

## How Does SuSanA Generate Impact?

### Case Story 7: Developing SDG6

#### At a Glance



**Region:** Global

**Topic:** Developing SDG6

**Actors:** Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), Eawag, UN Water, JMP

**Impact Argument:**

Through discussions and the further development of indicators, SuSanA partners have qualitatively improved the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) on sanitation and contributed to reaching a more comprehensive SDG 6.

#### Introduction

Sustainable Development Goal 6 aims to “Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.” It comprises eight targets, including the achievement of access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all, the improvement of water quality by reducing pollution, the substantial increase of water-use efficiency across all sectors as well as the implementation of integrated water resources management at all levels, among others.

SDG 6 progress is monitored by the Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply

and Sanitation (JMP), a joint program of UNICEF and WHO that compiles relevant data to track progress. According to JMP’s 2017 statistic, 4.5 billion people currently do not have safely managed sanitation.

We talked to sanitation expert Roland Schertenleib, an emeritus of Eawag, who has been an active contributor to developing SDG 6 and by doing so advancing and qualitatively improving the discourse on sanitation in the field



SDG6: “Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.” © UNDP Afghanistan.

of international cooperation from the Millennium Development Goals to the SDGs.

#### Interview

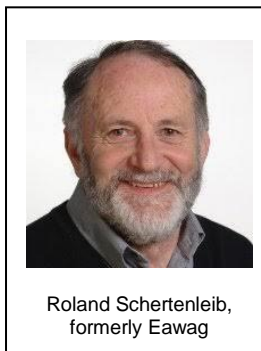
**SuSanA: Sanitation is both addressed in the MDGs as well as in SDG 6. Can you tell us how the focus on sanitation has developed from the MDGs to the SDGs?**

The SDGs are more comprehensive and ambitious in general and particularly also with regard to sanitation. Whereas in the MDGs sanitation was addressed only in one of the targets under Goal 7 (Ensure environmental sustainability) which called for a “reduction of the people without access to adequate sanitation **by half**”, in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Sanitation there is a dedicated goal on water and sanitation (SDG6) with a specific sanitation target for achieving access to **adequate** and **equitable sanitation** and hygiene **for all**. Meeting this target will require a stronger focus on the poor and on the people who are most difficult to reach. Furthermore, the sanitation target in SDG6 focuses on the entire sanitation system.

**SuSanA: In collaboration with the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), you worked on improving the MDG on sanitation resulting in SDG6. Can you elaborate on the process and the main achievements related to sanitation?**

Already in 2013, two years before the end of the MDG period, SDC started to advocate and lobby for a dedicated goal on water in a Post-2015 agenda and they asked me to help them in this endeavour. By early 2014 we had prepared and presented to the international water community a first proposition for a Global Goal For Water with the title “A Water-Secure World for All”. It included four targets covering (1) universal access to

safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene; (2) managing water resources sustainably at the basin level; (3) managing all wastewater to protect water resources and ecosystems and to make better use of wastewater as a resource; and (4) reducing mortality and economic losses from floods, droughts and other water-related disasters. This proposition was extensively discussed and further developed among different organisations especially also within UN-Water and it became an important background document for the discussion within the UN Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals. I think it is fair to say that the SDG6, which was finally adopted in September 2015 by the UN General Assembly, corresponds to about 80% to the proposition we had fed early 2014 into the Post-2015 process. In my opinion, these are the main achievements with regard to sanitation: (a) in the SDGs there is a dedicated goal on water and sanitation (SDG6); (b) in SDG6 there are specific sanitation targets including hygiene and also the management of wastewater; (c) these



Roland Schertenleib, formerly Eawag

sanitation targets are addressing sustainability issues of the entire sanitation system.

**SuSanA: Can you also elaborate on the development of indicators addressing sanitation within the SDG framework?**

The WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme was leading the discussion on the development of indicators addressing

*“My long-time engagement with SuSanA has motivated and helped me arguing for the need to adequately covering sanitation in SDG6.”*

*- Roland Schertenleib, formerly Eawag*

water supply and sanitation within the SDG framework. The old MDG indicator “use of an improved

sanitation facility” focused just on hygienic separation of excreta from human contact and one of the main motivation for forming SuSanA in 2007 was actually to highlight the need to go beyond access to a basic facility and to address sustainability issues of the entire sanitation system. In the last few years there was a growing consensus in the sector on the need to address safe management of faecal waste along the entire sanitation chain. Consequently, extensive technical consultation with over 100 experts from over 60 organizations resulted in the following interpretation of the term “adequate” sanitation: “implies a system which hygienically separates excreta from human contacts as well as safe reuse/treatment of excreta in situ, or safe transport and treatment off-site”. Therefore, the new global SDG indicator of ‘**proportion of population using safely managed sanitation services**’ defined as use of an improved sanitation facility one which is (a) not shared with other households, and (b) where excreta are safely disposed in situ or transported and treated offsite.

**SuSanA: Your work has taken place in close cooperation with SDC. What other organizations did you collaborate with to contribute to a more comprehensive SDG6?**

We were working at different levels, targeting different audiences and collaborating with different types of organizations. First of all, we were lobbying and wanted to make sure that in the Post-2015 agenda there would be a dedicated stand-alone goal on water covering not only water supply and sanitation but addressing the entire water cycle. In this early stage, the main target audience were politicians, government officials and national representatives in the Open Working Group for SDGs which were usually not familiar with the water sector. For this purpose, we collaborated closely with water-specialists in other national development agencies and with UN Water, the coordination body of all UN-organizations dealing with water. As a founding member of the SuSanA network, I personally was especially interested in and put a lot of emphasis on making sure that sanitation and hygiene would be adequately covered within the water goal. In this regard (also related to drinking water supply), we could profit a lot from the discussion and work initiated by the JMP in an early stage before the MDG ended.

**SuSanA: As you just mentioned, you are a founding member of the SuSanA network. How have you employed SuSanA and its resources in your endeavour?**

My long-time engagement and the work and discussions within SuSanA has motivated and helped me to lobby and argue that sanitation should be adequately covered in a dedicated water SDG by including a sanitation target which includes hygiene, goes beyond access to sanitation facilities

and addresses sustainability issues of the entire sanitation chain.

With its foundation, in 2007, SuSanA started out very much with a lobbying role, to highlight the importance of sustainability issues in sanitation particularly in the context of the MDGs. One of the first activities of SuSanA, was to define what sustainable sanitation means. Five sustainability criteria were identified related to (1) health and hygiene; (2) environment and natural resources; (3) technology and operation; (4) financial and economic issues, and (5) socio-cultural and institutional aspects. These sustainability criteria, particularly those related to the protection of the environment and natural resources, are very much in line with the underlying philosophy of the new SDGs and are largely reflected in many of the SDG targets. Thus, one can say that the SDGs have caught up with SuSanA.

I also used the SuSanA library to find documents and information for convincing people outside the water sector about the importance of sanitation for sustainable development.

**SuSanA: In your opinion, what are the greatest challenges to meeting SDG6 and how can they be countered?**

As with all the other SDGs, SDG6 is very ambitious and the challenges to meet the different targets are big and manifold. Let me mention what I feel are some of the greatest challenges to meet the SDG targets related to sanitation: Probably the greatest challenges are that the poorest and underprivileged are also getting access to adequate sanitation, that nobody is left behind and that there will be no open defecation by 2030. Another big challenge is to consistently apply a systems approach and addressing sustainability issues along the entire sanitation chain. Another important challenge is to upscale alternative technical and non-technical approaches and methods tested at pilot scale. Increased awareness at the political level that the lack of sanitation is an economic burden for the entire society is an important prerequisite for countering these challenges. It is also crucial that government officials and sector professionals in charge of planning, designing and implementing sanitation systems and services have easy access to unbiased information which is most relevant to them for taking informed and evidence based decisions.

**Thank you very much for taking the time to talk to us.**

## Further Information

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UN Water (2015). A dedicated Water Goal; Geneva; <http://unwater.org.sdg/a-dedicated-water-goal/en>

WHO and UNICEF (2015). WASH in the 2030 Agenda: New global indicators for drinking water, sanitation and hygiene; Geneva <https://washdata.org/reports>

UN Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/owg.html>

SuSanA (2017) Contribution of sustainable sanitation to the Agenda 2030 for sustainable development. SuSanA Vision Document. <http://www.susana.org/en/knowledge-hub/resources-and-publications/library/details/2715>

SuSanA (2017): Sustainable sanitation and the SDGs: interlinkages and opportunities.

<http://www.susana.org/en/knowledge-hub/resources-and-publications/library/details/2859>

UN-Water

<http://www.unwater.org/>

WHO/UNICEF. Joint Monitoring Programme

<https://washdata.org/>

Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC)

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/sdc>

Eawag

<http://www.eawag.ch/en/>

## SuSanA Impact Case Story

### *Developing SDG6*

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