Belgium has been actively supporting the water sector of several partner countries for a long period of time and water is strongly interlinked with Belgium's priority sectors (e.g. agriculture, health, education). Also, several non-governmental actors are active in the water sector. This policy paper offers a framework to guide the Belgian development cooperation (DGD) and its partner organizations and provides the basis for political dialogue with the partner countries of the Belgian development cooperation, the EU, other donors, and other multilateral partners. Development cooperation activities in the numerous other sectors and sector strategies developed by DGD interlinked with water will also find in this policy paper the necessary principles and approaches that need to be considered to foster mutual reinforcement and prevent unintended negative consequences.

2 The Water Challenges

Water is the source of life and affects health, food, and ecosystems. It is a critical natural resource for many other economic and industrial activities.

SDG6 is one of the four SDGs that support the entire natural system where we evolve as human beings: the biosphere. Fig. 1 depicts a pyramidal representation of the SDGs: a healthy biosphere is indispensable to sustain prosperous and equitable societies and economies. **The major water-related challenges to reaching SDG6 and their interdependency with the other components of this pyramid** for Belgium's partner countries addressed through this policy paper are presented below.

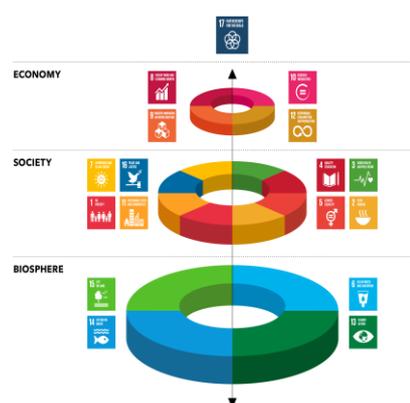


Figure 1: The pyramidal representation of SDGs placing SDG6 as part of the foundation. Source: Folke et al. 2016

WASH (Drinking Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene)

Billions of people around the world still suffering from inadequate access to water, sanitation, and hygiene¹: Some 2.2 billion people around the world lack access to safely managed drinking water

¹ Progress on household drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene 2000-2017. Special focus on inequalities. New York: United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO), 2019 on https://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/publications/jmp-report-2019/en/; <https://ourworldindata.org/water-access#access-to-improved-water-sources>

services, 4.2 billion people do not have access to safely managed sanitation services, and 3 billion lack basic handwashing facilities.

While significant progress has been made toward achieving universal access to basic water, sanitation, and hygiene, huge gaps exist in the quality of services provided between countries and between urban and rural areas. Besides, the sustained operation and maintenance of existing infrastructure proves challenging. **Mere access to WASH is not enough**, and budget allocations for long term maintenance or professional management of the services remain critically needed. Significant challenges also lie in the lack of means of authorities to invest in sanitation services and sensitization. WASH-related challenges are peculiarly crucial in Africa, where the bulk of the Belgian development cooperation occurs. Africa is the continent most affected by economic water scarcity, that is, the water scarcity caused by a lack of investment in the water infrastructure, insufficient human capacity, mismanagement of natural resources and climate change. The resulting lack of safe water, sanitation and waste management, and hygienic conditions has far too often resulted in infectious disease outbreaks such as cholera, typhoid fever, and dysentery. More recently, the Ebola crisis and the 2019 coronavirus pandemic have stressed once again the vital nature of WASH services for all. **Girls and women are significantly affected** through the loss of productive and leisure time WASH-related domestic labor; no full participation in schools due to the lack of WASH facilities; urinary tract infections arising from delayed urination or reduced water intake to cope with a lack of access to sanitation facilities and the loss of dignity and threat of sexual assault due to the lack of toilets.

Exacerbating the gap in WASH services is the often-negligible fraction of domestic and industrial wastewater and sludge treated before its release into the environment. Untreated water and sludge lead to water pollution and related health risks that remain widespread in most of the Belgian partners countries.

Increasing Water Scarcity, Lowering Water Quality and Climate Change

In addition to WASH, water quality and quantity are critical for other sectors. While about 12% of the global water resources consumption goes to WASH, 69 % is withdrawn for irrigated agriculture, and 19% for the industry. Often, these multiple usages result in unfair distribution among users and excessive extraction and pollution of surface water and groundwater, which in turn creates public health risks, affects food security, triggers social conflicts, and impacts aquatic ecosystems and their services.

These challenges are being exacerbated by a generalized increase in water demand and climate changes. Population growth, socio-economic development, and evolving consumption patterns have resulted in a 1% increase in water use per year since the 1980s. It is predicted that demand will continue to rise at a similar rate². Also, climate change and increasing climate variability result in high uncertainties regarding water supplies available in the future. Overall, it is predicted that **by 2030, over 40% of the world's population will be living in severely water-stressed river basins**. Further, extreme climatic events will likely intensify, and poor people will be disproportionately affected by more frequent and intense flood and drought events.

The failure to address these challenges would inevitably give rise to depletion of water quality and conflicts that will adversely affect **social stability and regional development** and pose a significant threat to national and international security. Ultimately this could lead to a further increase of (irregular) migration and forced displacement.

Poor Water Governance, Financing and Data

Water governance is instrumental in ensuring equitable and efficient water services delivery and water use repartition between socio-economic activities and ecosystems. Yet, a series of hindrances undermines such governance. While 3/4 of the countries worldwide have national standards for drinking water and wastewater, institutions tasked with regulatory oversight for such services are often overstretched and unable to undertake the required surveillance or put their plans into practice. Complicating factors that hamper integrated governance are the transboundary aspect of water, the lack

² FAO. [2020]. AQUASTAT Core Database. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Database accessed on [2020/10/03]

of capacity in terms of resources and expertise, inappropriate infrastructure, and the fact that water does always not rank high enough on the political priority list.

Insufficient financial resources to back up water policies and plans constitute another critical stumbling block. Large funding gaps remain between what is needed to reach the targets and what is available. Very few water supply or wastewater utilities recover costs for operation and maintenance from customers in the developing world and only a handful recovers debt service and depreciation. This is especially true in rural areas. Such context is not conducive to investments by the private sector. Countries need to mobilize substantial financial resources to build and maintain new networks, replace, extend, and modernize existing water infrastructures, and ensure service provision performance.

The question of accountability is also central. Governments' capacity to deliver quality public services at an affordable cost may be considered as one of the indicators of accountability vis-à-vis its citizens. Implementing DGD Water Policy Paper will require an enabling and regulatory environment that allows monitoring and assessing progress transparently and inclusively.

The problem of lacking data is predominant given the low rate of data production and the absence of a policy of sharing public data (recent and historical). Least developed countries **lack institutions, equipment, funds, and trained staff to collect, digitize, analyze, and share data.** These data are indispensable to assess the local conditions, prioritize problems, and develop policies to determine the state of the water resource and the services it can offer.

Diversity of Problems and Solutions

Water issues are highly variable from location to location, from season to season, and from community to community. People who lack water services are often living in the most challenging geography and climate. Rainfall patterns, hydrology, and water quality are site-specific and determine what technologies can be used. **One-size-fits-all solutions have not worked and cannot be the strategy to scale-up and scale-out.** Customized WASH services and water management solutions that capitalize on existing knowledge of the local conditions are needed. Moreover, it is essential to empower and build local people's capacity to make informed choices and respond effectively to changing conditions.

Fragility and the Humanitarian development Nexus

Many of Belgium's partner countries are characterized by a context of fragility and conflict. In such a context, developing countries are often characterized by weak state capacity or state legitimacy. However, delivering public services such as water and sanitation requires a state with sufficient capacities and legitimacy. In fragile contexts, collaboration through government can be challenging and for a certain period the humanitarian sector may need to provide support (but not as a serial process towards development programs). This means that in some instances both approaches (humanitarian and development) may be needed at the same time.

3 Vision

Water security is defined as "the capacity of a population to safeguard sustainable access to adequate quantities of acceptable quality water for sustaining livelihoods, human well-being, and socio-economic development, for ensuring protection against water-borne pollution and water-related disasters, and for preserving ecosystems in a climate of peace and political stability"³.

The vision of the Belgian Development Cooperation is a world where multilateral organizations, governments, local authorities, NGOs, the private sector, and donors are joining forces to strengthen and empower the local capacity and increase funding resources necessary to design and implement sustainable, integrated, and context-specific solutions that contribute to water security for all. Belgium works within the existing national and multilateral plans and strategies to empower local communities

³ UN-Water, 2020

and local governments in delivering water services where they need it most. We, DGD and its partners⁴ advocate and act with the idea that ensuring water security is a critical and indispensable step for development, with rippling effects on many essential components, including poverty eradication, dignity and equality, transparency and accountability, and women's empowerment, health, education, and community organization. As such and given the multiple and cross-sectoral implications of water, we seek to reduce diseases, save lives, help eradicating poverty, promote sustainable development, both economically and ecologically, increase food and energy security, and foster peace and security. In addition to implementing direct water interventions, we also consider water as a cross-cutting theme in the interventions addressing other domains.

Importantly, we strive to build resilient societies and to develop long lasting and integrated solutions, considering the uncertain factors at play, including changing climate, demographic growth, and political instability. We recognize that human activities and water consumption in Belgium and globally urgently need to remain within the limits of ecosystems and natural resources. We promote and implement holistic approaches involving local, regional, and global actors/levels to ensure the balance between water used for anthropogenic activities and sustainable water availability in the ecosystem. We make every effort for a fair use of the resources and seek to ensure that our societies do not use more resources than the earth can regenerate naturally, and do not produce more waste than the planet can absorb.

In our vision, the link with climate resilience is obvious in the water sector. Climate change affects the availability, quality and quantity of water and impacts on our health, the economy, and freshwater dependent ecosystems with devastating consequences for the most vulnerable. While water is often the instrument of disaster, it is also a key to resilience in the face of climate change. Water management can therefore play a very important role in climate change mitigation and adaptation.

The DGD DGD Water Policy Paper aligns with the UN 2030 Agenda, and all the actions are guided by the core principles of "Leaving no one behind" and the protection of human rights: Belgium seeks to promote the rights of women and girls and the most vulnerable.

4 Objectives

The overarching goal of this policy paper is **to increase water security in the context of socio-economic and climate changes and demographic growth.**

Belgium will work towards that goal within the framework of the existing multilateral approaches, and the national, regional, and local frame, needs and possibilities. Belgium will build on two core objectives and three priority axes that are mutually reinforcing.

Core Objectives

1. **Improve affordable and equitable access to safely managed drinking water, sanitation services, and hygiene (SDG 6.1, 6.2 & 6.3)**

Realizing the human rights to drinkable water supply, sanitation and hygiene is key to sustainable development and poverty reduction. The benefits are manifold: improved drinking water and sanitation leads to the reduction of water-borne diseases, improved nutrition and healthier living environments, increased school attendance of girls, better environmental stewardship, increased wages and job opportunities, improved competitiveness of cities, and more broadly, economic, and social gains to society.

The DGD support will focus on interventions in rural areas, where most of the unserved population currently lives, and in the so-called *secondary cities* and the peri-urban areas. The interventions will aim to contribute to the following results areas:

⁴ In the remainder of the document, "we" refers to the DGD and its partners

1) improve the quality and reliability of *drinking water* and service delivery, support partner countries to connect rural communities, households and public facilities to water supply installations or networks, ensure water treatment and guarantee the operation, maintenance, and management of the infrastructures,

2) strive to achieve appropriate access to safely managed *sanitation* for all and support and implement innovative approaches to eliminate open defecation, and

3) influence *hygiene behavior* change in the five key areas of handwashing, menstrual hygiene management, safe water management, food hygiene and the safe management and disposal of excreta.

Whenever possible, we will seek to work in a continuum from drinking water and sanitation facilities to wastewater and faecal sludge transport and treatment. The benefits of WASH can indeed only be fully realized if these sectors are addressed jointly. The reuse of faecal sludge will also be encouraged based on the principles of circular economy,

To address the rampant issue of existing installations and supply networks being often degraded with leakages and breaks, renovation will be preferred over the installation of new infrastructures whenever relevant from a contextual, technical, financial, and logistical standpoint.

The pace of investments in disaster preparedness, despite being very needed will be inherently slow and disasters will continue to happen. We will also provide for humanitarian aid and sustainable water supply units when disaster strikes.

Importantly, central to the Belgian approach will be the coupling of investments in **infrastructures** (the hardware) with investments in **management and operation** (the software). As such, technical interventions will be linked with a sound program for raising awareness, building the capacity, social engineering, and communication, and securing the funding for the long-term management, operation, and maintenance of the systems put into place. Key stakeholders from the government from national to local scale, the public services and private sector, and civil society will be involved in each stage of the process of creating such an enabling environment.

Standard indicators:

- Number of people using safely managed drinking water services (cf. SDG indicator 6.1.1)
- Number of people using (a) safely managed sanitation services and (b) a hand-washing facility with soap and water (cf. SDG indicator 6.2.1).

2. Improve/ enhance sustainable and integrated water management (SDG 6.3, 6.4, 6.5 & 6.6)

Water resources of sufficient quality and quantity are essential for supplying people with drinking water and food, for energy supply and economic development, and for preserving ecosystems' function and biodiversity. Water management, from the local to the global level, is highly fragmented, with roles and responsibilities for closely linked water aspects assigned to different entities. Achieving water security in the context of climate change and demographic growth will require a more sustainable, integrated, and longer-term approach to water management to optimize the use of scarce resources, to manage conflicting and cross-sectoral interests and to ensure accountability. Water management should build on a coordinated response that strikes a balance between different sectoral objectives and the needs of all water users, including the environment.

We will *encourage sustainable and integrated water management* that is, a coordinated management of water, land, and related resources that aims to maximize economic and social welfare in an equitable and fair manner and without compromising the sustainability of vital ecosystems and the environment. To enhance/improve *sustainable and integrated water management* we will strengthen its overall approach to water with a special focus on, but not limited to, climate change, natural resource management and ecosystems protection, agriculture, and value chains.

To achieve this goal, we will focus on these **results areas**:

1. Promote water management solutions that consider and respect the needs of all users and ecosystems, in terms of availability and quality across space and across time. Such approach will consider the barriers of the governing natural and socio-economic and cultural factors, including changing climate and demographic growth. This result area shall consider activities incentivizing water-saving behaviours across all human activities (household, social (schools, public infrastructures) recreation, ...) and all the stages economic activities (e.g.: the agri-food chain), promoting investment and solutions that incorporate management of 'natural infrastructure' – the ecosystem services provided by healthy watersheds and coasts – and their benefits for a climate-resilient protection of water resources and development of economic activities (such as food sector),etc. ...
2. Support the improvement of the capacity of national and local governments and institutions to design and operationalize integrated and coherent policy approaches. This implies, where appropriate, optimizing the institutional and administrative architecture of the countries, supporting the revision of legislative texts including implementing texts, emphasizing transversal collaboration amongst ministries, and strengthening the skills and resources of the local management authorities.
3. Encourage our partners to perform environmental and water resources impact assessments when designing agricultural and/or value-chain programs. Moreover, Belgian development partners implementing programs in sectors such as food and agriculture, energy, natural resource management and ecosystems protection, health, and the economy will assess the possible impact of their programs on the water resources. They will reach out to the various stakeholders and seek to balance interests and objectives and to avoid any unintended consequences that negatively impact the water resources.
4. Strengthen the capacities of national and local authorities, civil society, and stakeholders for cross-sectoral collaboration with an emphasize to build capacity, conduct R&D, and promote practices and technologies for enhanced protection of soil and water resources and increased water availability and use efficiency, especially in arid areas⁵. In this context, social engineering shall be an important component in Belgium's programs, to ensure sustainability to activities linked to water distribution and water rights, and the payment for water services.

Priority axes

I. Building Climate resilience (climate adaptation and mitigation)

Climate change affects the availability, quality and quantity of water and impacts on our health, the economy, and freshwater dependent ecosystems with devastating consequences for the most vulnerable. While water is often the instrument of disaster, it is also a key to resilience in the face of climate change, water management can therefore play a very important role in climate change mitigation and adaptation

Given the negative impacts climate change can have on the sustainability of WASH services and behaviors and agriculture, Belgium will pay special attention to climate resilient development of WASH services and agriculture. This will involve understanding and managing risks resulting in the protection of water resources, adaptation to increasing water scarcity and deteriorating water quality, and disaster-resilient water and sanitation technologies and systems. We will prioritize on designing and building **robust and climate-resilient infrastructures** that are last long-term and using as much as possible sustainable material (and, when adequate produced locally). Raise awareness on the crucial role of biodiversity protection and ecosystem health conservation in ensuring resilience and the **use of nature-based solutions** will be investigated and where appropriate be implemented, in line with the EU Green deal. We will support **climate smart agriculture** and adapt modes of production to deal with higher incidences of water scarcity and water excess (flood protection, drainage, use of drought resistant crops) We will **raise awareness** among decision-makers of the need and urgency to limit leaks in existing networks, in particular by promoting good asset management practices and using technological

⁵ Specific activities will range from pollution reduction, water-efficient and drought-tolerant crops, rainwater conservation and harvesting water from the air, water desalination, operation, maintenance, and upgrade of the water infrastructures and irrigation technique, and awareness-raising concerning the water footprint.

innovations and raise awareness among the various categories of users (agricultural, industrial, domestic) of the need to save water and adopt water-saving behavior. We will also develop effective *early warning systems* targeting vulnerable populations in risk areas, as well as programs to raise awareness of water-related risks among these population. We will support work by multilateral organizations and developing countries to collect and use global and regional information on rainfall, and on surface water and groundwater hydrology, to manage water resources better, and to develop regional and national plans for coping with the impacts of climate change. Support academia to conduct research and collaborate with public and private institutions that invest in low-regret, climate-resilient and context-specific water and sanitation infrastructure and technology.

Beyond the uptake of urgently needed adaptation measures to increase water system resilience, improved water management also opens opportunities for climate change mitigation (mitigation measures can influence water resources and their management and water management policies and measures can have an influence on greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and, thus, on the respective sectoral mitigation measures). For instance, in agricultural water management, a specific challenge is the need to adapt existing modes of production to deal with higher incidences of water scarcity and water excess. We will support mitigation measures such as water reuse, using water-saving technologies, increased utilization of solar pumps, support conservation/climate smart agriculture

Finally, we will strive to directing climate finance towards climate change adaptation measures related to water resources and water-related risk management / or increase the water sector's share of climate finance and emphasize water's ties to other climate-related sectors to ensure greater funding for water management

II. Research, innovation and developing water information systems

More efficient and long-lasting solutions are needed to reach global water security and to tackle the major water challenges consequential from climate changes and demographic growth. Belgium will support the research and development/scaling-up of innovative water solutions for improved water resources management adapted to the local context, and, equally as important, accelerate the implementation of existing knowledge and technology. We will combine traditional knowledge with modern technology and innovative methods by involving multiple stakeholders. The innovation pathways are intrinsically uncertain, and taking that direction inevitably involves a risk of failure. Small-scale projects demonstrating successful novel water solutions will be deployed in various regions and contexts⁶.

We will support investments on innovation and scaling-up of innovative pilots, which e.g., integrate ecosystem functions and nature-based solutions into grey infrastructure, develop low-cost solutions to leave no one behind and actively support the diversification of water sources in an environmentally sensitive way.

Reliable water data at local, national, and regional scales are essential for an adequate management and for identifying and mitigating pressures and impacts on water resources and to effectively target measures and funding. **We will support national governments in development and strengthening of country level disaggregated data collection, monitoring, and reporting systems, adapted to local needs and resources.** The research and innovation approach should rely on enabling and regulatory environment that allows monitoring and assessing progress transparently and inclusively. The aim of such an environment is three-fold: (i)adaptive management of ongoing projects, (ii)capitalization on experience-based feedbacks on lessons learnt, (iii) transparent and comprehensive reporting of project outcomes. We will also include risk analysis to assess and prevent the possible rippling effects of the realization in one sector over another.

⁶ The specific issues addressed by research and development programs will include, but will not be limited to, innovative digital approaches for payment, data collection and monitoring, participatory approaches for improved water management, water desalination, circular use and re-use of wastewater and fecal sludge, groundwater availability, water quality monitoring, water treatment solutions, improved irrigation practices and drought-resistant crops, environmental risk management and early warning, and approaches based on nature and ecosystems

In this context, when possible, we will build capacity for collecting and sharing data on water availability, quality, management, and sanitation, integrating spatial, socio-economic, and political components.

We will also develop effective early warning systems targeting vulnerable populations in risk areas, as well as programs to raise awareness of water-related risks among these population. We will support work by multilateral organizations and developing countries to collect and use global and regional information on rainfall, and on surface water and groundwater hydrology, to manage water resources better, and to develop regional and national plans for coping with the impacts of climate change. Support academia to conduct research and collaborate with public and private institutions that invest in low-regret, climate-resilient and context-specific water and sanitation infrastructure and technology.

III. Strengthen water governance: capacity, institutions, and sustainable finance (SDG 6.A and 6.B)

Strengthened water governance at all levels is essential to achieve water security and for long term stability. It requires appropriate institutions, reliable data, capacity building, awareness raising and funding. It should foster sustainable, durable, climate resilient water management as well as the consideration of interlinkages between water, energy, food security and ecosystems.

Belgium will strive for raising awareness water and sanitation issues to become a priority in the development plans, policies, and strategies of national governments.

We will contribute to the creation of an *enabling environment* for improved drinking water and sanitation delivery service, enhanced water sector coordination, and investment mobilization – both at the national and the local levels. This requires improved institutional capacity and authority to assist and facilitate policy reforms and to monitor and enforce agreed norms and more inclusive institutional structures for multi-stakeholder dialogue and cooperation to ensure fair and equitable access to sustainable water supply and sanitation services to all. At the local level, water user communities and local authorities will be supported to help manage water together with all relevant actors and local stakeholders will be empowered to influence governments and to participate in the design and implementation of the most technically suitable, affordable, and socially acceptable WASH solutions

Our support will focus on *capacity building* through education and training, and providing technical, institutional, and legal assistance. Whenever relevant, water programs funded by Belgium seek to integrate components that aim for (i) increasing the capacity of national and subnational governments to assess, regulate, and manage water services; (ii) designing policies and procedures; (iii) supporting the strengthening of local actors by improving their capacities for the operation and management of the utilities, and budgetary management; and (iv) setting up mechanisms for sectoral and cross-sectoral coordination mechanisms and multi-stakeholder consultation; (v) increasing the capacity of civil society to advocate for water and sanitation, water management services and water resource management.

5 Approaches and Guiding Principles

- **Work local and engage with the community - Leave no one behind**

Belgium always works together with local partners, structures and stakeholders in the partner countries, and actively engages the community. Transparent and continuous communication with both national and local authorities underline each intervention. Since water is an important component of human and social development, the support for, and the inclusion and equitable treatment of, vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, such as women, youth, minorities, the disabled and poor segments of the population, are critical involvement in the water sector. We will strive for mainstreaming equity and inclusiveness in projects/programs that we will finance. Efficient utilisation and management of water requires the full participation of all stakeholders. We will continue to advocate for national governments to deepen stakeholder participation and will advocate that at all stages of the project cycle, interested parties are adequately consulted in a timely, transparent, and inclusive manner.

Greater knowledge and information about the poorest and most disadvantaged groups are required to develop effective policies and implement ‘best-fit’ WASH solutions at the local/community level.

- **Multilateralism, support for local empowerment and ownership**

Interventions can only be sustainable if they are legitimate, efficient, and in line with the political, socio-economic, and cultural context and with the local needs, approaches, and capabilities. Working coherently with the multilateral initiatives helps to do this right. We will strive for each intervention to be adapted to the multilateral, national, regional, and local environment.

- **Technical assistance, education, and training**

Technical assistance, education, and training are central in the Belgian water programs and viewed as essential to ensure the longevity, sustainability, and local ownership of the solutions. They are provided in all phases of a project, from support for a needs assessment and co-development of locally adapted solutions to the training for the technical operation and maintenance, and the design of adequate and efficient management, governance, and cost recovery schemes. We also assist with institutional strengthening and policymaking and offer a panel of academic training to prepare future engineers and leaders.

- **Diplomatic engagement**

The Belgian embassies will engage diplomatically to help create the right conditions for facilitating the implementation of these DGD Water Policy Paper by considering the local constraints and opportunities. We will also contribute to the international debates related to water and to European water diplomacy through our multilateral collaborations, regional fora, and the Belgian embassies. We advocate for the enhanced ambition of water programs and funding, and for the consideration of the tight interlinkage between water, climate, inequalities, peace, and security. We recognize that the issues around water **have also become a source of conflict** between countries and between peoples globally. Belgian diplomatic engagement plays its role by taking into account aspects linked to environmental issues which risk compromising long-term objectives in certain regions.

- **Increase and diversify funding to water programs**

Development Aid can only provide 10 to 25% of the funds required to meet water and sanitation needs globally. Innovative approaches are needed to create a multiplier effect. Belgium supports or encourages countries to mobilize new funding sources and develop new and sustainable financing mechanisms to deliver results at scale, considering the needs and rights of the poorest and most vulnerable, increase public sector expenditures on water and sanitation services per capita, and increase private investment mobilized for water and sanitation services.

In addition, there is a need to boost the private sector in the partner countries and support the engagement of the Belgian private sector. This will be done by showcasing the Belgian technologies and expertise, by stimulating and strengthening private operators who contribute to the development of resilient solutions at the local level, to enhance collaboration/delegation between national and Belgian private operators and to search for private partners willing to invest and support projects with positive repercussions on equitable water access and protection and providing risk insurance, loans, and loan guarantees where appropriate. The Belgian investments through ODA, FINEXPO, BIO, and others will be enhanced through partnerships with the Belgian civil society, private sector stakeholders, the international community, the EU, and other major donors.

- **Gender equality and empowerment of women and girls**

Universal and equitable access to water and sanitation for all can only be achieved through gender-responsive approaches in agricultural and WASH interventions. These must be based on a robust understanding of gender-specific needs and of the barriers that women and girls face when striving to realize their rights to safe water and sanitation. We will i) support women's active participation in the

policy and decision-making related to the planning, design, implementation, and monitoring of interventions targeting water and sanitation at all levels ii) advocate for gender-specific objectives to be articulated within national water, sanitation and hygiene policies and strategies ; iii) support activities that train and empower women and girls to exercise their rights and take active participation in decision-making; iv) ensure that our development partners integrate WASH considerations in the overall efforts to lower and eliminate perceived and actual barriers to girls' education, including those related to safe and healthy menstrual hygiene.

- **Stronger partnerships and program synergies and coherence**

Successful implementation of this policy paper will require strong coordination and partnerships with stakeholders on all levels. The added value of partnerships is manifold, including the exchange of knowledge and expertise, and the possibility of undertaking more ambitious, integrated, and longer-term projects. This is particularly relevant given Belgium's limited ODA budget for water. DGD's partners will seek to carry out projects in synergy with other Belgian and international partners. They will explore and strengthen linkages and synergies between interventions and meet regularly with other actors and a range of donors during sectoral and/or regional meetings. They will use digital information exchange platforms to stay informed of current projects and ensure the consistency of actions, to facilitate and encourage the transfer of information, knowledge, and expertise, and to support the identification of possible synergies.

Belgian international engagement can also inform best practices and cultivate opportunities to strengthen highly needed water security in Belgium.

- **Aiming for long term programs**

Past lessons learned, both Belgian and international, teach that meaningful and sustainable impact require an engagement of at least 10 years. DGD will try to set the stage for long term program approaches instead of short term, project-based approaches.

- **Stimulate interlinkages and synergies**

Targets under SDG 6 are highly interlinked with most of the other SDG targets. This includes, but is not limited to, the strong nexus between water, energy, food, health, and education. Belgium commits to establish linkages between the other sectors strategies and to design its water development programs in consultation with the other sectors and taking into consideration the risks and needs for water resources. Together, they identify and leverage the synergistic interlinkages, and take measures to prevent those that can lead to unintended and unwanted consequences.

- **Sensitization and the pursuit of behavioural change in Belgium**

Human consumption has an impact on freshwater systems when considering production and supply chains. The import of water-intensive goods for production puts pressure on exporting regions (where governance and regulation of water use may be weak or absent). In this context, the water issue in the South cannot be considered as a local problem but should be recontextualized in the global economy. It is therefore important to sensitize and mobilize governments, companies, civil society, and individuals to this notion of water footprint and the consequences of our local consumer behavior on a wider scale than Belgium.

6 Geographic Scope

Belgium will target primarily least developed and fragile countries. "As shown in Figure 3 which summarizes Belgian ODA between 2008 and 2018, Belgium has been actively supporting the water sector of some of these countries for a long period of time."

Figure 3.

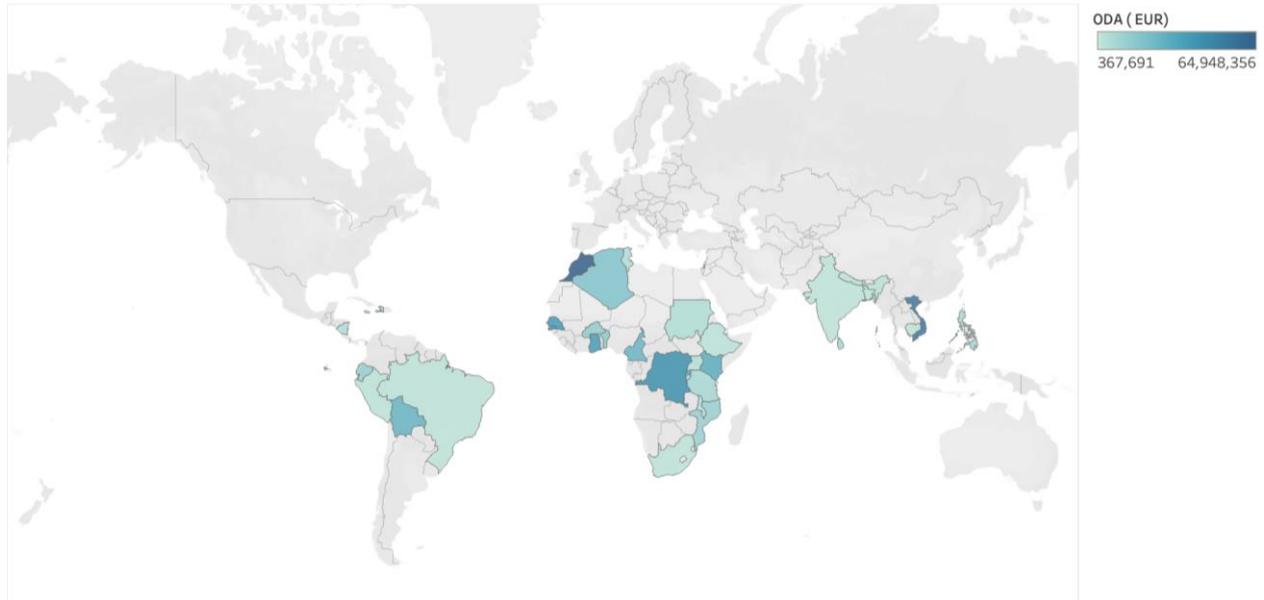


Figure 3. Global map showing the Belgian official development assistance spent on the water sector by country between 2008 and 2018.

The policy paper will be implemented in selected countries

- DGD's 14 partner countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, DR Congo, Guinea, Mali, Morocco, Mozambique, Niger, Palestinian Territory, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda). Those are all countries that are affected by physical or economic water scarcity. Other fragile countries where DGD supports interventions from civil society organizations
- Within the partner countries, DGD will prioritize its interventions in rural areas, where most of the unserved population currently lives, and in the so-called secondary cities and the peri-urban areas. The focus on rural areas will build on decades of long efforts of the Belgian Development Cooperation, while the focus on secondary cities is line with ENABEL'S activities in the past decade.

7 Who does what?

The DGD Water Policy Paper are designed to steer the design and implementation of programs and projects and support the monitoring of the Directorate-General for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid (DGD) and defines the Belgian position related to water issues on the international stage. It is a guiding document for DGD itself, the official Belgian development agency ENABEL, and the NGA's that are supported by DGD. The policy paper is also a basis for policy dialogue with partners and other donors and is an invitation for cooperation with agencies like FINEXPO and BIO, and the stakeholders from private, public, research institutions, and non-governmental organizations.

Table 1. Overview of Agency Contributions to the DGD Water Policy Paper

Means of Engagement	Objectives	
	O1: WASH	O2: Sustainable & integrated Water management
Technical Assistance, education, and training	ENABEL, NGA's	ENABEL, NGA's,
Sustainable Infrastructure & Services	ENABEL, NGA's	ENABEL, NGA's
Science, Technology & Innovation	VLIR-UOS & ARES, universities, ENABEL, NGA's	VLIR-UOS & ARES, universities, ENABEL, NGA's
Resource Mobilization & engagement with the private sector	DGD, BIO, NGA's, ENABEL	DGD, BIO, ENABEL
Awareness raising	ENABEL, NGA's	ENABEL, NGA's
Diplomatic Engagement	FPS Foreign Affairs	FPS Foreign Affairs
Monitoring & evaluation	DGD & each implementing partner	DGD & each implementing partner

8 Glossary

- **Aquatic ecosystems.** An aquatic ecosystem is an ecosystem in a body of water. Communities of organisms that are dependent on each other, and their environment live in aquatic ecosystems.
- **Ecosystem services** are the many and varied benefits to humans gifted by the natural environment and from healthy ecosystems, such as the provisioning of water for domestic and economic activities, the prevention of erosion, the protection from flood, and recreation.
- **IWRM** is a process which promotes the coordinated development and management of water, land, and related resources, to maximize the resultant economic and social welfare equitably without compromising the sustainability of vital ecosystems.' (Global Water Partnership)
- **Safely managed services** are defined as the use of an improved drinking water source which is: located on-premises, available when needed, and free of fecal and priority chemical contamination. More info on https://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/monitoring/coverage/indicator-6-1-1-safely-managed-drinking-water.pdf
- **Secondary cities** are urban centers providing critical support functions for governance, transportation, and production services. A secondary city may emerge from a cluster of smaller cities in a metropolitan region or may be the capital city of a province, state, or second-tier administrative unit within a country. Secondary cities differ from primary cities not only in terms of population size (ranging from 100.000 to 500.000 inhabitants) but present also a specific economic, social, and environmental profile (Cities Alliance, 2014).
- **Technical assistance** is non-financial assistance provided by local or international specialists. It can take the form of sharing information and expertise, instruction, skills training, the transmission of working knowledge, and consulting services and may also involve the transfer of technical data.
- **Transboundary water bodies:** the aquifers, and lake and river basins shared by two or more countries
- **WASH** is an acronym that stands for "water, sanitation, and hygiene". Universal, affordable, and sustainable access to WASH is a key public health issue within international development and is the focus of the first two targets of Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG 6).
- **The water nexus** approach has been promoted by the UN as the water-food-energy nexus. Demand for all three is increasing, driven by a rising global population, rapid urbanization, changing diets, and economic growth. Agriculture is the largest consumer of the world's freshwater resources, and more than one-quarter of the energy used globally is expended on food production and supply.
- **Water security:** "The capacity of a population to safeguard sustainable access to adequate quantities of acceptable quality water for sustaining livelihoods, human well-being, and socio-economic development, for ensuring protection against water-borne pollution and water-related disasters, and for preserving ecosystems in a climate of peace and political stability" is the definition proposed by UN-Water. More on <https://www.unwater.org/publications/water-security-infographic/>
- **Water services** include the provision of drinking water and wastewater services including sewage treatment. This can be done on a point basis through installations or in a distributed way through networks.
- **Water use efficiency** is the ratio between effective water use and actual water withdrawal. It characterizes, in a specific process, how effective the use of water is.