

SNV in Water

Our ever thirstier and increasingly polluted world must urgently adapt to climate change and its impact on local and regional water cycles. Water security for some, inevitably becomes about water security for all. SNV offers a robust combination of technical expertise, methodological excellence, and long-term country presence. Our work contributes to more sustainable and fairer outcomes in WASH, irrigation, water resource management, and the urban water cycle.

The challenge

Demand for water is eight times higher than it was 100 years ago, due to rising living standards, economic growth, and growing populations. Fresh water is essential to all life, but is threatened by over-extraction, pollution, and changes in the water cycle largely attributable to climate change.

Rethinking, reforming, and strengthening water governance is urgent. Already, two billion people experience high water stress, and a further four billion suffer from severe water scarcity for at least one month every year.¹ In the absence of collective water adaptation, people develop their own coping mechanisms (storage, pumping, dumping of waste water). These are often unregulated and practised with both little regard for the needs of others, or of water resource

preservation. In this context, better-off groups secure their own interests, leading to inequitable water security.

The inability of societies to adapt their water management practices affects not only water for people, but also leads to profound ecosystem changes, affecting bio-diversity and the broader natural resource base. Today, we face a vicious cycle of weak governance, degradation, and inequality.

Our approach

SNV's overarching ambition is water security for all – including the natural world. Our focus is on equity: between people, between current and future generations, and between humans and the environment.

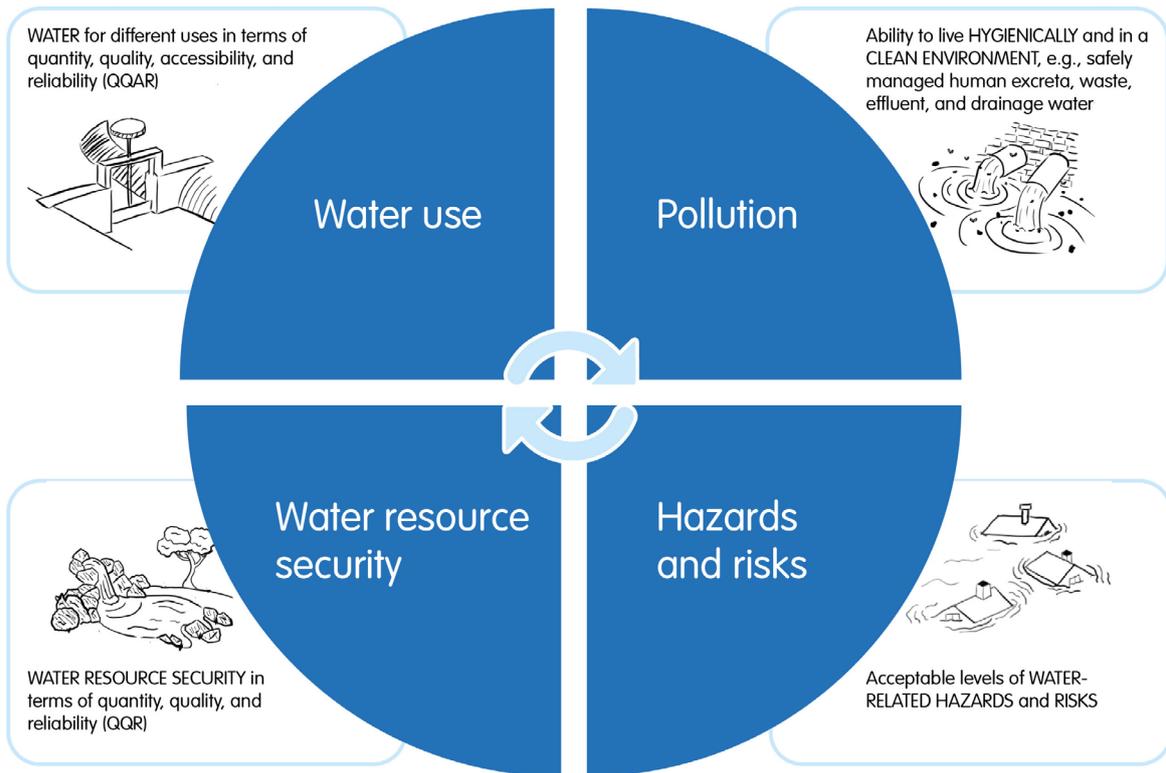


Figure 1 Four dimensions of water security

We define water security as the reliable availability of an acceptable quantity and quality of water for health, livelihoods, ecosystems, and production, coupled with an acceptable level of water-related risks.² Hence we work on four dimensions of water security: (i) access to water use for different purposes, (ii) an environment free from pollution and waste, (iii) an acceptable level of water-related risks, and (iv) water resource security.

SNV takes a holistic and inclusive approach to water, based on a water cycle perspective and the water-related human rights: the human rights to water, to sanitation, and to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment. Governments are duty-bearers of the progressive realisation of these rights in their countries. To achieve this, they must engage both the private sector and civil society and ensure that no-one is harmed nor left behind. SNV works with governments and other stakeholders to facilitate this by strengthening

water sector systems that interlink governments, the private sector, and civil society in ways that enable responsible water use with the required checks and balances.

We contribute to achieving water security by applying nine strategies that we consider essential to transforming practice.

- Driving professionalisation and performance of national and sub-national stakeholders in the water sector
- Deepening understanding of inequality and processes of marginalisation in the water sector, and building more inclusive practices
- Strengthening the institutional fabric of water governance and management at all levels
- Facilitating a better understanding of the nexuses in water governance, in particular with our two other sectors, Energy and Agriculture

¹ WWAP-UNESCO World Water Assessment Programme, *The United Nations World Water Development Report 2019: Leaving No One Behind*, Paris, UNESCO, 2019.

² Grey, D. and Sadoff, C.W., "Sink or Swim? Water security for growth and development", *Water Policy*, vol 9(6), 2007, <https://doi.org/10.2166/wp.2007.021> (accessed 26 August 2022).

- Enhancing sectoral accountability and improving demand management, beyond water stewardship
- Promoting and supporting a greater focus on water storage (natural and built) and water quality
- Promoting and supporting better maintenance systems and the continuous functionality of grey and green infrastructure
- Increasing financial health of water management and services, moving towards sustainable cost-recovery and increased investment
- Facilitating and endorsing collective informed choice around water investment decisions

We realise our ambition through four framework approaches: Equitable Water Resource Management, Inclusive Sustainable Irrigation, Climate Resilient Rural WASH, and Sustainable Urban Water Cycles.

Framework approaches

Equitable Water Resource Management (EWRM)

Water resource management is central to managing floods and droughts, satisfying water needs for different uses, and conserving the water resource base. For many years, the emphasis has been on Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM), but integration is not an end in itself. SNV sees integration as a means and emphasises the need for equitable water resource management between people, generations, and nature.

To move towards more equitable water resource management, SNV strengthens multi-level water governance, improves the availability and use of global and local data, calls for greater accountability for water use, extraction, and pollution, and introduces improved financing and investment models for water resource management and the maintenance of grey and green investments.



Stakeholders in the midst of watershed planning at Lake Phoksundo Suligaad. Photo credit: SNV Nepal/PAANI project supported by USAID.

Sustainable Inclusive Irrigation (SII)

Irrigation is a core climate change adaptation strategy for countries and will continue to expand as part of the world's renewed commitment to achieving food security. The challenge lies in ensuring this does not become climate adaptation for some at the expense of other groups or the sustainability of the resource. For SNV, sustainable and inclusive irrigation development is about irrigation user practices, their productive and domestic water needs, as well as those of surrounding populations and the environment.

SNV's Sustainable Inclusive Irrigation approach is a holistic multi-scale approach for groundwater and surface water irrigation applied at different scales: large, medium, small-scale irrigation, and individual extraction. It addresses irrigation governance, performance of scheme management, services for farmers for field-level irrigation, and the quality and transparent construction and rehabilitation of infrastructure.



SNV technical assistance to Lambayeque irrigation system. Photo credit: SNV, supported by DGIS.

Framework approaches

Climate Resilient Rural WASH Services (CRWASH)

The relatively small climate footprint and low political weight of rural populations appears to have contributed to a decline in the political prioritisation of rural water supply, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) over the past decade. Yet, rural WASH is essential for healthy populations and sustained economic development in rural areas.

SNV's approach is area-wide, assisting local governments to realise the human rights to water (supply) and sanitation, improve climate resilience of services, and reduce vulnerabilities of rural populations to water-related risks. We strengthen WASH governance, the performance of rural service providers, and the quality of infrastructure construction and rehabilitation. By strengthening consumer supply chains and financing, we develop rural WASH markets and support evidence-based behavioural change.



Women gathering water in rural Mozambique. Photo credit: SNV Mozambique/CEDES project supported by the UK Government.

Sustainable Urban Water Cycles (SUWC)

Next to climate change, urbanisation is a dominant global trend and creates enormous pressure for water and waste services. Urbanisation alters the natural water cycle towards an 'urban water cycle', increasing the risk of floods, droughts, and heat stress in cities.

SNV uses a holistic approach to improve water security in urban contexts, integrating water supply, sanitation, solid waste, and drainage. We work with stakeholders to strengthen governance and regulation, services, finance and investment, effective behavioural change interventions, treatment, and circularity, as well as city-wide flood and drought management. For SNV, achieving city-wide water security requires increased attention and investment in low-income areas.



Mechanical sludge emptying in progress. Photo credit: SNV Indonesia and Rajeev Munankami/WASH SDG project supported by DGIS.

SNV is a not-for-profit international development organisation that makes a lasting difference in the lives of people living in poverty by helping them raise incomes and access basic services. We focus on three sectors – agriculture, energy, and water – and have a long-term, local presence in 24 countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Our team of approximately 1,300 people is the backbone of SNV.

www.snv.org/water

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