El Agua Nos Une

Water stewardship and evidence-based decisions

Water Solutions

Region

Latin America: Colombia, Peru and Mexico.

Partners

Colombia:
National Institute of Environmental Studies, Ministry of Environment, National Business Association, Centre of Science Technology; Water fund BioCuenca.
Peru:
National Water Authority, CARE - SABA VIDA, National Association of Industries, Foreign Trade Corporation of Peru, Drinking Water and Sewer Service of Lima.
Mexico:
National Water Commission, Life Cycle Analysis Centre, Mexican Business Council for Foreign Trade.
International:
UN Global Compact, GIZ, Pacific Alliance: Business Council and Green Growth Technical Group.

Background information

Latin America faces challenges related to water stress, flooding, increasing water demand, and low levels of wastewater treatment (less than 50% of wastewater is treated). Public, private and civil society organisations need to tackle these challenges jointly through evidence-based decisions and action. What should emerge is a private sector that is more aware of its business-related risks and responsibilities and citizens who increase their efforts to reduce their environmental impact.

Beneficiaries:

Local communities, public institutions, business associations, companies, water practitioners and citizens.

Costs:

SDC: CHF 4 million; counterparts: CHF 3 million

Duration

03.2026 – 12.2029 (phase 2)

Contact

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Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC

Based on Switzerland's decade-long experience in private sector engagement and empowerment of public institutions, the El Agua Nos Une programme is building the basis for evidence-based decisions processes which should lead to better water governance in three Latin American countries. El Agua Nos Une envisions systemic change towards corporate water use efficiency and pollution mitigation, mobilising stakeholders and investments for ecosystem preservation in a process that also contribute to a more equitable society and responsible water use.

Context

Water use has increased six-fold over the past century and continues to increase by about 1% per year. Besides, between 80% and 90% of wastewater worldwide is discharged to the environment without any form of treatment. The Disclosure Insight Action (CDP) Global Water Report 2019 showed that less than 50% of the companies surveyed measure and monitor discharges from their production process and only 12% of these companies have set goals related to pollution reduction. In a globalised economy, water management challenges are increasingly associated with the accelerated production and consumption of goods and services. Thus, SDC has identified a niche of work to facilitate knowledge on water footprint evaluation and reduction, focusing on practical results. This initiative fosters partnerships with public and private sector partners to improve decision-making, based on technical information and systemic monitoring.

Outcomes

1. **Institution, regulation and finances**. Involved actors have jointly established the necessary conditions at the institutional, regulatory and financial level to strengthen collective water governance.
   - Evidence-based policy implementation
   - Strengthened public and private capacities
2. **Private sector action.** Influential private sector actors implement and propagate the practice of Corporate Water Stewardship (CWS) oriented towards responsible water use, along their value chains and through collective action.
   - CWS application across value chains and business clusters
   - Collective application of Nature-based solutions in a territorial approach





3. **Knowledge building, management and application.** Influential private sector actors implement and propagate the practice of CWS oriented towards responsible water use, along their value chains and through collective action.
   - Innovation, definition of good practice coupled with on-demand advice at an international scale.
   - A growing international community of practice that is linked to and engaged in regional and global platforms

Cross-cutting themes

- Governance and policy dialogue
- Innovation
- Gender equality and youth participation

Intervention Strategy

Local level:
- Business partners commit to assessing and reducing their water impacts and engage in collective actions.
- Conservation of natural infrastructure with community leadership.
- Participation and exercise of institutional competencies.

National level:
- Business associations promote scaling up.
- Natural infrastructure investment models inspire and learn from other regions.

International level:
- Structured exchange promotes change, with emblematic examples, through leaders in each sector, mostly in Latin America.
- Technical advice, by demand, to Ecuador and Panamá.

Additional information:

https://bit.ly/3XLE64x

www.elaguanosune.org/