SHF

Reframing how we tackle and invest in Sanitation, Hygiene & Menstrual Health

Water Governance

Region

Global, with a focus on Eastern & Western Africa

Partners

The United Nations Sanitation & Hygiene Fund

Project objectives

The Sanitation and Hygiene Fund (SHF) is dedicated to achieving universal access to sanitation, hygiene, and menstrual health through market-based approaches. SHF works to strengthen public systems, develop inclusive and investable markets, and mobilise sustainable finance to enable countries to transition from grant-dependent models to self-sustaining, country-led service economies. By advancing next-generation sanitation (NGS), circular and climate-aligned wastewater solutions and menstrual health markets, SHF drives systemic change while generating economic, social, and environmental impact. This is underpinned by the following theory of change.

Beneficiaries

Individuals without access to sanitation and hygiene, marginalised groups, women, entrepreneurs.

Costs

CHF 28 million.

Duration

1 January 2023 to 31 December 2031 (2 phases)

Contact

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Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
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Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC

About SHF

The UN's Sanitation & Hygiene Fund (SHF) - the only UN fund of its kind - catalyses investment in off-grid sanitation economies and menstrual hygiene marketplaces. We do this by working in partnership with low and lower middle-income countries, development partners, development financing institutions and the private sector to tackle barriers to inclusive growth and accelerate sustainable markets.

Context & Objectives

3.4 billion people still lack basic services. While safely managed sanitation coverage increased from 48% to 58% between 2015 and 2024, progress remains unequal, with disparities between urban and rural areas, wealthier and low-income households, and persons with disabilities. Wastewater challenges are equally pressing. To address this, SHF's Next Generation Sanitation (NGS) initiative promotes multipronged, context-specific solutions: blending centralised and decentralised systems, strengthening service delivery models, and enabling blended finance and private-sector participation.

Meanwhile, over 1.7 billion women and girls in LMICs face menstrual health barriers, with 613 million lacking access to safe, affordable products and reliable facilities. Stigma, weak market systems, and limited investment further restrict access and dignity. SHF's Capital M initiative tackles these issues by fostering innovation, improving product access, and addressing social norms, with a focus on building inclusive markets for affordable, fit-for-purpose menstrual hygiene products.

Recognising the limitations of traditional grant-based models, SHF pivoted to scalable, decentralised, and market-based approaches. For example, as of 2026, SHF has begun scaling transformational interventions, leveraging blended finance partnerships, mobilising public and private capital, and supporting hundreds of enterprises in the sanitation value chain. Successes include access to sanitation for 63,000 households in Kenya, 10,000 household toilets constructed in Nigeria, and nearly 70 enterprises supported in Kenya and Uganda. Structurally, SHF has introduced tools like SANEMAT to measure sanitation and menstrual health market maturity, pushed for ISO standards for menstrual products with participation from 56 countries, and drove policy and regulatory reforms in Kenya, Uganda, and beyond.

SHF's overall purpose is to strengthen public systems, develop inclusive and investable markets, and mobilise sustainable finance, enabling countries to transition from grant-dependent models to self-sustaining, country-led service economies. This is pursued through two operational pillars: NGS, which focuses on reforming off-grid sanitation challenges for poor populations, and Capital M, which builds inclusive and affordable markets for environmentally friendly sanitary products. Both pillars aim to create resilient, self-sustaining market systems that improve health, gender equality, and climate resilience while generating economic, social, and environmental impact.

The intervention strategy is targeting Kenya, Uganda, Nigeria, and Senegal, with potential for market expansion elsewhere. NGS uses a systems-based approach to transform sanitation by treating wastewater as a resource and promoting inclusive, resilient, and market-driven solutions. Capital M reframes menstrual health as a systemic market underperformance issue, driven by weak regulation, limited data, and fragmented supply chains. Both pillars emphasise regulatory frameworks, private-sector cooperation, and a gender-responsive approach.





Additional information:
www.shfund.org