

ACCELERATING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF WATER-RELATED SDGS IN PAKISTAN

Under increasing urgency to respond to water-related sustainable development, national governments need to accelerate progress on Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6 to assure “sustainable management of water and sanitation for all”. Since 2017, a consortium of partners (UNU-INWEH, UNOSD, the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Korea, and the Korea Environment Corporation(1)) has implemented the project “Water in the World We Want” to investigate how countries can address critical evidence gaps and deliver better policies to achieve SDG 6. The consortium collaborated with the experts and policymakers from the project partner countries to develop SDG 6 Policy Support System (SDG-PSS), the key output of this project, to help create evidence for the enabling environment of SDG 6 in countries with limited or missing data.

Implementing SDG-PSS in Pakistan

Pakistan joined the project in the [first phase \(2017–2018\)](#). A national workshop (14–15 March 2017, Islamabad) gathered experts to discuss the links between SDG 6 Targets and Indicators and SDG-PSS Components as a first effort to understand national priorities through the lens of the SDG-PSS tool. As a result of the local ownership approach to SDGs, partners in Pakistan decided to implement the SDG-PSS at the provincial level.



In the [second phase \(2019–2020\)](#), Pakistan shared its experience of implementing SDG-PSS as a regional-hub in the Asia region. Experts from Armenia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Iran, Mongolia, Pakistan, the Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Turkey, and Vietnam gathered in a regional workshop for Asia (4–5 September 2019, Daegu) to learn from two regional-hubs (the Republic of Korea and Pakistan) about implementing SDG-PSS.

In the third phase (2021–2023), Pakistan remains a regional power in the implementation of SDG-PSS as the country strengthens its national mechanisms for achieving SDG 6. In this phase, the project countries are expected to benefit from Pakistan’s experience at the provincial level as they demonstrate how the tool can be used by local authorities to address evidence gaps in the enabling environment for achieving SDG 6. Capitalizing on its experience of working on SDG-PSS online, PCRWR has developed an explanatory handbook for understanding and application of PSS[2].

MECHANISMS FOR IMPLEMENTING SDG-PSS IN PAKISTAN


SDG-PSS management and coordination in Pakistan is led by the Pakistan Council of Research in Water Resources (PCRWR), a flagship national water institute. PCRWR organized six countrywide SDG-PSS training workshops, while using its strong network to actively involve government officials and groups across the country to participate in these training and data collection activities. For instance, participants were asked to bring data, which were used to run SDG-PSS. In addition, the PCRWR team helped produce a customized version of SDG-PSS user guide. Since the project’s inception, the tool has been used by approximately 100 professionals from at least 20 institutions.


[1] UNU-INWEH: United Nations University Institute for Water, Environment and Health; UNOSD: the United Nations Office for Sustainable Development

[2] Handbook on SDG PSS [User Guide for Policy Support System \(PSS\)](#) (pcrwr.gov.pk)

PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS

The implementation of SDG-PSS has benefited Pakistan in three critical dimensions (i) developing capacity, (ii) improving SDG 6 data reliability, and (iii) helping define national targets.

 **Capacity Building:** SDG-PSS played a major role in building a shared understanding among local and national SDG 6 stakeholders through national workshops and training events. This contributed to strengthening knowledge of all SDG 6 targets and related concepts among professionals, including those in the public sector, and was a positive first step towards implementing the tool nationally. The evidence produced during these activities served as input from local and provincial levels to the national government and contributed to [Pakistan's Perspective Data Reporting Gap](#).

 **Improving SDG 6 Data Reliability:** Data availability is a major challenge in Pakistan at both federal and provincial levels as the country does not yet have a comprehensive data-sharing policy. In this regard, SDG-PSS has helped identify what kind of data sets are needed to support SDG 6 reporting and to facilitate its implementation. For instance, while some targets are already on track, such as Target 6.3.2 (Proportion of water bodies with ambient water quality), others are still hard to track due to the lack of reliable data. In this regard, SDG-PSS has been helpful in simultaneously finding data gaps and tracking progress in real-time and on different data components, and the data gaps in SDG 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, and 6.5.1 could be narrowed in the future. A considerable amount of work on addressing data sets for SDG 6.4 and 6.6 is in progress and aims to have data for reporting in the next five years. With six components that cover a broad spectrum of information, SDG-PSS is considered a valuable tool for water-diverse data in countries such as Pakistan.

 **Helping Define National Targets:** Currently, Pakistan is trying to develop a baseline value report as a first step in setting up national targets for each SDG, including SDG 6, based on the available data and monitoring activities that have been carried out. Some efforts have been made during SDG-PSS training workshops conducted with provincial authorities in Pakistan to help them set realistic goals and streamline national policies and institutional strategies. However, defining numerical targets remains a challenging task and is hindered by the absence of official implementation of the tool at the governmental level. For example, SDG-PSS has not yet been adopted by the main Pakistan SDG support units, and its implementation will be greatly improved when the tool is officially declared at the governmental scale as the one to use for SDG 6 reporting. Still, SDG-PSS has the potential to contribute at a later stage to setting rational aspirations and is expected to play a role in setting more accurate targets by considering gaps in the national data. The strategy will be to approach provincial officials and communities to help them explore SDG-PSS and to use it while defining subsequent final baselines.

PERSPECTIVES

The Government of Pakistan continues to support and facilitate discussions between federal and provincial level organizations to use SDG-PSS. However, for more effective implementation, it will be necessary to adopt SDG-PSS as the official SDG 6 mechanism at a high governmental level. While there are ongoing discussions to use SDG-PSS more broadly, the process could be facilitated further by engaging other UN organizations in the country that are also supporting the achievement of SDG 6 targets.



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