Eawag at the centre of international WASH efforts

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Two international conferences are currently being held at Eawag in Dübendorf: the Global WASH Cluster Meeting and the Emergency Environmental Health Forum. Both are aimed at strengthening and focusing collaboration and international efforts on the topics of water, sanitation and hygiene in a humanitarian context.

“Our world is witnessing an unprecedented convergence of crises,” said Eawag Director Martin Ackermann as he began his welcome address at this year's Emergency Environmental Health Forum, which is currently being held at Eawag. Together with the Global WASH Cluster Meeting, which was also held at the aquatic research institute earlier this week, over one hundred researchers, practitioners and decision-makers gathered on the campus in Dübendorf.

Eawag is thus acting as a central hub for international efforts to solve the numerous global crises surrounding the topic of water. Globally, access to safe drinking water and sanitation is still inadequate. Eawag is the newest member of the Global WASH Cluster. In his opening speech, Christian Stamm, Vice Director of Eawag, therefore emphasised the importance of collaboration and innovation, which are necessary not only to react to crises, but also to anticipate and mitigate them. Sustainable solutions are needed – and it was precisely these potential solutions that were discussed at Eawag as part of the WASH Cluster Meeting.

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Eawag Director Martin Ackermann welcomes guests from all over the world to the Emergency Environmental Health Forum on the campus in Dübendorf (Photo: Laura Baquedano).

Help in humanitarian crises

During the Emergency Environmental Health Forum, participants are focusing on the latest research findings from humanitarian WASH programmes and discussing approaches and innovations to benefit populations affected by humanitarian crises. “The forum is a unique platform for fostering collaboration, exchanging knowledge and inspiring action,” says Ackermann. Especially in crises such as floods, droughts and war, hygienic conditions are often catastrophic and drinking water is a rare commodity. Eawag is therefore conducting intensive research into adapted technologies for humanitarian use.

The exchange and cooperation with relevant organisations, those affected and decision-makers is central to this – and the Emergency Environmental Health Forum offers exactly that. Numerous presentations and panel discussions with representatives of international organisations such as UNICEF, OXFAM and the International Red Cross provide insights into the daily efforts to support people in greatest need, whether in countries of the Global South or in war-torn regions. This includes not only access to clean drinking water and safe, hygienic sanitary facilities, but also effective measures to combat disease.

“We are delighted to welcome the international community here at Eawag,” says Christoph Lüthi, Head of the Department of Sanitation & Water for Development. “This underlines Eawag's efforts and endeavours to promote research into sustainable water supply and sanitation.”

Cover picture: With the Global WASH Cluster Meeting and the Emergency Environmental Health Forum, two international conferences are held at Eawag (Photo: Eawag, Peter Penicka).

Related Links

WASH Cluster

Emergency Environmental Health Forum

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