

40^{years}
skat

Swiss Resource Centre and
Consultancies for Development



Anniversary Brochure

40 years
ska

Congratulations
from the
Management
Board

The management board is proud of the immense and highly qualified inputs that Skat has contributed to the field of development cooperation over the last forty years. This has only been possible through a high level of commitment to the development goals and people

concerned, as well as to Skat as an organization and a united team. We are especially thankful to the management of Skat, who have steered the boat with exceptional efforts, time inputs, “market” sensitive and innovative ideas through storms and challenges at various levels. We would also like to thank Skat’s personnel, who practiced an exceptional standard of commitment and professionalism and always place the people involved at the centre of their work. Last but not least, we would like to mention all the external persons and organisations who have contributed to Skat’s success in various forms, by seeking their services and/or providing advice and encouragement.

Finally, we wish Skat all the strength and good spirits for the years ahead to continue to make a most useful contribution to the goals of development cooperation.

Contents

Skat Milestones 4

How it all began - 40 years ago 6

40 years of Skat 9

Stories of the team12

Looking ahead: Our new Strategy 2018 - 2022 32

Skat Milestones



1997 - 2000

Internal reorganization
Establishment of Skat Consulting Ltd. (share holding company)
Loss of several SDC mandates
Documentation centre closed
Increasing number of consultancies in post-disaster reconstruction

1978

Establishment of Skat association, at University of St.Gallen (HSG)

Skat: Schweizerische Kontaktstelle für Angepasste Technologie (Swiss Centre for Appropriate Technology)

1992

Disengagement from University of St.Gallen



1994

ISO 9000 certification
Start of several SDC backstopping and support mandates
Consolidation of experiences



1983 - 1989

Thematic focus: Water, Building, Energy and Transport
Start of SDC support mandate
Focus on knowledge capitalization & dissemination
First consultancy assignments



2002

Establishment of Skat Foundation as non-profit arm of Skat Consulting
Inclusion of Knowledge management as expertise



2007

First project implementation in the area of Governance with DESPRO - Decentralisation support project for Ukraine until today



2018

40 years
skat

2003

Growth and increase of turnover

Knowledge sharing

Project documentation, publication guidelines and tools

First project implementation



Since 2012

PEPP/PROECCO project implementation in Great Lakes Region (Rwanda, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo)



Since 2006

Increased project implementation, turnover and revenue increase

Integration of cross-cutting themes:

- Governance and Decentralisation
- Environment
- Climate



2018

New Strategy

Strengthening of expertise in

- Water Management: water supply, sanitation, and hygiene
- Building, reconstruction, and settlements
- Energy production and climate change mitigation
- Governance

Since 2008

Apasan- Water and Sanitation project implementation Moldova



How it all began - 40 years ago

By Urs Heierli

“We can fly to the moon – but we do not have a reliable handpump”.

In 1978, when Skat was created, the fact that handpumps were not reliable was a sad reality, which led to the foundation of Skat. Indeed, Skat contributed significantly to improving the reliability of handpumps at the global level. Skat was mandated by the World Bank and SDC to become a technical centre of excellence in handpump design; the concept of VLOM (Village-level operation and maintenance) has achieved global acceptance and HTN (“Network for cost-effective Technologies in Water Supply”) supported the global dissemination of these technologies.

The creation of Skat was inspired by the debate about adequate technologies: E.F. Schumacher, author of the bestseller “Small is beautiful”, was supposed to be the keynote speaker at a preparatory conference in Bienne in 1977. Unfortunately, he died just a few weeks before, in September 1977. The adequacy of technologies was highly debated, sometimes with heated controversy, and often with ideological fervour, but the main question was very simple and straightforward: what technologies do the majority of people in poor countries need? Was the technology used in the West (or, to be more precise, the most modern technology) the right answer? Schumacher’s ITDG (Intermediate Technology Development Group) published a catalogue of old hand- or animal-powered machines and tools (“A Guide to Small-Scale Equipment for Rural Development”), which became a bestseller; these were the tools that people in developing countries really needed, not powerful tractors and harvesters.

Skat – then called “Swiss Centre for Appropriate Technology” – was mainly a documentation and consultancy centre, where development practitioners could ask questions. Of the first 77 questions Skat answered in 1979, over 30 were related to renewable energy (solar, biogas and hydropower), but the future focal areas of Skat, building and construction, and drinking water supply, were already very prominent from the beginning. There was a great need for know-how, and Skat worked with many international Appropriate Technology (AT) centres to establish a broad knowledge network, SATIS (“Socially Appropriate Technology Information Services”). Skat also created a bookshop where the most important publications were made available.

Documentation services were complemented by in-depth consultancy on specific topics, such as water turbines and hydropower, as well as handpumps and building materials, through which Skat became a centre of excellence. It developed a solid reputation which led to flourishing consultancy activities, generating substantial revenues.

A vision and mission for the next 40 years – getting useful technologies to scale ...

From the outset, Skat was not only focused on technology. It had come to the realisation that there is more to successful implementation and dissemination of a suitable technology, once it has been adapted to the local context. Three forms of interventions are needed to achieve broad dissemination: “push” (to bring a technical solution to early adopters), “pull” (to create a demand and supply chain), and “policy” (to influence and create a conducive policy environment for the solution). It is this holistic approach that became part of the DNA of Skat.

One reason for Skat to be located in St. Gallen was the close link with the University of St. Gallen. From 1979 to 1992, Skat was part of the University and was part of the Institute for Latin American Research and for Development Cooperation. The activities of Skat were linked to the academic world through Jean-Max Baumer’s teaching in development cooperation. This link shaped Skat’s understanding of Appropriate Technologies to include economic and social perspectives, and it prevented Skat from focusing on technology only.

Skat has more to offer than it appears at first sight: it has developed a truly solid knowledge in several areas, for example in handpump development. Through its initial focus on handpumps, it has gradually widened its scope. What started as the “Handpump Technology Network” (HTN) gradually evolved into the internationally renowned RWSN (“Rural Water Supply Network”), covering a broad range of affordable rural water solutions. Today, handpumps are not seen as cutting-edge, and many handpumps have become obsolete. But people in Africa, Asia and Latin America still have enormous needs to access safe water: many still rely on open wells with a bucket and many handpumps are neglected. Could this be an opportunity to lead the next revolution for rural water services? Could Skat and RWSN play a lead role for the next period and help bring rural water supply to the next level, through affordable systems ?

Similarly, Skat has one of the richest experiences and knowledge in the area of building materials, a sector that is often under-estimated in its paramount importance for development. Building materials and the construction sector are one of the most dynamic and important sectors for infrastructure and housing; this sector is also crucial in terms of job creation. This area of expertise began 40 years ago with the publication “Appropriate Building Materials” by Roland Stulz, then a best-seller of the Skat bookshop, which was translated into many languages, and remains relevant. Skat is currently supporting and revolutionising the entire brick, construction and housing sector in Rwanda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo by acting as an industry facilitator. By applying the “push”, “pull”, “policy” strategy, it provides not only technical expertise in brick-making, but also in efficient construction and housing solutions. What started as a brick project now supports the entire value chain from brick to housing and is on the brink of

becoming interesting for investors and the real estate business. These are contributions that are of paramount importance to development issues, and these contributions will be most relevant in the years to come.

... and unfolding the potential for social entrepreneurship and innovation

Adapting technologies to local situations and contexts and creating viable supply chains were the guiding principles of Skat, from the outset. And these principles have remained relevant over the last 40 years: Marketing aspects, business models, human centered design (HCD) and social entrepreneurship are the most fashionable topics of today's development challenges. These are hot topics discussed in development circles, as well as at the World Economic Forum in Davos.

To unfold the potential of these concepts, it will be necessary to remain technically competent and focus on practical solutions with boots on the ground. To succeed in scaling up technologies, it will be also crucial to embed them in scalable economic and entrepreneurial strategies. I hope that we succeed in re-associating Skat with the University of St. Gallen in order to create links between the enormous practical experience of Skat and the theoretical backbone of social science and economic theory that the University can offer. Combining the practical orientation of Skat with the academic world of the University of St. Gallen, will be a win-win for both, and Skat will remain at the forefront of the development policy debate for the next 40 years.



40 years of Skat

By Karl Wehrle

"An eventful, challenging and successful life!"

I had the privilege of contributing to Skat's eventful and challenging life, from its pioneer beginnings up to today's established and effective tandem of Skat Consultancy and Skat Foundation. I would like to recall below some of the highlights and share with you some of the secrets that contributed to Skat's success, based on my experience.

Skat was created by key Swiss organisations in the field of development cooperation, in order to act as a technical resource center and to document and make available the Swiss experience in an effective manner, thereby achieving overall development goals. Skat has maintained this mission throughout its life. This commitment required a high level of alertness to an ever-changing context and for strong and appropriate responses to ongoing demands.

From "Do-It-Yourself" to holistic technical solutions considering social acceptance, cost efficiency, supply chains, etc.

When Skat was first created, the "self-help" approach was high on the agenda. Accordingly, the concept of appropriateness was considered equivalent to "do-it-yourself" solutions. However, simple technical solutions were often not accepted due to low prestige and/or high maintenance requirements. Skat responded to these failures by reinforcing its expertise through the recruitment of qualified professionals and by focusing its activities on selected limited areas of expertise. At the same time, Skat realised that staff could only sufficiently understand changes in the context and respond accordingly and in a holistic way to new demands by frequently exposing its professionals to the reality in the field, and by involving additional areas of expertise to achieve balanced sustainable solutions. Skat then became increasingly involved in consultancies and backstopping of on-going projects and enhance linkages with complementary disciplines.

From documentation to effective knowledge management

At the beginning, the pillar of Skat's resource center was its library. This was the place where knowledge was collected, if necessary documented and made available. Skat realised soon that there was a demand for additional learning activities. Pro-actively, Skat created and became involved in learning platforms in form of workshops and networks at national and international level. The Aguasan network that facilitates effective knowledge exchange among water sector professionals for over 35 years is one of the examples where Skat has been instrumental. Today Skat covers the entire cycle of knowledge

management from knowledge capture and creation to synthesizing and documenting, as well as sharing & transferring. Different methods and tools are applied depending on the context (e.g. internet-based or traditional)

From an association to an autonomous consultancy & foundation

In order to continue providing services and in order to remain sustainable, Skat had to adjust its organisational set-up and its way of financing in a flexible and timely manner, according to changes in the wider context and demands in the field. Skat launched its activities in a rather protected working environment: it was housed by the University of St.Gallen and its budget financed by its founding members, including SDC. However, the budget available became soon insufficient to cover the increased demand from the field that called for additional staff. Hence services had to be “sold” through mandates, projects and consultancies. With time, the major part of Skat’s activities was no longer covered by the regular budget. These developments required adjustments in the management of the organisation, regarding personnel, financing, risks, etc. In responding to these challenges, Skat turned from an association into a consultancy complemented with a foundation. This tandem allows Skat to offer and provide consultancies and implement projects of a high professional standard on the consultancy side, by coping with the challenging environment of the private sector. On the foundation side, it stays closer to the original role of Skat by innovatively creating and sharing knowledge and experiences as well as promoting development cooperation in the Eastern part of Switzerland.

Some of Skat’s “secrets” to cope with the challenges along the transformation process

Skat was at all times convinced and committed to its mission. It has been willing and capable to adjust its way of working in a flexible and innovative manner according to contextual changes, demands and ongoing learning. Skat offered and implemented its services in the niches where it has a comparative advantage. With this mindset, Skat’s contribution turned out to be most effective and in many cases unique. Skat’s agility seems to be rooted primarily at the management but also at the staff level in being open, curious and alert concerning new developments and demands, but also to maintain a learning attitude and readiness to creatively and innovatively develop appropriate solutions. Additionally, the most important factor, is that Skat’s collaborators are highly committed to contribute to Skat’s mission in a highly professional way in their area of expertise. Finally, it would be an oversight not to mention the contributions and goodwill that has come from the many outside supporters of Skat. These contributions have encouraged Skat to make its own way and have provided useful guidance in many instances.

Skat's preparedness for the years after its 40th birthday

Skat's experience, unique qualities and competences, together with its readiness for continuous learning, put it in a strong position to make a substantial and useful contribution to the challenges that development cooperation has yet to meet. In recent years, approaches that have already been applied will still be in demand, including developing the capacity of local players through partnering in project implementation and/or tailored trainings, or utilising technical project implementation to reorganize and strengthen local project management and governance in general. A special mention goes to the tandem of Skat consultancy and Skat foundation, which facilitates innovation and the development of new solutions and approaches, as well as the strengthening of local actors through effective ways of sharing knowledge and experiences. Overall, it can be concluded that Skat is prepared for the years to come to make a substantial and sustainable contribution to the overall development goal of poverty alleviation.



Stories of the team

Our team and former colleagues made Skat what it is today.

Our team applies consistent professional expertise in various fields and develop innovative ideas and approaches, through which they permanently move things forward. We can say that all of our staff members are highly committed and motivated to find solutions to difficult tasks even under the most challenging circumstances. In the following we

would like to give our readers an insight into some personal stories of some of our Skat colleagues from their activities and missions.

Hedi Feibel

PhD, Renewable
Energy and Water
Expert,
at Skat since 2012

"In 2013, I spent two weeks in Liberia for a reconnaissance study to identify possible mini hydropower sites for rural electrification. During the one-week field trip together with Greg, the chief hydrologist of the Liberian Hydrological Service, we had lots of fun despite the

difficult conditions in the Liberian countryside. We reached one of the sites after walking for over 2 hours through the forest, climbing hills and crossing tributaries. But finally we were rewarded by a kind of a "multi-level" exciting thunderous waterfall, the Gbedin Falls. On the way back, we came through a village where we were quickly surrounded by tens of children. Greg asked them to recite the Pledge of Allegiance, which they did in unison. Then, he sat down and started explaining them in detail why we were there and what we were doing. It was a great moment and I was very impressed to see how seriously he took them as the next generation who - already as children - need to understand their environment."



Greg, Hedi and her team on a "rural electrification mission" in Liberia

Kerstin Danert

PhD, Water Specialist,
at Skat since 2008

"It was Erich Baumann ("the handpump man"), that inspired me to join Skat in 2008. I reckoned that if he was able to undertake such diligent work and strengthen capacity on fundamental aspects of rural water supplies in Skat, that perhaps I could do something similar.

Ten years later, and I have worked in 15 African countries. Trying to pick out the gems from my portfolio of rich experiences is difficult. However, I will never forget the pleasure of seeing the Liberian Government staff present their first Water and Sanitation Sector Performance Report at the National Joint Sector Review. I sat listening, at times with tears in my eyes recalling the hard work that the team undertook to pull information from across the whole country into one document. Another experience I bask in was witnessing participants of the Sierra Leone Drilling supervision course learn. *"Thank you for this course"* one participant informed me. *"I used to supervise drilling, but I stood there as a statue. I thought that gravel pack was a German word"*. And finally, particularly humbling was working with Government staff and highly motivated handpump mechanics in Northern Bahir El Ghazal, South Sudan. There was such an eagerness to learn that I felt as though the people I was working with were drawing every possible piece of knowledge from my head that they could. And so you can perhaps imagine how much I look forward to the years ahead."



Meleesa Naughton

Water resources
management
Specialist,
at Skat since 2016

"I first came to know Skat through the fact that it hosts the Rural Water Supply Network, when I joined the network a few years ago on the recommendation of my then-colleagues, who worked for an international Non-Government Organisation based in Ireland. We pored

over the discussions happening on the network platform as we tried to provide our field staff with recommendations on how to improve the sustainability of rural water services provided by our organisation. Back then, I thought that the Rural Water Supply Network was a huge operation, with many people involved in the Secretariat; I was very surprised to find out later on that all these activities were managed by two members of staff only! It speaks to the convening power of this network, and of Skat in particular, which has managed to bring many organisations together and advance the thinking in rural water supplies for the benefit of many organisations and people around the world."



During a field visit to a village in Cote d'Ivoire where we brought participants of the RWSN Forum for a field visit

Matthias Saladin

Water and Sanitation
Specialist,
at Skat since 2014

"The first time I met Mr. Hari, he was a very shy, introvert person who would watch his shoes when speaking to me. At that time he was a mechanic and his main business was making big iron gates for house owners in his home town of Njombe in the Southern Highlands of

Tanzania. After a training workshop with our partner SHIPO, he learned how to make Rope Pumps (see picture) and manually drill wells. These skills, combined with a lot of courage, endurance and resilience, set him on his way to become a master artisan. And after another workshop where he learned how to make a business plan, calculate costs and prices and how to do marketing on a shoe string, his business started taking off. When I met him in March 2018, he had a dozen persons working for him in three teams. His latest assignment was the installation of a well and a pump in Dar-es-Salaam, where a wealthy person challenged him to find water because no one else was able to. After drilling the well and successfully installing a pump, the same client then asked him to drill a well and install a pump in Zanzibar, which he has just completed now.

Seeing people like Mr. Hari evolve and thrive is the best satisfaction I can think of. At the end of the day, we as consultants are not going to help people to carry water to their home or dig their latrines. The best we can do is supporting people like Mr. Hari to fulfil their aspiration – not only to have safe drinking water, but to make a living out of providing safe drinking water to others."



Mr. Hari and Matthias Saladin at a rope pump (Tanzania) constructed by Hari and his team

Stephanie Theis

Knowledge Management
and Communications
Specialist,

at Skat since 2016

"My first overseas mission with Skat was to support a study on Resilience in Groundwater Supply Systems in Lagos, Nigeria. I met people who are living in an environment with abundant water resources, but facing tremendous challenges with regards to

accessing reliable drinking water supply. Along the way, I met students, researchers and professors who shared their perspectives on the issue and traditional leaders and villagers who voiced concern about the lack of reliable water supply and disputes over water in their communities.

The data gathered through the interviews we undertook with villagers and officials provided inputs into a study to better understand resilience to environmental shocks, in order to improve the lives of people. I was struck by the practical realities of what it means to have no reliable water source.

One woman, in her 60s, told me that since she has a borehole at home, it is such a relief for her as she no longer has to wait for hours in long queues to get a first glass of water in the morning. The encounters with all these different people, listening to how water access changed their lives in various settings made it a great memorable experience.

I'm happy to work in a company where it matters to make an impact and which is able to remain successful since 40 years by holding onto their mission and vision (...) of improving the lives of marginalized people".



After a very insightful interview on Groundwater use with a community (Lagos state, Nigeria)

Julie Smolnitchi

Water Governance
Specialist,
at Skat since 2014

"A few weeks after my arrival in Moldova where I joined Skat's Swiss Water and Sanitation Project (ApaSan) financed by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and the Austrian Development Cooperation, I decided to spend 3 days with an elderly women who

lived in a typical Moldovan village. The aim was to better grasp the living conditions and more specifically the water and sanitation situation. I experienced the harsh reality as I felt the minus 18 degree Celsius temperature on my skin. "Matusa Maria" (aunt Maria in Rumanian), welcomed me with some reservations at first, without understanding too much what I wanted. I followed Maria like her shadow in her daily routine starting at 5 am: collecting firewood, feeding pigs, goats, chicken, braving the cold to fetch water at the fountain and using the outside pit latrine. Matusa Maria lived like my grandmother from Ticino. Health and hygiene conditions have drastically changed in Switzerland since 100 years but unfortunately not in the poorest country of Europe.

I truly wish that Skat continues to apply its expertise in the water and sanitation sector to improve the dignity and health of the people like Maria who benefited from tap water thanks to the ApaSan project."



Sean Furey

Water and Sanitation
Specialist,
at Skat since 2011

"I joined Skat in 2011 to help organise the 6th RWSN Forum in Uganda, which was a great success. However, my first solo-mission came in 2012 when I was working for the Ministry of Water & Environment in Uganda to support the development of national Water Source

Protection guidelines. It was a great assignment, but I arrived late at night at my hotel in Kampala, opened up my emails to find out that the following morning I would be facilitating a whole-day consultation workshop for around 250-300 government and development partner staff. Needless to say, I didn't get much sleep that night as I pulled together a programme of presentations and discussions. The following day went really well and I really enjoyed the debate and discussion.

The follow-up fieldwork while piloting the guidelines was also a really great experience. What I love about the job are the wonderful people that I have got to meet and work with from all over the world. It has been gratifying since that project, that my work has been used to guide how water supply and water resources are done across Uganda to protect catchment areas and livelihoods.

Working for Skat also brings the dubious pleasure of collecting travel horror stories: being deported from Kenya after losing my passport; being refused entry to Tajikistan because my entry visa hadn't been signed by the consulate in Berlin; arriving alone in Liberia with no luggage, no pick-up, no mobile-phone coverage and torrential rain; and a 3-hour flight from Marrakech to Zurich that took 20 hours and included a bus-replacement service and a mysterious propeller plane from Geneva to Zurich."



Selfie from the Fergana Valley, Tajikistan where Skat provided backstopping support to a rural water supply and sanitation programme.

Noro Robson Schmid

Publications/Office
Manager

at Skat since 2004

"In 2016, the 16th Summit of the Francophonie was hosted by Madagascar. Through the Swiss Development Cooperation Agency, Switzerland was represented at this big event highlighting the theme «Eau, paix et sécurité» (Water, peace

and security). As part of the backstopping mandate, Skat set up a stand representing the theme. I, as part of the project support staff, had the privilege of participating and setting up the stand logistically.

It was of course an honour and a pleasure for me to represent Switzerland, my heartland in Madagascar, my homeland. And to have been part of the winning team. In the end, our stand won the prize for the most innovative stand in the "summit village"!

Vive Skat!"



Martin Läng

Publishing and ICT
Specialist,

at Skat since 1994

"When I started working at Skat in 1994, we still had our own publishing house and a public library. At that time we exhibited our books at the Frankfurt Book Fair and I was allowed to travel there several times to represent Skat. For me it was

great to finally have a job which I can fully identify with and in which I see an important meaning. Much of the work of producing books in 1994 was still done manually: copying, cutting and pasting by hand. I am very grateful to Skat for being able to experience technical developments here, including how the production of information has changed during this time, and how the nature of its dissemination has developed. I was able to help implement this progress at Skat. This has always kept the work interesting for me and I hope that this will continue for many years in this way."



Me at my working place at the headquarters in St.Gallen

Laura Neuweiler

Office Manager
at Skat since 2009

"In 2011 I had the opportunity to provide administrative and logistical support during the 6th Water Supply Network (RWSN) Forum in Kampala, Uganda, which was a great success. The Forum set out a vision for the future and provided the opportunity for around 450 delegates

from around 52 countries to share their experiences and chart key next steps along the path for rural water supplies. It was a great experience for me to be part of the project support staff, having the chance to meet very interesting people from all over the world with different cultural backgrounds.

After five days of intensive work at the event, we visited a typical Ugandan village next to Busungu. There we visited John and his family, living in an area, where they have to face tremendous challenges with regard to accessing reliable drinking water supply. We arrived there as strangers but they welcomed us warmly and with great enthusiasm offering us a delicious home-made lunch. (I still can remember the taste and the smell of that food, though I never found out what I had actually eaten).

These kinds of memories are the little things of life, we never will forget. I am happy to work for a company where such experiences are possible!"



My colleagues and I at the registration booth at the RWSN Forum in Kampala

Violeta Zivanovic

Office Manager
at Skat since 2011

"In 2016 I had my first overseas mission organising the 7th Rural Water Supply Network (RWSN) Forum, which took place in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. The Forum was a huge success with more than 440 participants. During this five day Forum I had the chance to meet people from 65

different countries. It was fascinating seeing so many different cultures. I had the opportunity to visit a small village near Abidjan called Soumie. Participants were welcomed in the village, located an hour away from Abidjan, and given a demonstration of manual drilling. The habitants welcomed us with traditional dancing, singing and food. It was amazing talking to them. There were a lot of children with paintings on their bodies. As I was taking pictures of the surroundings, children ran one by one to be in this picture above, and I decided to join them. I have never met such warm, loving and hospitable people. Especially the children seemed so happy in spite of the challenging living conditions. This visit was truly a memorable experience."



Bertha Camacho

Knowledge Management,
Monitoring and
Evaluation Specialist
at Skat since 2007

"I started working at Skat on May 1, 2007. Coming from Bolivia, it was the first time in my life that I had to work on May Day. However, it proved to be a stroke of luck, since my journey at Skat has been filled with enriching experiences. At Skat, I not only have the opportunity to work

with so many inspiring people; but I also have had and still have the opportunity to work in so many different countries. My first mission was in June 2007 to Kitgum, Uganda, where I conducted training to UNICEF staff on Emergency Monitoring and Evaluation. Since then, my journey at Skat took me as far as Bangladesh and Mongolia in the east; Nicaragua in the west; Copenhagen in the north and South Africa in the south. The richness of working with diverse groups of people is a source of motivation to continue supporting initiatives that help others improve their livelihoods. Ten years after, I had the great pleasure of becoming the Director of Skat Foundation. In my new role, I am more than keen to continue promoting actively the importance of knowledge sharing in development cooperation. I am thankful to each of my colleagues at Skat for 11 years of collaboration."



Swiss Reso
Consultanci

Florian Klingel

Water and Sanitation
Specialist

at Skat since 2011

"Skat has been working for 10 years in Moldova, supporting the country's government and the people in the poor countryside to improve their water supply and sanitation. Moldova is where I have travelled about 25 times since joining Skat and enjoyed many weeks working in

an exciting project. But for my family, Moldova was this unknown place where I disappeared frequently and came back from quite tired. So this spring, we chose this unlikely holiday destination and visited Jonathan (our team leader in Moldova) and his family, who have become good friends over the years. My family could see Moldova and its charming countryside, as well as meet the people with whom I spent all this time during those long absences: our great project team.

In Trebujeni village, one of the 42 villages where Skat has helped build a water supply system, we were shown around by the director of the local association managing the water system, which was set up with the help of the project. It was particularly nice to show Emil the facilities of the water supply system and explain to him how it all works. As he could see, working at Skat is more than just staring at a screen in the office.

On our walk through the village, a lady was happy to fill us a bottle of water from her tap and we could all confirm that the water tastes as least as good as in St. Gallen."



My son Emil and I inside a water supply reservoir in Trebujeni village in Moldova.

Sanjay Gupta

Water, Sanitation
and Solid Waste
Management Specialist
at Skat since 2014

"My first long term assignment with Skat as consultant started in 2011 in Bhutan with the Managing Director of Skat Juerg Christen. We had the task of developing an integrated solid waste management strategy in the framework of the concept of "zero waste". That was not

just a massive task in terms of carrying out a survey in various towns of Bhutan, but also in organizing and implementing trainings of local officials. It was personally a very fulfilling experience as it was the first time that a zero waste framework and strategy for Bhutan was jointly developed. And professionally it was a very successful endeavour as the Cabinet approved it and Bhutan endorsed its first zero waste strategy for the country.

Since I joined Skat full time in 2014 I have been involved in a few action research projects, which I enjoyed the most, such as marine litter research projects in Vietnam, Indonesia and Philippines, improving waste management in Indonesia and organizing beach clean-ups and zero waste schools programs. On the 40th anniversary of Skat, my immediate goal is to set up fifty zero waste schools and colleges in India and its neighboring countries. I believe that over the next two decades, developing countries need to pay more attention to solid waste and faecal sludge management."



Me, during the waste composition survey 2011 in Bhutan

Jürg Christen

Managing Director,
Senior Social Infrastructure
and Environmental
Management Specialist

at Skat since 1993

"After 10 years of field work for Helvetas, building suspension bridges in Nepal and water supplies in Lesotho, I returned to Switzerland in 1993 with my family and joined Skat in St. Gallen.

Meanwhile 25 years have passed and I am very proud to be currently the

longest serving active Skat employee. I joined the organisation when it still was an association providing advisory and documentation services in the field of technology management. However, it was also a time when development cooperation was changing and a new, more adequate organisational form was needed to react to the new challenges. During the late nineties I actively participated in this change process, which transformed Skat into a shareholding company with its sister organisation Skat Foundation. During the early years of the new millennium I had the privilege to lead Skat with a highly professional team of experts into a healthy consultancy company and foundation, which is successfully established in international development cooperation. Although I have enjoyed my role as a Managing Director of this exciting organisation, I am always thrilled to go back to the field to work directly with our partners and beneficiaries. The field is my source of inspiration and motivation where I get the drive to do this work. Although our work is always related to poverty, inequality, crisis or disaster it gives me satisfaction to provide a small contribution to the mitigation of these issues.

It was this type of event which got me back into the hills of Nepal in 2015, when the recent disastrous earthquake destroyed big parts of the country, with thousands of deaths and people injured and numerous settlements destroyed. My input was the start of the school reconstruction project of Caritas Switzerland in Sindhupalchowk district, where under the able supervision of my colleague and senior architect Daniel Schwitter a good number of solid, earthquake-resistant and child-friendly schools are being reconstructed since."



During an assessment of damages after the earthquake in Nepal, 2015- completed school in 2017

Anne Sophie Aublet

Water Specialist
at Skat since 2010

"The first time I arrived in St.Gallen at Skat, I intended to meet a certain man, Roger Schmid, because I wanted to be part of the AGUASAN Community of Practice. After 3.5 hours of travel, I was told that Roger was not in the office because he had been blocked somewhere

due to this unpronounceable Icelandic volcano. Fortunately for me, he had just arrived after 3-4 days delay and managed to come anyway so my trip was not useless. I became an AGUASAN member and joined Skat shortly after this meeting under Roger's mentoring. He has inspired me and still does, as well as truly dedicated practitioners such as Karl Wehrle, Daniel Schwitter or Jürg Christen. They have made the soul of Skat and we owe to them to keep it alive."



Discussion with the a water users association in Kivu, DRC

Daniel Schwitter

Education and
Health Infrastructure
Specialist

at Skat since 1995

"One of the most striking experiences of my 23 years employment with Skat was the collaboration with the Tibetan Medical & Astro Institute Medical Academy (MTK) in Dharamsala, India. The MTK, of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, is a cultural and educational institution that functions

under the guidance and support of the Central Tibetan Administration and the Dalai Lama. The institute's primary objective is to preserve, practice and propagate the ancient system of Tibetan medicine.

In 2006, His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama visited Switzerland. During his stay in Zurich the idea of establishing a New Tibetan Medical Academy in Dharamsala was born. His Holiness is greatly in favour of the collaboration between Tibetan medical personnel and modern scientific medical practitioners and researchers, to ensure that the traditional Tibetan Medicine keeps up with recent scientific developments. He further recommends that the methods of learning and practice of Tibetan Medicine should be developed based on scientific means, in line with changing times yet without losing the very identity of it. In collaboration with the ETH Sustainability Institute of Zuerich, it was decided to carry out a Feasibility Study to provide key information on the required physical health facilities for decision-making regarding the establishing of a future medical academy as well as recommendations for the formulation of a possible project proposal. For this purpose a joint Tibetan/Swiss team composed of Medical Doctors, Pharmacists, Ethnologists and Higher Education Specialist was formed. My task in the team was to address the Physical Facilities Component. During our mission in Dharamsala we had several personal meetings with the Dalai Lama. These meetings took place in a warm atmosphere, were exclusive and always most interesting. The statements of His Holiness were very precise, modest and sometimes also humorous. In terms of financial investments the outcome of the survey was rather discouraging. The estimated overall costs for physical facilities was amounting almost US\$ 70 million. Thanks to the fame and respect the Dalai Lama enjoys worldwide, two main private investors were found to finance the project. However, they wanted to mention the project in the PR of their respective business. As such conditions are a "no-go" for the Dalai Lama, the project had to be closed for financial reasons."



Daniel Schwitter (left), member of the Tibetan/Swiss joint mission team together with his Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama

Daniel Wyss

Architect and Urban
Planner, Team Leader
Skat Great Lakes

at Skat since 2007

"I started my work in Eastern Africa in a small cafe in Kigali in 2013. There were three of us and an old car, waiting for the landlord to finish the renovation of our office. At that time, we were quite aware of the modest capacities of the local construction sector- the industry we

came to support. But we did not imagine that we would find ourselves soon in the epicentre of the world's fastest urbanising area with such an incredible unsatisfied hunger for affordable houses and durable building material.

For addressing the challenges of the underperforming construction industry, it was crucial that we could count on Skat's capacity to avail its 40 years of in-house experience and its large external network. The joint efforts and knowledge of highly motivated experts and practitioners from three continents were involved in the development of appropriate technical solutions, business models and trainings that could trigger the transformation process of the construction industry towards more energy-efficient and employment-creating housing supply. In 2018, our services as well as our factory and housing designs are in high demand, with a volume of requests that is difficult to meet, even with our hard-working three country teams which include now around 50 people.

After nearly 6 years working as Regional Team Leader, I am soon leaving Africa with my family and will again join the Skat team in Switzerland. I am happy that entrepreneurs, labourers, staff members, public servants, planners, builders and investors in affordable estates or in the micro-scale upgrading of informal settlements are contributing their individual knowledge to the construction sector's growing pool of expertise. Their very valuable practical experiences are the key for the successful inclusive urbanisation in this challenging but wonderful part of the African continent."



One of our demo and training sites in an informal settlement in Kigali



A project Presentation at MIT in Cambridge / Boston

Roger Schmid

Rural and Environmental
Engineer, Water and
Environment Sanitation
Specialist

at Skat since 2001

“When I joined Skat in autumn 2001, I had just returned from a 3½ years junior professional officer assignment at UNICEF Madagascar. At that time, I wasn’t yet very knowledgeable about development cooperation organizations in Switzerland and also not yet connected

to Swiss practitioners in the water sector. However, we all know that in development interventions – being generally of a high complexity – learning from experience is a key process for progress and success. Furthermore, given the large amount of written (e-based) information accessible but of variable quality, learning from professionals and their networks is essential. So, after my first consultancy mandates for Swiss NGOs and the SDC under Skat, I then also got exposed to the Swiss water sector community by getting introduced and recommended to the AGUASAN group by my institutional “mentor” Karl Wehrle.

AGUASAN is a remarkable Community of Practice bringing together

since 1984 a broad range of Swiss-based specialists to promote wider and deeper understanding of the key water and sanitation issues in developing and transitioning countries. During the past 15 years, I had the opportunity to benefit from and to shape considerably the practices of AGUASAN: its uninterrupted series of quarterly one-day knowledge exchange meetings (N°136 held on March 1st, 2018) and yearly one week international knowledge generation workshops (34th event having taken place in June 2018).

I continue today to enjoy being part of this reputed community and think-tank and to regularly meet good working colleagues and friends, exchanging experiences in an atmosphere of openness and trust, whilst validating proven knowledge and exploring new innovative ideas.”



Celebration of the 100th AGUASAN Meeting on 25.02.2009

Martin Boelli

Electrical and
Environmental Engineer,
Energy and Energy
Efficiency Specialist
at Skat since 2012

"In 2012, just one year after the revolution, I was allowed to travel to Tunisia for giz to investigate the potential and possibilities of electricity production in the drinking water supply. The population and the administration took responsibility for the coup, and every decision had

to be weighed up against whether it was in line with the new order. Our project had a certain potential to use their own resources and to limit dependency from abroad. I have rarely been able to work with such motivated people as I did in Tunisia in 2012. The project ideas were discussed intensively, loudly and in detail, and alternatives were carefully considered. Our training was very well attended and the participants were focused, concentrated and asked if something was not clear. Working in Tunisia was a highlight of my work at Skat, with great sympathy and respect for the partners in Tunisia. Working at Skat allows to make such unique experiences – thank you!"



Looking ahead: Our new Strategy 2018 - 2022

Juerg Christen, Managing Director, Skat Consulting Ltd.

In 1978, Skat – now known as the “Swiss Resource Centre and Consultancies for Development” - was founded in St. Gallen, Switzerland with the aim of providing technical support for international cooperation and humanitarian aid. At this time, there were high expectations in the potential

of so-called “appropriate technologies”.

Forty years later we realise that the challenges the world is facing - particularly in developing countries and countries in transition - have not diminished. Indeed, although some progress has been made, much remains to be done.

With this in mind, in 2017 we started a comprehensive review of our work and approaches and formulated the new **Strategy 2018 - 2022** in a participatory manner with the team and the management board of Skat.

What we have elaborated are the guiding principles and the outlines of the new strategy which I would like to summarise as follows:

Who we are

Skat is an independent Swiss Consulting Company and Foundation working globally in the fields of international cooperation and humanitarian aid, and providing services in the areas of water management, building, reconstruction and settlements, energy production, and climate change mitigation.

Our vision is of a world where current and future generations have the means to realize their human rights and live in a decent and healthy environment.

Our mission is to contribute to sustainable development and to eradicate poverty through the sustainable management of natural resources.

Strategic Goals

By 2022, Skat strives to make a significant contribution for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) by focussing on the following six strategic goals:

- 1) Moderate growth of overall turnover until 2022, particularly in the area of water management, whereas in the other areas the turnover will be kept.
- 2) Increase the number of mandates from SDC by offering Skat's expertise in relevant thematic networks and focal points, and to the Humanitarian Division.
- 3) Get new mandates from State Secretariat of Economic Affairs (SECO) by offering Skat's Expertise.

- 4) Successful handover of the strategic and operational management to the next generation, a younger and gender-balanced team. Skat is led by a new committed Management Board and Management.
- 5) Successful consolidation of the new organisation structure that enables an efficient, lean and effective management.

Areas of expertise



Water management

Skat is the leading expert organisation for water supply, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) in Switzerland in international cooperation. Skat provides cutting-edge expertise through consultancies and implements projects. In the overall area of water management, Skat will further strengthen its specific expertise particularly in groundwater management, water resources management, and water, sanitation and hygiene in schools and health facilities.



Building, reconstruction and settlements

Skat has longstanding experience in the area of sustainable building, reconstruction and planning of settlements. Skat provides consultancy services, backstopping, capacity development, and supports the implementation of reconstruction projects in disaster-affected areas. Skat will focus on reconstruction with a disaster risk reduction perspective, education and health infrastructure facilities, and building materials and systems.



Energy production and climate mitigation

Skat has longstanding experience in the areas of renewable energies - especially mini-hydropower, energy efficiency, and environmental management - especially solid waste management. Skat will maintain its investments in energy production and climate mitigation initiatives, and continue to actively participate in its networks and partnerships



Governance

Skat is successfully implementing one large project for public service delivery, decentralisation and local governance. Skat also provides consultancy services on governance in its thematic areas and continues accordingly to implement mandates.

Services

Skat provides three types of services. Consultancies and the implementation of projects are Skat's core services, whereas knowledge sharing is a complementary service Skat is providing mainly through the Skat Foundation.



Consultancies

Consultancies are Skat's **core business**. Providing cutting-edge expertise to our partners and clients in our thematic areas will remain an important pillar in the Strategy 2022.



Project implementation

The implementation of projects is Skat's **financial backbone** and managing (large) projects for the Swiss government will remain economically crucial. Project implementation mandates help Skat stay close to field realities and provide a decent contribution margin, which we require for running Skat as a whole. The Swiss market in this area will probably be shrinking and the competition is high. An asset in the acquisition is Skat's USP to offer integrated competences in various thematic areas and in the cross-cutting topic of governance.



Knowledge sharing

Due to its longstanding role as a resource centre in international cooperation, Skat is known for all its efforts to provide expert support for knowledge sharing and networking, capacity development, knowledge brokering and communication, services mainly provided through the Skat Foundation.

Clients and partners

Skat works with a wide range of clients and partners: governmental organisations, international organisations, non-governmental organisations, private sectors organisations, and academic institutions. The most important partners are governmental organisations, particularly the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), which will remain a core partner of Skat.

Organisation

The new organisation chart of Skat will become effective from 2018-2019 onwards. It will consist of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Chief Project Officer (CPO) and Chief Finance Officer (CFO). They will form the **Senior Management Team** of Skat.

Professional staff will be organised in **project teams** with a project manager, according to the requirements of the respective projects.

For learning from Skat's experiences and further developing Skat know-how, **teams for knowledge sharing** will meet regularly according to the needs of professional staff.

Skat Foundation

In October 2002, Skat founded Skat Foundation in St. Gallen. Skat Foundation is a non-profit organisation, and a legally independent foundation supervised by the Swiss Federal Supervisory Board for Foundations. This non-profit foundation provides a reliable framework for ensuring the sustainability of Skat's services by fostering the **management of the knowledge and information** generated by Skat and its clients in its thematic areas of expertise. Skat Foundation fosters the following Knowledge Management processes:

- **Creation of knowledge** through research and innovative pilot projects;
- **Sharing of knowledge** through networks, events, workshops, training courses and knowledge brokering;
- **Documentation of knowledge** through publications and communication products

By doing this, Skat Foundation supports Skat and clients to apply and use knowledge and practices, for the benefit of the poorest and most vulnerable members of our global society.

I am convinced that with this carefully elaborated strategy with a sharpened thematic focus, the moderate growth scenario and the adjusted management structure, Skat is well positioned to meet the new challenges in international cooperation up until 2022 and beyond.

40 years
skat