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Swiss Agency for Development  
and Cooperation SDC



**REGIONAL  
THEMATIC HUB  
BANGKOK**  
2025-2028

**FOREIGN POLICY  
STRATEGY  
2024-2027**



**INTERNATIONAL  
COOPERATION  
STRATEGY  
2025-2028**



**REGIONAL  
THEMATIC  
HUB  
BANGKOK  
2025-2028**  
SDC

**SOUTH EAST  
ASIA  
STRATEGY  
2023-2026**

**COOPERATION  
PROGRAMME  
MEKONG  
2022-2026**  
SDC

**COOPERATION  
PROGRAMME  
MYANMAR  
2024-2027**  
SDC

**COOPERATION  
PROGRAMME  
NEPAL  
2023-2026**  
SDC

**COOPERATION  
PROGRAMME  
BANGLADESH  
2026-2028**  
SDC

**COOPERATION  
PROGRAMME  
VIETNAM  
2025-2028**  
SECO

**COOPERATION  
PROGRAMME  
INDONESIA  
2025-2028**  
SECO

# Background

South and South East Asia have achieved remarkable economic growth over the past decades, lifting millions of people out of poverty. Yet, this rapid development has come at a significant environmental cost. The region's unique biodiversity hotspots and its ecosystems serve as vital global carbon sinks. This rich natural capital is under severe pressure. Air, water, and soil pollution affect millions of people, especially the most vulnerable populations who depend heavily on these ecosystems. Greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise at among the highest rates in the world.

South and South East Asia and the Pacific are also among the most exposed regions to natural hazards and the impacts of climate change. Efforts in disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation are not keeping pace with growing risks, highlighting the urgent need for stronger action and investments to protect the poor. At the same time, countries in the region have

gained valuable experience and developed robust and innovative solutions in disaster risk management and climate action, relevant far beyond their borders.

Food and water security remain critical challenges. In the Mekong region alone, 60 million people depend on agriculture and fisheries. Their livelihoods and food production systems are increasingly threatened by climate change. Shifting to more sustainable food systems offers great potential for strengthening the agricultural sector while balancing food production with conservation and climate goals. Stress on the region's water resources is increasing due to overuse, pollution, deforestation, large-scale infrastructure such as hydropower dams and climate change.

Amidst this complex regional context, there is a need to accelerate the shift towards inclusive, resilient and environmentally friendly development pathways, based on

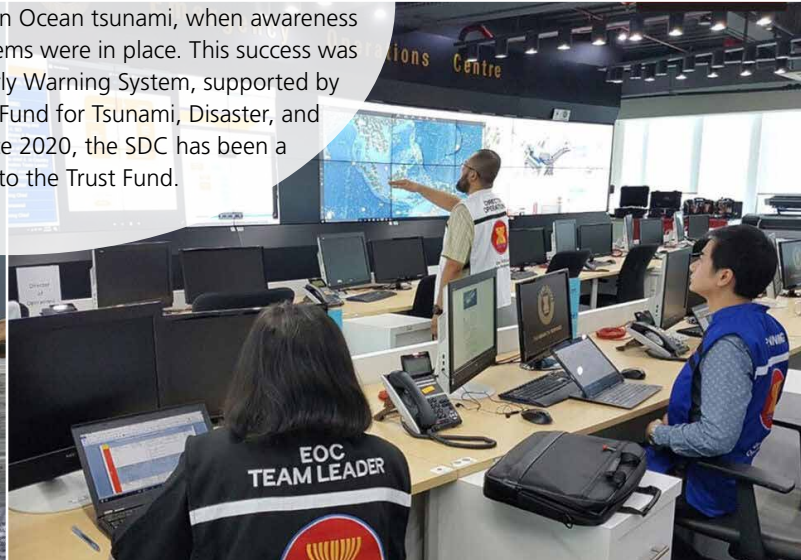
strong regional cooperation and inclusive, transboundary governance.

Switzerland has been a trusted partner in South and South East Asia providing humanitarian aid and technical assistance since the 1960s. Its current countries for international cooperation include Cambodia, Laos, Indonesia, Myanmar, Vietnam, Bangladesh, India and Nepal. To address cross-border issues such as climate change, environment, disaster risk management, food systems and water, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) operates a Regional Thematic Hub within the Embassy of Switzerland in Bangkok. It supports regional collaboration and contributes to building a more sustainable and resilient future for the people of South and South East Asia.



## The tsunami disaster that didn't take place

On 30 July 2025, an 8.8-magnitude earthquake off Russia's Kamchatka Peninsula triggered a Pacific-wide tsunami warning. Thanks to swift pre-emptive evacuations, millions of people were kept safe across Russia, Japan, Pacific island states, and the Americas – a stark contrast to the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, when awareness was limited, and no warning systems were in place. This success was made possible by the Pacific Early Warning System, supported by the ESCAP Multi-donor Trust Fund for Tsunami, Disaster, and Climate Preparedness. Since 2020, the SDC has been a key contributor to the Trust Fund.



# Results and lessons learnt

## **From emergency response to long-term resilience building**

After the devastating 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, Switzerland provided extensive emergency aid and reconstruction support in Indonesia and Thailand. Building on this experience, the SDC established a Humanitarian Aid Hub in Bangkok in 2013 with a focus on two roles: strengthening disaster risk reduction and coordinating rapid response across South East Asia and the Pacific. In the years since, the hub has continued to facilitate the deployment of in-person, in-kind and financial support from Swiss Humanitarian Aid after major disasters, including the Palu earthquake and tsunami in Indonesia in 2018, six consecutive typhoons affecting the Philippines in 2024 and the Myanmar earthquake in 2025. Through the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific Trust Fund, the hub has supported efforts to strengthen transboundary early warning systems for tsunamis and coastal hazards.

It has also helped improve innovative early warning systems and supported reviews of hydropower dam safety in the Mekong.

Collaboration with the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management has strengthened regional disaster response capacity. Switzerland has also championed the integration of protection, gender, and inclusion in ASEAN disaster management frameworks. In past years, countries in the region facing a high frequency of natural hazards invested heavily in early warning systems, emergency preparedness and response mechanisms. As regional and national capacities in these areas strengthened, the hub progressively shifted its focus. Today it plays a key role in long-term resilience-building, linking humanitarian aid with development to address cross-border sustainability challenges.

## **Piloting new approaches for Swiss international cooperation**

Since 2023, the hub has expanded its scope to five key themes: climate change, environment, disaster risk management, food systems, and water. With the mandate to address a broader set of interconnected sustainability challenges, it has become a regional competence centre for thematic cooperation on sustainability, working closely with the network of Swiss representations across South and South East Asia. The hub invests resources in strategic, demand-driven partnerships with local, national, and regional actors that rely on “software” – knowledge, innovation, and collaboration. It mobilises Swiss expertise from the public and private sectors, academia and NGOs. The work of the Regional Thematic Hub complements bilateral development cooperation by building resilience and fostering inclusive, sustainable solutions to shared regional challenges.

# Switzerland's commitment – priority areas for 2025–2028

In line with the strong focus on sustainability in Switzerland's South East Asia Strategy 2023–26 and reflecting the priorities of the Swiss International Cooperation Strategy 2025–28 and the Swiss Foreign Policy 2024–27, the Regional Thematic Hub in Bangkok reinforces its engagement in three focus areas. These reflect Switzerland's comparative advantages, respond to pressing regional challenges, and build on lessons learnt from decades of cooperation.

## **Disaster risk management and climate change adaptation**

Switzerland has long-standing expertise in disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation. Through its Regional Thematic Hub in Bangkok, it supports countries and communities to reduce vulnerabilities and strengthen resilience. Efforts include promoting risk-informed and climate-smart planning at national and sub-national level,

investing in data digitalisation and the use of geospatial tools. Locally-led adaptation is prioritised, ensuring early warning systems support the full monitoring cycle – from risk mapping to emergency response – and reach the most vulnerable. This work contributes to the UN's Early Warnings for All initiative. Intervention strategies are based on evidence and integrate protection, gender, and social equity. Expertise of the Swiss private sector in areas such as insurance, risk analysis, and clean technologies complements technical cooperation to deliver practical and context-specific solutions.

## **Inclusive low-emission and environmentally friendly development**

The hub promotes the region's transition to low-emission and resource-efficient economies, contributing to global efforts to mitigate climate change. Its work aims to reduce environmental and climate impacts

while ensuring that the most vulnerable groups are not left behind. Building on more than 30 years of Swiss engagement in clean air initiatives, the hub advocates transboundary cooperation and integrated climate and air-quality policies, highlighting the multiple benefits of clean air action for public health, food security and climate mitigation. It supports countries in piloting and scaling innovative solutions to reduce air pollution from agricultural burning and forest fires. The hub works with SDC cooperation programmes to accompany local private sector actors in adopting circular economy approaches: support is provided to innovative SMEs that deliver solutions to environmental challenges related to waste management, energy, pollution and the use of natural resources. Swiss expertise in sustainable finance will be used to open opportunities for inclusive green growth, especially for marginalised groups.

## **Biodiversity, ecosystems, water and food systems**

The hub promotes the protection and use of natural resources in such a way as to benefit both people and the environment. Locally driven solutions are supported to preserve biodiversity, maintain healthy ecosystems, and ensure equitable access to land, water, and food – thereby improving resilience to climate change and quality of life.

In forestry, the hub advances social forestry practices that empower indigenous peoples and local communities, strengthening their rights to land and resources. Nature-based solutions are promoted to deliver multiple benefits: protecting biodiversity, reducing emissions, supporting climate change adaptation, and improving local livelihoods.

In water management, the hub fosters cross-border cooperation and improved governance at local, national, and regional levels. Integrated water resource management helps balance competing needs such as agriculture, hydropower, and domestic use, while expanding access to clean water for vulnerable groups. Swiss expertise in hydrology, water diplomacy, and pollution reduction underpins these efforts.

To strengthen food security, the hub supports the shift to sustainable food systems through agroecological practices, circular approaches, and responsible land use. It promotes smallholder resilience, inclusive markets, and participatory food governance, with a focus on gender equality and social inclusion. By linking efforts across biodiversity, ecosystems, water, and food, the hub fosters solutions that are both environmentally sustainable and socially fair.

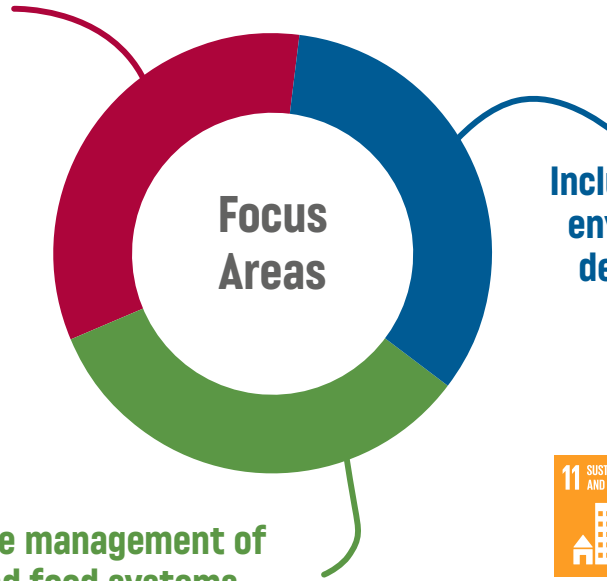
## **Transversal themes**

Across all areas and in all projects, the hub promotes gender equality and social inclusion and aims for intersectoral collaboration. It works to build synergies with other Swiss international cooperation priorities in South and South East Asia, including private sector development, governance, migration, and health.

## Disaster risk management and climate change adaptation



## Biodiversity, sustainable management of ecosystems, water and food systems



## Inclusive low-emission and environmentally friendly development pathways



## Transversal for all the focus areas





# Approach and partners

Effectively addressing transboundary challenges is at the heart of the hub's engagement and is delivered in the following complementary ways:

## **Policy dialogue and advocacy**

The hub represents Switzerland in key regional processes and platforms on climate change, disaster risk reduction, environment, water, and food systems. It strengthens regional cooperation and contributes to norm-setting, working closely with ASEAN under Switzerland's Sectoral Dialogue Partnership and with the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), a key platform for multilateral policymaking and dialogue on a range of sustainability challenges. The hub also engages in policy dialogue with the Bangkok-based regional offices of UN agencies, multilateral development banks, the private sector, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and civil society.

## **Projects and strategic partnerships**

The hub finances selected strategic regional partnerships and supports the implementation of global initiatives funded by the SDC in South and South East Asia. It pilots innovative approaches with scaling-up potential, such as the integration of geospatial technology and artificial intelligence into risk mapping, to tackle key challenges regarding climate change, environment, disaster risk, biodiversity, water and land. It does so with civil society organisations, the private sector, governments and international organisations.

## **Advisory services and capacity building**

The hub provides thematic advice to Swiss representations in the region, supporting the design of cooperation programmes in SDC priority countries, as well as the planning and implementation of thematic projects and in mainstreaming climate change, DRR and environment. It also manages a

regional thematic network to foster institutional learning and capacity building among Swiss representations and partners.

## **Response readiness**

The hub monitors disaster risks and supports Swiss representations across South East Asia in risk assessment. In case of a major disaster with a request for international assistance, it works with the SDC at the FDFA's head office in Bern and the Swiss representations to mobilise the support needed. Hub team members also represent Switzerland in coordination meetings for several regional aid mechanisms.

## **Resources**

The hub's financial resources include CHF 1.8 million annually from the Humanitarian Aid Framework Credit and CHF 1 million from the Development Cooperation Framework Credit. It also manages the regional components of global initiatives supported by the SDC on a portfolio of around CHF 7 million.





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