



External Evaluation of the RésEAU cum AGUASAN Backstopping Mandate 2020-25

Volume 1: Evaluation report (Final)

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Abbreviations

AFS	Agriculture and Food Systems, SDC thematic network
BSM	Backstopping mandate
CDE	Climate, Disaster Risk Reduction, and Environment, SDC thematic network
CHF	Swiss Franc
IT	Information Technology
MENA	Middle East and Northern Africa
NPOs	National Programme Officers, SDC
OECD/DAC	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development/Development Assistance Committee
SCO	Swiss Cooperation Office
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation

Nomenclature

RésEAU—the SDC knowledge network on water

Focal Point	The senior policy advisor of the SDC Section Water responsible for the RésEAU and the backstopping of the RésEAU and AGUASAN.
Core Group	The steering committee of the RésEAU, consisting of the Focal Point and SDC field representatives from Central Asia, Latin America, the Middle East, and the Western Balkans.
Core teams	The steering committees of the Sub-RésEAUs, consisting of SDC field representatives from multiple countries in the respective regions.
Regional core team leader	A senior SDC field representative who has the nominal lead of a Sub-RésEAU.
RésEAU Updates	Bi-monthly e-mails to all RésEAU members with links to the latest (SDC) water sector news, events, and courses.
RésEAU Briefs	Roughly semi-annual, 12–16-page, overviews on a specific water topic, including key concepts, case studies, good practices, and lessons learned.
Trend Sheets	Roughly tri-annual, 10–12-page, introductions on an specific trend or a new technological development in the water sector, including case studies and further reading.
Trend News	A one-pager on a specific news item, technology, or development in the water sector.
Learning journeys	A series of moderated, interactive, webinars and (virtual) workshops around a specific topic in the water sector.

AGUASAN

Community of Practice	An interdisciplinary community of Swiss-based water and sanitation experts in international development cooperation.
Quarterly meetings	One day knowledge exchange events by and for the members of the AGUASAN Community of Practice.
Workshop series	An annual five-day knowledge generation workshop on a water related topic for water sector practitioners of the SDC and its development partners.

Executive summary

Introduction

The purpose of this evaluation was to conclude, learn, and look forward. It was to account for the performance and usefulness of the backstopping of the RésEAU and AGUASAN, understand what worked, what didn't and why, and identify new or alternative approaches to the RésEAU and AGUASAN backstopping. It concerned a qualitative assessment. The evaluation relied on the insights from interviews, an online survey, and a document review to offer a descriptive analysis and assessment of the backstopping of the RésEAU and AGUASAN. The primary intended users of the evaluation were the SDC Focal Point for the RésEAU and AGUASAN, the RésEAU Core Group, and the management of the SDC Section Water.

The RésEAU, AGUASAN, and the backstopping mandate

The RésEAU is the SDC thematic network on water. It comprises 480 professionals from the SDC (21%) and SDC implementing/development partners (79%). It has three established regional Sub-RésEAUs: Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Middle East and Northern Africa, and Latin-America. AGUASAN is a community of practice of Swiss-based water sector professionals. It holds quarterly knowledge exchange meetings for its members and organizes an annual five-day workshop for water professionals around the world on a current water topic. The backstopping of the RésEAU and AGUASAN is, for the period 2020-25, carried out by Skat Consulting Ltd, Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation, and Zoï Environment Network. Its function is to secure the quality of SDC's water operations, promote innovative ways of capitalization and knowledge sharing, provide demand-driven support to the Sub-RésEAUs, and nurture the core practices of AGUASAN.

The backstopping of the RésEAU

The RésEAU members appreciate the opportunity to exchange with peers and access the latest news, thinking, case studies, good practices, and SDC's norms and standards. This especially holds true for the SDC national program officers and local development partners—key actors in SDC's operations. Moreover, if the SDC wants to share normative documents, good practices, and the latest thinking on what works, what doesn't and why on any water-related topic, it needs a network to connect to its water experts and development/implementing partners. The evaluation, however, found that whilst the RésEAU exists, it is under-activated and -utilized. The (Sub-)RésEAU(s) hardly meet and there are few processes where the SDC and non-SDC members alike could link into, exchange amongst peers, and garner knowledge in a purposeful and structured manner.

The RésEAU, and the backstopping mandate of the RésEAU, are too ambitious and—strangely enough—too demand-oriented for their own good. The (backstopping of the) RésEAU is to simultaneously contribute to *'knowledge management, capacity strengthening, strategic reflection, thematic expertise and advice, promotion of innovation, and the exploration of new trends in the water domain'*, without a common vision amongst the SDC Section Water, the backstoppers, and the RésEAU members about what this means in practice and how the backstoppers/the RésEAU could and should be utilized.

Being demand-oriented is generally considered to be the gold standard in development cooperation. It allows one to respond to the needs, priorities, and capacities of the target group. The challenge in the RésEAU is that needs and demands are diffuse, decision-making is centralized, and the Focal Point, Core Group, Sub-RésEAUs, and backstoppers are caught in a Catch-22. Common opinion holds that (knowledge) networks require active moderation to ensure that meetings between members are organized and to bring demand and supply together. Demand is not served on a silver platter—it needs to be curated. Moreover, communities of practice are seen as the gold standard for knowledge sharing.

These key findings suggests that the (backstopping of the) RésEAU should focus on its core function of knowledge sharing, by transforming the Sub-RésEAUs into active communities of practice, and proactively and purposefully bringing the demand and supply of knowledge together.

The Backstopping of AGUASAN

The story is very different for the backstopping of AGUASAN. For two reasons. First, the backstopping of AGUASAN is limited in scope, well-defined and circumscribed, and highly organizational in nature. Second, Skat Consulting Ltd. effectively co-owns the community of practice as a co-founder, member, and long-time facilitator. The four core tasks of the backstopping mandate—ensuring continuity in the quarterly meetings, running the web portal, managing AGUASAN’s support to Solidarit’Eau Suisse, and organizing the annual workshop—all work and work well. The evaluation therefore recommends that the SDC can continue supporting the backstopping of AGUASAN in its current form and as long as it considers AGUASAN valuable and to serve its interests.

Gender mainstreaming

The RésEAU has a gender strategy. It includes another impressive to-do list for the RésEAU and the backstoppers. So far, there have been no resource allocations for implementing any of these to dos. Instead, the RésEAU prioritized youth and asked the backstopping mandate of the RésEAU to support the SDC’s fledgling 1 Million Youth Action Challenge. Consequently, most interviewees and 84% of the survey respondents were unaware of the RésEAU gender strategy. Because gender equality is a cross-cutting theme in the Swiss International Cooperation Strategy 2020-24 (and likely to remain so in the 2025-28 iteration), gender equality considerations should be integrated in all SDC’s work, including its knowledge networks. The evaluation therefore recommends the (backstopping of the) RésEAU to, here as well, focus on its core function of knowledge sharing, in this case pertaining to the latest thinking, guidelines and good practices on promoting gender equality in water interventions.

Recommendations

The evaluation formulated eight recommendations for the SDC Section Water—most of which can be implemented forthwith:

1. to make the Sub-RésEAUs ‘Cluster Green communities of practice’, modelled after the AGUASAN Community of Practice,
2. for the RésEAU to continue to proactively give members access to operationally relevant SDC water sector information, guidelines, good practices, and trends,
3. for the Section Water to allocate more time to moderating and running the RésEAU, or empower the backstopping mandate to this end,
4. for the backstopping mandate to include local backstoppers, i.e., water/cluster green network experts in the regions, which can help prepare, organize, moderate, and follow-up the proposed quarterly Sub-RésEAU meetings of SDC and non-SDC members,
5. focus the RésEAU gender work on knowledge sharing of guidelines and good practices on promoting gender equality in and through water interventions.
6. for the backstoppers to develop with the SDC Focal Point, Core Group, and core teams a (theory of change) methodology and institute a system to monitor the extent to which the RésEAU and AGUASAN annual workshop help *‘the SDC and partners apply up-to-date knowledge in their water work and nurture the quality of SDC’s thematic work’*.
7. to transfer from Hazu to MS Teams for all communications and document sharing within the RésEAU and the backstopping mandate, and
8. to continue supporting the backstopping of AGUASAN in its current form and as long as AGUASAN serves the SDC’s interests.

1 Introduction

1. This report documents the external evaluation of the RésEAU cum AGUASAN backstopping mandate. This external evaluation was commissioned by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). The SDC's project cycle management principles stipulate that all programs, projects, and mandates are to be evaluated around the mid-point or at the end of their implementation. This mid-term evaluation took place in first trimester of 2024—eighteen months before the end of the backstopping mandate. This opening chapter lays down the purpose and use of the evaluation, introduces the main evaluation questions, describes the backstopping mandate, shares the evaluation methodology and limitations, and offers a reading guide to the rest of the report.

1.1. Purpose and use

2. The **purpose of the evaluation** was three-fold, namely to:

1. **account** for the performance and usefulness of the backstopping of the RésEAU and AGUASAN,
2. **understand** the appropriateness of the backstopping mandate for the RésEAU and AGUASAN, including its set-up, approaches, working modalities, products, and tools, and
3. **identify** new, alternative, useful approaches to the backstopping of the RésEAU and AGUASAN.

3. In short, the evaluation was **to conclude, learn, and look forward**. There were no immediate upcoming decisions for the evaluation to serve. Instead, the evaluation was to inform the SDC's strategic reflections on how to shape the backstopping of the RésEAU and AGUASAN for 2025-28 (the period of the next Swiss International Cooperation Strategy). These reflections will happen against the backdrop of:

- the recent reorganization of the SDC, making it 'fit-for-purpose',
- the SDC internal deliberations on the formation of a new Cluster Green which is to encompass the SDC's thematic sections on (i) water, (ii) climate change, disaster risk reduction, and the environment, and (iii) agriculture and food systems, and
- the need for the Confederacy, and thus the SDC, to reduce (government) expenditures.

4. The SDC must ultimately decide on whether to continue and, if so, how to continue the backstopping of the RésEAU and AGUASAN. This evaluation may inform that decision. At the end of the day, the evaluation served the three classical functions of evaluation: **accountability, learning, and decision-making**.

5. The **primary intended users** of the evaluation were: **the SDC Focal Point¹** of the RésEAU, the **Core Group²** of the RésEAU, and **the SDC Water Section**. Indirectly, the evaluation was to serve the **SDC Management**.

6. The **secondary intended users** of the evaluation were the **focal points of SDC's other thematic networks**, especially the Climate, Disaster Risk Reduction, and Environment (CDE) network and the Agriculture and Food Systems (AFS) network. The current backstoppers of the RésEAU—Skat Consulting Ltd., Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation, and Zoï Environment Network—expressed their intent to use the evaluation results for their own reflection with the RésEAU and AGUASAN on how to further improve their backstopping.

¹ The senior policy advisor of the SDC Section Water responsible for the RésEAU and the backstopping of the RésEAU and AGUASAN.

² This is the de facto steering committee of the RésEAU, consisting of the SDC Focal Point and an SDC field representative from Central Asia, Latin America, the Middle East, and the Western Balkans.

1.2. Main evaluation questions

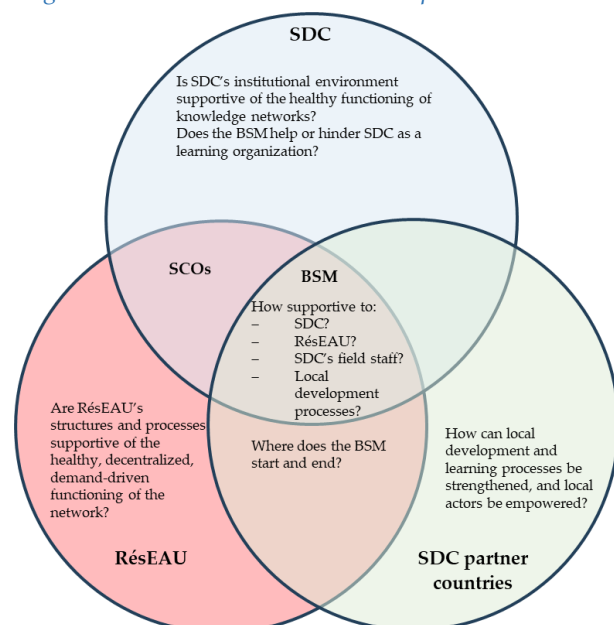
7. The above purpose statement translated into **four main evaluation questions**:

1. To what extent and how did the backstopping approaches, working modalities, products, and tools contribute to the usefulness of the backstopping mandate and the functioning of the RésEAU and AGUASAN?
2. What new, alternative, and useful approaches to the backstopping of the RésEAU and AGUASAN exist?
3. How did the backstopping perform on the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria: relevance, coherence, effectiveness, impact, efficiency, and sustainability?
4. What conclusions, lessons, and recommendations can be drawn from the evaluation on the current and future backstopping of the RésEAU and AGUASAN?

1.3. Institutional and development context

8. The backstopping of the RésEAU and AGUASAN took (and takes) place within a multi-dimensional context—within different but purposefully interlinked social systems. These different contexts and systems influence each other. Figure 1 captures this in a static and two-dimensional form. Each circle represents an institutional reality—each with its own rules and practices—that influenced the backstopping and that the backstopping sought to influence. In practice, each of these institutional and development contexts was, of course, dynamic and continuously evolving. The questions in Figure 1 stem from the SDC and the backstoppers and shaped the inquiry and the story line in this report.

Figure 1 The institutional and development context



1.4. The backstopping mandate of the RésEAU and AGUASAN—an introduction

9. **The RésEAU.** The RésEAU is the SDC thematic network on water. Its overall goal is *'an increasingly water secure [global] development through the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all'* (SDC 2024). It seeks to achieve this by ensuring that:

- the SDC and partner staff apply up-to-date knowledge in their water-related work, are connected, and exchange among each other, and
- SDC's water profile is strengthened, coherent, and trendsetting (SDC n.d).

10. In January 2024, the network had 480 members of which 101 (21%) SDC staff and 379 (79%) development and implementing partners (Skat 2024). The RésEAU's main tools and activities are regional face-to-face events, webinars, thematic learning journeys, the capitalization of project experiences, thematic briefs, trend news/sheets, and bi-monthly e-mail updates on news, upcoming events, and capacity building opportunities (SDC n.d).

11. The RésEAU is organized in regional Sub-RésEAUs (Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Latin-America, and the Middle East and Northern Africa). At a global level, it is steered by a so-called Core

Group, consisting of the SDC Focal Point and an SDC field representative from Central Asia, Latin America, the Middle East, and the Western Balkans. The SDC Focal Point is a senior policy advisor of the SDC Section Water, who carries final responsibility for the RésEAU and the backstopping of the RésEAU and AGUASAN. At the Sub-RésEAU level, the networks are steered by a regional core team, consisting of SDC field representatives with one being the regional core team leader.

12. **AGUASAN.** AGUASAN is *‘an interdisciplinary Swiss Community of Practice bringing together a wide range of specialists to promote a deeper understanding of key issues in water and sanitation in international cooperation. AGUASAN has at all times been about people, their knowledge and their practical experiences ... and aimed at developing innovative strategies, approaches, and conceptual tools of practical use’* (AGUASAN 2024). AGUASAN dates from 1984 and has since organized an unbroken series of quarterly meetings of the Community of Practice and an almost unbroken series (except for 2020-21 during the covid-19 pandemic) of annual five-day workshops for water practitioners of the SDC and its implementing partners. AGUASAN is positioned as an *‘essential link in SDC’s thematic knowledge management’* (AGUASAN 2024).

13. **The backstopping mandate.** The backstopping mandate is, in general terms, to support the functioning and activities of the RésEAU and AGUASAN. In doing so, it is to contribute to the following four objectives:

1. secure the quality of the SDC’s thematic work,
2. promote innovative ways of capitalization, knowledge management and sharing,
3. provide demand-driven support to the Sub-RésEAUs (SDC 2024), and
4. nurture the core practices, membership, and impact of AGUASAN (Skat 2023).

14. The scope of the backstopping mandate is further elaborated in Chapter 2 (for the RésEAU) and Chapter 3 (for AGUASAN). The backstopping mandate is executed by the Swiss-based consortium of Skat Consulting Ltd., Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation, and Zoï Environment Network. The mandate runs for five years, from 1 October 2020 to 30 September 2025, with a budget of CHF 3,453,707.

15. The mandate is coordinated by a senior advisor and overseen by a director from Skat Consulting. It is executed by a pool of close to 20 thematic and methodological experts of the consortium. These experts are mobilized on a need basis. In addition, Skat Consulting supports the Central Asia and MENA region Sub-RésEAUs and leads the backstopping of AGUASAN; Helvetas backstops the Latin-America Sub-RésEAU and is supporting the set-up of an Africa Sub-RésEAU; and Zoï Environment Network is focused on supporting communication (materials).

16. The coordinator holds three-weekly calls with the SDC Focal Point. The director, coordinator, and lead backstoppers meet semi-annually for an internal review of the backstopping mandate and for a strategic reflection with the SDC Focal Point. The consortium submits semi-annual operational (progress) reports on the backstopping mandate to the SDC Focal Point. In addition, the Skat director and coordinator and SDC Focal Point connect on a needs-basis.

1.5. Evaluation methodology

17. The evaluation concerned a purposeful, theory-based, and qualitative inquiry into the effectiveness of the backstopping mandate. Purposeful, because the evaluation sought answers to the evaluation questions of the SDC and the backstoppers. Theory-based, as the evaluation took the backstopping’s theory of change as reference point for structuring the evaluation and drawing lessons, conclusions, and recommendations. Qualitative, because the evaluation relied on the insights and perspectives gained from interviews, an online survey, and relevant documentation to offer a descriptive analysis

and assessment of the backstopping mandate. The evaluation's findings and recommendations stem mostly from an inductive and a deductive analysis. Finally, the evaluation triangulated its findings across data sources and evaluators.

1.6. Limitations

18. The biggest limitation of the evaluation was the low response from the RésEAU and AGUASAN members to our request for an interview and/or participation in the online survey. Apart from the standard-bearers within the SDC and the backstopping consortium³, we reached out to 36 SDC and non-SDC members of the RésEAU and AGUASAN for an interview. 15 (or 42%) responded (positively). For the online survey amongst 480 RésEAU members the response rate was, nominally, 18% but in practice 13%.⁴ For the survey amongst AGUASAN members the response rate was 19%.

19. In the end, we interviewed 39 people, and surveyed 62 RésEAU and 28 AGUASAN members. This means that the evaluation findings, conclusions, and recommendations rest on the experiences and views of a relatively small number of RésEAU and AGUASAN members. Whilst a limitation, we will argue in the Chapters 2 and 3, when we evaluate the backstopping of the RésEAU and AGUASAN respectively, that it also constitutes a 'key finding'.

20. At the end of the day, the evaluation constituted a probe, offering one reality of the (backstopping of the) RésEAU and AGUASAN, based on a limited data set. Individual stakeholders may have experienced a different reality and hold a (somewhat) different picture of the (backstopping of the) RésEAU and/or AGUASAN and the lessons it bears. Such differences in perceptions are natural and unavoidable. They offer the opportunity to complement and enrich each other. This evaluation offers one building block for future decision-making. The SDC's own experiences provide additional input.

1.7. Reading guide

21. Chapter 2 reflects on the functioning of the RésEAU and the backstopping of the RésEAU and how both—through a few tweaks—can be made more purposeful, effective, and efficient. Whereas the RésEAU is an SDC knowledge network, the AGUASAN is not. Chapter 3 therefore solely evaluates the backstopping of the AGUASAN, leaving AGUASAN for what it is: a well-functioning community of practice.

22. Chapter 4 subsequently discusses some individual topics in which the SDC expressed interest. This concerns the SDC cross-cutting themes gender and youth, the cooperation with other (SDC) networks, the use of interns and junior advisors in the backstopping, and the communication means and platforms. Chapter 5 offers a formal account of the backstopping of the RésEAU and AGUASAN against the six OECD/DAC evaluation criteria. As the evaluation's recommendations are integrated into the respective chapters, chapter 6 offers a summary conclusion.

23. This main report includes as appendices an overview of key RésEAU activities and products, the driving forces behind the AGUASAN Community of Practice, the AGUASAN workshop series topics, and the SDC standard assessment grid on the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria. A second, separate, volume includes two parts. Part 1 contains the survey reports. Part 2 details the evaluation approaches and sources.

³ This concerns, within the SDC, the focal points for the SDC's thematic knowledge networks, staff from the Section Water, the RésEAU Core Group members; and, within the backstopping consortium, nearly the full backstopping team.

⁴ The official response rate was 86 persons (18%), but the far majority of questions was only answered by 62 persons (13%). Of the 62 respondents, 18 were from the SDC (29%) and 44 non-SDC (71%).

2 The backstopping of the RésEAU

24. The backstopping mandate *‘is geared to support the RésEAU in fulfilling [its] key functions’* (SDC 2024). As a result, the two are intertwined and interdependent. The backstopping can only work effectively if the RésEAU functions, and the RésEAU can only function effectively with the support of the backstoppers. The two must therefore be evaluated conjointly — there is no other way.

25. This chapter starts with the expected functions of the RésEAU and support from the backstoppers. It subsequently shares the evaluation’s main findings on ‘what worked’ and ‘what didn’t’ and the evaluation’s inference on ‘why’ this was the case. The chapter then makes a brief comparison with the practices of other networks and how conducive the SDC’s (changing) institutional environment is for networks. The chapter concludes with a suggestion, an idea, a recommendation on how — through a bit more focus and selectivity — both the RésEAU and the backstopping can be made more relevant, effective, and efficient. A recommendation rooted in the evaluation’s findings.

2.1. Expected functions of the RésEAU and the backstopping

26. Much is expected from the RésEAU and, concomitantly, from the backstopping. As for the RésEAU, different lists exist about its core objectives and functions. If we collate these lists and take out the duplicates, then we arrive at the following *‘objectives and functions’* of the RésEAU (SDC n.d, 2024).

- **Access to information:** to provide access to the latest news, trends, and knowledge in the water sector for all its registered members.
- **Capacity development:** to promote learning, pass on professional thematic and methodological knowledge, and to strengthen the competencies of the SDC staff and its implementing partners.
- **Institutional learning:** to capitalize on program and project experiences, extract lessons learnt, and formulate good practices.
- **Advise:** to provide, through conducive channels, strategic and operational advice to the SDC’s organizational units and implementing partners on water-related topics and support policy development.
- **Improve operations:** the SDC and partner staff apply up-to-date knowledge in their water-related work and the SDC’s water profile is strengthened, coherent, and trendsetting.
- **Mainstreaming:** to increase the understanding and integration of water-related aspects into the SDC strategies and operations, and improving interventions where water aspects are involved.
- **Networking:** SDC and partner staff are connected and exchange among each other.
- **Outreach:** to establish new relevant (strategic) partnerships.
- **Knowledge management:** to foster knowledge management and organizational learning within the SDC.
- **Innovation:** to promote the creation and use of innovative instruments and approaches.
- **Communication support:** to provide on-demand advisory services and support for effective communication of the SDC practices towards interested stakeholders and a wider audience.

27. As such, the RésEAU *‘is – in line with the core mandate of all SDC thematic networks – a key instrument for knowledge management, capacity strengthening, strategic reflection, thematic expertise and advice, promotion of innovation, and the exploration of new trends in the water domain’* (SDC 2024).

28. In line with the above objectives and functions of the RésEAU, the backstopping mandate has been given **three outcome objectives**:

1. the quality of the SDC’s thematic work is secured and nurtured,

2. innovative ways of capitalization, knowledge sharing, training, and anticipative thinking (e.g. foresight analysis) are introduced and successfully implemented thus contributing to enhanced organizational learning, and
 3. the Sub-RésEAUs are supported on a demand-driven basis thus creating ownership, promoting self-initiative, and increasing the impact of SDC's water related interventions in the field / Global South (SDC 2024).
29. These outcomes were to be achieved through **three, interdependent, service packages** on and for:
1. knowledge generation, capitalization, and conceptualization,
 2. information sharing, mainstreaming and policy influencing, and
 3. thematic learning, capacity strengthening, training, and networking (SDC 2024).
30. The service packages contained **21 actions or action areas**. These principally cover all '*objectives and functions*' of the RésEAU as listed above. However, to give an impression of the demands placed on the backstopping, Figure 2 '*summarizes*' these action areas through a word cloud.



Source: the backstopping mandate's service packages. With Jason Davies Word Cloud Generator.

- had no pre-defined outputs⁵,
- included an upfront allocation of 25% of the budget (CHF 863,427) to source expertise over and beyond the in-house capacity of the backstopping consortium, and
- allocated CHF 25,000 per year from its budget to each of the Sub-RésEAUs to empower and vitalize the regional networks.

2.2. Strengths and weaknesses of the RésEAU and the backstopping of the RésEAU

⁵ The backstopping mandate was, consciously, formulated rather open-ended to 'try out new approaches and innovate, and continue what works, and disregard what does not work'.

RésEAU, the Sub-RésEAUs, and the backstopping met these (high) expectations? The short answer is to some extent, but not to the level that most people involved aspire to. In other words, there is room for improvement. The longer answer starts with the evaluation's findings on the strengths and weaknesses of the RésEAU, the Sub-RésEAUs, and the backstopping, and progresses from there all the way to this chapter's recommendations.

2.2.1 The RésEAU's and the backstopping's strengths (for most part)⁶

33. The evaluation identified the following strengths of the RésEAU and the backstopping.

- **Peer exchange.** SDC and non-SDC members alike appreciate and welcome the opportunity to exchange with peers on the water-related challenges that they face. There is a (latent) demand for exchange amongst the whole breadth of RésEAU members: SDC and non-SDC, including local development partners and international (Swiss) subject matter experts. The RésEAU and the Sub- RésEAU's, in principle, offer this opportunity through the meetings, events, webinars, and learning journeys that they organize.
- **Effective knowledge sharing.** The backstopping mandate organized, so far, two learning journeys and about half a dozen webinars.⁷ The learning journeys offered the participants a deep dive in, and produced practical, conceptual, overviews of, a particular topic (political economy analysis in the water sector and the nexus water, energy, food, and the environment respectively⁸). These overviews, captured in a RésEAU brief and an AGUASAN Factsheet, have given SDC's national program officers reference documents to work from. The, mostly stand-alone, webinars offered concise introductions to water-related topics or concepts. (The Trend Observatory Water also produced podcasts. This is, in principle, an easy means to transfer knowledge as people can listen in when it suits them. So far, however, these have received limited listenership—several dozen listeners per podcast at best.⁹)
- **Valuable documentation.**⁷ SDC field staff, especially the national program officers, and implementing partners appreciated and welcomed the RésEAU Updates¹⁰, RésEAU Briefs¹¹, and Trends News/Sheets¹². It offered them access to the latest news, thinking, case studies, good practices, and industry/SDC standards. They offered a source of inspiration and can help in the design, management, and monitoring of their programs and projects. Having said that, these products covered a broad range of topics and the RésEAU membership is diverse. This meant

⁶ 'For most part' because few things are purely black or white. As the Dutch soccer legend, Johan Cruyff, used to quip 'every disadvantage has its advantages'. Thus, we tried to keep our eye on the ball, which in this evaluation meant looking at 'the big picture' and not get lost in the nitty gritty detail.

⁷ See the nomenclature in the beginning of the evaluation report for a brief introduction to these products. See Appendix A for an overview of the produced learning journeys, webinars, podcasts, briefs and trend news and sheets.

⁸ The first learning journey was an SDC internal exercise as only SDC national program officers participated in the journey. The second learning journey was formally part of the preparatory work for the AGUASAN Workshop in Amman, Jordan. The Sub-RésEAU core team, however, was part of the ideation, execution, and follow-up of the learning journey.

⁹ For most survey respondents, the webinars (61%) and learning journeys (54%) are aligned with their interests and add value to their work.

¹⁰ The RésEAU Updates were highly appreciated by all interviewees. They are 'read like a newspaper', i.e., selectively, to 'keep abreast of the latest news and upcoming events'. This was confirmed in the survey with over 80% reading or scanning the Updates.

¹¹ 73% of the survey respondents have read at least one of the five RésEAU Briefs produced by the backstoppers. 65% observed that 'it gave them access to information on good practices and challenges that they could apply in their work'.

¹² The Trend News and Sheets were disseminated amongst RésEAU members by e-mai. In addition, the Trend Observatory on Water had 623 unique visitors between June 2023 and April 2024. 77% hailed from either Switzerland or Germany. Based on webpage views, over 433 looked at the Trend Sheets and over 96 looked up the podcasts.

that, of course, not all products were of interest to all members.¹³ Members self-select, and the challenge for the RésEAU is to produce a broad range of products and topics to serve most, if not all, members.

- **Information channel.** As one key informant astutely noted: *‘there is no way around a network to disseminate information’*. If the SDC wants to share normative documents, good practices, and the latest thinking on what works, what doesn’t and why on any water-related topic, it needs a network to connect to all its water experts and development/implementing partners. With its large membership of 480 people, the RésEAU serves this purpose.
- **Funding.** The SDC reserved CHF 3,453,707 for five years or close to CHF 700,000 per year to run, operate, or activate the network. This is needed and invaluable. A network requires *‘active moderation’*, *‘activities’*, and *‘external (thought) input’*. Moreover, it allows the Sub-RésEAUs to complement existing SDC program and project resources, e.g., for a *‘rapid assessment of knowledge gaps on the nexus water, sanitation, and climate change’* as conducted by the MENA region Sub-RésEAU.

34. Based on these strengths, most survey respondents considered the RésEAU to be ‘somewhat’ or ‘highly effective’ across a cross-section of its functions—see below Table 1 .

Table 1 The effectiveness of the RésEAU according to the survey respondents

	Highly effective	Somewhat effective	Somewhat ineffective	Highly ineffective
Strengthening your work, projects, programmes, or research	▪ 18%	▪ 62%	▪ 17%	▪ 3%
Improving access to information and knowledge on best practices, learnings, trends, news, etc.	▪ 35%	▪ 48%	▪ 15%	▪ 2%
Disseminating information about your work in the water sector	▪ 20%	▪ 47%	▪ 29%	▪ 5%
Facilitating peer exchange and learning	▪ 17%	▪ 53%	▪ 36%	▪ 5%
Facilitating organizational learning	▪ 15%	▪ 47%	▪ 33%	▪ 5%
Facilitating networking and opportunities for exchange and collaboration	▪ 29%	▪ 38%	▪ 32%	▪ 2%

2.2.2 The RésEAU’s and the backstopping’s weaknesses (for most part)

35. Despite these strengths, the evaluation also observed the following.

- **Limited activity.** Neither the RésEAU, nor the Sub-RésEAUs are *‘active’*—they do not offer spaces for regular and purposeful exchange between SDC members and between SDC and non-SDC members. The bi-annual RésEAU meetings have been scrapped—on purpose—to organize member activity through the Sub-RésEAUs. In the last two years, the Central Asia and MENA-region Sub-RésEAUs held single (re-)launch events which included SDC and non-SDC members.¹⁴ The Latin-America Sub-RésEAU has not met in recent years. The envisaged South-East Asia Sub-RésEAU has not been established yet. The Western Balkans are neither truly part of the Sub-RésEAU Central Asia, nor initiated their own Sub-RésEAU. And the backstoppers are experiencing difficulties in launching the Africa Sub-RésEAU. In short, only few Sub-RésEAUs are active and hold (physical or virtual) member meetings.¹⁵ As a consequence, (i) the members

¹³ These products do not, and were never meant to, culminate into a comprehensive repository of operational guidance notes. As one key informant noted: *‘staff cannot rapidly find information that is useful for their daily work and in the context they are working’*.

¹⁴ According to two key informants, the Central Asia Sub-RésEAU met bi-annually between 2011-20 (before the covid-19 pandemic).

¹⁵ The MENA-region Sub-RésEAU does have an active (SDC-internal) Core Team with regular exchanges between its members but is struggling to maintain interest and momentum as it is looking for new topics and funding for the learning journey and

'do not know each other', preventing them from easily connecting, and (ii) the RésEAU is *'not creating an audience'* for its own knowledge products (e.g., podcasts).

- **Limited engagement.** The SDC Focal Point and backstoppers estimated that roughly 10% of the RésEAU members were active participants, with most other members passive followers of the SDC news.¹⁶ This estimate is given credence by the low response rate to this evaluation's request to participate in an interview and/or participate in the online survey (42% and 13%, respectively). A 2019 survey by the backstoppers had a (nominal) response rate of 18,5%.
- **No clarity of purpose.** The backstopping of the Sub-RésEAUs was to be *'demand-driven'*. This was a pilot, meant to promote initiative and make the Sub-RésEAUs responsible for their own development. The core teams, however, appeared to be unclear about the function the Sub-RésEAUs could and should play within the region, whether and how to mobilize and engage SDC staff and implementing partners alike, and the activities and topics the Sub-RésEAUs should take up. Combined with a lack of member meetings, the SDC core teams struggled to give the Sub-RésEAUs meaning and define (purposeful) demands for backstopping support. More on this in the next section.
- **Centralized decision-making.** The backstopping mandate was framed flexible and each Sub-RésEAU had CHF 25,000 per year at its disposal. The Sub-RésEAUs did not use these funds to organize regular meetings (which is linked to the previous point). Moreover, the RésEAU was considered by many to be *'of the SDC Section Water'* and, specifically, the SDC Focal Point. Most decisions required the fiat of the SDC Focal Point. The regional core teams were therefore very Focal Point/Core Group oriented, which amplified the central decision-making process.
- **High demand and management orientation.** The backstoppers were geared towards the Focal Point, Core Group, and regional core teams. On the one hand, this was understandable. The backstoppers are service providers (agents), accustomed to serving their formal client (principal). The RésEAU's centralized decision-making structure amplified this natural tendency. Moreover, much emphasis was placed on the mandate's third outcome objective, that the *'Sub-RésEAUs were [to be] supported on a demand-driven basis'* (SDC 2024). In addition, the backstoppers were asked not to demand too much of the regional core team leaders, as these had their plates full already.

On the other hand, the backstoppers were also to *'conduct surveys for strategic steering'*, offer *'a high degree of alertness and anticipation'*, and *'make available conducive channels to support the SDC operations and strategic planning'* (SDC 2024). Moreover, as stated in the opening paragraph of this chapter, the success of the RésEAU and the backstopping mandate are intertwined. All of this also called for proactiveness on the part of the backstoppers and finding ways to relieve the regional core team leaders and serve the healthy functioning of the Sub-RésEAUs.

- **Limited travel budget.** The backstopping mandate did not foresee much travel for the backstoppers. On the one hand, understandable. The SDC wants to limit its carbon footprint and many meetings can, effectively, be done virtually. On the other hand, many key informants stressed the importance of (i) personal, peer-to-peer, exchange, and (ii) linking the Sub-RésEAUs

pilot study on wastewater treatment and reuse. The Latin America Core Team meets virtually two to three times a year but has not progressed beyond a short list of potential topics for a webinar / learning journey series.

¹⁶ Less than 30% of survey respondents had attended any of the RésEAU' events. Only 17% had shared updates about their work and organizations for inclusion in the RésEAU Updates.

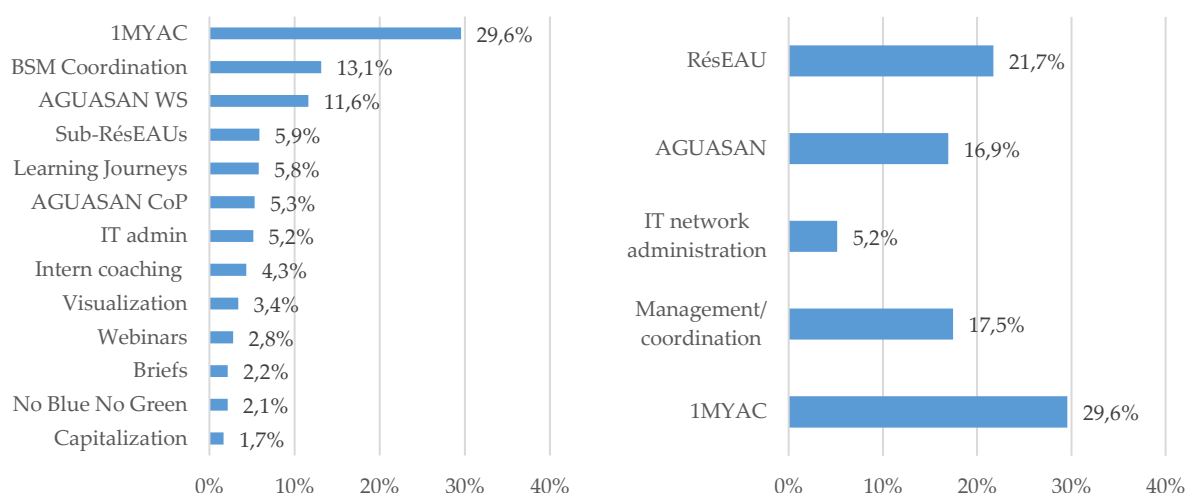
to prevailing operational challenges in the region. The first requires in-person Sub-RésEAU meetings. The second, regular on-the-ground engagement with a broad range of stakeholders. Both imply in-region travel and require budget.

- **Weak integration of the SDC's regional and thematic advisors.** The SDC has regional and thematic advisors on water and the environment. These advisors lead regional programs and backstop the SDC national program officers in the country offices. Some are part of the RésEAU Core Group. Some did not see the value-added of the RésEAU for their work and/or struggled to give it appropriate time—either to shape it or consume its products. To paraphrase one key informant: *'I can hardly follow-up the outputs of my workstreams, giving me no time to read the RésEAU products, let alone time to think about how to incorporate it into my work'*.
- **Limited capitalization of experiences.** One clear task of the backstopping mandate and a clear role it can play is on the 'capitalization' of experiences. It basically allows the backstopping mandate to conduct 'thematic evaluations' of a portfolio of SDC water projects to draw out and disseminate the lessons learned. We came across very few examples of such work and to the extent that it was done it was mostly pulling together the lessons from close-out reports, supported with a handful of interviews, and presenting these lessons in a nice format.¹⁷ The backstopping mandate did not undertake evaluative work, which could serve its objectives.

2.3. The backstopping's allocation of time-inputs

36. At this point, it might be useful to look at what the backstoppers spent their time on. Figure 3 and Figure 4 offer an overview. They show that a good portion of time—in this case mostly from junior staff—was allocated to supporting the One Million Youth Action Challenge (1MYAC)—a challenge on the nexus water, environment, and climate change, which emerged from the Focal Point's youth mandate and as fledgling initiative required support to get on its feet.¹⁸ A good portion was also dedicated to management and coordination, such that less than 50% of the backstopper's time went to substantive, operationally relevant, support to either the RésEAU or the AGUASAN.

Figure 3 The backstopper's time allocation across tasks ... Figure 4 ... and across main expenditure categories.



¹⁷ On example was on the project experiences with water stewardship in Latin-America.

¹⁸ This was also made possible and considered opportune because the covid-19 pandemic hampered the envisaged (Sub-) RésEAU activities, leaving the BSM with time on their hands. The backstopping of the 1MYAC has, in the meantime, been transferred to the International Secretariat of Water.

2.4. One more key finding: demand, supply, and everything in between

37. The above account of the strengths and weaknesses of the (backstopping of the) RésEAU confirms the desire of SDC field staff and implementing partners to exchange with peers, expand their knowledge, and access the latest thinking on effective approaches to address water challenges—all with the intent to do their work better and improve the development effectiveness of their programs and projects. One of the RésEAU's core objectives—to ensure that *'the SDC and partner staff apply up-to-date knowledge in their water-related work, are connected, and exchange among each other'* (SDC n.d), is and remains pertinent.

38. At the same time, both the RésEAU and the Sub-RésEAUs fail to truly capture the imagination and interest of its target group and are not vibrant networks or communities of practice. In a way, by trying to be everything, the RésEAU runs the risk of serving no one. But this is not the complete story. There is one more aspect to it. The backstopping mandate had three objectives: secure and nurture SDC's thematic work, introduce innovation, and support the Sub-RésEAUs on a *'demand-driven basis'*. The latter became the organizing principle of the backstopping mandate and the required steppingstone for fulfilling the first two objectives. This proved difficult, only worked in part, and ultimately put a significant break on the evolution and effectiveness of the RésEAU and Sub-RésEAUs.¹⁹

39. Except for the work by the Trend Observatory on Water, most (if not all) actions from the backstopping mandate were to be rooted in an explicit demand for support from the Sub-RésEAUs. To some extent this worked. Working on Blue Peace Asia, which combines diplomacy with technical assistance, SDC's national program officers in Central Asia found it challenging to support the diplomacy part of the work and expressed a desire to learn more about political economy analysis. The backstopping mandate could respond with a learning journey on political economy analysis in the water sector. The learning journey itself was an SDC internal exercise, not a true Sub-RésEAU activity. Its substance, however, was captured in a RésEAU brief and pushed into the network.

40. Three other examples are the learning journeys on water, energy, food, and the environment (implemented as part of the preparations of the AGUASAN Workshop in Amman, Jordan), on transboundary groundwater management, and on wastewater treatment and reuse and transboundary groundwater governance (both in the planning). These topics emerged from the discussions during the 'relaunch' events of the Sub-RésEAUs for the Middle East and Central Asia respectively. These examples show that there are pertinent topics on which Sub-RésEAU members want to expand their knowledge. Our interviews identified others as well, such as transboundary water management, water stewardship, and integrated water resource management. Still, at the end of the day, the Sub-RésEAUs hardly met and there were few processes where the SDC and non-SDC members alike could link into, exchange amongst peers, and garner knowledge in a purposeful and structured manner.

41. The idea was that suggestions for learning journeys, a webinar series, the RésEAU briefs would be gathered and weighted by the Sub-RésEAU core teams and then put forward for consideration to the RésEAU Core Group and ultimate approval by the SDC Focal Point. The Sub-RésEAU core teams, however, struggled to assert themselves. There were several, interrelated, reasons for this:

¹⁹ 92% of the survey respondents had not made any requests for information, training, or advisory services to the RésEAU core group members.

1. the core teams consist mainly (if not only) of the SDC staff, i.e., exclude the non-SDC members,
2. whilst the SDC is very decentralized with each Swiss Cooperation Office responsible for its own bilateral country program, the decision-making in the RésEAU is centralized, hampering ownership and initiative,
3. the SDC staff have their hands full with implementing their programs and projects, having little time to lead, organize, and co-develop a common agenda for a regional community of practice,
4. the SDC staff do not have a clear and common picture on the role of the Sub-RésEAUs, how to engage and mobilize the non-SDC members, and where knowledge sharing stopped and implementation support begins (see
5. the SDC staff do mostly not have the experience of a vibrant community of practice to emulate the Sub-RésEAU on,
6. the Sub-RésEAUs hardly meet, thereby not offering a 'conductive channel' and a process, both for channeling demand and allowing for an active, vibrant, Sub-RésEAU to emerge, and
7. the backstoppers did not see it as their task to proactively serve and animate the Sub-RésEAUs, instead interacting (mostly) with the regional core team leaders of the Sub-RésEAUs and responding to their expressed demands for support. The backstoppers did not initiate surveys to solicit the interest and needs of Sub-RésEAU members.²⁰

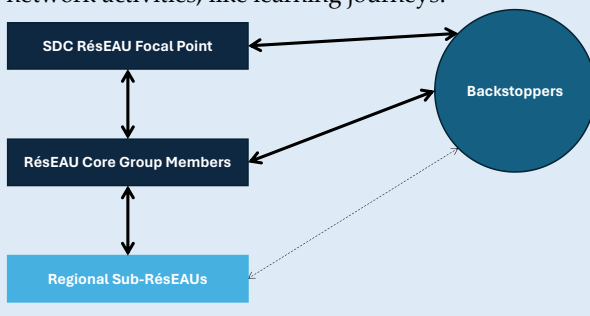
42. The result was a classical Catch-22²¹:

- The SDC and non-SDC members looked at the RésEAU for opportunities and information.
- The SDC Focal Point looked at the Core Group and core teams for initiative.
- The core teams looked at the backstoppers for demand identification, thematic inputs and process guidance.
- The backstoppers looked at the Core Group and core teams to voice their needs and demands.

43. In other words, the SDC Focal Point, the RésEAU Core Group, the Sub-RésEAU core teams and the backstoppers—inadvertently—held each other trapped in a circular logic and the demand for support remained too diffuse to act as an effective organizing principle. As such, the challenge of the RésEAU and Sub-RésEAUs is not unlike that of 'the commons'. Because it is there, one can dip into it as one chooses, without taking responsibility for its health and continuity. This means that like the commons, it needs public action.²² It needs someone to connect the dots, fill the open spaces, shape and implement the ideas, and realize the opportunities—someone to bring demand and supply together (and ease the working life and solve the challenges faced by the SDC field staff). This requirement is confirmed by the experiences of other networks, to which we now briefly turn.

Textbox 1 Organizational practice

The backstoppers largely interacted with the Focal Point and Core Group, with limited interaction with (Sub)RésEAU members. The latter only through network activities, like learning journeys.



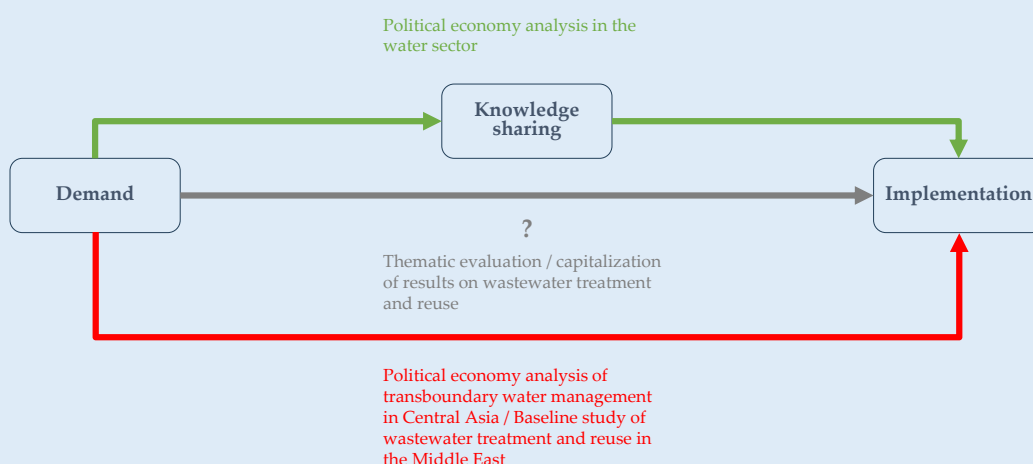
²⁰ As a consequence, 48% of survey respondents had either not interacted with the backstoppers or were unaware of them.

²¹ Catch-22, the title of a Joseph Heller novel from 1961, refers to 'a dilemma or difficult circumstance from which there is no escape because of mutually conflicting or dependent conditions' (Oxford Languages, Google Dictionary).

²² This is also confirmed by Brian Head (2008) who found that public agencies as network conveners in funding or steering roles, can significantly influence the dynamics of a network, and that public agencies may also be better placed to play these network manager roles.

Textbox 2 The scope of the (backstopping of the) Sub-RésEAUs

A recurrent conundrum for the core teams of the Sub-RésEAUs was where knowledge sharing stops and implementation support begins. This was exacerbated by the fact that the Focal Point, Core Group, and backstoppers wanted to be ‘demand-driven’ and thus principally respond positively to any voiced demand. The SDC Blue Peace Central Asia offers a useful working model. Political or sector analytics which are needed for and serve Blue Peace’s hydro diplomacy or technical assistance are conducted within the Blue Peace program. The more general introduction into political economy analysis in the water sector could be picked up by the Sub-RésEAU through a learning journey. Similarly, the envisaged baseline assessment of wastewater treatment and reuse in the MENA region constitutes program preparatory work and should be covered by the operational budgets of the Swiss Cooperation Offices. But, of course, there will always remain grey areas. For example, a thematic cross-program evaluation of wastewater treatment and reuse—a capitalization of experiences—does this constitute knowledge generation and sharing or program preparatory work? In these grey areas, the Focal Point will probably just need to be pragmatic, weighing relevance and expediency.



2.5. The lessons from other knowledge networks

44. We spoke with several leads of other (SDC) networks. There are no silver bullets or magic wands. These networks resort to the same tools and instruments. Common opinion, however, holds that:

- active communities of practice are the gold standard, as they allow for in-person, peer-to-peer exchange and give ‘*thought leadership*’,
- knowledge generation should be ‘*purposeful*’, i.e., serve a specific goal for a specific audience,
- ‘*engagement creates ownership*’, i.e., the action of working together binds people in and together,
- updates, events, trainings, publications, webinars are ‘*more general means to keep members attached and involved*’,
- linking network events to other, larger, recurring, conferences reduce costs (monetary and timewise) and can create momentum and enthusiasm (‘*as people know they will meet again*’), and
- networks and communities of practices need resources as they need to be ‘*designed, moderated, with frequent meetings, and maintained*’—activities should as much as possible be ‘*part of a process*’ both to ensure regular engagement and for effective knowledge sharing and capacity building.

2.6. SDC’s institutional environment

45. Some key informants to the evaluation questioned SDC’s commitment to knowledge management and networks. It goes well beyond the scope of this evaluation to pass an evaluative judgement on this claim. However, the feedback that we received, was that the problem was time and the need to

prioritize, not a lack of institutional support.²³ The terms of reference of SDC staff, including national program officers, include the task and responsibility to network. Moreover, SDC staff experienced limited difficulties attending networking and learning events (including the five-day AGUASAN workshop) if these events were deemed relevant and valuable. In other words, the problem probably lies more within the Sub-RésEAUs and their perceived lack of relevance and value than in SDC's wider institutional environment.²⁴

46. As to SDC's institutional context, the following developments or institutional realities appear more pertinent and were taken into consideration when formulating this chapter's recommendations.

- For the period 2025-28, the SDC thematic cooperation department is likely to tender (i) a single backstopping mandate for the logistical and IT support to all thematic knowledge networks of the SDC, and (ii) the thematic and methodological backstopping mandate for the three knowledge networks under the new Cluster Green in three lots under a single tender. (See also Textbox 3 for a brief comparison between the three networks: the RésEAU, the Agriculture and Food Systems network, and the Climate, Disaster Risk Reduction, and Environment network).
- In the upcoming Swiss International Cooperation Strategy 2025-28, the SDC will likely put more emphasis on the nexus water, energy, food, and the environment, giving the three concerned knowledge networks both the imperative and the opportunity to work together more closely. This will especially be an opportunity in Africa, where the RésEAU has been unable to set-up a Sub-RésEAU because nominally the SDC is not active the water sector in Africa (even though water scarcity influences many of its operations).
- The Sub-RésEAUs rely on the ownership and engagement of the SDC regional and thematic advisors and (regionally engaged) national program officers. The SDC thematic cooperation department, however, has no jurisdiction over these staff. Their engagement in the knowledge networks needs to be won by offering value-added to their work.

Textbox 3 The similarities and differences between the three Cluster Green knowledge networks

Below table highlights the similarities and differences between the RésEAU, the Agriculture and Food Systems (AFS) network, and the Climate, Disaster Risk Reduction, and Environment (CDE) network.

	RésEAU	AFS	CDE
Focal Point (all part-time)	– 1 (0,8 FTE)	– 2 (1 FTE)	– 2 (1,2 FTE)
Backstopping	– Thematic, methodological, admin/IT/logistics		
Central events	– None	– Bi-monthly 'food-for-thought' 45-minute virtual check-ins	– None
Regional sub-networks	– ✓	– X	– X
E-mail update	– ✓	– ✓	– ✓
Closed user group communication (dgroups)	– ✓	– ✓	– ✓
Learning journeys/webinars	– ✓	– ✓	– ✓
Briefs/trend sheets	– ✓	– X	– X
Podcasts	– ✓	– X	– X
Budget	– CHF 3,453,707	– CHF 1'017'553	– ...
Period	– 1.10.20 – 30.9.25	– 30.4.20 – 31.3.25	– Until end 2023

²³ This was seconded by the survey results. 59% of respondents observed that the SDC environment, processes, and priorities 'encourage' the SDC staff to engage in knowledge sharing through RésEAU, whilst 22% thought they were not well-oriented towards knowledge sharing (and 19% didn't know). Note. This question only received 32 responses, of which 13 from SDC staff.

²⁴ The fact that SDC allocated CHF 3,5 million to the backstopping of the RésEAU and AGUASAN also kind off refutes the claim that SDC is not committed to knowledge management and networks.

2.7. Conclusion and recommendations

47. The RésEAU and its products are appreciated. To the extent used, they offer useful channels to share and build knowledge. At the same time, there are few physical meetings for peer-to-peer exchange and few structured and purposeful knowledge sharing and learning processes. At the end of the day, the RésEAU and the backstopping mandate appear simply too broad for their own good. Both could benefit from greater focus and selectivity. The evaluation offered clear orientation for this. For most key informants, the (Sub-)RésEAU(s) should:

- keep members up-to-date and help them do their work better, i.e., be operationally relevant,
- tackle concrete (operational) development challenges,
- be additional to the SDC's regular programming processes and budgets,
- include face-to-face meetings for peer-to-peer exchange,
- be light, recognizing that SDC and non-SDC members have their plates full of work, and
- be actively supported/moderated.

48. These 'conditions', together with the abovementioned good practices from other networks, lead us to the following **two primary recommendations**:

1. **to make the Sub-RésEAUs 'Cluster Green communities of practice', modelled after the AGUASAN Community of Practice²⁵, and**
2. **for the RésEAU to continue giving its members access to operationally relevant SDC water sector information through means which generate the most response from members, and which explicitly help them do their work better.**

Directed to: SDC Section Water—RésEAU cum AGUASAN Focal Point and management team.

Reason: To align better to the needs of the SDC and non-SDC RésEAU members, to make it feasible within the available resources, and to improve the development effectiveness of the network.

Possible actions: This chapter's appendix details and operationalizes these two recommendations, including the role of the backstopping mandate. It subsequently also lists what, consequently, the RésEAU should stop striving for—all items have been taken from the original listing in Section 2.1 or from the RésEAU's/backstopping's practice.

Timeline: Short-term. Both recommendations can be implemented immediately, i.e., under the current backstopping mandate.

Note: Section 2.1 observed that different lists exist on the core objectives and functions of the RésEAU. One of these lists is included in the SDC's external flyer about the RésEAU. This is also the shortest and clearest list and one that these two recommendations serve spot-on. For future reference, the SDC may want to consider referring to this list only. It states that the RésEAU is to ensure that:

²⁵ One could argue that this will be difficult as the AGUASAN Community of Practice was set up by the practitioners themselves who had a direct interest and joy in doing so. The underlying argument is that for communities of practice to be successful, they need to emerge organically. This might be true. Having said that, key informants to this evaluation did express a desire to exchange with peers but failed the time and resources to organize this. This comes back to the argument in the main text that the challenge is not unlike that of the commons. It thus may be equally true that with a little push vibrant communities of practice can emerge. Note in this regard that the AGUASAN Community of Practice could also count on financial SDC support from the very beginning (AGUASAN 2024). And if the 'push' does not receive resonance, then the SDC can decide to limit the RésEAU's work to the second proposed leg, namely, to share with its members operationally relevant SDC water sector information.

- the SDC and partner staff apply up-to-date knowledge in their water-related work, are connected, and exchange among each other, and
- SDC's water profile is strengthened, coherent, and trendsetting (SDC n.d).

49. In addition, to these two core recommendations, we recommend:

3. **for the Section Water to allocate more time to moderating and running the RésEAU, or empower the backstopping mandate to this end, to understand the (latent) demands from members/Sub-RésEAUs and respond to these demands with the appropriate supply of knowledge sharing initiatives and processes.**

Directed to: SDC Section Water—management team.

Reason: Knowledge networks require active moderation to match demand and supply and not succumb to the problem of the commons.

Possible actions: Copy the practice of the AFS and CDE networks to allocate two staff part-time to the moderation of the RésEAU or empower the backstopping mandate to this end.

Timeline: Medium-term in case of extra Section Water staff time, short-term in case the backstopping mandate is empowered.

4. **for the backstopping mandate to include local backstoppers, i.e., water network experts in the regions, which can help prepare, organize, moderate, and follow-up the proposed quarterly Sub-RésEAU meetings of SDC and non-SDC members—see recommendation 1 and this chapter's appendix.**

Directed to: SDC Focal Point and the backstoppers.

Reason: To minimize travel and the carbon footprint and allow for preparatory and follow-up consultations in the dominant regional language and within the region's time-zone.

Possible actions: The backstoppers mobilize or recruit a local water sector expert to prepare, organize, moderate, and follow-up the proposed quarterly Sub-RésEAU meetings.

Timeline: Short- to medium term, as soon as the decision is made to implement recommendation one.

2.8. Appendix: details on the two core recommendations on the RésEAU

The below table offers a first attempt to operationalize the two core recommendations of this chapter. These entail a suggestion, a first attempt, and can certainly be refined and improved upon.

Table 2 A two-pronged approach for the RésEAU

	Sub-RésEAU / Cluster Green Community of Practice	RésEAU Updates plus
Concept	Sub-RésEAU members meet four times per year, of which twice in person, to: – discuss an operationally relevant topic in-depth, – exchange on their work (challenges) and – network.	The RésEAU selectively pushes operational relevant information into the network through: – RésEAU Updates, including trend news, – Normative SDC documents / guidelines, and ultra-selectively and purposefully: – RésEAU Briefs, including trend sheets, – Podcasts, webinars, learning journeys.

	Sub-RésEAU / Cluster Green Community of Practice	RésEAU Updates plus
Purpose	To keep SDC and non-SDC members up-to-date and help them do their work better	
Target audience	SDC field staff and their implementing / development partners	
Outcome	The SDC and partners apply up-to-date knowledge in their water-related work, thereby nurturing and securing the quality of the SDC's thematic work.	
Assumptions	– Members require exchange and exposure to peers to further their thinking and overcome operational challenges. – Members are work-focused and program- and goal-oriented. – Engagement creates ownership and new ideas. – Exchange needs, at least in part, to be in person (face-to-face). – If the topics are relevant, members have the incentive, interest, capacity, and tenacity to work with the knowledge gained.	– Members want to be inspired and learn about new things. – Members want to know what SDC wants and expects. – Members want to access concrete, operationally relevant, suggestions, good practices, and guidance. – Members are work-focused and program- and goal-oriented. – If the topics are relevant, members have the incentive, interest, capacity, and tenacity to work with the knowledge gained.
Requirements	Community of practice meetings should be: – regular, i.e., 4 times per year at standard intervals, – at least twice in-person, – purposeful, relevant, and concrete, – designed, prepared, and moderated, – with inputs / active participation of members, – include occasionally external speakers for inspiration (outside-in information flow), – enable interpersonal connection / networking, – followed-up and maintained, and – possible comprise smaller sub-regions to enable semi-annual travel to the meetings.	The information flow should be: – operationally relevant, concrete, and applicable, – concise and accessible, – inspirational / trigger thinking, – alternately backward-looking (learning from experience) and forward looking (identify and address future challenges), – transmit SDC standards, guidelines, and good practices. Note. – Less is more. Better invest in a few high-quality products and processes than in many. – Maintain some regularity, so members know what they can expect and rely on.
Good practice examples	– AGUASAN Community of Practice (see also <i>'the driving forces behind AGUASAN'</i> in Appendix B.	– Political Economy Analysis in the Water Sector – SDC's Guidance on Governance
Vis-à-vis current practices	– To organize Sub-RésEAU member meetings on a regular, quarterly, basis.	Ideas – variations, of course, possible. – Maintain bi-monthly RésEAU Updates, including Trend News. – Merge the RésEAU brief and trend sheet concepts into an attractive ~3-pager, plus a ten-page background paper for further reading. – Publish the RésEAU brief/trend sheet twice per year, e.g., the brief in January

	Sub-RésEAU / Cluster Green Community of Practice	RésEAU Updates plus
		and the Trend sheet in September, thus alternating backward-looking (learning from experience) and forward looking (identify and address future challenges). – Base the briefs on thematic evaluation and research. – Initiate podcasts, webinars, and learning journeys only when there is a concrete demand and target group. Choose the medium that best serves/suits the target group. Favor a coherent series over one-offs. Decouple podcasts, webinars, and learning journeys from briefs (and vice-versa).
Agenda	– Exchange on a specific topic – P2P questions and answers – Networking opportunity – SDC news and guidelines	n/a
Optional extras (Highly selective)	On an explicit need, demand, interest-basis only, with member thought leadership, and SDC operations relevant, to organize: – regional learning journeys.	
Future proof?	Yes, Sub-RésEAUs can become regional Cluster Green networks.	Yes, the three Cluster Green networks will continue to exist in parallel. Joint products/journeys whenever opportune and purposeful.
Role Focal Point	To monitor and ensure that the quarterly meetings take place, are prepared, and run well.	To regularly engage with the Sub-RésEAU's core teams and participate in quarterly meetings to identify knowledge needs and match demands with available knowledge (supply). Note. If needed, this can be delegated to the backstopping mandate.
Role Core Group	None.	Possible evolve into a peer review group to review and accord the RésEAU products to be pushed into the network.
	Consider discontinuing the Core group in present form: one management layer too many – currently regarded as inefficient and ineffective by the participants (a drain rather than a boost).	
(Role) core teams	– Consist of active SDC and non-SDC members. – Act like a pro-active steering committee. – Actively support the backstoppers in ensuring that the quarterly meetings have merit and worth. – Facilitate and moderate the quarterly meetings.	– Based on the quarterly meetings of the Sub-RésEAUs act as a counterpart of the Focal Point in knowledge needs assessment and idea generation and conceptualization of briefs, trends sheets, podcasts, webinars, and learning journeys.

	Sub-RésEAU / Cluster Green Community of Practice	RésEAU Updates plus
Backstopping mandate	– To organize, prepare, facilitate, and follow-up the quarterly meeting of each Sub-RésEAU.²⁶ – To compare and adopt good practices between the different Sub-RésEAUs.	– To actively support the conceptualization of ideas for knowledge sharing/products. – To operationalize the identified topics, conduct the requisite research, prepare and disseminate the Updates and Briefs, implement the podcasts, webinars, learning journeys. – To monitor outcomes (see section 5.3).
Backstopping requirements	– Focus on facilitation and moderation. – Budget for logistics, travel, preparation, participation, and follow-up. – Local (regional) presence to limit travel and enable consultations (see recommendation 3). – Actively enroll others to step forward and take a lead role in organizing individual meetings.	– Focus on execution: substance, research, production, implementation, quality, dissemination, and monitoring. – Requisite budget
Costs	– The quarterly Sub-RésEAU meetings will require some additional expenditure. Overall, however, clarity of purpose and scope (i.e., less coordination), a reduction in products, focus and selectivity with the learning journeys, and the use of local water sector experts will allow a reduction of the backstopping mandate budget.	

Table 3 What to leave behind (for now)

Leave the following 'objectives and functions'	Not try the following service package tasks
– Capacity development/serving as a training platform ²⁷	– Introduce novel concepts for innovative reflection on new workstreams and working modalities
– Provide strategic and operational advice to SDC's operational units and implementing partners	– Help in providing support for thematic expert inputs, field visits, peer learning and mentoring
– Mainstream water-related aspects into SDC strategies and operations	– Set-up peer-to-peer mechanisms (outside the proposed Community of Practice)
– Support policy development	– Implement stand-alone activities, e.g., 1MYAC
– Help establish new (strategic) partnerships	– Force inter-network cooperation
– To promote the creation and use of innovative instruments and approaches	– Maintain and offer a virtual platform for online exchange
– Provide on-demand advisory services for effective communication	– State of the art IT solutions are utilized to provide top-notch information
– Being explicitly / purely demand-oriented (although one needs to remain sensitive to needs)	– Identify and follow other key players

²⁶ In the first years, this will require a more active engagement of the backstoppers than with AGUASAN Quarterly Meetings. If successful, the level of efforts should become similar.

²⁷ Other institutions, such as UNDP Cap-Net Water Knowledge for All, appear better positioned for this.

3 The backstopping of AGUASAN

50. The story is different—and shorter—for the backstopping of the AGUASAN. For two reasons. First, the backstopping of AGUASAN is limited to four well-defined and well-circumscribed tasks, namely:

1. supporting the lead organizer of the AGUASAN quarterly meetings with the organization, facilitation, and follow-up of these meetings,
2. running the AGUASAN website, both as an information and collaboration portal,
3. coordinating the 2nd opinions from AGUASAN members of the funding applications to the Solidarit’eau Suisse, and
4. the preparation, organization, facilitation, and follow-up of the AGUASAN workshop series.

51. The second reason for why the story is different from the backstopping of the RésEAU is that Skat Consulting—the principal backstopper of AGUASAN—co-owns AGUASAN.²⁸ Skat Consulting is a co-founder of the AGUASAN Community of Practice and, as a water expert in its own right, a fixed participant in its quarterly meetings. Moreover, it has backstopped AGUASAN for at least 20 years (except for the period 2016-20 when SEECON, another Swiss consultancy firm, provided the backstopping). In other words, Skat Consulting has an interest in the success and continuation of the AGUASAN Community of Practice. We now briefly discuss the four AGUASAN backstopping tasks.

3.1. The AGUASAN Community of Practice quarterly meetings

52. The AGUASAN Community of Practice quarterly meetings are always hosted by one of the members. The host, together with one or two other community members, organizes, prepares, and moderates the meeting. Skat Consulting offers *‘light-touch, behind the scenes support’*, for example with communications to members. On the one hand, this support is so *‘light-touch’* that many members are hardly aware of the role Skat Consulting plays behind the scenes (or the mandate that they have for it). On the other hand, as one key informant noted, *‘it works, and it works well’*. The fact that the quarterly meetings have been organized, without exception, since 1984 and can count on 20-25 participants per meeting is sufficient evidence for this.²⁹

3.2. The AGUASAN website

53. On SDC’s request and with SDC funding, AGUASAN prepared its own website. It offers public access to the purpose and history of AGUASAN, its members’ list, and resources from the quarterly meetings and annual workshops. It also contains a member only portal for inter-community communication. Skat Consulting worked with the Swiss web-hosting company Hazu to create the [website](#) and portal. It is up and running and works.

3.3. The second opinions

54. Solidarit’eau Suisse is an association of Swiss municipalities and water boards through which these municipalities and water boards can finance water supply and sanitation projects in the Global South. Since 2007, 223 Swiss municipalities have supported over 75 projects of NGOs in the Global South (Solidarit’eau Suisse 2024). The association was set up with the support of the SDC and AGUASAN. AGUASAN members have since provided technical backstopping support *‘examining each project/partnership and ensuring that the chances of success of the project/partnership are guaranteed’*

²⁸ Co-ownership is meant figurately, as the AGUASAN Community of Practice has no formal (legal) structure.

²⁹ Over 90% of the survey respondents rated the backstopping support as (somewhat) effective.

(Solidarit'Eau Suisse 2024). In total about 20 AGUASAN members have prepared such second opinions. Skat Consulting facilitates the review process and provides quality assurance. This support works.

3.4. The AGUASAN workshop series

55. Since 1984, AGUASAN has organized an annual five-day workshop on a water-related topic (see Appendix C for a full overview of topics). These workshops are conceptualized, designed, and prepared by an annually reconstituted steering committee, consisting of one or two SDC representatives and one or two AGUASAN members. Skat Consulting provides organizational, logistical, and workshop moderation support, and – when opportune – thematic inputs in the design or conduct of the workshops. SDC funds the organization; participants cover their own costs.

56. Workshop participants call it a *'diamond'*, *'a uniquely powerful and extraordinary way to learn'*, and *'a luxury to spend five full days speaking about water problems day and night'*. Skat Consulting calls it *'a luxury'* to be able to truly prepare the workshops – a fundament to its recurrent success. The workshops attract circa 50 participants – around 40 are SDC field and development/implementing partner representatives and roughly ten SDC headquarters, AGUASAN members, Skat Consulting staff, and external experts. According to the key informants, the workshops cover the relevant topics and people, offer opportunity for peer-to-peer exchange and learning, and – as the above quotes testify – are extremely appreciated at a time when such time-investments are the exception rather than the rule.³⁰ Participants also said it led to better SDC programming. This evaluation was not an evaluation of the AGUASAN workshops. Based on the above feedback, it appears nonetheless an institution worth nurturing.

57. In 2022, after 35 annual workshops, upon the SDC's instigation, the workshop was for the first time organized outside of Switzerland – in Amman, Jordan. The reason was to bring the workshop and its participants closer to the development realities in the field, enable more local participation, and allow for more relevant field excursions. The next workshop (#38) will be organized in Cox Bazaar, Bangladesh. The evaluation was asked to opinion about this choice to organize the workshop in the Global South. Again, we did not subject this question to a full-fledged evaluation. AGUASAN members and workshop participants, generally, were supportive of this choice and reasoning. The evaluation did not come across any arguments speaking against it. It appears a practice worth continuing.

3.5. Conclusion and recommendation

58. Whilst the story is different, the conclusion rings familiar. The backstopping of AGUASAN is relevant, effective, and efficient because the AGUASAN Community of Practice and workshop series are considered valuable by their participants, the backstopping is well-defined and -circumscribed, and Skat Consulting takes owner- and leadership, ensuring continuity. The evaluation has no suggestions for improvement. We **recommend**:

5. **For the SDC to continue supporting the backstopping of AGUASAN in its current form and as long as it considers AGUASAN valuable and to serve its interests³¹.**

Directed to: SDC Section Water and Focal Point. **Reason:** The backstopping of AGUASAN is functioning and light. **Timeline:** short- to medium-term.

³⁰ About two thirds of the AGUASAN member survey respondents who had attended at least one annual workshop deemed the backstopping support (somewhat) effective.

³¹ These interests, currently, are (i) maintaining and expanding the Swiss knowledge base which forms, in part, the intellectual basis of SDC's water programs and projects, and (ii) offering, through the AGUASAN workshops, a conduit for the SDC staff (in particular national program officers) and partners to expand their water knowledge and competencies.

4 Individual topics of interest

59. The SDC also expressed interest in specific dimensions and instruments of the (backstopping mandate of the) RésEAU and AGUASAN. These dimensions and instruments are covered hereunder.

4.1. Gender

60. Under the previous backstopping mandate, Helvetas supported the RésEAU and the SDC gender network to develop a gender strategy for the RésEAU. The objective was to:

- enhance the gender representation and voice in the RésEAU, and
- support members to better address gender issues in their water programs.

61. The strategy foresaw the:

- mapping of the gender knowledge, capacity, practices, tools, resources, and existing partnerships among RésEAU members,
- the introduction of the gender strategy among RésEAU members through a series of webinars and online events,
- link, exchange, and identify gender collaboration opportunities between SDC gender focal points and SDC RésEAU contact persons at head office and regional/country level,
- prioritization and integration of gender objectives into the next phase of SDC's organizational and programmatic planning,
- outreach to potential and relevant new partners and collaborators who are gender sensitive, capable, influential,
- collection of available guides on gender sensitive communications and sharing amongst RésEAU members, and a gender sensitive communication guidance adapted to the water sector is made available, including through webinars,
- identification and documentation of innovative good practices and gender transformative actions in the water sector,
- compile and enhance availability of RésEAU resources on gender in water,
- organization of joint Gendernet and RésEAU member learning events and/or journeys,
- production of relevant content on gender in water for the annual Gender Equality Status Report,
- review gender disaggregated indicators in SDC standard performance indicators, and
- integrate gender qualitative and quantitative indicators into RésEAU's next phase plan and logframe (SDC 2020).

62. Another impressive to do list. Under the current backstopping mandate, there have been no time or budgetary resource allocations for these to do with the RésEAU prioritizing (this time around) youth through the 1 Million Youth Action Challenge. Consequently, most interviewees and 84% of the survey respondents were unaware of the RésEAU gender strategy.

63. In line with the evaluation of, and recommendations on, the backstopping of the RésEAU (Chapter 2), we **recommend** the RésEAU to:

6. **focus its gender work on (i) ensuring that the SDC's latest normative documents on the promotion of gender equality in SDC operations are shared with the RésEAU members, (ii) state-of-the-art external guidelines on gender equality in the water sector are shared with RésEAU members, (iii) capitalizing the SDC experiences and good practices in promoting gender equality in the water sector and sharing these with the RésEAU members, (iv) the mapping and sharing of the gender knowledge, capacity, practices, tools, resources, and existing partnerships among RésEAU members, (v) promoting the use of gender relevant tools**

such as time-use analysis or gender analysis matrix in ongoing activities and products, and (vi) include a gender lens in all RésEAU products and activities, thereby prioritizing genders sensitive and transformative research and actions.

Directed to: SDC Focal Point and backstoppers.

Reason: Gender equality is a cross-cutting theme in the Swiss International Cooperation Strategy 2020-24 (and is likely to remain so in the 2025-28 iteration). This means that gender equality considerations should be integrated in all SDC's work, including its knowledge networks.

Possible actions: as stated in the recommendation.

Timeline: short term—the backstopping mandate can immediately start implementing this recommendation.

4.2. Youth

64. Youth is a cross-cutting theme in Switzerland's International Cooperation Strategy 2020-24 and has been so in previous iterations. As such, the SDC has worked on a myriad of activities and initiatives, e.g., One Million Youth Action Challenge (1MYAC), Youth of Central Asia network, the Youth Parliament of Water, a Youth Camp at the IUCN Conference in Marseille, a youth dialogue at the Conference of Parties of the UNFCCC, etc. The backstopping mandate was mobilized in the first year of the 1MYAC to help put the challenge on its feet and underway. The 1MYAC has since been transferred to the International Secretariat of Water.

65. The backstopping's support to youth activities have been provided on an opportunity and need basis. The question is to what extent it can and should be an integral part of the RésEAU. The core objective of the RésEAU is to strengthen the quality of SDC's water work. To the extent that youth involvement can support this, the RésEAU (and the backstoppers) can and should highlight this. This can, for example, be done through the capitalization of program and project experiences. The support of dedicated youth activities, however, appears to lie outside the scope of the RésEAU and the backstopping mandate of the RésEAU. As such, it made sense for the SDC to transfer the 1MYAC to the International Secretariat of Water which now acts as full-time implementing agency of the 1MYAC.

4.3. Inter-network cooperation

66. There is no shortage of (SDC) networks, and—at face value—it makes sense for (SDC) networks to cooperate. Development is complex and seldom remains confined to a single sector. Occasionally, networks do cooperate. Two examples are:

- the collaborative assessment of environmentally induced migration by the SDC networks on water, migration, and climate, disaster risk reduction, and the environment, and
- the previously mentioned learning journey on the nexus water, energy, food, and the environment in preparation of the AGUASAN workshop in Amman, Jordan, by the RésEAU and the AGUASAN.

67. By and large, however, cooperation between networks remains sporadic and thin. This was confirmed by the online survey. 60%-70% responded that they were either not aware of any cooperation or deemed the cooperation infrequent and/or insufficient. This is not surprising. Each network has its own purpose, membership, organization, and culture. Skat Consulting has calculated that the SDC thematic networks have less than 10% overlap in members (Skat 2023). And whilst the RésEAU is an

SDC focused network, AGUASAN is more a *'meeting of the minds'* of Swiss-based water experts and , for example, the Swiss Water Partnership represents the whole Swiss water sector³².

68. At the end of the day, inter-network cooperation is driven by opportunity and individuals. Opportunity to make operationally relevant linkages because there is a need to look beyond one's own sector. By individuals, because they have an interest and incentive to reach out. Such cooperation can then take the form of joint events, studies, or learning journeys. Given this evaluation's finding and recommendation that the RésEAU should focus on helping its members do their work better, i.e., on operational relevance and effectiveness, keeping inter-network cooperation opportunity-based and individual-led seems appropriate. Moreover, the SDC's move towards the formation of a Cluster Green will bring new opportunities; for example, the setting up of a joint regional sub-network in Africa (as already suggested in the recommendations of Chapter 2).

4.4. Young professionals

69. The SDC also inquired about the intentional use of trainees and junior advisors in the backstopping mandate. All three consortium partners—Skat Consulting, Helvetas, and Zoï Environment Network—mobilized trainees and junior advisors for the backstopping work. These trainees and junior advisors were incorporated in all work aspects, from organizing and taking the minutes of meetings, to communicating with the Focal Point and Sub-RésEAU core teams, to helping produce the RésEAU briefs, organizing the AGUASAN workshop and supporting the 1MYAC, amongst others. In the process, they received on-the-job coaching from senior backstoppers. At no point did the evaluation come across difficulties in this set-up. The trainees and junior advisors were incorporated in the work like any (consulting) company would do. The evaluation has no recommendations for improvements.

4.5. Hazu

70. Hazu is a Swiss company and cloud platform. It offers *'a collaborative brainstorming space'* and web hosting. It hosts the RésEAU, AGUASAN, and Trend Observatory Water websites. The RésEAU and the backstopping mandate also use it to store the minutes and background documents of meetings. This, however, is only done actively and consistently by the backstoppers for their internal coordination meetings, the coordination meetings with the SDC Focal Point, and the RésEAU Core Group meetings. The uploads for the Sub-RésEAU core team meetings have only been periodic.

71. Few, if any, of the key informants with knowledge of Hazu were enthusiastic about the platform. They did not consider Hazu very intuitive and user-friendly. It did not allow for (live) collaboration on a document or the uploading of video and photos, which meant that people anyway had to resort to other platforms as well. Hazu has, in that regard, after the advent of much more online collaboration during and after the covid-19 pandemic, been superseded by more commonly used platforms such as MS Teams and Google Docs. Moreover, Hazu offers limited access for web administrators. Adelphi, which runs the Trend Observatory Water, had to request Hazu to get the number of downloads of its Trend Sheets and podcasts. As the SDC will transfer to MS Teams, the evaluation **recommends**:

7. **To transfer from Hazu to MS Teams for all communications and document sharing within the RésEAU and the backstopping mandate.**

Directed to: SDC Focal Point and backstoppers.

³² The Swiss Water Partnership brings together all Swiss organizations involved in the water sector, including public, private, civil society, and academic institutions and organizations.

Reason: MS Teams will become the prime communication and document sharing platform for the SDC. Most people prefer to limit the number of platforms where they must sign into.

Timeline: medium-term—as soon as the SDC has completed the transfer.

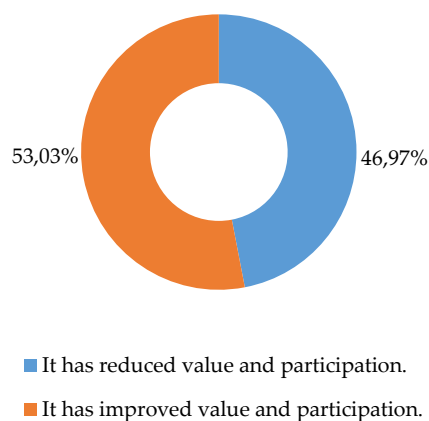
4.6. From Shareweb to Living Docs

72. Shareweb was SDC's long-standing web platform for publicly sharing information and documentation about its networks, initiatives, and programs. In the case of the RésEAU, it offered access to a description of the water network, news and events, and key SDC water sector documentation. It was functional and the SDC staff and development/implementing partners knew it. In other words, it worked. The SDC is currently transferring from Shareweb to Living Docs which will offer the same functionality. There is no need for further change. With the plan to tender the administrative/IT related backstopping support for all SDC knowledge networks to a single service provider, this will also enable the mainstreaming of the visuals and functions of the networks' respective websites, including closed user group (member) e-mail messaging.

4.7. From in person to virtual and hybrid meetings

73. A final question from the SDC concerned *'the new reality of virtual and hybrid meetings with less frequent travel'*—how has this new reality impacted member engagement? Chapter 2 observed that member engagement is not particularly high to begin with. The survey amongst RésEAU members nonetheless posed this question. And the response was, more or less, an even split (see Figure 5), which probably signals that some people embrace the online meeting opportunities, whilst others still prefer in-person contact.

Figure 5 From in person to virtual meetings



74. The survey responses observed several pros and cons. Virtual and hybrid events offer more opportunity to participate as there are fewer time and cost constraints associated to it. Virtual events, however, are not that rich when it comes to networking and peer-to-peer exchange. Many stated therefore that while virtual and hybrid events have value, they cannot and should not entirely replace in-person events. This further underscores the need to have in-person quarterly Sub-RésEAU meetings as well (as recommended in Chapter 2).

5 Assessment on the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria

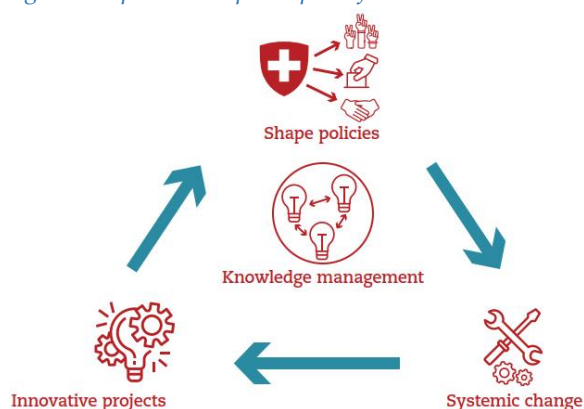
75. This chapter assesses the backstopping mandate of the RésEAU cum AGUASAN on the six OECD/DAC evaluation criteria: relevance, coherence, effectiveness, impact, efficiency, and sustainability, whereby we will argue that an assessment on sustainability does not make sense. Appendix D translates this qualitative assessment into a formal rating per criteria using SDC's standard OECD/DAC assessment grid.

5.1. Relevance

76. Relevance is *'the extent to which an intervention's objectives and design respond to beneficiaries' ... and donor needs, policies, and priorities, and continue to do so if circumstances change* (OECD/DAC 2019). Chapter 2 already highlighted that there is the desire to exchange with peers and have access to the latest news, thinking, case studies, good practices, and SDC's norms and standards. This desire is strongest amongst the SDC national program officers and local development partners. Their limited engagement in the (Sub)RésEAU(s) could be seen as placing a question mark on the extent to which this desire for peer-to-peer exchange and access to up-to-date information is also a 'priority' for them. This question may, however, be off the mark. The SDC national program officers and local development partners are development- and program-oriented. If they don't get the opportunity and information through the RésEAU, they will look elsewhere. They do not have the resources to activate the RésEAU first. Of course, the other side of this coin is that the RésEAU's offer could be more operationally relevant for the RésEAU members. Based on the feedback and the survey results, we conclude that the RésEAU (and the AGUASAN workshop series for that matter) are relevant for RésEAU members but could be even more so if it would offer more opportunities for peer-to-peer exchange and more targeted and richer knowledge sharing products and processes.

77. To what extent do the RésEAU and AGUASAN also respond to the SDC's policy framework? Switzerland's International Cooperation Strategy does not explicitly address knowledge sharing and management. It observes that Switzerland *'seeks to influence the international normative framework through participation in intergovernmental processes, global and regional initiatives, and innovative actions in selected countries'* (FDFA 2021) and complements this with a graph that acknowledges the central role of knowledge management in this endeavor—see Figure 6. The strategy also acknowledges that, in this process, Switzerland needs to work with other actors *'who share its reform ambition'*, including governments, private companies, NGOs and academia.

Figure 6 Operational principles of the SDC



Source: (FDFA 2021)

78. Two other key framework documents are the Guidelines on Water 2022-25 and the Global Programme Water Programme Framework 2021-24. The guidelines state that *'knowledge and facts are a fundamental requirement for far-sighted policy making to secure access to water and basic sanitary facilities'* (FDFA 2022). To that end, it advocates, amongst others, for recording key data and information, developing employee skills, and ensuring that *'accountability, transparency, coherence, validation, reporting and the exchange of experience and knowledge are consolidated and strengthened with and as part of cross-*

sector partnerships and cooperation’ (emphasis added). Neither the RésEAU nor AGUASAN are mentioned in the guidelines to this end.

79. This is different for the Global Programme Water Programme Framework 2021-24.³³ Knowledge management is part of the Section Water’s theory of change. It stipulates that the Section Water ‘promotes the expertise, knowledge, and skills of water actors in Switzerland and worldwide ...[and]... manages knowledge, i.e., action-oriented knowledge generation and exchange, within and beyond Switzerland’. Moreover, AGUASAN, amongst others, is seen as ‘allowing for Swiss knowledge and expertise to be produced, verified, compiled and introduced into the sectoral debate or translated into innovative solutions to global water challenges’ and the RésEAU ‘has a pivotal role to share new insights and knowledge beyond the [Section Water] team with the broader water community of practice’ (SDC 2020). Based on this document review, it is safe to conclude that knowledge sharing and management are considered relevant and important in Switzerland’s development cooperation in the water sector.

5.2. Coherence

80. Coherence concerns ‘the compatibility of the intervention with other interventions’ (OECD/DAC 2019). This criterion has already largely been addressed in Section 4.3 when we spoke about inter-network cooperation. Internal coherence is the most relevant, i.e., the extent to which the (backstopping of the) RésEAU and AGUASAN identify and exploit complementarities and synergies between each other and with other knowledge networks in the SDC. Section 4.3 argued that at present this is done on an opportunity and individual basis, and rightly so given that especially the RésEAU is still struggling to assert itself. It also noted that the formation of a new Cluster Green within SDC offers new opportunities for collaboration between the concerned networks, especially at the level and in the activation of Sub-RésEAUs. Further thought could still be given to how the AGUASAN annual workshop could be better integrated into the knowledge sharing strategies of the RésEAU. As for external coherence, it makes sense to continue doing this on a needs and opportunity basis to complement and strengthen RésEAU and AGUASAN knowledge sharing processes and activities.

5.3. Effectiveness

81. Effectiveness is ‘the extent to which the intervention achieved, or is expected to achieve, its objectives’ (OECD/DAC 2019). We recall that the backstopping mandate of the RésEAU cum AGUASAN had four objectives:

1. secure and nurture the quality of the SDC’s thematic work,
2. promote innovative ways of capitalization, knowledge management and sharing,
3. provide demand-driven support to the Sub-RésEAUs (SDC 2024), and
4. nurture the core practices, membership, and impact of the AGUASAN (Skat 2023)

82. We discuss each objective in turn. The first three pertain to the RésEAU. To what extent has the backstopping mandate and the RésEAU secured and nurtured the quality of SDC’s water work? Truth be told, neither the SDC, the backstoppers, nor this evaluation can—at present—provide a solid answer to this question. There is some anecdotal evidence that propagated concepts are being applied in the field.³⁴ But applying a concept and securing the quality of SDC’s thematic work are not necessarily the

³³ In 2022, the Global Programme Water was renamed Section Water.

³⁴ The most concrete examples are (i) the use of the RésEAU brief/learning journey on political economic analysis in the water sector to help conduct a stakeholder analysis for Blue Peace interventions in Central Asia and the Bekaa Water Management project in Lebanon, and (ii) the integration of the water-energy-food-environment nexus concept in National Strategy of Jordan 2023-40, the SDC regional cooperation programme for the Middle East, and the Enhancing Resilience of Lebanon Water and Food Systems program.

same thing.³⁵ Concepts need to be embedded, adapted, and evolve within a local reform agenda and be carried by local reform actors to make a difference on the ground. This means that such local reform processes need to be accompanied over time. Of course, such accompaniment goes beyond the mandate of either the RésEAU or the backstoppers, but it also tells us that a single concept, webinar or learning journey is not enough to nurture and secure the quality of SDC's water work. Instead, it requires:

- purposeful and targeted efforts to improve SDC operations,
- a process of recurrent knowledge sharing and exchange, and
- active monitoring of the underlying theory of change, key milestones, and outcome indicators.

83. The recommendations in Chapter 2 addressed the first two bullet points (purpose and process). Moving forward, it is needed to pick up on the last bullet point as well. The service packages of the backstopping mandate foresaw that *'impact assessment systems are put in place and utilized for strategic steering'* (SDC 2024). Given the multitude of expectations from the backstoppers and the backstoppers focus on being 'demand-driven' (see Chapter 2), this requirement fell by the wayside. To this end, we **recommend**:

7. **to develop a (theory of change) methodology and institute a system to monitor (i) the extent to which the RésEAU and the AGUASAN annual workshop helps the SDC and partners apply up-to-date knowledge in their water-related work and nurture and secure the quality of SDC's thematic work.**

Directed to: The SDC Focal Point and the backstoppers.

Reason: The backstopping mandate and the RésEAU need to—evidently—contribute to SDC's development effectiveness.

Possible actions:

- formulate an explicit theory of change for the (backstopping mandate of the) RésEAU,
- monitor and evaluate knowledge pick-up, e.g., through the Most (un)Successful Change methodology,
- conduct thematic, cross-project/portfolio, evaluations,
- institute annual, fixed-format, online surveys (akin to the Agriculture and Food Systems network practice).

Timeline: short- to medium-term

84. The second objective was to promote innovative ways of capitalization, knowledge management and sharing. As one backstopper quipped: *'What is innovation? Is a learning journey innovative?'* Posing these questions is answering them. Updates, briefs, trend sheets, webinars, learning journeys can be useful, but are hardly innovative. Through these products, the backstoppers sought to respond to the third objective of the backstopping mandate, namely *'to provide demand-driven support'* to the RésEAU. The backstoppers were demand-oriented (see Chapter 2), but almost to a fault, in the sense that it trumped most other considerations, including for example working on *'concepts and approaches that stimulate novel/innovative reflection'*, *'making available conducive channels to support SDC's operations'*, and conducting *'surveys'* to map needs and demand (SDC 2024).

³⁵ The evaluators have evaluated well-developed concepts such as Local Economic Development, Agricultural Market System Development, Fiscal Decentralization, Gender Equality and Social Inclusion, amongst others. These are well-founded, well-articulated concepts, but their (disjointed) application has often disappointed.

85. The fourth objective was to nurture the core practices, membership, and impact of AGUASAN. Chapter 3 evidenced that the backstopping mandate effectively nurtured the AGUASAN core practices. As for AGUASAN's impact, above reflection on the development effectiveness of (the backstopping mandate of the) RésEAU applies to AGUASAN as well. The above recommendation has therefore been extended to the AGUASAN workshop series.

86. Where does this leave us? Some objectives cannot be assessed, e.g., securing and nurturing SDC's water work. Some objectives were (partly) achieved, e.g., being demand-driven and securing the AGUASAN practices. Whilst other objectives were not achieved, e.g., stimulating innovation, either in knowledge management or water work. It is therefore, ultimately, a mixed bag, which suggests room for improvement.

5.4. Impact

87. Impact is *'the extent to which the intervention has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended, or unintended, higher-level effects'* (OECD/DAC 2019). The story on impact is an extension of the above one on effectiveness. *'Higher-level effects'* would emanate from nurturing and securing the SDC's water work (including through demand-driven support). We argued above that there is some anecdotal evidence of the use of propagated concepts, but little information on the outcomes that these resorted and no monitoring system to trace such outcomes and ultimately impacts. This evaluation was neither set-up, nor had the resources to fill this gap. Given the scope and type of work done under the backstopping mandate (i.e., updates, briefs, trend sheets, webinars, learning journeys), the fact that development is complex, and the fact that the backstopping mandate spent less than 50% of its resources on substantive activities for the RésEAU and AGUASAN, we are inclined to conclude that the impact of the work is likely to be very limited. Of course, this does not exclude the possibility of an individual success (perhaps in the future emanating from the inclusion of the water, energy, food, and environment nexus in the National Strategy 2023-40 of Jordan). But if it had already transpired, would such an example not have bubbled up to the surface?

5.5. Efficiency

88. Efficiency is *'the extent to which the intervention delivers, or is likely to deliver, results in an economic and timely way. Economic is the conversion of inputs (funds, expertise, etc.) into outputs, outcomes, and impacts, in the most cost-effective way possible. Timely delivery is within the intended timeframe, or a timeframe reasonably adjusted to the demands of the evolving context'* (OECD/DAC 2019). From a learning perspective, the most interesting question is whether—in hindsight—the backstopping could have been used differently to achieve better results. Figure 4 in Section 2.3 highlighted that the backstoppers spent less than 50% of their time on the RésEAU and AGUASAN. More than 50% was either 'lost' on coordination and management or spent on putting the fledgling 1MYAC on its feet.

89. The time allocation to AGUASAN was appropriate in the sense that it allowed the backstoppers to fulfill their tasks well. Still, more time and effort could have been spent on monitoring and assessing the development effectiveness of the AGUASAN annual workshop. For the (backstopping of the) RésEAU, there appears to have been ample of room to spend more time on activating the Sub-RésEAUs, channeling and further articulating the demands for support, and providing highly targeted, purposeful, knowledge sharing, either through documentation, webinars, podcasts, or learning journeys (whatever best fits the purpose and the target group). This has not transpired for the reasons laid down in Chapter 2. Moreover, the RésEAU's centralized decision-making sometimes also led to slow decision-making thereby resulting in a lower level of activity than anticipated and planned for.

5.6. Sustainability

90. Sustainability is *'the extent to which the net benefits of the intervention continue or are likely to continue'* after the intervention ends (OECD/DAC 2019). On this last evaluation criterion, the first question is what is to be understood under *'the net benefits of the intervention'*? Is this the healthy functioning of the network or the development outcomes that it contributed to? The second question is whether it matters. In the first instance, on the healthy functioning of the RésEAU and AGUASAN, few if any networks are self-sustainable. As the key informants pressed upon us, networks always need active moderation. In the second instance, on the sustainability of the development outcomes, this depends on the interest, incentives, capacity, resources, influence, and tenacity of the local reform actors. The initial and recurrent knowledge sharing plays a subordinate at best. As such, it appears to make little sense to judge the backstopping mandate on the sustainability criterion.

6 In conclusion

91. The preceding thematic chapters were self-contained. They introduced the topic at hand, presented the evaluation findings and analysis, drew a conclusion, and offered concrete recommendations. By way of conclusion, this section succinctly answers the four main evaluation questions.

1. [To what extent and how did the backstopping approaches, working modalities, products, and tools contribute to the usefulness of the backstopping mandate and the functioning of the RésEAU and AGUASAN?](#)

The Sub-RésEAUs and the updates, briefs, trend sheets, webinars, and learning journeys were appreciated by members to the extent that they took place and were oriented to their operational needs and challenges. However, member demands were too diffuse and the RésEAU institutional set-up not strong enough to effectively channel and articulate the demands and connect them to the available supply of knowledge. Because of being overly demand-oriented, neither the RésEAU, nor the backstoppers could live up to their full potential (usefulness). In contrast, the backstopping of AGUASAN was well-circumscribed, well-organized, and effective.

2. [What new, alternative, and useful approaches to the backstopping of the RésEAU and AGUASAN exist?](#)

There are no silver bullets, nor magic wands. Other networks use the same tools and instruments as the (backstopping of the) RésEAU and AGUASAN. The evaluation, however, found that (i) communities of practice are the gold standard, as they allow for peer-to-peer exchange, (ii) knowledge sharing should be purposeful, i.e., address members' operational challenges, (iii) engagement creates ownership and learning requires time, which speaks for frequent/regular meetings and events, and (iv) networks need moderation because without they fall foul to the problem of the commons: with everyone responsible, no one takes care of their health.

3. [How did the backstopping perform on the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria: relevance, coherence, effectiveness, impact, efficiency, and sustainability?](#)

The backstopping was both relevant and, as argued above, needed. RésEAU members wished for peer-to-peer exchange and access to up-to-date knowledge. The Swiss International Cooperation Strategy recognizes the pivotal role of the exchange of experience and knowledge for the effective delivery of cooperation. Whether the (backstopping of the) RésEAU was effective and impactful is an open question. There is a need to develop and institutionalize a monitoring and evaluation system. This also pertains to the AGUASAN annual workshop series. The backstopping did not introduce innovation and was too demand-oriented for its own good. The backstopping wisely collaborated with other networks on an opportunity basis. Ultimately, both the RésEAU and the backstopping of the RésEAU could benefit from focus and selectivity.

4. [What conclusions, lessons, and recommendations can be drawn from the evaluation on the current and future backstopping of the RésEAU and AGUASAN?](#)

The backstopping of AGUASAN works and can be continued as is. The lesson (and recommendation) for the (backstopping of the) RésEAU is that 'less is more'. The (backstopping of the) RésEAU can best focus on the function of knowledge sharing, by transforming the Sub-RésEAUs into (Cluster Green) communities of practice and—in a highly targeted manner, using the means that likely will receive the highest response—offer operationally relevant knowledge, guidelines, and practices to the RésEAU members. The RésEAU needs active SDC moderation.

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Appendices

A RésEAU activities and products

RésEAU briefs

1. Water: the key to sustainable food systems globally
2. Promoting social water entrepreneurship
3. Developing sustainable rural markets for resilient sanitation: lessons from Bangladesh
4. Why political economy matters in the water sector
5. Water management solution pathways under climate change in the Middle East

Trend sheets

1. Digital technologies help reducing inequalities in water security
2. On thin ice – adapting water resources management to climate change effects on the mountain cryosphere
3. Capitalising on circular economy principles to tackle challenges in the water sector and beyond
4. Thirsty food systems - How can we feed the world with limited water resources?
5. Water viewed from space – remote sensing for sustainable water management
6. Managing the invisible - Trends in sustainable groundwater development
7. Trillions needed for access to safe water: Trends in funding and financing a water-secure future
8. Rivers drowning in plastics - an underestimated risk?

Trend news

1. Virtual reality to train water engineers of the future
2. Green Hydrogen – a water-wise solution for decarbonizing the global economy?
3. Muddy waters for climate change mitigation
4. Artificial meat - a solution for a reduced water footprint of our food system?
5. IPCC puts water at the center of climate change adaptation and mitigation
6. Floating photovoltaics – How Photovoltaics can help save water

Podcasts Trend Observatory Water

1. Food system trends and water security
2. Water in climate action
3. Involving youth in shaping our future water world
4. Trends in groundwater management and use
5. Youth perspectives on the UN Water Conference 2023
6. How to fight plastic pollution in rivers?
7. A global nexus perspective on water – insights from the 5th Mediterranean Water Forum

Learning journeys

1. Political Economy Analysis (PEA) in the Water Sector, Central Asia
2. Water, energy, food, environment nexus, Middle East

In planning:

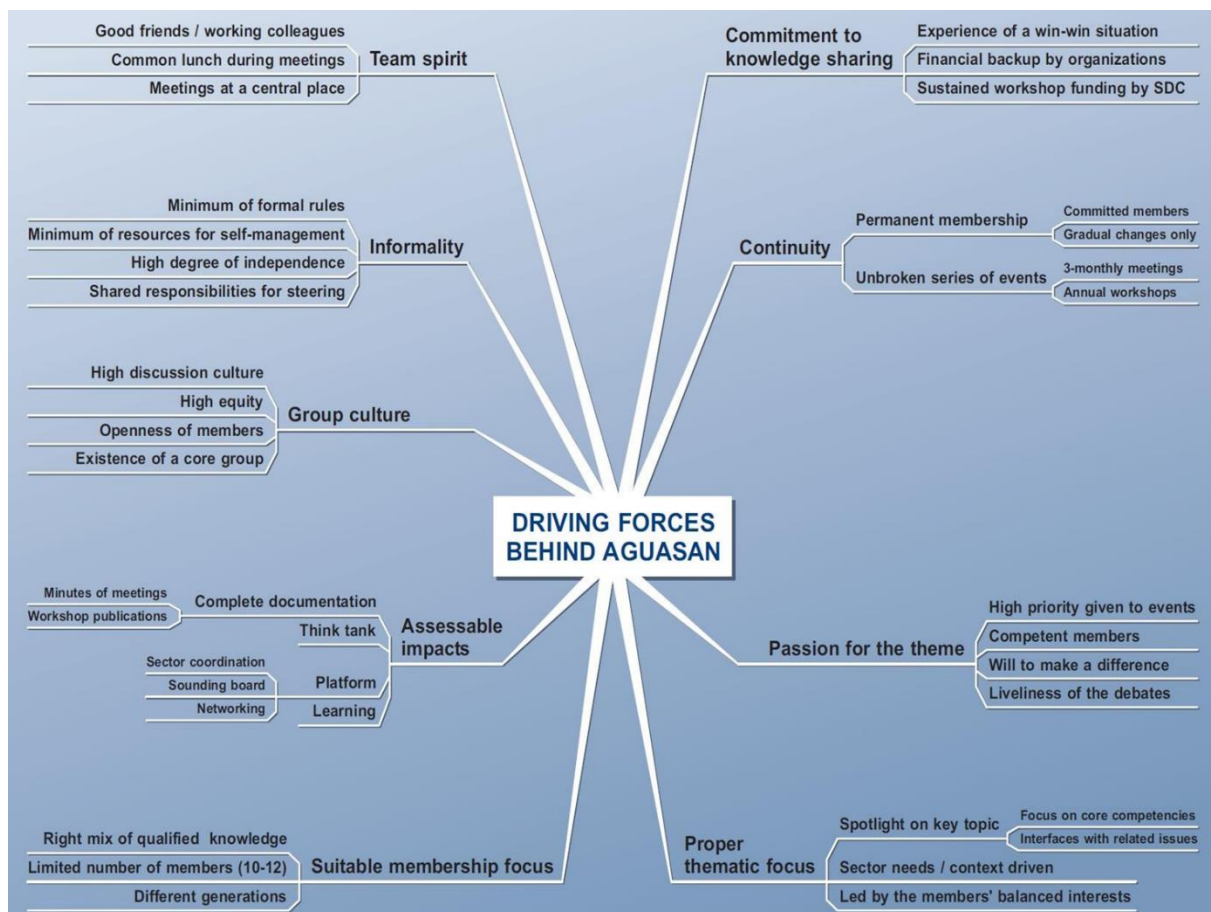
1. Transboundary groundwater management, Central Asia
2. Decentralized wastewater treatment and reuse, Middle East
3. Water and the environment, Western Balkans

Webinars

1. How can digital technologies help reducing inequalities in water security
2. On thin ice – adapting water resources management to climate change effects on the mountain cryosphere
3. Capitalizing on circular economy principles
4. Water and climate change in Iraq: discussing opportunities for transboundary collaboration with Turkey
5. Systematic Behavior Change in WASH Using the RANAS Approach
6. Why Political Economy Matters in the Water Sector
7. Water, energy, food, environment nexus, Middle East

B Driving forces behind AGUASAN

Below PowerPoint slide offers the AGUASAN's own understanding of its core strengths (AGUASAN 2024).



The same AGUASAN presentation underscores the importance of:

- professional moderators to ensure an open exchange and effective learning through a sensitive methodology.
- extensive preparation with regard to the process, content of contributions, development of case studies, excursions, etc.
- a workshop built in logical sequences, which on the last day leads back to everyone's daily routine (what do I with the learning?).

C AGUASAN Workshop Topics 1984-23

N°	Titles	Date
0	Appropriate Technologies in Water Supply and Sanitation	1984
1	Water Decade: Drinking Water and Wastewater Problems in Developing Countries.	1985
2	Participation and Animation	1986
3	Sanitation and Health	1987
4	Operation & Maintenance: Activities and goals relevant for maintaining village supply systems and latrines.	1988
5	Monitoring and Evaluation in Drinking Water and Sanitation Projects.	1989
6	Sustainability of Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Projects: What is sustainability, in what fields can it be achieved, what are its guidelines, what has to be done to make a project sustainable?	1990
7	Communication in Development Cooperation: Communication and its various aspects in development work	1991
8	Water and Sanitation Knowledge System: Development of water and sanitation knowledge systems for better preparation and implementation of WatSan projects.	1992
9	Water is Not a Free Resource (anymore) – Who Pays? About the problems of financing water & sanitation systems.	1993
10	Sustainable Water and Sanitation Projects through Fair Negotiations: Importance of well conducted discussions during preparation and implementation of water & sanitation projects to ensure their sustainability.	1994
11	Urban Sanitation: Challenge to communities, private sector actors, local governments and external support agencies.	1995
12	Transfer of Ownership in Water Supply and Sanitation Systems: Community ownership of water supply systems, which is essential to user participation, and to the sustainability of these systems.	1996
13	Less Water for More People: How to tackle and avoid conflicts around global water scarcity in the field of international development cooperation.	1997
14	Technology and Balanced Development: All involved organizations, professionals and users are bound to contribute to sustainable drinking water supply and sanitation systems.	1998
15	Private Sector – Just a (new) Hope? Can the private sector contribute effectively to cover the needs in the water sector and is the market economy suitable to work in programmes of poverty alleviation?	1999
16	The Household-Centered Approach: A new way to increase the sustainability of water & sanitation projects?	2000
17	From Sector Reform to Sector Revolution: A new (and revolutionary) approach is needed in order to ensure sustainable operation and maintenance of installed systems.	2001
18	Profits for All – Service for All: Innovative approaches and management options for equitable and sustainable drinking water and sanitation services.	2002
19	This Shit Drama – are there Ways Out? Innovative approaches for practical solutions to a dirty and deadly issue that has been taboo for too many decades.	2003
20	Sustainable Services Without External Support – Still a Challenge! What is needed so that sustainable services are guaranteed after withdrawal of external resources?	2004
21	Caring and Integrated Management for Sustained Water and Sanitation Services: Conserving existing services allows future investments in upgrading and scaling up.	2005
22	More Benefits for Households from Water and Sanitation through Intersectoral Synergies: Can the impact on poverty be improved by linking water & sanitation with health and income generation?	2006
23	Opportunities and Challenges for the Water and Sanitation Sector in a Decentralized Context	2007
24	Is Community Management Enough to Sustain the MDG Efforts? Alternative management approaches for sustainable rural water supply services.	2008
25	The WatSan Continuum: Towards a more dynamic Interaction between Emergency Relief, Rehabilitation and Development.	2009
26	From “Haute Cuisine” to “Good Fast Food”: Taking advantage of the Momentum for Large Scaling Up in the Water Supply and Sanitation sector.	2010
27	Water and Sanitation are Human Rights – So What? Implications and actions needed to put the rights into practice.	2011
28	Financial Sustainability of WASH Services: About mind-set change and an eye for the future.	2012

29	Meeting the Challenge of WASH in Health Facilities: Fostering synergies between the health sector and community care.	2013
30	Water Challenges Beyond WASH - Bridging the Water, Food and Energy Sector Divides: Towards concerted approaches that address trade-offs and build synergies across sectors and their actors.	2014
31	Disaster Risk Reduction in WASH: Towards Resilience and Adaptive Management in the Water Sector.	2015
32	Implementing the Water Goal – SDG in practice: A workshop for shapers of the Water and Sanitation 2030 Agenda.	2016
33	Circular economy – transforming waste into resources: From linear to circular water and sanitation models.	2017
34	Leveraging the data revolution: Informed decision-making for better water and sanitation management.	2018
35	Advancing the Human Right to Water and Sanitation through Inclusive Business Approaches	2019
36	Water Management in Times of Climate Change: Finding actionable solutions for fragile contexts in the Middle East	2022
37	Digitalization and Data Management in the Water Sector. "Using Data for Action and for Impact"	2023

D The SDC assessment grid for the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria

Note: this assessment grid (Version: 11.06.2020) is used for evaluations of SDC / SECO financed projects and programmes. It is based on the OECD Development Assistance Committee evaluation criteria.³⁶ In mid-term evaluations, the assessment requires analyzing the likelihood of achieving sustainability and, to a lesser degree, the likelihood of effectiveness and efficiency. All applicable sub-criteria should be scored, and a short explanation should be provided.

Please add the corresponding number (0-4) representing your rating of the sub-criteria in the column “score”:

- 0 = not assessed
- 1 = highly satisfactory
- 2 = satisfactory
- 3 = unsatisfactory
- 4 = highly unsatisfactory

Key aspects based on DAC criteria	Score (put only integers: 0, 1, 2, 3 or 4)	Justification (please provide a short explanation for your score or why a criterion was not assessed)
Relevance		
1. The extent to which the objectives of the intervention respond to the needs and priorities of the target group.	2	The RésEAU members appreciated the opportunity to exchange with peers and access the latest news, thinking, case studies, good practices, and SDC's norms and standards. This held especially for the SDC national program officers and local development partners. The RésEAU's offer, however, could be made more operationally relevant for the RésEAU members, and the objectives and functions of the (backstopping of the) RésEAU extended well beyond the priorities of the RésEAU members which were highly operationally focused. The backstopping of AGUASAN served AGUASAN members' interest in the continuity of the quarterly meetings and the annual workshops.

³⁶ For information on the 2019 revisions of the evaluation framework see: Better Criteria for Better Evaluations. Revised Evaluation Criteria. Definitions and Principles for Use, OECD/DAC Network on Development Evaluation, 2019.

2. The extent to which the objectives of the intervention respond to the needs and priorities of indirectly affected stakeholders (not included in target group, e.g. government, civil society, etc.) in the country of the intervention.	0	This dimension was not assessed. The evaluation focused on the relevance and effectiveness of the backstopping mandate for the RésEAU and AGUASAN members and the SDC.
3. The extent to which core design elements of the intervention (such as the theory of change, structure of the project components, choice of services and intervention partners) adequately reflect the needs and priorities of the target group.	2	The Sub-RésEAUs and the RésEAU updates, briefs, trend sheets, webinars, and learning journeys were appreciated by members to the extent that they took place and were oriented to their operational needs and challenges. RésEAU members' interests, however, were diverse and the (Sub-)RésEAU(s)' products and activities too limited in number and not targeted and purposeful enough to adequately reflect the needs and priorities of a good portion of the members.
Coherence		
4. Internal coherence: the extent to which the intervention is compatible with other interventions of Swiss development cooperation in the same country and thematic field (consistency, complementarity and synergies).	2	This criterion was assessed based on the internal coherence of the RésEAU with AGUASAN and other thematic networks in SDC. All these networks strive to improve the quality of SDC's thematic work. As such, they are internally coherent in terms of objective. Whilst the actual collaboration between these networks was sparse and sporadic, the evaluation identified examples of joint events and products. In addition, the SDC was in the process of forming a new Cluster Green and will likely decide to merge the thematic backstopping of the three thematic networks which will allow for enhanced collaboration and the transformation of the Sub-RésEAUs into regional cluster green networks. Moreover, with the RésEAU itself still in need of strengthening, having the inter-network collaboration opportunity-based is considered appropriate at this point in time.
5. External coherence: the extent to which the intervention is compatible with interventions of other actors in the country and thematic field (complementarity and synergies).	0	As the RésEAU is an SDC-centered and -oriented network, and AGUASAN a semi-closed Swiss-based network, the evaluation did not assess the backstopping mandate on this criterion.
Effectiveness		
6. The extent to which approaches/strategies during implementation are adequate to achieve the intended results.	3	The RésEAU, and the backstopping of the RésEAU, were too ambitious and too demand-oriented for their own good. This led to unclarity about what the RésEAU, the Sub-RésEAUs, and the

		backstopping mandate were for, as well as the lack of moderation to channel and further articulate the demand and actively connect the demand to the available supply of knowledge.
7. The extent to which the intervention achieved or is expected to achieve its intended objectives (outputs and outcomes).	3	Whilst there is some anecdotal evidence that propagated concepts were being applied in the field, there was little solid evidence of how this knowledge translated (or was likely to translate) into the <i>'nurturing and securing SDC's thematic work in water'</i> (the core objective). Whilst the backstoppers were demand-oriented (another objective), this trumped most other considerations, including working on <i>'concepts and approaches that stimulate novel/innovative reflection'</i> (the third objective). The backstopping of AGUASAN did help ensure the core practices of AGUASAN.
8. The extent to which the intervention achieved or is expected to achieve its intended results related to transversal themes.	3/0	The backstopping mandate developed a RésEAU gender strategy, but this was not prioritized for implementation. The evaluation did not evaluate RésEAU's work on youth.
Efficiency		
9. The extent to which the intervention delivers the results (outputs, outcomes) cost-effectively.	3	The backstopping of the RésEAU did not yet live up to its potential (see above under effectiveness) and spent less than 50% of its time on thematic support to the (Sub-)RésEAU(s) and AGUASAN.
10. The extent to which the intervention delivers the results (outputs, outcome) in a timely manner (within the intended timeframe or reasonably adjusted timeframe).	2 (outputs) 3 (outcomes)	In terms of concrete outputs (Updates, Briefs, Trend Sheets, and webinars), the backstopping mandate delivered as planned and with a limited number of time inputs, e.g., the briefs and trend sheets were produced within roughly 5 to 8 working days. In terms of outcomes, without changes in the orientation and objectives of the (backstopping of the) RésEAU, they are unlikely to achieve their objectives. See the evaluation's conclusions and recommendations.
11. The extent to which management, monitoring and steering mechanisms support efficient implementation.	3	Whilst a clear management structure was put in place, this structure was too demand-oriented, with too centralized decision-making, and insufficient eye for the bigger picture to effectively and strategically steer the (backstopping of the) RésEAU. The backstopping mandate foresaw that <i>'impact assessment systems are</i>

		<i>put in place and utilized for strategic steering'</i> . This has not yet taken place, contributing to the difficulty of assessing effectiveness and impact.
Impact		
12. The extent to which the intervention generated or is expected to generate 'higher-level effects' as defined in the design document of the intervention.	3	Higher-level effects were not explicitly defined in the design document. One would expect that such effects would emanate from nurturing and securing the SDC's water work. As noted above, there is little evidence on the outcomes. Given the scope and type of work done under the backstopping mandate, the fact that development is complex, and the absence of success stories, we conclude that the impact of the work is likely to be subpar.
Sustainability		
13. The extent to which partners are capable and motivated (technical capacity, ownership) to continue activities contributing to achieving the outcomes.	0	The consensus amongst the key informants to the evaluation was that knowledge networks need active moderation. As an SDC centered and oriented network, an active role of the SDC and/or backstoppers remains indispensable. Therefore, this criterion was not assessed.
14. The extent to which partners have the financial resources to continue activities contributing to achieving the outcomes.	0	Same as above
15. The extent to which contextual factors (e.g. legislation, politics, economic situation, social demands) is conducive to continuing activities leading to outcomes.	2	Although the SDC must reduce its budgetary outlays due to fiscal tightening of the Confederate government, the expectation amongst the key informants was that the SDC will continue to value and support the thematic knowledge networks, including RésEAU and AGUASAN, not least because knowledge sharing is considered a pivotal pillar of effective development cooperation (also recognized as such in SDC's policy framework).





External Evaluation of the RésEAU cum AGUASAN Backstopping Mandate 2020-25

Volume II: Appendices (Final)

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Abbreviations

AFS	Agriculture and Food Systems, SDC thematic network
BSM	Backstopping Mandate
CDE	Climate, Disaster Risk Reduction, and Environment, SDC thematic network
CHF	Swiss Franc
CoP	Community of Practice
ICS	International Cooperation Strategy
IT	Information Technology
NPOs	National Programme Officers
OECD/DAC	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development/Development Assistance Committee
SCO	Swiss Cooperation Office
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation

Part 1—Survey results

1. RésEAU member survey

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Introduction

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), through its Section Water, has commissioned an External Evaluation of the RésEAU cum AGUASAN backstopping mandate. As part of the data collection activities for the evaluation, a survey of RésEAU members was conducted. This survey inquired into the members' engagement with RésEAU and the backstopping.

Methodology

This section defines the methodology used to conduct the survey, including the sampling strategy and design of the survey instrument.

Sampling Strategy

As of March-April 2024 when this survey was conducted, the RésEAU consisted of 480 members, excluding the SDC Focal Point, the RésEAU Core Group, backstoppers, and defunct email addresses. The survey was sent to all these members (survey population).

Design of Survey Questionnaire

The survey questionnaire was independently by the evaluators. Subsequently, the questionnaire was refined to ensure accurate capture of terminology and processes, through consultations with SDC Focal Point and the backstoppers.

The survey questionnaire was designed to collect both quantitative and qualitative data, across the following themes:

- a) Engagement with RésEAU Activities and Initiatives
- b) Feedback on Backstopping
- c) Engagement with Networks other than RésEAU
- d) Recommendations for the Future
- e) Background Information on Respondents

The questionnaire consisted of 29 questions organized in sections corresponding to the above themes. These questions included both open-ended and close-ended questions, including formats such as multiple choice, scoring, and others. The questionnaire was designed to be completed in under 20 minutes and was built on the SurveyMonkey platform.

To ensure targeted responses, branching logic was applied, i.e., based on their responses, respondents may or may not have been presented with all 29 questions. For instance, if a respondent at the beginning of the 'Feedback on Backstopping' section answered a question stating that they are not aware of the backstoppers, then they would not be presented with further questions in the section and would skip ahead to the next section.

Profile of the Respondents

The survey received 85 responses, with an effective response rate of 17.7%. Of these responses, 62 were complete responses, and 23 were partially completed. Partial responses have also been analysed.

Figure 1: Gender break-up of respondents

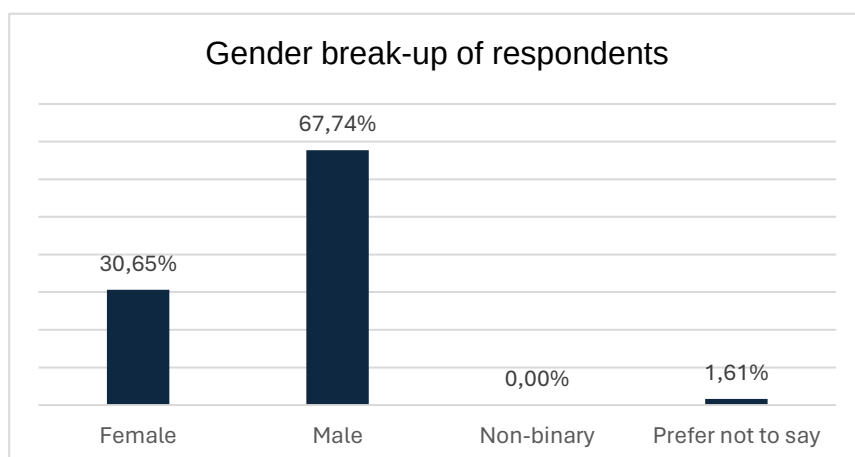
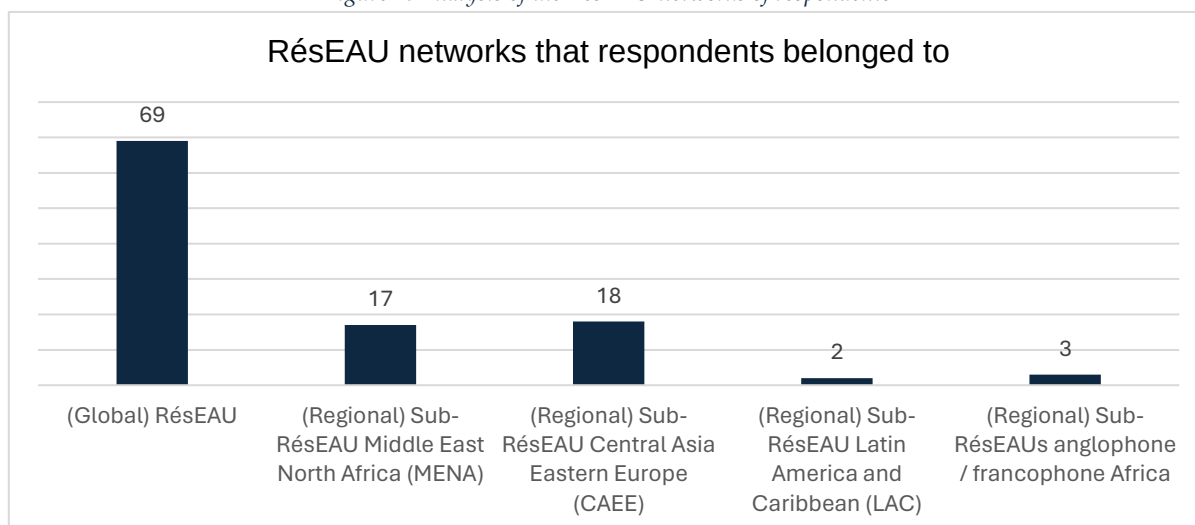


Figure 1 presents the gender break-down of the 62 respondents who completed the survey. Though male respondents form the majority, the survey achieved a moderate level of female representation, in that over 30% of the respondents were female.

Figure 2: Analysis of the ResEAU networks of respondents



The bulk of the 85 respondents were members of the Global RésEAU network, as shown in Figure 2. Over 27% of respondents were members of both the Global RésEAU as well as of one or more Sub-RésEAUs. The survey saw moderate participation of members from the Middle East North Africa (MENA) and Central Asia Eastern Europe (CAEE) Sub-RésEAUs, but limited participation from the other Sub-RésEAUs. There was not a significant variation in the responses from respondents across various Sub-RésEAUs, even among the MENA and CAEE groups where there was wider participation.

The following tables provide the details of survey respondents contrasted against the RésEAU's membership data.

Table 1: Survey Respondents and RésEAU Membership

Sub-RésEAU	Members who Responded	Total Number of Members
Global	69	270
Middle East and North Africa (MENA)	17	91
Central Asia and Eastern Europe (CAEE)	18	195
Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC)	2	55
Africa	3	95

Table 2: Survey Respondents and RésEAU Membership Gender Breakup

Gender	Respondents	RésEAU
Female	19	247
Male	42	348

Key Results and Findings

This section presents the findings, organized under the various themes that the survey questionnaire inquired into, namely:

- a) Engagement with RésEAU Activities and Initiatives
- b) Feedback on Backstopping
- c) Engagement with Networks other than RésEAU
- d) Recommendations for the Future

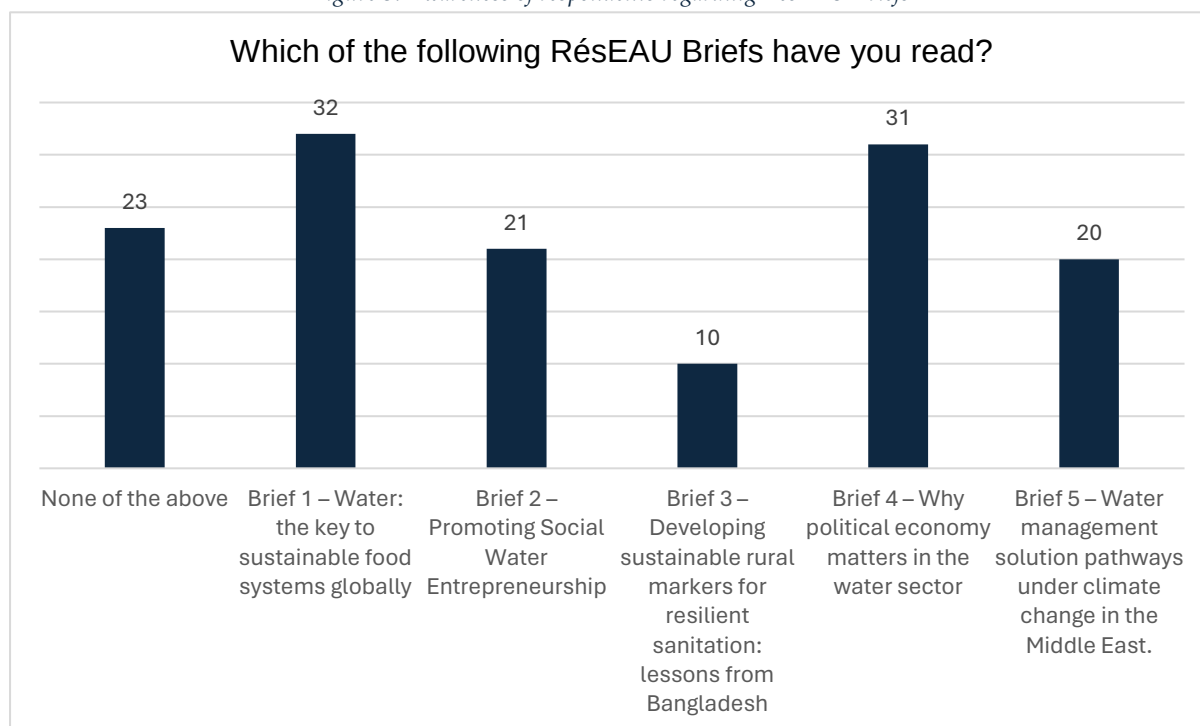
Engagement with RésEAU Activities and Initiatives

This sub-section describes the findings of the survey on respondent's engagement with RésEAU's activities and initiatives, including their engagement with outputs, events, and the value they derive from the network.

Engagement with RésEAU briefs

Since the beginning of the BSM, a total of five RésEAU briefs have been published and disseminated to members. Figure 3 illustrates the number of respondents who had read each brief. Briefs 1 and 4 had been read by the greatest number of people, while brief 3 had been read by the least.

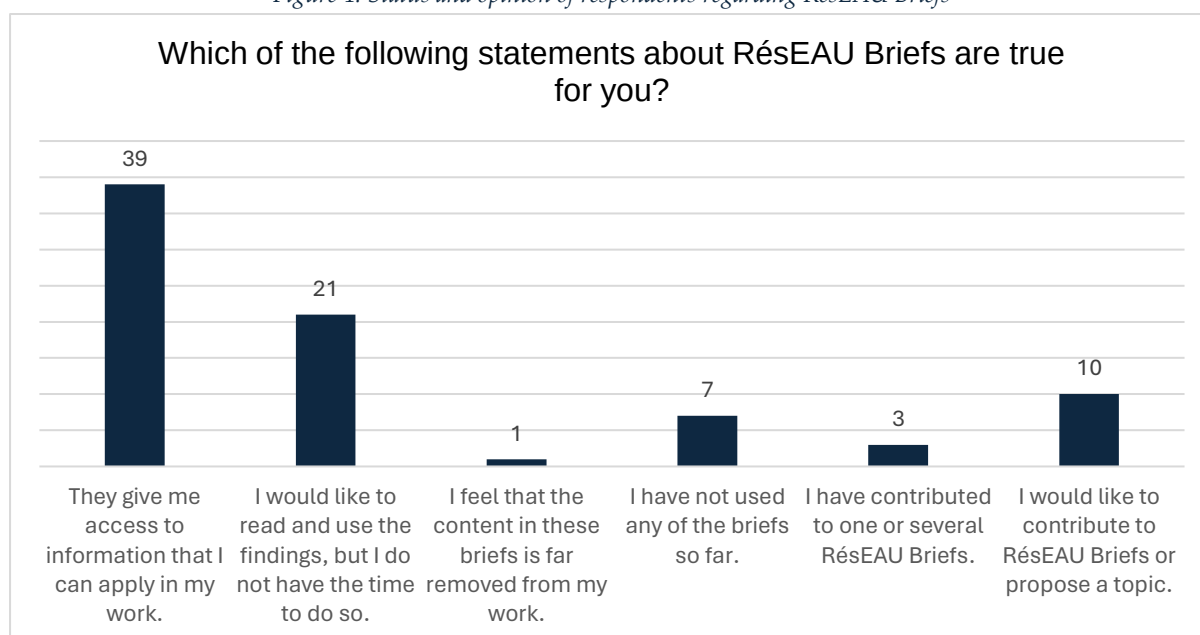
Figure 3: Awareness of respondents regarding ResEAU Briefs



About 27% of the 85 respondents – 23 people – had not read any of the briefs. The data indicates that on average, each respondent read only 1.6 briefs of the five that had been so far published.

The survey further inquired into the perceived value of the briefs among the respondents who had read one or more of them. This data is presented in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Status and opinion of respondents regarding ResEAU Briefs



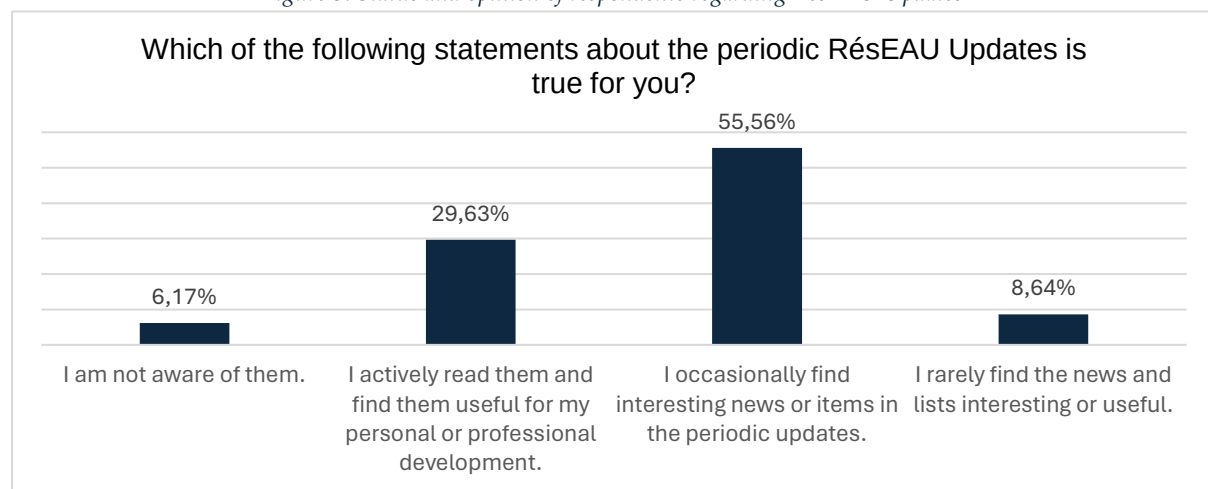
About 65% of respondents stated that the briefs gave them access to information that they could actively apply, while many also noted that they would like to read and use the

information, but time played a constraining role in their ability to do so. Only 1 respondent felt that the briefs were not relevant to their work. This demonstrates that the briefs are found relevant and useful by the respondents who read them. Moreover, 10 respondents expressed interest in contributing to the briefs.

Engagement with RésEAU Periodic Updates

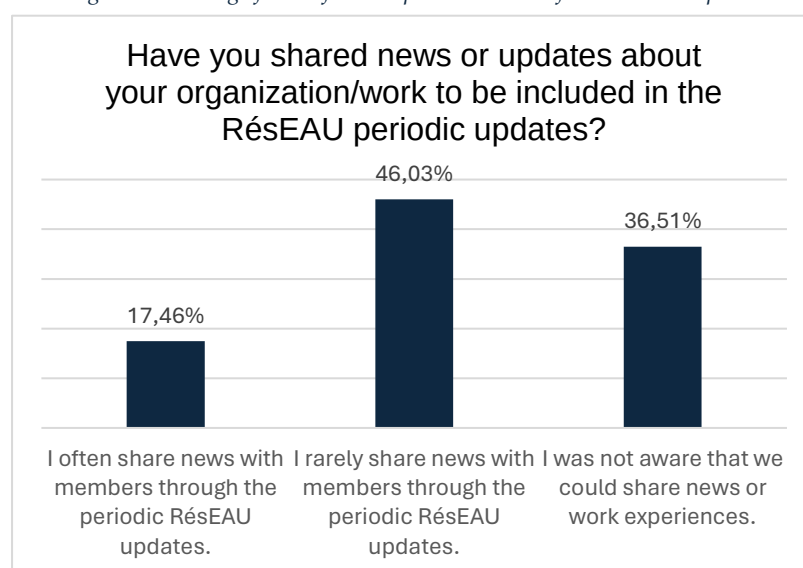
RésEAU periodic updates typically sent once two months, include news and curated lists of courses, events, opportunities, webinars, etc. The survey inquired into respondents' engagement with these periodic updates, and the data is presented in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Status and opinion of respondents regarding ResEAU Updates



Nearly 30% of respondents reported that they actively read them and find them useful, while another 55.5% reported that they occasionally find useful information in the updates. Only 8.6% of respondents stated that they rarely find it useful. 6% of respondents were entirely unaware of these updates.

Figure 6: Sharing of news from respondents' work for ResEAU Updates



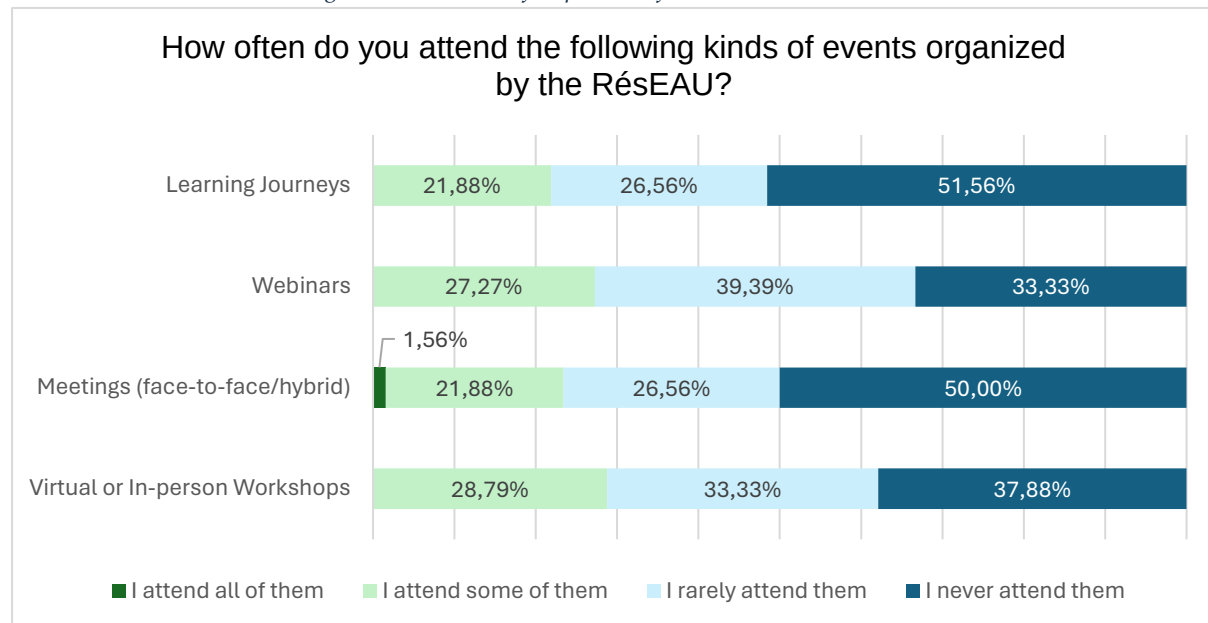
Members can contribute information about their work or organization to these updates, including by mailing through the DGroups communication tool or by informing core team members or backstoppers. As seen in Figure 6, over 36% of respondents were not aware that they could do so. Only about 17% of respondents stated that they actively use this facility and often share

news with other members through periodic updates.

Engagement with RésEAU Events

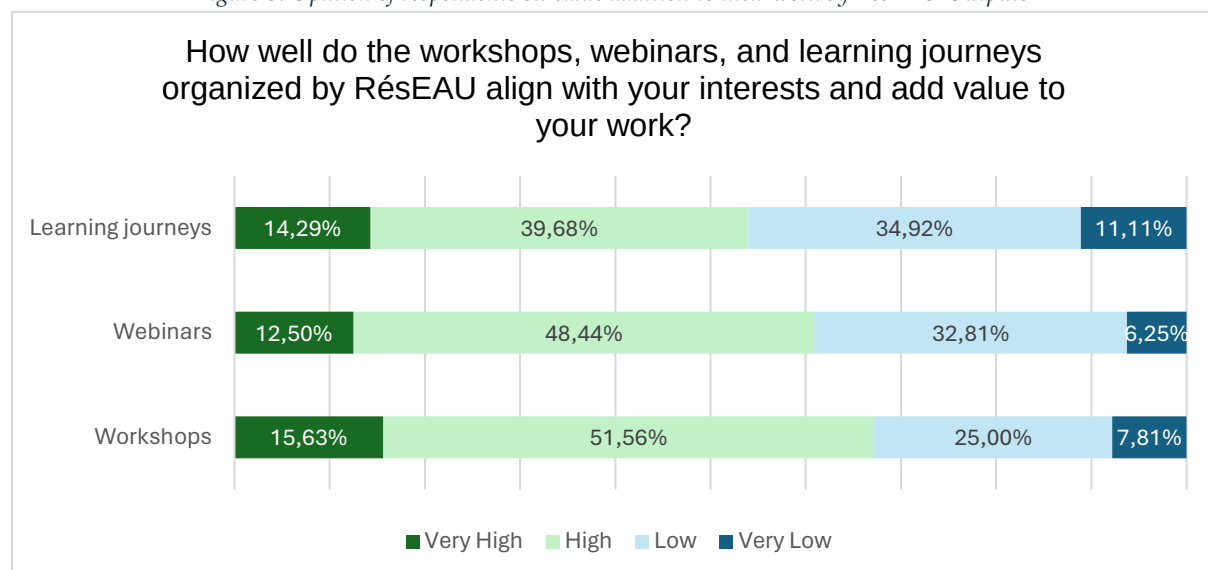
RésEAU organizes different events for its members, which see varying degrees of participation. These include virtual and in-person meetings and workshops, webinars, and learning journeys. The survey inquired into respondents' participation in these events, as shown in Figure 7.

Figure 7: Attendance of respondents for various ResEAU events



A significant proportion of respondents stated that they never or rarely attended them. Of these, the data indicates that workshops and webinars see the highest numbers of positive responses.

Figure 8: Opinion of respondents on value addition to their work by ResEAU Outputs



When respondents were asked which of the activities aligned most with their interests and added value to their work, workshops and webinars received the highest number of positive responses.

Demand Generation and Requests from Members

The RésEAU sought to be demand-oriented. The survey inquired into respondent's views on the demand generation process. It inquired both into whether they had made any specific requests voluntarily and whether they had been consulted on their needs by core group members.

As shown in Figure 9, most respondents stated that they had not made any specific requests for information, training, or advisory services to the RésEAU core group members.

A similar trend emerged when respondents were asked if they had been consulted on their needs by core group members. Nearly three-quarters of respondents stated that they had not been consulted, and over 13.6% stated that they had been consulted but no action was taken up based on their inputs.

Figure 9: Demand or request generation by respondents

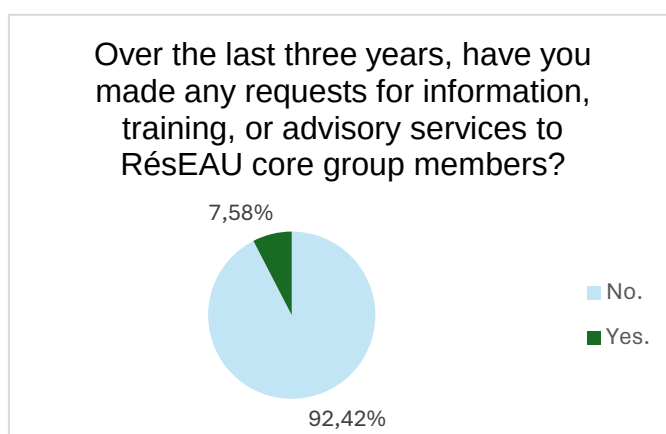
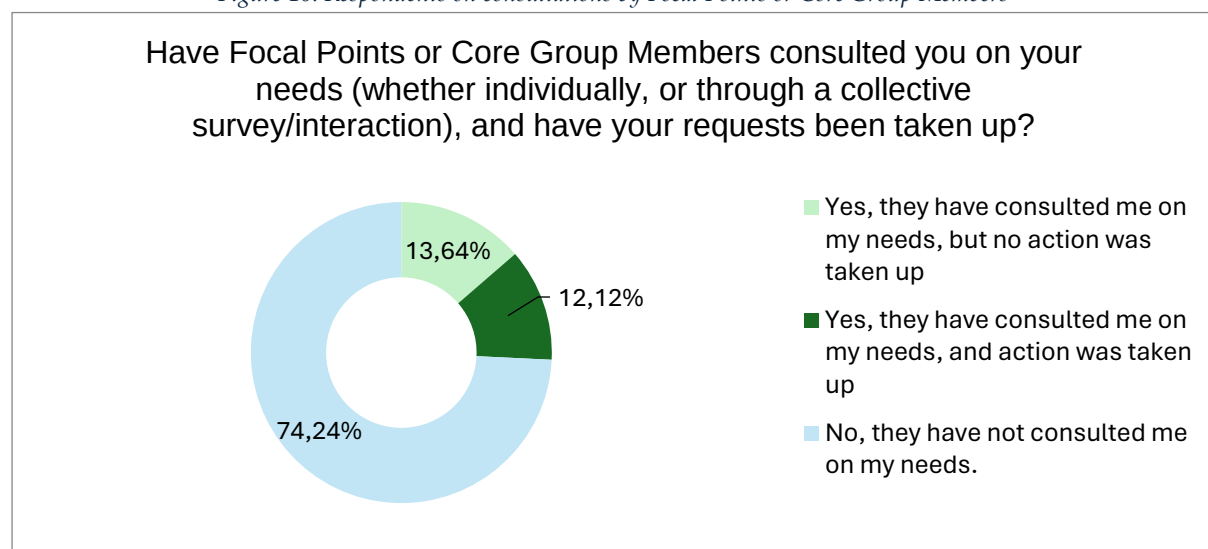


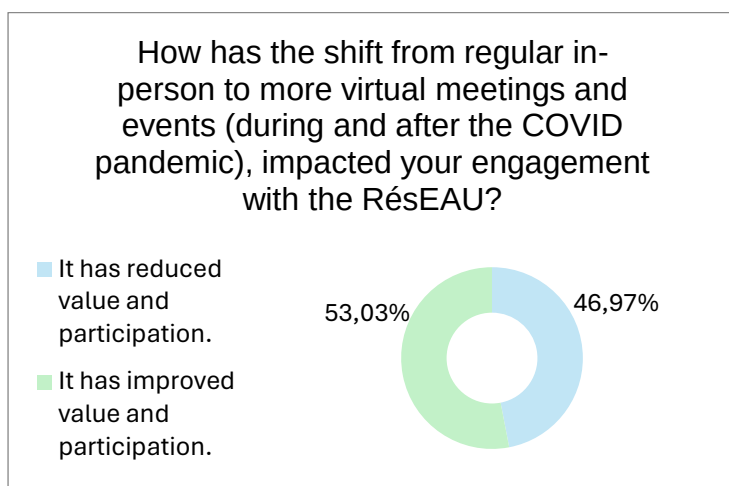
Figure 10: Respondents on consultations by Focal Points or Core Group Members



Modes of Engagement and Communication

Since the beginning of the BSM, which coincided with the covid-19 pandemic, there has been an increasing reliance on virtual and hybrid events, as opposed to face-to-face events. The survey inquired into respondents' views on this shift to more virtual and hybrid events.

Figure 11: Opinion of respondents on changes in modes of communication

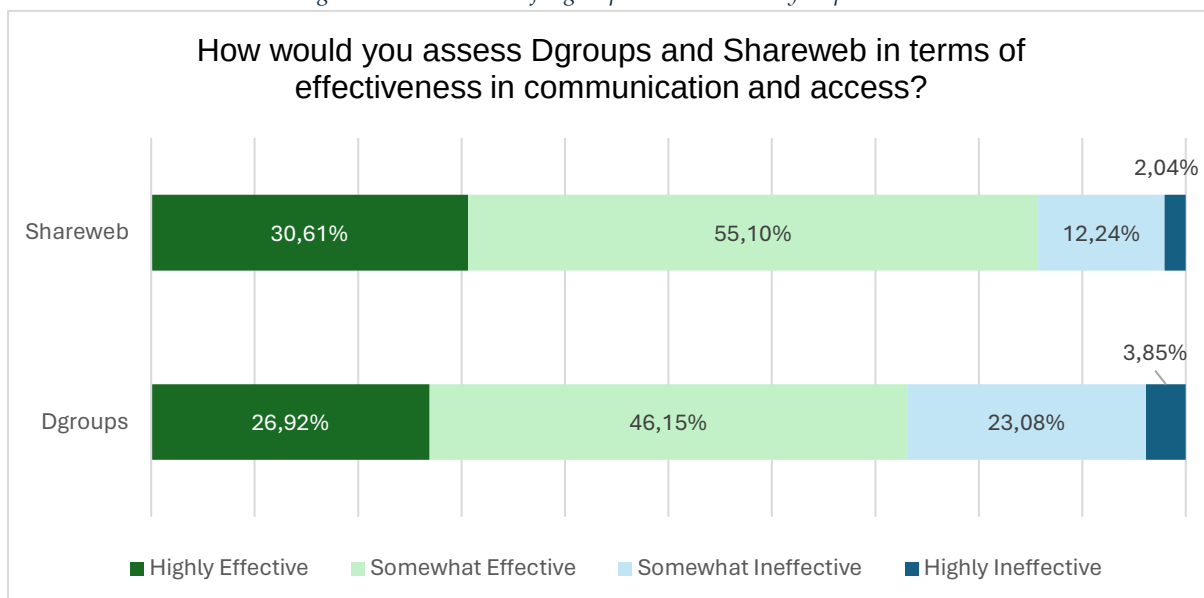


The respondents' opinion on this question was split, with a slightly higher percentage stating that it has improved value and participation. Many stated that a shift to virtual and hybrid events was a positive one, with one notably saying that this was a "good post-COVID leftover". However, the responses noted that there are several pros and cons. Respondents largely believe that virtual and hybrid events offer

more avenues to participate as there are fewer time and cost constraints affecting participation, however, they noted that while such events are not rich when it comes to networking and peer exchange. Many also stated that while virtual and hybrid events have value, they cannot and should not entirely replace in-person events, which should be conducted periodically as well.

Communication within the network is largely conducted through two platforms: Dgroups and Shareweb. The former is a core communication tool, in that it is a mailing platform to reach out to all members, while the latter acts as a data repository. The survey inquired into respondents' perception of both these platforms, in terms of effectiveness and access.

Figure 12: Assessment of Dgroups and Shareweb by respondents

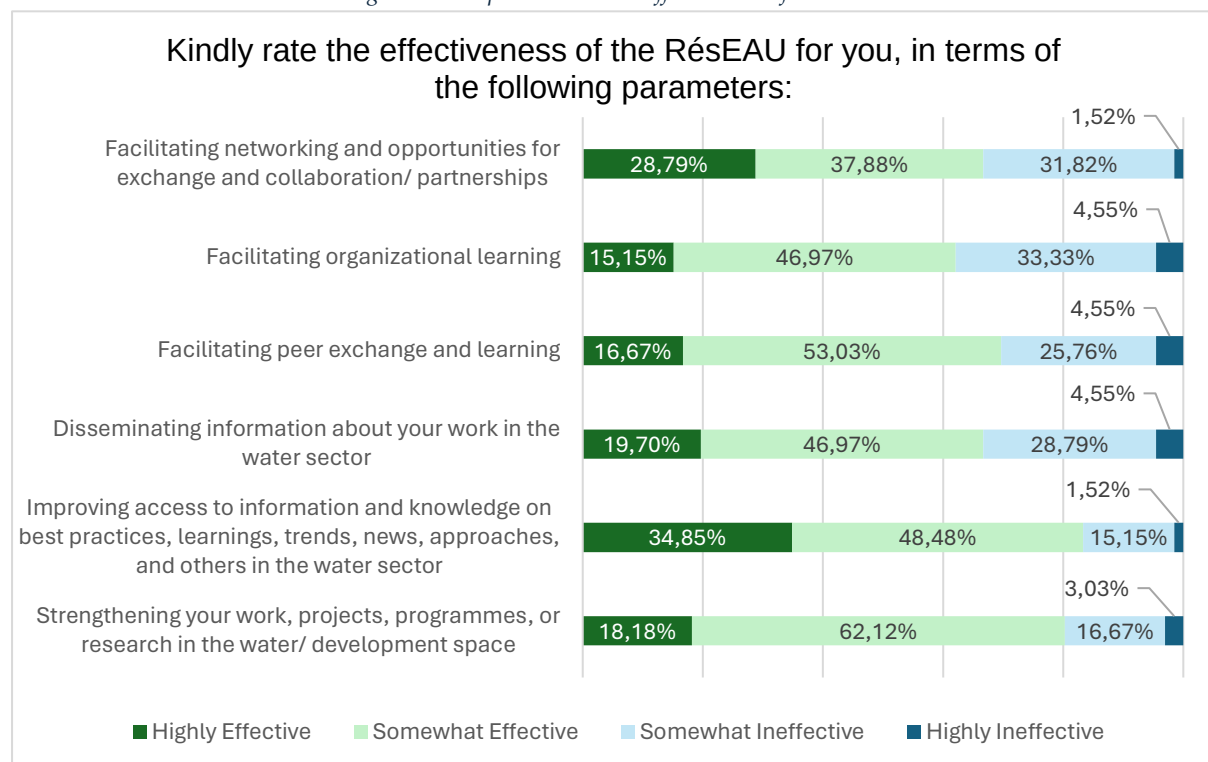


As shown in Figure 12, in general, both these platforms were rated positively. In both cases though, there were a sizeable number of people who rated them as ineffective or highly ineffective. This is higher for Dgroups than for Shareweb. When offering comments, many respondents stated that they are unaware of Dgroups or do not use them at all.

Perceived Effectiveness of RésEAU

The survey inquired into the respondents' perspectives on how effective the RésEAU was for them on several parameters, such as facilitating networks and partnerships, facilitating organizational learning, facilitating peer exchange, disseminating information about their work, improving access to information and knowledge, and strengthening their work. The data from this question is presented in Figure 13.

Figure 13: Respondents on the effectiveness of RésEAU

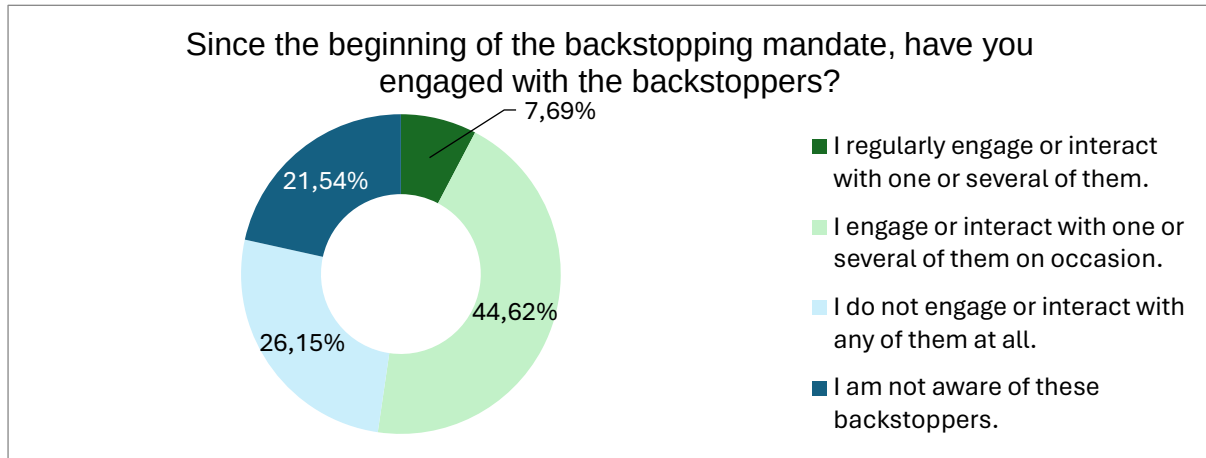


Responses to these different parameters were mixed. For instance, though nearly 30% rated the RésEAU as highly effective in facilitating networking, a similar number also rated it as somewhat ineffective on the same parameter. A similar trend is seen even in terms of the parameter on strengthening members' work. In general, the most favourable responses were seen in terms of improving access to information and strengthening work, projects, or programmes, while the highest number of unfavourable responses. Overall, well over half the respondents shared favourable responses across all these different parameters.

Feedback on Backstopping

The survey first inquired into the awareness of the backstoppers and the BSM among the respondents. As shown in Figure 14, just over half of the respondents regularly or occasionally interacted with the backstoppers, while 21% were not aware of the backstoppers at all and 26.15% did not engage or interact with them at all.

Figure 14: Engagement of respondents with the backstoppers



A total of 65 respondents answered this question. Among these, only those respondents who had regularly or on occasion interacted with the backstoppers were presented with further questions on backstopping. Those who did not engage with or were not aware of them skipped this section and proceeded to the next section on 'Engagement with Networks other than RésEAU'.

The following sub-sections present the findings on these respondents' engagement with, perception of, and feedback on the BSM and the backstoppers.

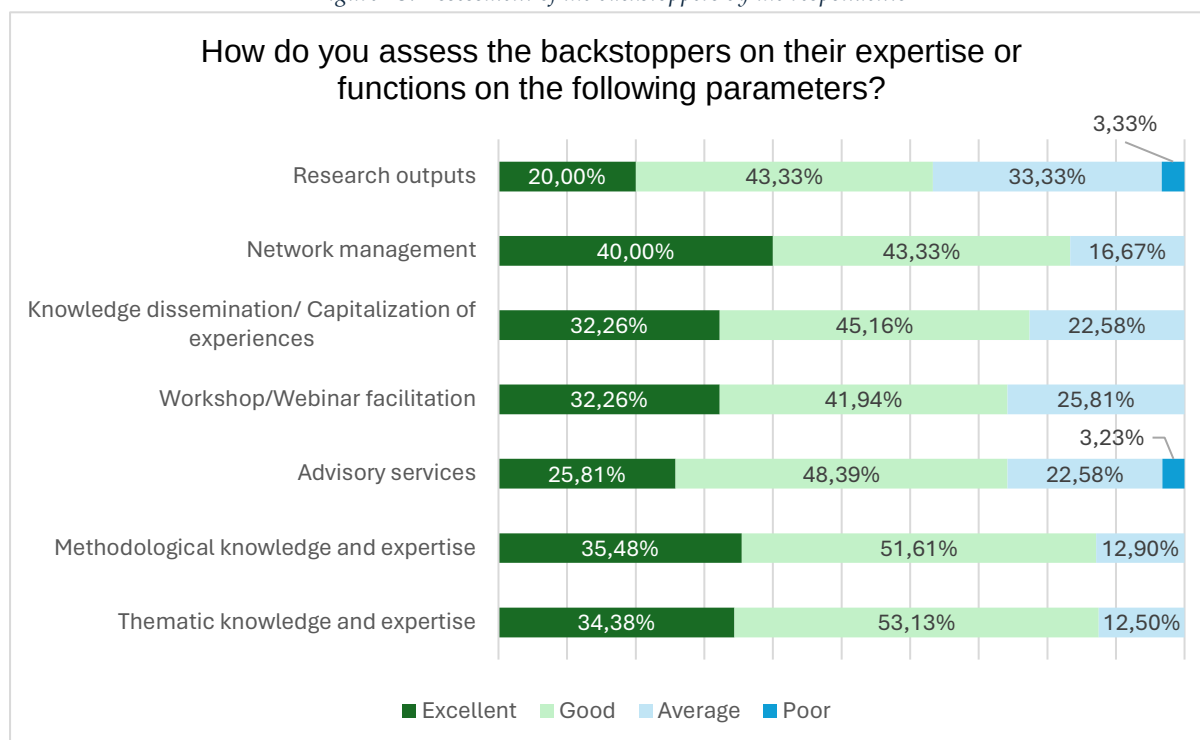
Perception of Expertise and Functions of the Backstoppers

The survey enquired into respondents' perception of the expertise and performance of the backstoppers on various functions and activities that are expected of them. This included their research outputs, network management, knowledge dissemination, workshop/webinar facilitation, advisory services, methodological knowledge and expertise, and thematic knowledge and expertise.

Respondents were required to score the backstoppers on these parameters, against a four-point scale ranging from excellent to good to average to poor. The data from this question is presented in Figure 15.

Responses on all these parameters were largely positive, with a substantial proportion of respondents scoring the backstoppers either excellent or good, on all these parameters. A minute proportion of respondents scored the backstoppers as poor on just two parameters – research outputs and advisory services. The most favourable responses were received concerning network management, thematic knowledge and expertise, and methodological knowledge and expertise. On the other hand, research outputs had the least number of positive responses. Across all these parameters, there were a sizeable number of respondents who scored the backstoppers as average.

Figure 15: Assessment of the backstoppers by the respondents



Discussions and Initiatives to Promote Youth and Gender Diversity

SDC through its networks has been trying to facilitate discussions and initiatives to promote youth and gender diversity. Respondents were asked if, to their knowledge and in their opinion, the backstoppers had facilitated discussions and initiatives on these themes.

Figure 16: Respondents on backstopper efforts for youth

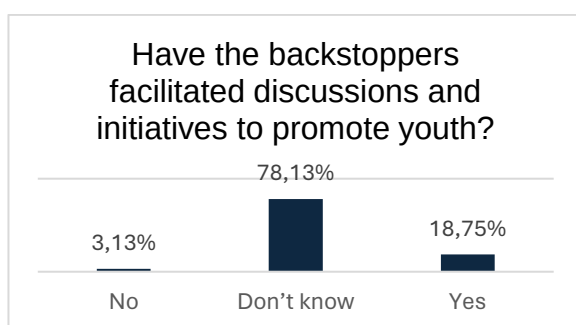
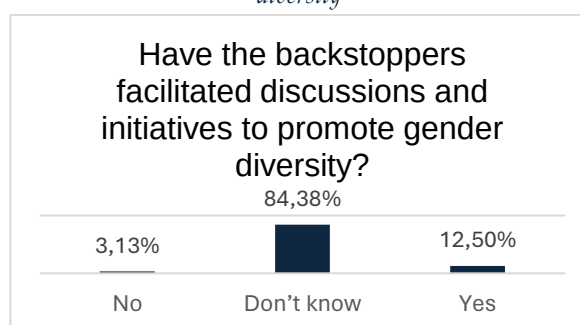


Figure 17: Respondents on backstopper efforts on gender diversity

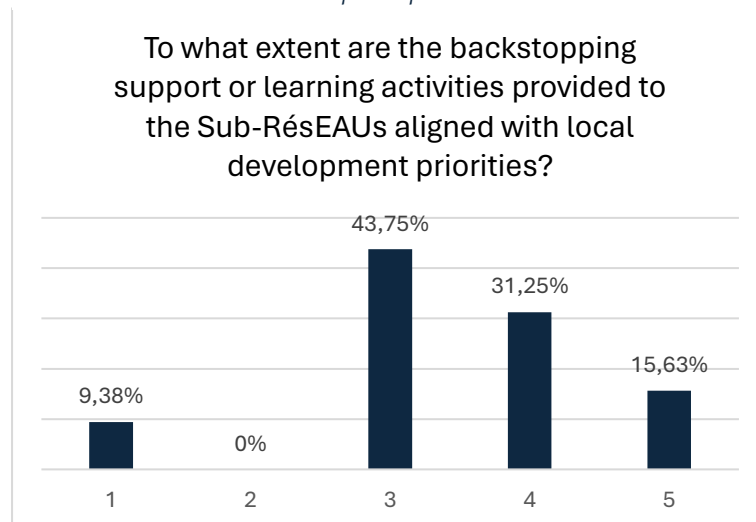


In both cases, the majority of respondents stated that they were unaware of such discussions or initiatives. The number of respondents who stated yes was slightly higher in the case of discussions and initiatives to promote youth. Respondents highlighted that the backstoppers and the network were active in including youth and supporting Swiss Water Partnership (SWP) youth.

Alignment with Local Development Priorities

Respondents were asked if the backstopping support and activities aligned well with local development contexts, needs, and priorities. Respondents were asked to score this alignment on a scale of 1-5; the data from this question is presented in Figure 18.

Figure 18: Respondents on the alignment of backstopper activities with local development priorities

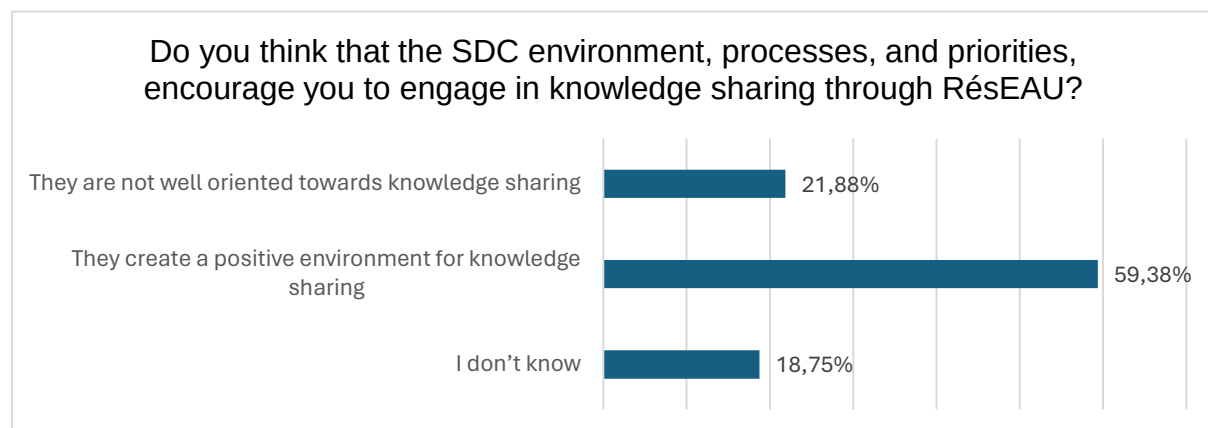


The highest number of respondents gave the backstopper activities a score of 3, while the second highest gave them a score of 4. Very few participants scored them as 1, with none scoring them as 2. A significant number also scored 5.

Role of SDC Environment

Respondents were asked if the SDC environment, processes, and priorities create a positive environment for knowledge sharing through the RésEAU.

Figure 19: Respondents on the role of SDC environment



Nearly 60% of respondents stated that they create a positive environment for knowledge sharing. 21.88% stated that they are not well-oriented towards this goal. One respondent highlighted language barrier as a constraint, while another respondent highlighted that the SDC environment was overwhelming, with too many functions, and that impacted their ability to engage in these activities and functions.

Recommendations to Improve the Effectiveness of Backstopping

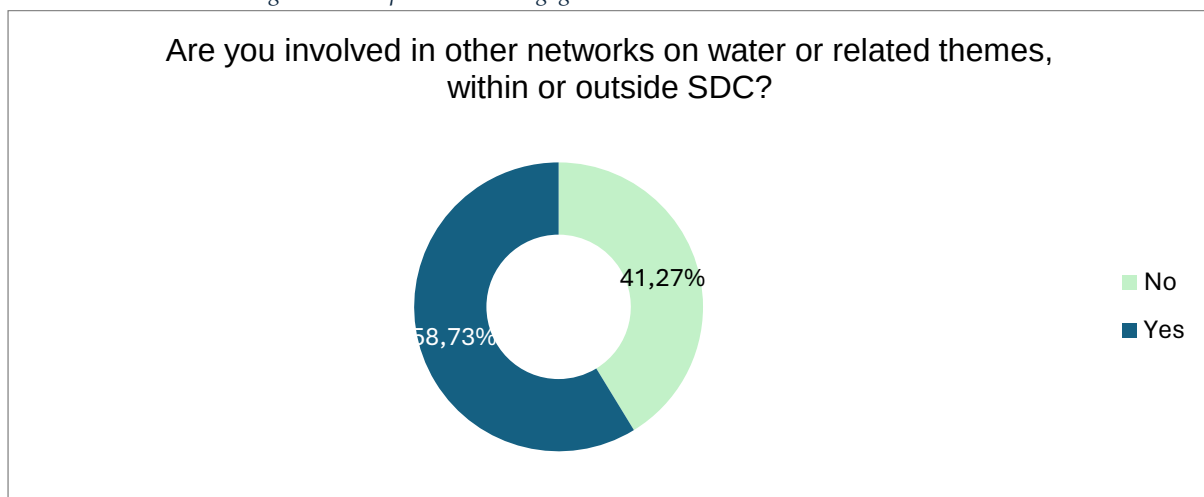
When respondents were asked about their suggestions to improve the effectiveness of the backstopping of both RésEAUs and Sub-RésEAUs, responses were varied. Several respondents said that the current process was effective, non-intrusive, and lean and there was not much room for improvement. Other suggestions included:

- Conducting a user survey to map expectations
- Supporting more structured group mentoring programmes, regional workshops, and study tours.
- Greater engagement and participation with Sub-RésEAUs, including more face-to-face meetings and a more systemic approach to participation with other SDC thematic networks

Engagement with Networks other than the RésEAU

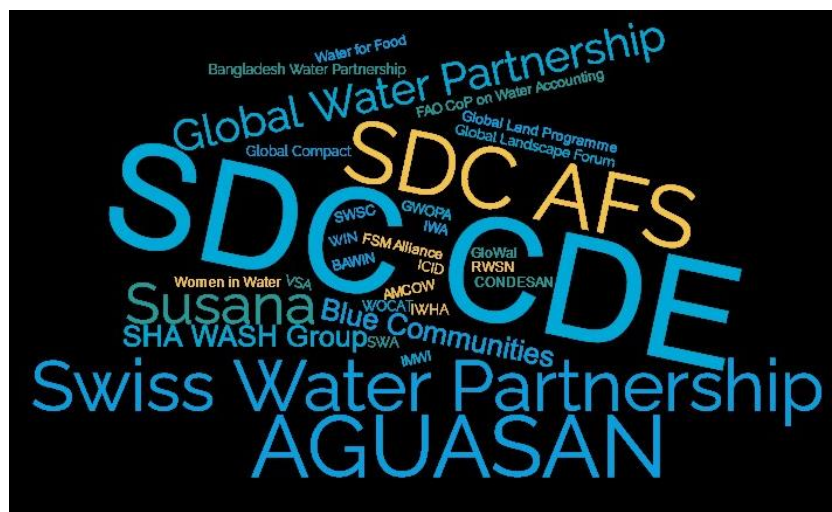
The survey inquired into whether members were part of other networks aside from RésEAU. As is seen in Figure 20, nearly 60% of respondents stated that they were part of other networks.

Figure 20: Respondents on engagement with networks other than ResEAU



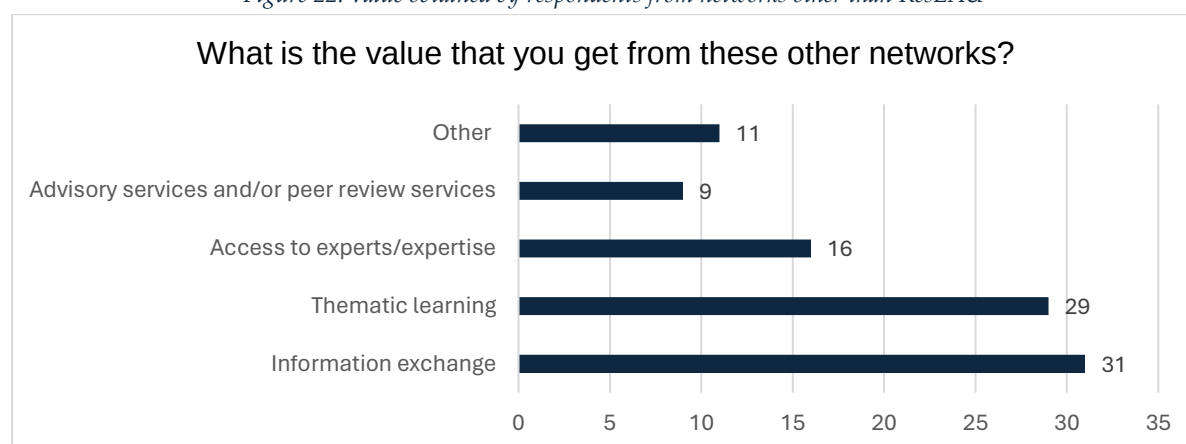
These networks include those within SDC, other thematic networks on water, as well as other thematic networks in the wider development space. Some of the networks are captured in the word cloud in Figure 21.

Figure 21: Networks other than ResEAU where respondents were involved



Among these 37 respondents who stated that they were part of other networks, the survey inquired into the value that they derive from these other networks.

Figure 22: Value obtained by respondents from networks other than ResEAU

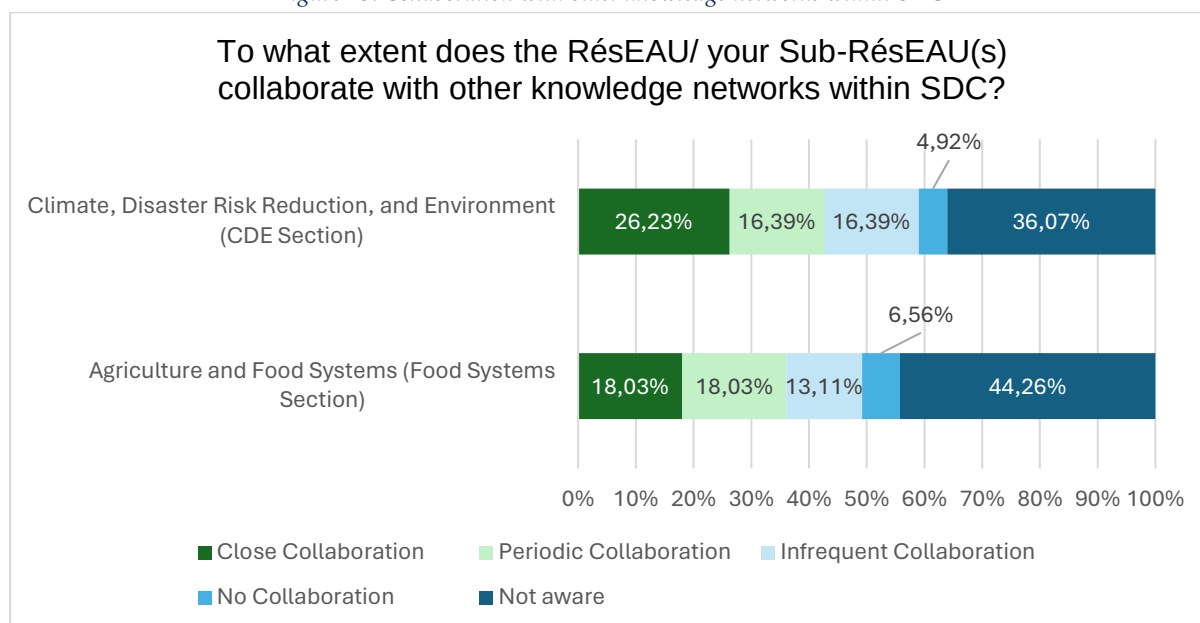


Information exchange and thematic learning were selected the most, with access to experts/expertise and advisory or peer review services following at a distance. Respondents who selected the other option highlighted several other value additions, such as advocacy, partnerships, networking, and experience sharing.

Collaboration with other Knowledge Networks within SDC

Respondents were asked about their opinion on the extent of collaboration of the RésEAU with other networks within the SDC, such as the Climate, Disaster Risk Reduction, and Environment Network and the Agriculture and Food Systems Network.

Figure 23: Collaboration with other knowledge networks within SDC



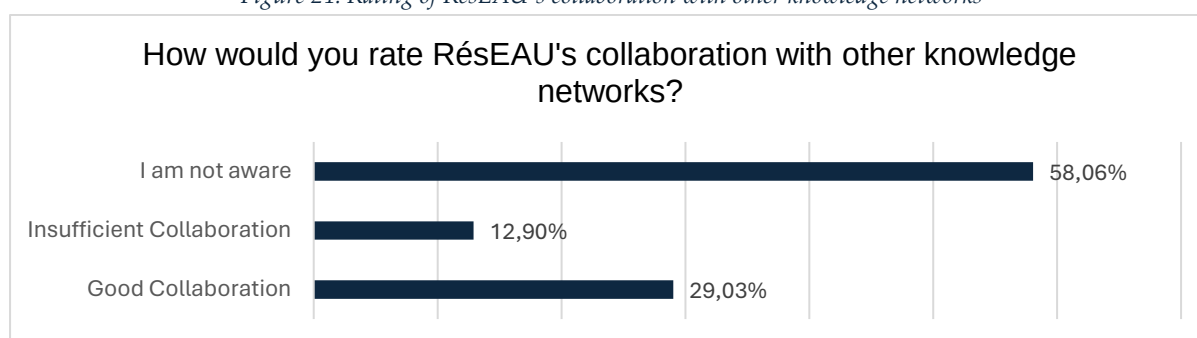
As seen in Figure 23, in both cases most respondents stated that they were unaware of such collaboration, while a small percentage also stated that there was no collaboration. Responses were mixed, but there seems to be a perception that there is a slightly higher collaboration with the CDE Section than with the Food Systems Section.

Respondents gave several suggestions for improving collaboration with other networks within SDC. Largely, they centred around greater cooperation between the Cluster Green Networks for periodic joint meetings, joint publications, and so on.

Collaboration with Knowledge Networks outside SDC

When asked about RésEAU's collaboration with networks outside SDC, a larger majority of respondents stated that they were unaware of such collaborations, while about 30% and 13% stated that there was good and insufficient collaboration, respectively.

Figure 24: Rating of RésEAU's collaboration with other knowledge networks



Best Practices to be Adopted from Other Networks

Respondents were asked to share their inputs on best practices related to network activities and outputs or network management, that can be adopted from other knowledge networks. These included:

- Creating more informal channels for peer exchange, such as WhatsApp, Telegram, or MS Teams
- More periodic informal, regional meet-ups for members
- Building specific working groups on key topics

Looking Forward

Some highlights of the respondents' suggestions to improve the usefulness of the RésEAU products and services were:

- To link activities to a user-needs survey
- Conducting more interactive, transformative learning experiences
- Integrate a greater number and a broader variety of successful project experiences and learnings
- Tailor-made meetings and workshops for specific regions where challenges and experiences are similar and relevant for participants.
- Conduct more high-level, in-person events for networking and discussions
- Summaries and outputs in languages other than English

Further, when asked about the kind of activities that respondents would find useful if added to current backstopping priorities, responses included:

- Creation of small Communities of Practice on specific topics, especially at the regional level
- Outcome mapping and after-action reviews to understand the impact of CoP and projects
- Advisory services that support the members, such as facilitating linkages with development partners for project implementation, integration of water, climate change, and energy, and bringing pluralist support or perspectives.

2. AGUASAN member survey

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Introduction

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), through its Section Water, has commissioned an External Evaluation of the RésEAU cum AGUASAN backstopping mandate. As part of the data collection activities for the evaluation, a survey of the AGUASAN Community of Practice (CoP) members was conducted. This survey inquired into the members' engagement with the backstopping, and their experience as a member.

Methodology

This section defines the methodology used to conduct the survey, including the sampling strategy and design of the survey instrument.

Sampling Strategy

As of March-April 2024 when this survey was conducted, the AGUASAN CoP consisted of 159 members. These 159 members represented the survey population. To ensure that the survey received unbiased data and was free from potential conflicts of interest, the following groups were excluded from the sample:

- SDC staff who were involved in management and planning activities for the RésEAU,
- members from the core teams of the backstoppers

Having excluded these groups, the survey was sent 145 members (the sample).

Design of Survey Questionnaire

The survey questionnaire was designed by the evaluators. Subsequently, the questionnaire was refined to ensure accurate capture of terminology and processes, through consultations with the SDC Focal Point and backstopping team leaders.

The survey questionnaire was designed to collect both quantitative and qualitative data, across the following themes:

- a) Engagement with AGUASAN
- b) Opinions on AGUASAN Quarterly Meetings and its backstopping support
- c) Opinions on AGUASAN Annual Workshops and its backstopping support
- d) Engagement with AGUASAN Website
- e) Engagement with other Networks
- f) Background information

The questionnaire consisted of 18 questions organized according to the above themes. These questions included both open-ended and close-ended questions, including formats such as multiple choice, scoring, and others. The questionnaire was designed to be completed in under 10 minutes and was built on the SurveyMonkey platform.

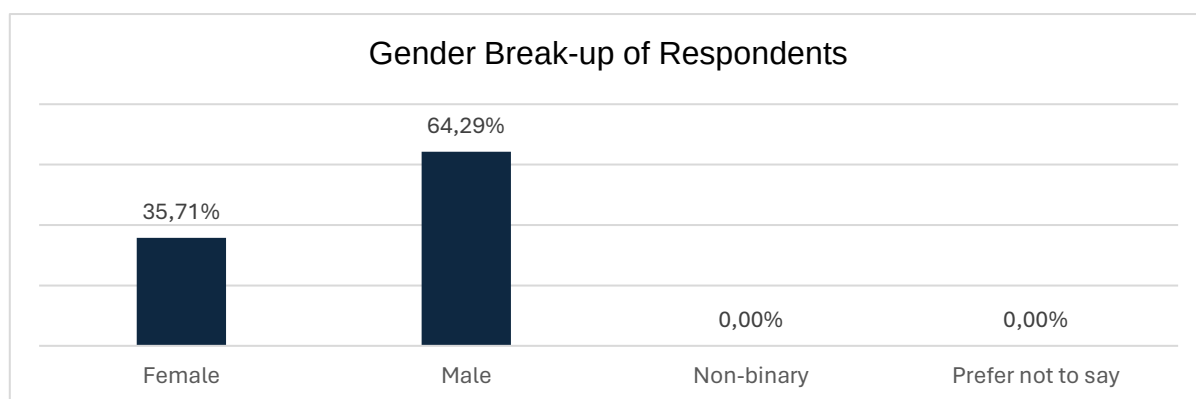
To ensure targeted responses, branching logic was applied, i.e., based on their responses, respondents may or may not have been presented with all 18 questions. For instance, if a

respondent had not attended any AGUASAN Annual Workshops, they would not be presented with further questions on them and could skip ahead to subsequent questions.

Profile of Respondents

Of the sample size of 145, the survey received 28 responses, with an effective response rate of 19.3%. Of these responses, 25 were complete responses, while 3 were partially completed. Partial responses have also been analysed. Figure 1 presents the gender break-up of the 28 respondents who completed the survey.

Figure 1: Gender breakup of survey respondents



Though male respondents formed the majority, the survey achieved a moderate level of female representation, in that 10 respondents (35.71%) were female.

Figure 2: Duration of respondents' association with AGUASAN CoP

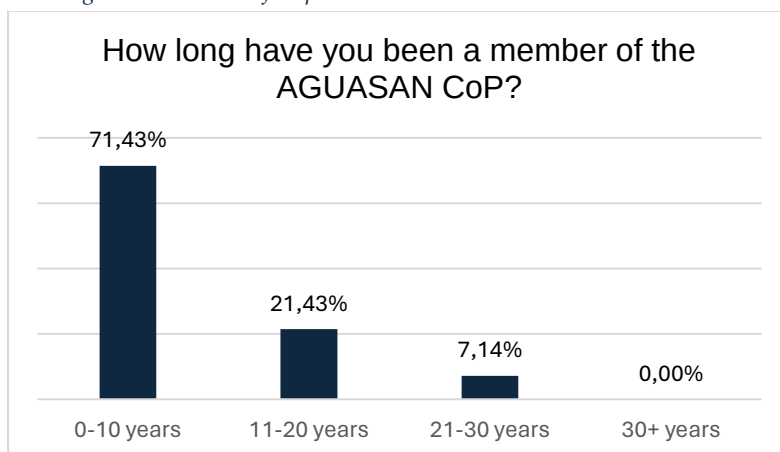


Figure 2 presents data on how long the respondents had been members of the AGUASAN Community of Practice (CoP). Most respondents who filled in the survey were relatively more recent members of the AGUASAN CoP (0-10 years), followed in decreasing order by those who had been members for longer periods of time.

Key Results and Findings

This section presents the findings, organized under the various themes that the survey questionnaire inquired into, namely:

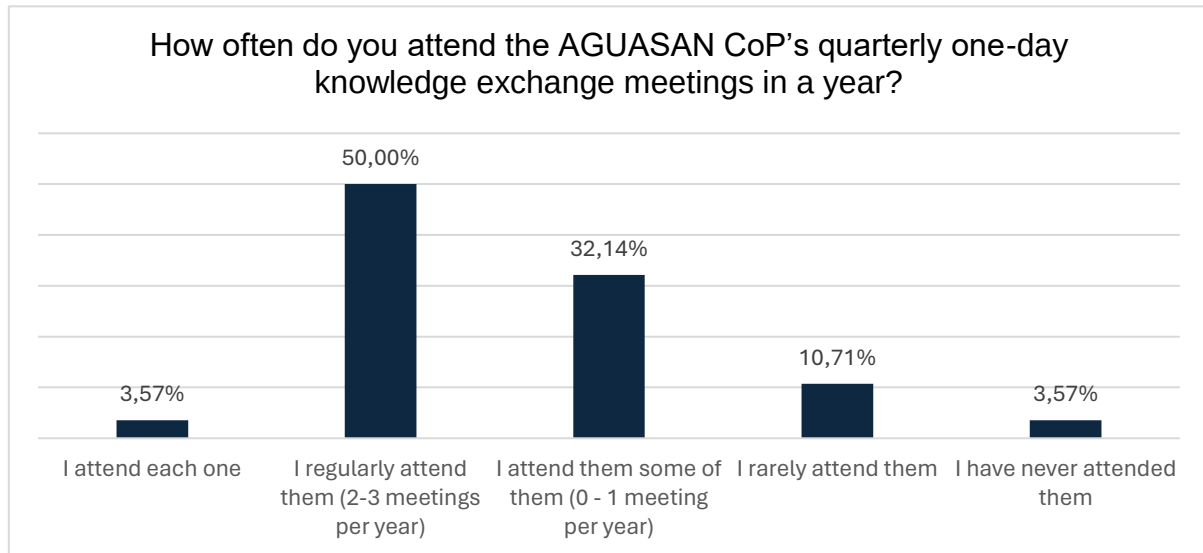
- Opinions on AGUASAN Quarterly Meetings and its backstopping support
- Opinions on AGUASAN Annual Workshops and its backstopping support
- Engagement with AGUASAN Website

d) Engagement with other Networks

Engagement with AGUASAN Quarterly Meetings

Every quarter, the AGUASAN CoP organizes a one-day knowledge exchange meeting for its members. Figure 3 showcases the respondents' attendance of these events.

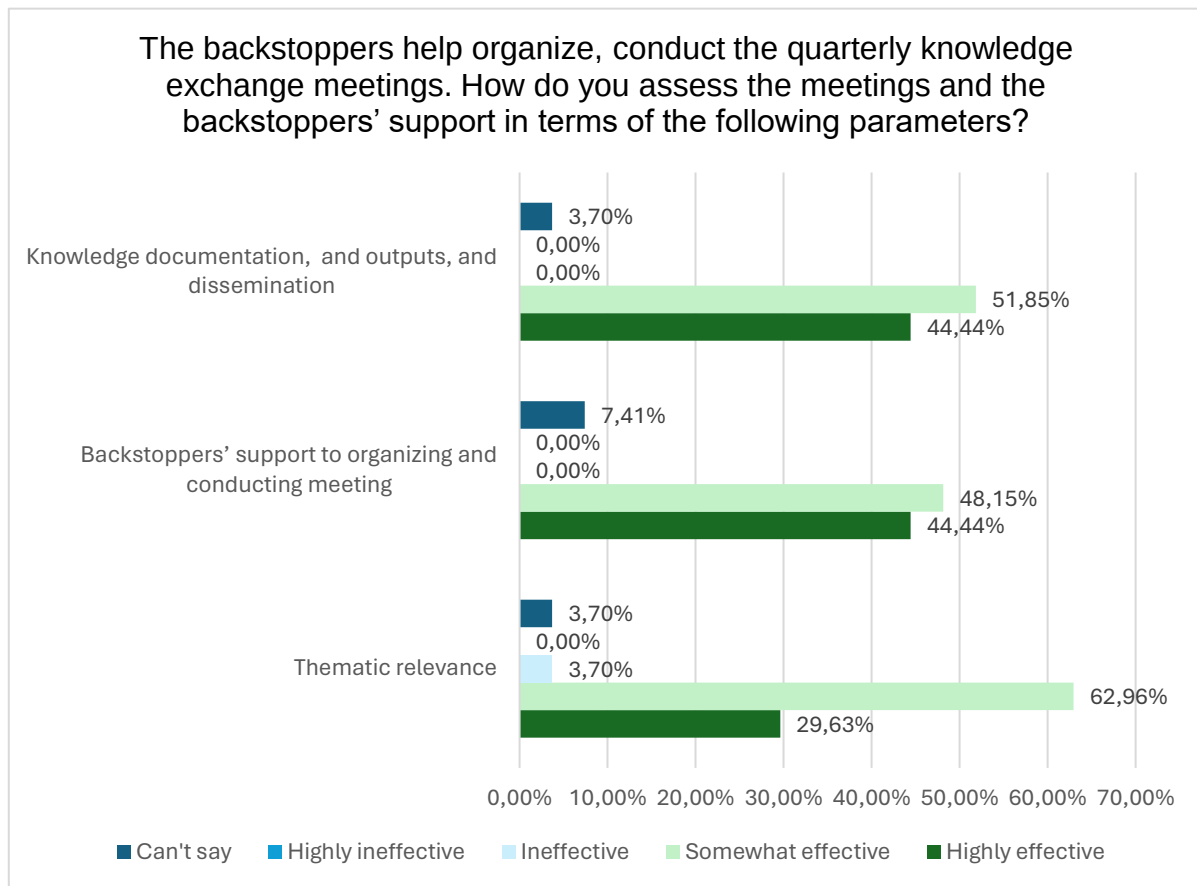
Figure 3: Frequency of respondents in attending AGUASAN CoP knowledge exchange meetings



Half the respondents stated that they regularly attend these meetings (2-3 meetings a year), while a significant proportion responded that they attend them sometimes (0-1 meetings a year). Few respondents stated that they never attend them or that they attend each of them. This indicates a high level of engagement with and perceived value addition from these meetings.

The respondents were also asked to indicate their assessment of these meetings and the backstoppers' support to them, on the following parameters, as shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Respondents on the effectiveness of backstopper support



Respondents largely shared favourable responses across all parameters, with only an isolated unfavourable response on thematic relevance. Even in the case of the latter, the respondent stated that their focus was largely in an academic rather than applied space, and therefore did not align fully with that of AGUASAN.

Respondents were asked to share their suggestions on how these meetings and the backstopping support to them could be improved. Some of the highlights of respondents' suggestions were as follows:

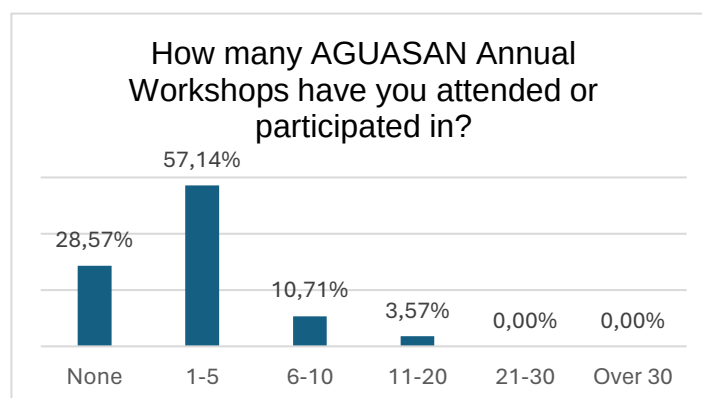
- Participatory planning of meeting topics, curating events around a particular theme rather than on multiple sets of presentations/topics, and inviting external experts or professionals based on the theme.
- Using an interactive hybrid format, for e.g. conducting first few hours digitally or with option to participate virtually, with rest of the day happening on-site, or alternating virtual and face-to-face meetings.
- Providing briefings of past meetings.
- Creating opportunities for more academic-praxis exchanges.
- More curation of content and moderation of discussions, and greater scope for exchanges on experience, learning, and failure.

Engagement with AGUASAN Annual Workshops

Aside from the quarterly, one-day knowledge exchange meetings, AGUASAN also organizes a longer annual workshop. These workshops typically happen in person and for 5 days. The survey inquired into respondents' participation in these annual workshops.

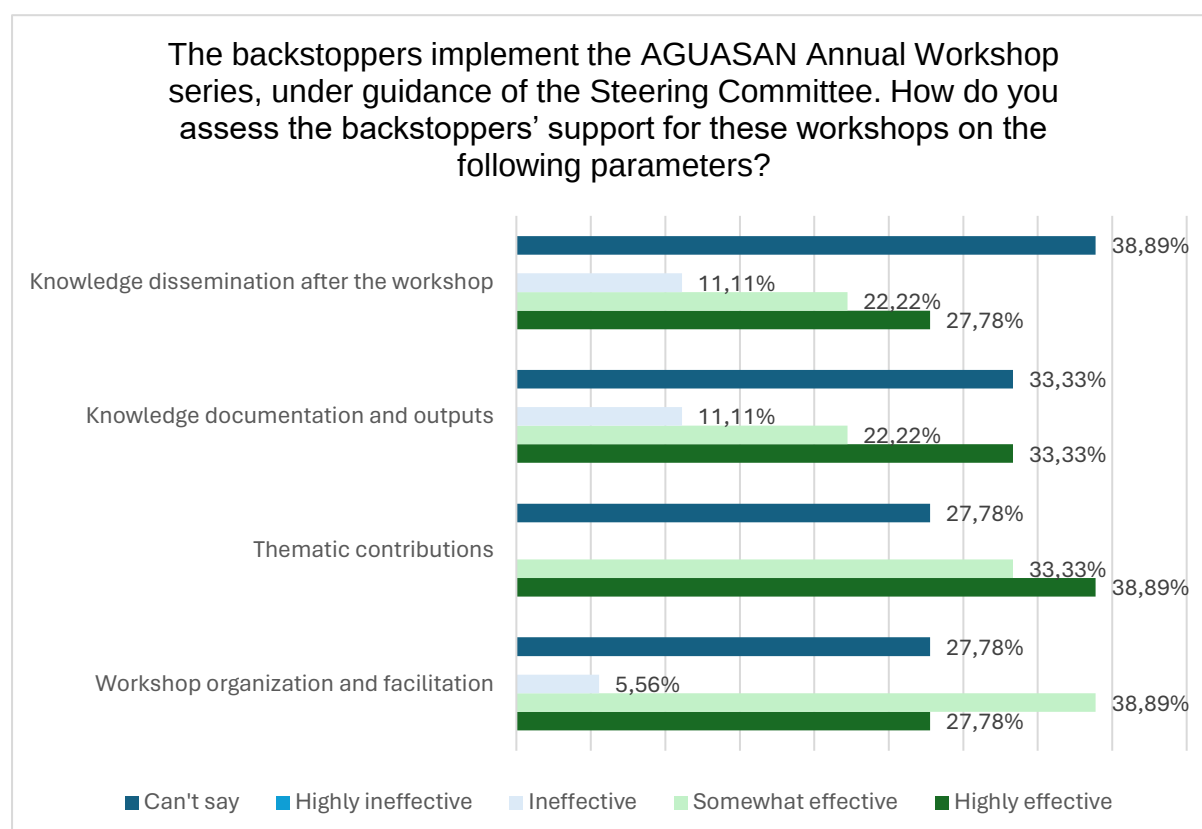
As seen in Figure 5, most respondents had attended 1-5 workshops during their membership. Very few had attended 6 or more workshops, while none had attended over 20. Nearly 30% of respondents had not attended any AGUASAN workshop. This can be explained by the fact that these workshops are targeted to (SDC) water practitioners in the Global South and not the AGUASAN members.

Figure 5: Number of annual workshops attended or participated in



As with the quarterly knowledge exchange meetings, respondents were asked to share their opinion of the workshops and the backstopping support to them. Their responses are shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Assessment of the backstopper support for AGUASAN Annual Workshop series



The responses, from those who could judge, were largely favourable across all the parameters. However, a few respondents rated knowledge dissemination, knowledge documentation and workshop organization as ineffective.

Respondents shared several suggestions on how the backstopping support to these workshops can be improved. Highlights are as below:

- Communication strategy to be improved and evaluated.
- AGUASAN to be linked to key environmental priorities: climate change, biodiversity, energy transition issues.
- Engaging more with participants and encouraging pro-active role in the workshop, while promoting gender and age balance.
- Taking more pro-active role in organization of thematic inputs, rather than relying on unpaid work of organizing committee and finding balance between recipients and co-producers over thematic.

These workshops were usually held in Switzerland, but the 36th Annual AGUASAN Workshop in 2022 was held in Jordan instead. Respondents were asked their opinion on holding these workshops outside Switzerland. Responses were mixed:

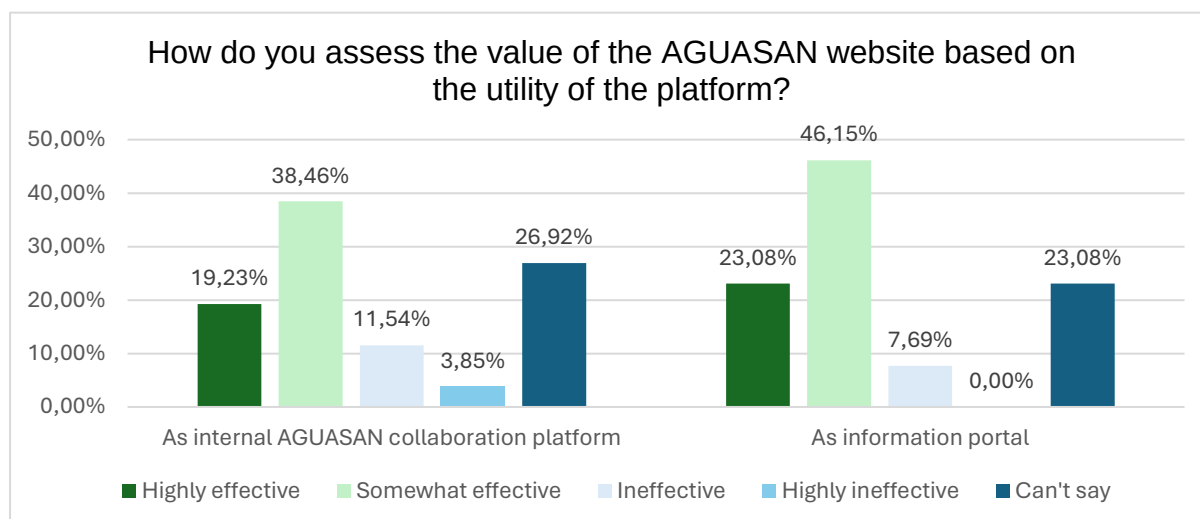
- Respondents in favour stated that this would promote inclusiveness and diversity, while providing more opportunities for members to immerse themselves in context-specific work and increasing relevance for members, many of whom work in low and middle-income countries.
- Respondents against stated that it may not be feasible and should be avoided due to the emissions linked to travel, resource constraints for travel, or limiting attendance, especially for those from smaller organizations who could not afford to travel.

Some respondents stated that it may be considered on an alternating basis or should be considered only based on the nature of participation expected (if objective is to increase Swiss participation, it should be in Switzerland while it should be held outside if participation of non-Swiss professionals is to be increased).

Engagement with AGUASAN Website

The backstoppers have recently built and updated the AGUASAN website. The website, built on the HAZU Platform. This website is intended to be used both as an internal collaboration platform as well as an information portal. The survey inquired into respondents' engagement with and perspectives on the website.

Figure 7: Assessment of the AGUASAN website by respondents



Responses on both its uses were largely favourable. Many also stated that they can't say on both counts. Offering more information for this, respondents stated that they had not used the platform. A small, but significant proportion of respondents stated that it was ineffective in both use-cases. Reasons shared for this were that there is more friction to opening the website compared to mails delivered to their inboxes, and that the website was not regularly updated yet and relatively new. One respondent stated that they only used the website when links were shared. Another respondent offered an input that the website could contain links to relevant thematic resources and other websites, especially those not in English.

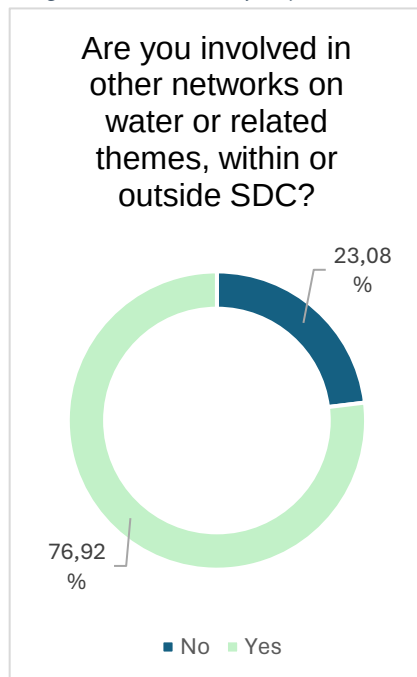
Some suggestions shared to further improve the website were as follows:

- Linking with member websites in other languages
- Opening an X (formerly twitter) account and being present in thematic networks
- Making it more user friendly or offering tutorials
- Creating a knowledge section with thematically grouped documents or resources.

Engagement with other Networks

Over three quarters of respondents reported that they were also part of other networks, other than the AGUASAN CoP (Figure 8). Some of the networks named by the members include:

Figure 8: Association of respondents in

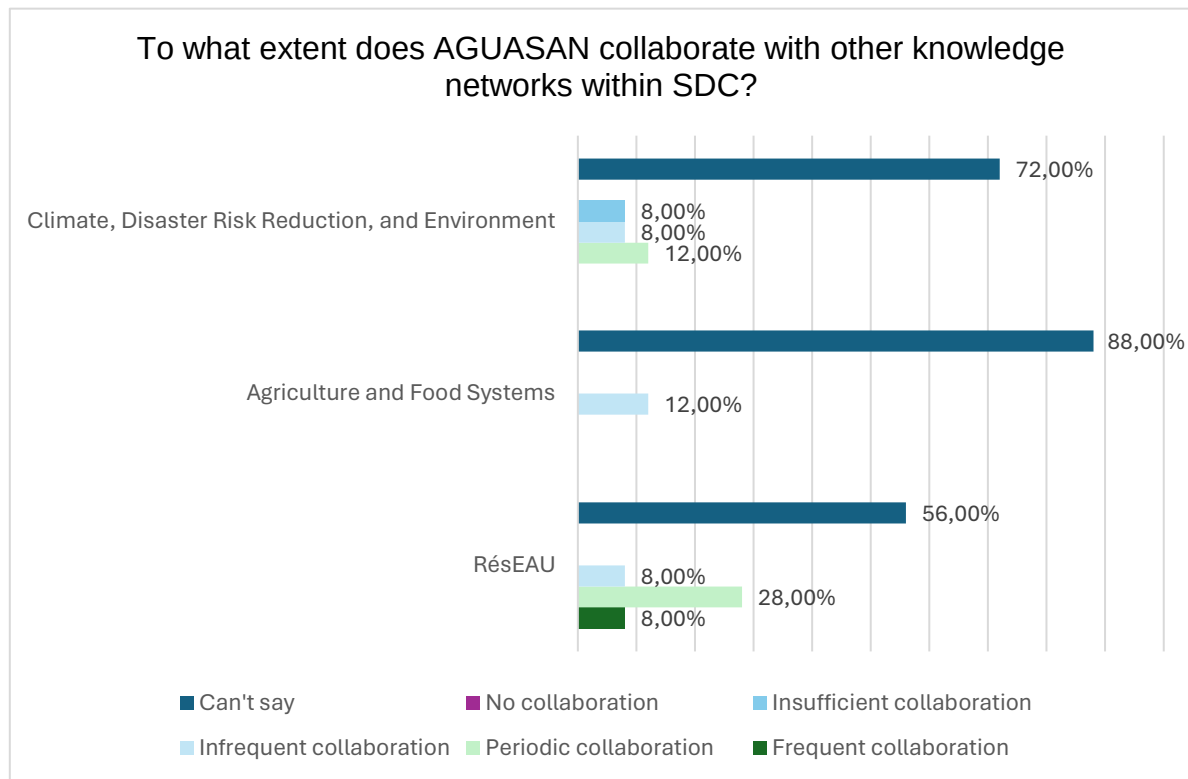


- RésEAU
- Rural Water Supply Network
- Blue Community
- Susana
- International Rainwater Harvesting Alliance
- AMSCALL
- Fundación Natura Colombia
- International Water Association
- UN Water
- Swiss Water Partnership
- African Water and Sanitation Association
- WASH Talk Canada
- WASH in School and WASH in HCF
- PS-EAU (France)
- Academic Hydrology Associations
- Solidarit'eau Suisse
- Ecumenical water Network

- Swiss Water and Sanitation Consortium
- Prevent Alliance

There are several related knowledge networks within the SDC, such as the RésEAU, the Climate, Disaster Risk, and the Environment network, and the Agriculture and Food Systems network. Respondents were asked to assess AGUASAN's collaboration with each of these networks. Responses are presented in Figure 9.

Figure 9: Respondents on AGUASAN's collaboration with other knowledge networks within SDC



In most cases, respondents stated that they can't say. Some respondents stated that this was because they were new to the network, however, this may also be because the collaboration is not visible. Of the networks where collaboration was stated, RésEAU seemed to have the most collaboration, though here too most scored as periodic, rather than frequent collaboration. This may be because of the natural overlap in subject matter.

Respondents were asked to suggest how collaborations with the SDC Water Network, RésEAU can be strengthened. Highlights of their responses are given below:

- Facilitating more field coordination and improvement in communication
- Organizing knowledge exchange sessions, either through brief topical meeting sessions (30–60-minute sessions), knowledge exchange meetings, or presentation of activities by RésEAU members during quarterly meetings.

There were some isolated suggestions which were notable. One such suggestion was that the two networks' activities should be organized and distributed, rather than being in parallel; for example, AGUASAN could be more focussed on 'exchange and meet and greets' while RésEAU could focus more on learning through activities like webinars, seminars, etc. Another respondent noted that there is a perception that RésEAU is seen as an internal SDC platform by outsiders, while AGUASAN is seen to be more inclusive. In a similar vein, another respondent suggested that RésEAU should be opened outside of SDC, such as by including 'ambassadors' in different countries of the Global South drawn from networks of university students or other such groups.

Feedback on AGUASAN Backstopping

Finally, respondents were asked to share their feedback or thoughts on how AGUASAN and/or its backstopping support could be further improved to add more value to members. A few respondents answered this question. Some suggestions they made were:

- Participants stated that they would like to browse through members. One respondent said that one way to do this could be by presenting members one by one in meetings, while another said that this could be done through the website or a LinkedIn group.
- One respondent suggested that AGUASAN should benchmark from other water-based networks.
- Another respondent stated that though they do not know the exact mandate for the backstopping, that they could see SKAT and Helvetas as being very present, while not being as aware of Zoï.
- One respondent stated that efforts must be made to extend the circle of the community and capitalise on participants and partners outside Switzerland as well.

Part 2: Evaluation questions, approach, and sources

3. Evaluation questions

The purpose statement of the evaluation translated into **four main evaluation questions**:

1. To what extent and how did the backstopping approaches, working modalities, products, and tools contribute to the performance and usefulness of the backstopping mandate?
2. What new, alternative, and useful approaches to the backstopping of the RésEAU and AGUASAN exist?
3. How did the backstopping perform along the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria: relevance, coherence, effectiveness, impact, efficiency, and sustainability?
4. What conclusions, lessons, and recommendations can be drawn from the evaluation on the current and future backstopping of the RésEAU and AGUASAN?

The **first evaluation question** was to address the following (interrelated) backstopping dimensions:

- **expertise**: core team, specialized experts, junior staff, and trainees,
- **engagement**: proactiveness and demand-orientation,
- **service offer**: advise, product development, and process/network facilitation,
- **working modalities**: mostly virtual with few face-to-face meetings (except under AGUASAN),
- **tools**: RésEAU Briefs, RésEAU Updates, dgroups, learning journeys, webinars, podcasts, (e-)workshops, (e-)trainings, field visits,
- **platforms**: Trend Observatory on Water, Hazu, and RésEAU Shareweb, and AGUASAN website,
- **thematic areas**: youth and gender,
- **network activation**: activity level and vitality of the RésEAU and Sub-RésEAUs, and
- **AGUASAN backstopping**: quarterly meetings, annual workshop, first workshop outside Switzerland, and complementarities and synergies with RésEAU.

The second evaluation question constituted:

- an open inquiry into the **ideas of the RésEAU and AGUASAN members** on relevant support and backstopping modalities for the future,
- a **comparison with other networks** (including their backstopping modalities), within SDC and beyond, and
- an investigation in how RésEAU (or its Sub-RésEAUs) can **engage with other networks** or communities-of-practice

The **third evaluation question** could be further divided into the following sub-questions:

- **Relevance**: to what extent was the backstopping aligned to the needs and priorities of the RésEAU members, the AGUASAN Community of Practice, and SDC, and continued to be so when circumstances changed?
- **Coherence**: to what extent did the backstopping facilitate useful and effective collaboration between RésEAU and the SDC's other thematic networks (internal coherence), and between RésEAU and AGUASAN and other regional/international water networks (external coherence)?
- **Effectiveness**: to what extent has the backstopping achieved its stated objectives or is likely to achieve its stated objectives (see also Section 6)?
- **Impact**: to what extent has the backstopping support helped enhance SDC's development impact in the water sector and how realistic is it to expect this from a knowledge network and Backstopping Mandate?

- **Efficiency:** to what extent could the backstopping have achieved better results through a different allocation of its budgetary resources and a different demand on SDC's human resources?
- **Sustainability:** to what extent are the backstopping's results likely to continue after the Mandate ends, considering the interest and capacity of the RésEAU cum AGUASAN members, the institutionalization of communication and learning systems, and the SDC institutional context?

Three underlying questions for all three above questions were:

1. **What is the value-added of the backstopping mandate for the RésEAU, AGUASAN and the SDC?**
2. **What worked, what didn't and why?**
3. **What can/should be improved** in the backstopping in the future to make it more relevant, useful, and effective?

The answer to these last two questions was to inform the answer to the **fourth primary evaluation question** and offer **the conclusions, lessons, and recommendations** of the Evaluation.

Finally, SDC's evaluation practice required that the recommendations were prioritized, specify the target audience, and offer a time indication for their implementation (differentiating between short, medium, and long-term).

4. Evaluation design matrix

The table below recaps the four main evaluation questions and shows how each question was answered. The table specifies the judgment criteria (i.e., the basis for the evaluative assessment), the data collection methods, the data sources, and data analysis approaches. The table offers a concise overview of the scope of and approach to the evaluation.

Table 1 Evaluation design matrix

Evaluation questions	Judgement criteria	Data collection methods	Data sources	Data analysis methods
1. How did the Backstopping Mandate perform as measured against the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria?	The OECD/DAC Evaluation Criteria definitions*, including, importantly: – the Swiss International Cooperation Strategy (ICS) 2017-20 and 2021-24 – Guidelines on Water 22-25 – GPW Program Framework 21-24 – expressed needs and priorities of RésEAU and AGUASAN members – RésEAU BSM objective statement *As defined in OECD/DAC (2019). Better Criteria for Better Evaluation. Revised Evaluation Criteria. Definitions and Principles for Use	Document review Online survey Key informant interviews	Documents: – Credit proposal – Progress report – Budget and expenditures – Baseline survey – Membership data – SDC corporate documents – Section Water documents Survey: – Members survey Key informants: – Focal Point RésEAU – RésEAU Core Group – Backstoppers – Section Water staff – SDC Members RésEAU: Heads of domain and NPOs in selected SCOs in all regions – Non SDC members RésEAU – AGUASAN members – SDC CDE and AFS networks focal points – Regional/international water networks	Inductive and deductive analysis Comparative analysis Follow-the-money analysis

2. To what extent and how did the backstopping set-up, modalities and tools contribute to the performance and usefulness of the Backstopping Mandate?	The BSM's theory of change (see Section 7) The relevance and contribution of the backstopping's: – expertise – demand-orientation – responsiveness/proactiveness – service offer – working modalities – tools – platforms – thematic areas – network activation	Document review Online survey Key informant interviews	Documents: – BSM products & platforms – task list and activity matrix Survey: – members survey Key informants: – same as above, excluding external networks	Inductive and deductive analysis Contributions analysis
3. What new, alternative, and useful approaches to the backstopping of the RésEAU exist?	– RésEAU members' expectations and ideas – Best practices of other (SDC) networks	Document review Online survey Key informant interviews	Documents: – Factsheets and websites of other knowledge networks Survey: – Members survey Key informants: – Same as under Question 1	Inductive and deductive analysis Comparative analysis
4. What conclusions, lessons, and recommendations can be drawn from the Evaluation on the current and future backstopping of the RésEAU?	– What worked, what didn't and why? – What can and should be improved?		The answers to the first three evaluation questions	Inductive and deductive analysis

5. Scope

Backstopping mandates are common within SDC. Program officers use them to mobilize specialized knowledge and access labor. They use this knowledge and capacity to help scope, design, and monitor projects and programs. The SDC program officers often do not have the time within their broad range of responsibilities to acquire the requisite specialized skills and undertake these tasks in full. Hence, their use of external expertise.

The Backstopping Mandate of the RésEAU fulfilled the same function. In fact, in our initial interviews, when inquiring into the scope of the Backstopping Mandate, the first thing mentioned was that the Backstopping Mandate gave the RésEAU **access to thematic and methodological knowledge and capacity**, for example to:

- helped design and commission, monitor, and/or undertake regional or thematic scoping studies with or by local experts,
- advised on relevant development approaches,
- developed RésEAU strategies (e.g., on youth and gender), and
- helped in organizing webinars, learning journeys, face-to-face events, e-workshops etc.,
- linked SDC staff to trusted information sources.

But the Backstopping Mandate of the RésEAU—and other knowledge networks within SDC for that matter—**went well beyond this classical function of the SDC backstopper**. In addition, it was to:

- administer the network membership, communicate with members, and manage the Information Technology (IT) platforms,
- capitalize and disseminate positive project and program experiences and good practices,
- facilitate exchange and learning amongst RésEAU and Sub RésEAU members,
- keep members up to date, and attuned to the latest trends and future challenges, and
- organize and facilitate conferences and workshops of the RésEAU, Sub-RésEAUs, and AGUASAN.

In other words, beyond the classical role of backstopper, the RésEAU Backstopping Mandate was to fulfill the role of:

- **network secretariat,**
- **knowledge manager,**
- **facilitator, and**
- **trendwatcher.**

The reason for this broader mandate was the same as for the classical Backstopping Mandate. These functions—which were deemed vital for the healthy functioning of the network—could not be fulfilled by the SDC staff within their allotted responsibilities and time.

Moreover, the Backstopping Mandate was **framed flexibly and service-oriented**—demand-driven—to *‘ensure a maximum support for what is needed’*. This meant that the Backstopping Mandate:

- had no pre-defined outputs,
- included an upfront allocation of 25% of the budget to source expertise over and beyond the in-house capacity of the backstopping consortium of Skat Consulting Ltd, Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation, and Zoï Environment Network, and
- allocated CHF 25,000 per year to each of the Sub-RésEAU’s to empower and vitalize them.

Finally, the backstopping mandate covered both the **RésEAU and AGUASAN**. The external evaluation **covered the full scope of the backstopping mandate** as defined above.

6. Benchmark

The Terms of Reference of the backstopping mandate stated **three (interrelated) objectives** for the mandate, namely to:

1. secure the quality of SDC's thematic work,
2. promote innovative ways of capitalization, knowledge management and sharing, and
3. provide demand-driven support to the Sub-RésEAUs.

Based on our initial discussions with the SDC and the backstoppers, we interpreted these objectives as follows. The backstopping mandate was to:

1. contribute to the continued development effectiveness of SDC's projects and programs in the water domain,
2. facilitate SDC's organizational learning, and
3. respond to the needs and expressed demands for support from SDC's field staff and their local development partners.

The achievement of the second and third objective could be inferred from **a direct inquiry amongst the RésEAU members**, covering both the SDC and the non-SDC members. The evaluation did this through an online survey amongst all RésEAU members and one-on-one interviews with a select number of RésEAU members (see Section 8).

The backstopper's contribution to the development effectiveness of SDC's projects and programs required, in principle, an evaluation of how the backstopper's thematic and methodological support had been picked up by SDC staff and their local development partners, included in the project and program design and implementation, and influenced the subsequent development effectiveness of these projects and programs. Such an in-depth, case-study-based, inquiry went well beyond the resources of this evaluation—each case study would constitute a development evaluation in its own right.

As with the second and third objective, we needed to glean the likely contribution to the development effectiveness of SDC's projects and programs from the extent to which RésEAU members have picked up and responded positively to the backstopping support. In other words, the members' appreciation of the relevance and utility of the backstopping support for their development work was used as **proxy** for measuring the backstopper's contribution to the development effectiveness of SDC's projects and programs.

7. Theory of change

For the backstopping mandate, no logical framework had been developed, nor a theory of change explicated. From the initial document review and interviews, we could infer the underlying, implicit, theory of change of the backstopping of the RésEAU. The theory of change is detailed below.

IF:

- RésEAU members voice their needs and qualified demand for support, and
- the backstoppers respond with thematic and methodological knowledge, process facilitation, and staff capacity (**Inputs**),

THEN the RésEAU and the backstopping mandate will:

- secure the quality of SDC's thematic work,
- promote innovative ways of capitalization, knowledge management and sharing, and
- provide demand-driven support to the Sub-RésEAUs (**Outcomes**),

BECAUSE:

- the backstopping support is:
 - oriented towards the needs and demands of people in the field, i.e., relevant, and
 - its inputs/products are appropriate, useful, attractive, and workable,
 - RésEAU members:
 - know that, and how, they can access the backstopping mandate,
 - proactively use the backstopping support and products for work that is pertinent to their current or future development projects and programs,
 - respond positively to the backstopper's inputs/approaches and integrate their thematic and methodological suggestions into the project and program design and implementation,
 - take charge of their own learning and development and proactively voice their need for support in the capitalization of operational experiences and for institutional learning,
 - SDC's local development partners within SDC's projects and programs:
 - respond positively to the backstopper's thematic and methodological inputs/approaches, and these inputs/approaches are critical for the development effectiveness of the interventions,
 - the backstopping mandate secures that:
 - SDC's project and program experiences and knowledge are captured, preserved, stored, and made easily accessible to the SDC staff,
 - SDC's good/best practices are disseminated and known, creating a multiplier effect as these practices are more widely implemented,
 - SDC remains up to date on state-of-the-art knowledge and new trends in the water domain,
 - the SDC has access to the human resources and thematic and methodological knowledge required to design, implement, and monitor its development projects and programs,
 - the RésEAU:
 - is an appropriate, useful, appreciated and used vehicle for exchange, learning, and personal and institutional development.
-

Through the survey and the key informant interviews, the evaluation inquired into:

- the extent to which above assumptions held up in practice,
- the likely achievement of the backstopping's objectives, and
- the internal and external factors that contributed to or hindered objective achievement.

8. Evaluation methods

This section briefly introduces the main data collection and analysis methods of the evaluation.

Online survey

The purpose of the online survey was to solicit the views of the RésEAU and AGUASAN members about the backstopping mandate. The survey was designed by the evaluators based on the evaluation questions, initial interviews with the SDC and the backstoppers, and an initial document review. The evaluators consulted the Focal Point and the backstoppers on the draft survey. The survey was conducted through the online platform Survey Monkey. The survey was anonymous, included question branching, and allowed us to differentiate the results by member categories. To enhance the response rate, the SDC and the backstoppers informed the RésEAU and AGUASAN members about the survey before the survey was sent out to all members. The survey was open for three weeks and non-respondents were reminded twice to participate in the survey.

Key informant interviews

The purpose of the key informant interviews was to discuss in-depth the main themes/questions of the evaluation, collect qualitative information on the development effectiveness of the backstopping mandate, inquire into the strength, weaknesses, and value-added of the backstopping mandate (and the underlying reasons), and solicit thoughts and ideas on how the backstopping mandate could be improved upon and shaped in the future. Most key informants were selected purposefully based on their function. For the SDC field staff, non-SDC RésEAU members, and AGUASAN members, we followed for 50% the suggestions of the SDC and backstoppers, and for 50% handpicked or randomly selected members from the RésEAU and AGUASAN member list.

Document review

The purpose of the further document review was to collect qualitative and quantitative data on the development effectiveness of the backstopping mandate. The scope of the document review can be gleaned from the Evaluation Design Matrix in Section 4.

Data analysis methods

The evaluation applied various data analysis techniques for answering the evaluation questions:

- **inductive analysis:** 'making sense' of the collected data during the data collection and identify 'emerging themes and patterns',
- **deductive analysis:** 'a structured analysis' of the collected data to specifically answer the evaluation questions,
- **contribution analysis:** a structured and qualitative inquiry to ascertain to what extent the backstopping 'contributed' to the observed results or whether other factors dominated,
- **comparative analysis:** comparing the RésEAU and backstopping modalities with the practices of other SDC and external knowledge networks,
- **follow-the-money:** based on the expenditure profile and the contribution analysis, assess whether—with hindsight—a different allocation of resources could have had better results,
- **triangulation:** findings and conclusions will rest on data stemming from different categories of key informants and/or documents and be drawn and supported by both evaluators.

Note: Secondary research identified that there are several evaluation frameworks that organizations have developed to evaluate or assess networks and network-based collaborations. A working paper by the International Institute for Sustainable Development* noted that network evaluations typically act on an analysis of original expectations and stakeholder observations on their achievement, without enough attention to external benchmarks. Laying out a general framework, the authors go one step further to suggest that a life-cycle analysis of the network may provide some means to compare performance of the network with others or a normative standard. This is an innovation but is still based on a more general understanding of network management experience, rather than the unique context and constitution of each network and still falls short of providing comparable quantitative and objective criteria or benchmarks. This evaluation therefore triangulated information from members, network managers (focal points and core group), as well as the insights from managers of other networks, to assess the RésEAU and the backstopping of the RésEAU and their performance.

* Creech, Heather, and Aly Ramji. 2004. Knowledge Networks: Guidelines for Assessment. Manitoba: IISD.

9. Documentation

Swiss government

- Switzerland's International Cooperation Strategy 2021-24
- Guidelines on Water 2022-25

SDC

- Credit proposal 'RésEAU cum AGUASAN' backstopping mandate
- Terms of Reference for the External Evaluation of the 'RésEAU cum AGUASAN' backstopping mandate, including excerpts of the backstopping mandate's terms of reference and the proposal from Skat Consulting, Helvetas Intercooperation, and Zoï Environment Network.
- Global Programme Water. Programme Framework 2021-24

Backstoppers

- Task list and activity matrix
- Operational reports (#6) from 2020-23
- Budget control (30.9.2024)
- Minutes of meeting. Backstopping mandate Coordination Meeting of Skat Consulting, Helvetas, and Zoi Environment Network with afternoon visit of SDC Focal Point. 30 November 2023.
- Adjustment proposal (2023)
- Hazu platform

RésEAU

- SDC's thematic network on water. Flyer: What is the RésEAU?
- Membership survey 2019
- Gender Strategy
- Concept note on advisory services
- Briefs (#5): scanned
- RésEAU website: <https://www.shareweb.ch/site/Water/reseau>
- RésEAU member list

AGUASAN

- AGUASAN Community of Practice. PowerPoint Presentation.
- AGUASAN website: <https://aguasan.ch/>
- AGUASAN Workshop, Amman, Jordan, factsheets (#5): scanned
- AGUASAN member list

Trend Observatory on Water

- Trend sheets (#8): scanned
- Trend news (#6): scanned
- Website: <https://hazu.swiss/deza/trend-observatory-on-water>

Other

- Evaluation of the Global Water Partnership (2018)
- External evaluation of the International Secretariat for Water and Solidarity Water Europe (2023)
- Cap-Net UNDP. Water knowledge for all: <https://cap-net.org/>
- Solidarité Eau Suisse website: <https://solidariteausuisse.ch/>

10. Key informants

Name	Section
SDC Section Water	
Daniel Maselli	Focal Point RésEAU cum AGUASAN
Simon Zbinden	Head of Section
Fabrice Fretz	Deputy Head of Section
Marc-André Bünzli	Senior expert humanitarian aid
Dimka Stantchev	Blue Peace coordinator
Paola Boverat	Financial and administrative officer
Core Group RésEAU	
Mufleh Aref-Haza Alalaween	SCO Jordan
Carmen Thönnissen	SCO North-Macedonia
Kenneth Alberto Peralta-Nario	SCO Peru
Lisa Gampp	SCO Uzbekistan
Other SDC knowledge network focal points	
André Wehrli	CDE network
Stephanie Piers de Raveschoot	AFS network
Skat Consulting Ltd.	
Frank Wiederkehr	Team leader backstopping mandate
Manuel Henseler	Deputy team leader / lead backstopper RésEAU
Roger Schmid	Lead backstopper AGUASAN
Florian Klingel	Thematic backstopper CEO Skat Consulting
Delphine Magara	Junior advisor
Rachel Hershey	Intern
Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation	
Bernita Doornbos	Lead backstopper
Sophie Nguyen-Khoa Man	Thematic backstopper
Riff Fullan	Senior backstopper – facilitation
Marc Monnet	Junior advisor
Zoï Environment Network	
Otto Simonett	Senior expert backstopping mandate
Rebecca Jimenez	Junior advisor
Adelphi	
Annika Kramer	Trend Observatory Water
External networks	
Sarah Oppenheimer	Global Water Partnership
Rick Elmendorp	Netherlands Water Partnership
Michelle Heeb	Swiss Water Partnership
RésEAU members: SDC – Swiss cooperation offices	
Nadine Fragnière	Central Asia: Uzbekistan
Cliff Hammer	Formerly Western Balkans
Rosa Alcayhuaman	Latin America: Peru
Diana Rojas	Latin America: Colombia
Michele Jalkh	MENA, Lebanon
Eduart Rumani	Western Balkans, Albania
Non-SDC RésEAU members	
Olivier Normand	ISW, Tajikistan
Eric Nanchen	Fondation pour Développement durable des Régions de Montagne FDDM
AGUASAN members	
Claudio Valsangiacomo	SUPSI
Micheal Herger	Swiss Red Cross
Isabelle Providoli	University of Bern

