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Swiss Agency for Development
and Cooperation SDC

Country Factsheet: SDC in India

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The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) is Switzerland's international cooperation agency within the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA). The agency is responsible for the overall coordination of development cooperation activities and humanitarian aid of the Swiss Government. In India, SDC has been active since 1963 with development cooperation programmes and humanitarian aid interventions designed to improve the living conditions of the poor and the marginalized and to contribute to sustainable development. To achieve this goal, SDC has focused on strengthening the capabilities and rights of disadvantaged groups, by improving their income and work situation and by supporting public institutions as well as civil society organizations.

India, in recent years, has gained more and more importance as a key actor at the regional as well as at the international level. Availability of financial and human resources in India has enhanced the country's capacity to address the challenge of poverty and sustainable development. Considering these factors, SDC, after more than four decades of development cooperation, decided to engage in a new type of collaboration with India.

The new programme involves a shift from traditional development cooperation towards a collaboration based on common interests and shared investments with the ultimate goal of reducing poverty. A key feature of the programme is the exchange of know-how and technologies related to climate change and energy between Switzerland and India as well as the promotion of cooperation among developing countries.

"33.5 percent of the 1.18 billion people in India live with less than US \$1 a day."¹

"India's GDP, in the past 5 years, has on an average increased by 8.5 percent"²

"6.9 percent of the population uses internet."³

"712,973,519 people in India were entitled to vote for the parliamentary elections of 2009."⁴

¹ World Development Indicators, 2007.

² Economic Survey 2008-09, Government of India.

³ Telecommunication Union, 2007.

⁴ Press Information Bureau, Government of India 2009



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AREAS OF COOPERATION

- Climate change constitutes the main focus area of the cooperation supported by SDC in India. It primarily includes innovative programmes with a link to national, regional and global policy dialogue. The programmes are designed to support efforts towards adaptation to the effects of a changing climate situation as well as towards mitigation of the causes of climate change by promoting renewable energy and energy efficiency measures. SDC furthermore supports programmes at the interface between climate change, food security, and disaster risk reduction.
- The regional programme on decentralisation and local governance in South Asia is located in India. SDC hosts a regional hub in Delhi to promote exchanges of experiences, lessons learnt and relevant practices relating to decentralisation across South Asian countries, as well as between Switzerland and India.
- In the area of South-South cooperation, knowledge sharing and networking, SDC is committed to build knowledge management tools and to strengthen platforms including cooperation between developing countries in all the programmes it supports.

WHERE SDC WORKS

SDC supports programmes in many parts of India, with a focus on arid and semi-arid areas as well as on the Himalayas.

OVERALL BUDGET

The SDC budget for India is on an average 8 million Swiss Francs or 350 million Indian Rupees per year.

PARTNERS

Public sector entities such as government departments; Academic and research institutions; Civil society organizations and advocacy groups; Relevant private enterprises in the context of multi-stakeholder partnership; Professional associations and other development actors.

PROGRAMME IN DETAIL



Climate Change: Adaptation

Constituting one of the main focus area of the cooperation, SDC's adaptation programme is designed to strengthen the ability of the most vulnerable communities to cope with the expected and actual impacts of climate change. Together with the Government of India, SDC works towards increasing the communities' adaptive capacities. SDC with its long-standing experience in India recognizes the need to integrate the concept of climate change management into all development programmes, as the consequences of global warming also have an impact on the efficiency of projects. Throughout, the focus has to remain on supporting the most vulnerable and the poor and on improving their lives. SDC's adaptation initiatives therefore look at water resources, food security, and agricultural biodiversity, including the promotion of climate resilient and climate ready crops, which are drought, salt and pest resistant. The exchange of experiences gathered and lessons learnt is equally essential and in the long run influences the refining of existing and the design of new policies on climate change not only in India, but also at the international level.

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Climate Change: Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy

SDC supports programmes that work towards mitigation of the causes of climate change by promoting renewable energy and energy efficiency measures. Since 1992 SDC has been working continuously in the energy and environment sector. The current energy programme of SDC benefits from this longstanding experience and aims at implementing minimum energy efficiency standards for the design and construction of new buildings for commercial use, as well as adopting energy efficiency in micro, small, and medium enterprises. After successful implementation, these technologies would be replicated in select areas across India. SDC also looks at social and health issues of employees and workers of these enterprises and supports their initiatives to improve their and their families working and living conditions. To ensure better access to electricity for the rural poor, SDC in India also supports initiatives to locally generate energy from renewable sources, and to enhance at the same time the capacity of the local population and local authorities to manage the new technologies. In addition, SDC strives to establish platforms to share methods of efficient energy use and collaborate with different stakeholders to exchange knowledge and find solutions that can be shared across different regions and countries.



Disaster Risk Reduction

Nearly 700 million people in rural India depend on agriculture, fisheries and forestry for their livelihoods, all of which are highly susceptible sectors to climate change. The consequences of global warming affect lives, especially those of the poor and marginalized who suffer the most from land degradation, water scarcity and natural disasters. Over the past decade, SDC has played an important role in relief and reconstruction efforts in several disasters. SDC supported local communities and authorities after the Orissa cyclone in 1999, the Gujarat earthquake in 2001, and the tsunami in 2004. With this experience and know-how, SDC's disaster risk reduction strategy over the next few years aims at minimizing the losses in lives and assets as a consequence of natural disasters. SDC will therefore contribute to build the capacities of the people to tackle possible disasters in a systematic and coordinated manner. SDC prioritizes action and practical means to achieve disaster resilience in vulnerable communities.



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Decentralisation and Local Governance

In India, the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments of 1993 institutionalized the process of decentralisation which had the effect of transforming the Panchayats - local government bodies - into key institutions of local self-governance. Since then, most states have undertaken a systematic and enduring effort to implement an operative vision of the Panchayati Raj. The goal is to ensure the institutionalisation of participatory democracy at the local level. Fortifying these decentralisation efforts has been one of the pillars of SDC's work in India. SDC's decentralisation programme promotes accountable, transparent and inclusive governance at the district and community levels. This allows for greater involvement of the citizens, especially the economically weak and socially marginalized. Additionally, SDC looks at enabling people to access resources to design, plan, and implement activities according to local needs and demands of the poor. SDC furthermore promotes exchanges of experiences, lessons learnt and relevant practices relating to decentralisation across South Asian countries, as well as between Switzerland and India.

CONTACT DETAILS

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC

Swiss Cooperation Office,
Embassy of Switzerland,
Chandragupta Marg, Chanakyapuri,
New Delhi 110021, India.
Phone: + 91 11 268 77819
Fax: + 91 11 268 73631
E-mail: delhi@sdc.net
Website: www.sdcindia.in

CROSS-CUTTING THEMES



Governance and Gender

Good governance forms the basis of sustainable economic and social development, which links with SDC's mandate to promote equitable, inclusive and sustainable development. This mandate makes it crucial for all programmes to address equality and improve participation of the poor and the marginalized. SDC implements governance as a cross-cutting theme in all its projects, and bases its approach on three principles. One is that all stakeholders have to be accountable to ensure that all programmes of SDC have an impact on the lives of poor and disadvantaged communities. The second principle is inclusive participation, and looks at supporting and promoting processes that enable groups concerned to articulate their needs and represent their interests and rights at the national and international level by encouraging them to participate in important forums and multiple stakeholder consultations. The third principle, gender equality, ensures that concerns of women and men are taken into consideration and that they are empowered to participate in development and decision making processes.



Knowledge Management and South-South Cooperation

In all its programmes, SDC promotes knowledge management with a view to facilitate the generation, access, and exchange of knowledge among various stakeholders on development relevant issues, and to encourage critical debate, in India as well as at regional and international level. SDC seeks to manage knowledge, share experiences and learn from them. This can take place by using different platforms such as conferences, seminars, meetings or websites. Direct interactions among decision makers at the policy level, civil societies, affected communities, academic and research institutions in India as well as in Switzerland are equally essential and supported. Furthermore SDC looks at bringing field expertise to the policy level, and promotes understanding of policies at the field level. Reciprocal knowledge sharing, dialogue as well as transfers of technologies among developing countries are crucial to further equitable and sustainable development processes and are actively supported by SDC.