Accelerating the Achievement of SDG 6 in five countries: A Discussion paper

Water is a foundation of life and livelihood, and is key to sustainable development. Successful water management will serve as a foundation for the achievement of many of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as well as for SDG 6 - which is to 'Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all'.

Lessons learned from the MDG era suggest that effective planning, policy and preparation in these early years of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development will be critical to final water-related SDG success, or otherwise. In 2016, the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) made clear that "the longer governments take to act, the harder it will be to deliver on their promises by 2030", and that overall, every three years of inaction will mean that the amount of effort needed to succeed will increase exponentially (Stuart et al. 2016, p.4). As well as earlier action, more intense action is needed; ODI reported that in order to achieve target 6.2 on universal sanitation, global progress will need to exceed current trends by almost four times (Nicolai et al. 2015). Finally, innovative policy and planning will be needed to allocate resources to achieving SDG 6, particularly in low resource settings; a World Bank report (Hutton & Varughese 2016) found that capital investments must increase by approximately 3 times to achieve the water supply, sanitation, and hygiene SDG targets 6.1 and 6.2 globally.

In September 2016, UNU-INWEH and partners – Korean Environment Corporation (K eco) and the Ministry of Environment, Republic of Korea (MOE) hosted a consultative meeting with representatives from four countries: Ghana, Tunisia, Costa Rica and Pakistan. Participants shared experience around national efforts to focus policy, planning and strategies around the newly agreed SDGs.

For example, Pakistan's fast-growing population and security issues strain government's capacity to build and maintain water and sanitation infrastructure, particularly in rural areas, while in urbanising, arid areas of Tunisia, climate change may challenge even the best-designed water capture and storage systems. An exercise that sought to assess current strengths, weaknesses, opportunities an threats was undertaken by country representatives, and is presented in Annex 1.

The consultative meeting also focused on a new initiative that aims to accelerate water-related SDG success through the SDG Policy Support System (SDG PSS). The SDG PSS is needed because although "data are the lifeblood of decision-making", it has been internationally recognised that too often in the water and sanitation sectors, existing data remain unused because they are not accessible, not of high quality, not well documented and harmonized, or not available at the level of detail or in the form required for decision making.

There is also a need to move from collecting data to using fit-for-policy evidence, which has been difficult for many countries to achieve systematically and effectively. In addition, although there are a wide range of water, sanitation, and policy tools available for use, it is currently complicated to bring the results of these tools together and use them in an integrated way for multi-sectoral, water-related SDG policy progress.

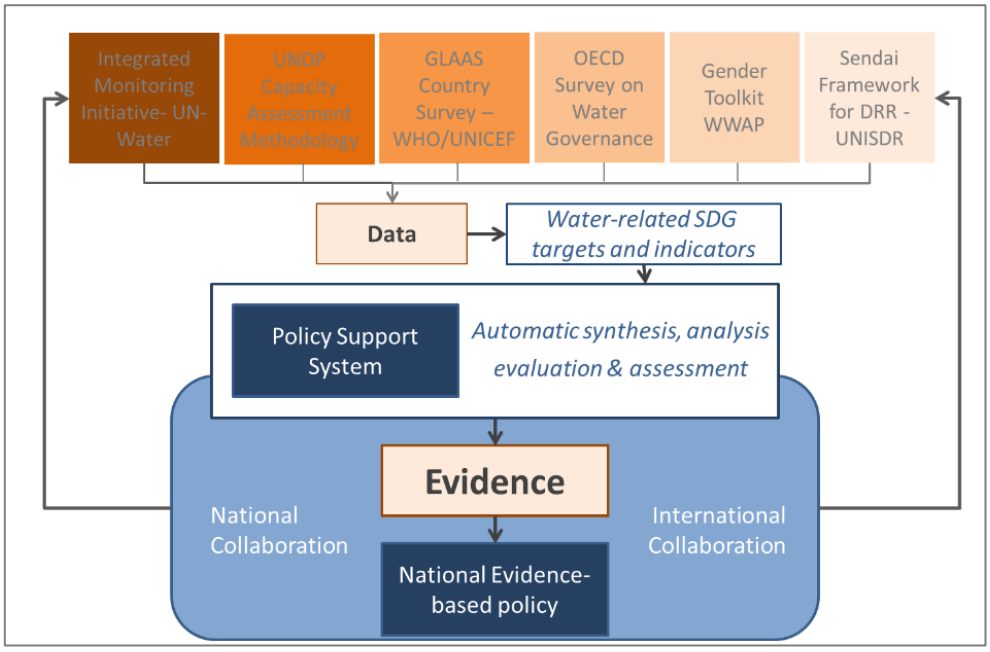
UNU-INWEH Director, Dr Vladimir Smakhtin, said at the meeting: "National governments are compelled by the SDGs to assess where they are in terms of an informed, transparent and

accountable policy framework, and to quickly improve on this baseline to accelerate progress towards all water-related goals before 2030".

The SDG PSS is designed to draw data from existing, international and nationally developed tools. The data that are targeted by the SDG PSS are all water-related, but cover six policy-critical themes including gender mainstreaming, financing, disaster risk reduction/resilience, capacity assessment, policy and institutional assessment, and transparency. Figure 1 shows a simplified work flow diagram of the SDG PSS. In addition to the tools and initiatives already mentioned, the 'generic' version of the SDG PSS draws from, for example, the UN-Water Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking-Water (GLAAS), the OECD Toolkit for Integrity, and WASHCost from the IRC.

As shown in Figure 1, the SDG PSS has been designed to encourage one agreed, and therefore authoritative, evidence base for policy use.

Figure 1: Example Workflow- SDG Policy Support System



In the water sector, multiple stakeholders, complex science, and a level of uncertainty in modelled and predicted scenarios under changing environmental conditions that are difficult for non-modellers to understand, all lead to difficulties in using data when developing policy. If different Government and expert stakeholders use the SDG PSS to agree on one evidence base for water-related SDGs, policy can become more aligned and potentially more effective.

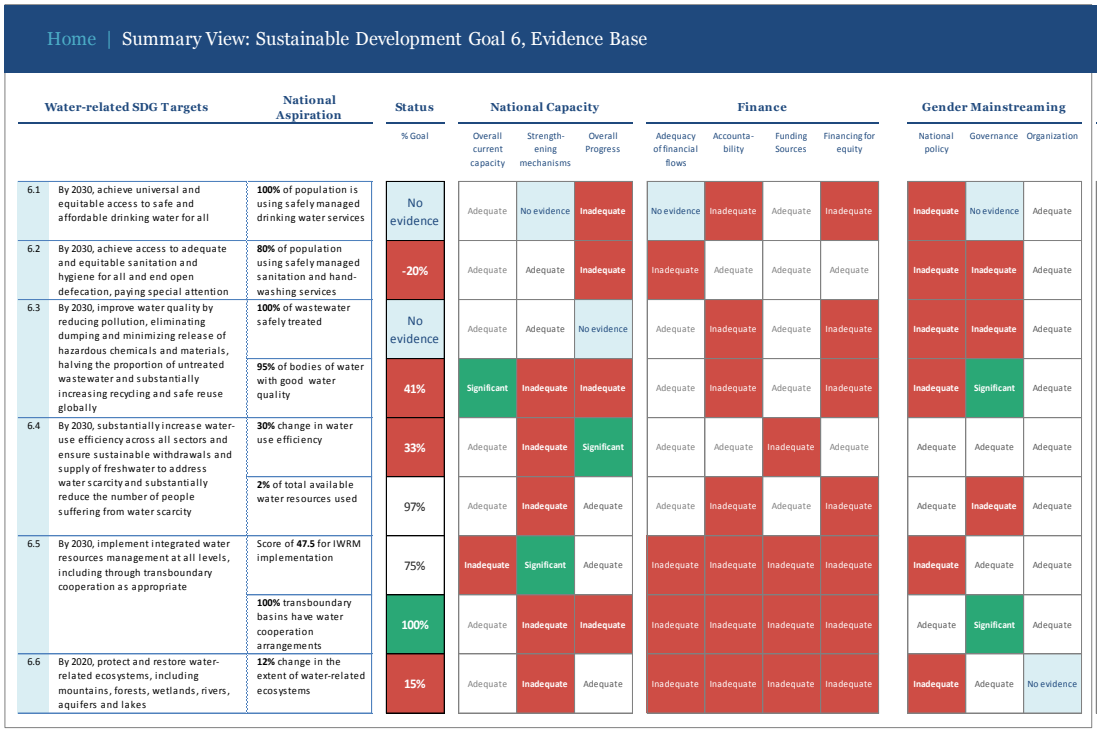
The SDG PSS is dynamic. In the current generic version, changes and updates can be made as different countries agree on national SDG targets, and it can be adapted to fit national or international planning cycles.

As data are collated into the SDG PSS, the system automatically synthesises and evaluates those data against SDG 6 targets and indicators. In this way, users can view strengths, gaps and needs for SDG indicators in one summary. An example of part of a summary view is shown in Figure 2. Policy makers will be able to view summary reports, perhaps for the first time being able to easily compare, for example, progress against gender mainstreaming with gaps and needs in capacity development.

The SDG PSS is currently coded in excel and is being trialled in five countries: The Republic of Korea, Ghana, Costa Rica, Pakistan and Tunisia.

In 2018, the SDG PSS will be freely and globally available online in English, Korean, French and Spanish, with the trial countries being acknowledged as regional leaders in water-related SDG evidence for policy.

Figure 2: An example summary view from the SDG PSS



Home | Summary View: Sustainable Development Goal 6, Evidence Base

Water-related SDG Targets		National Aspiration	Status	National Capacity			Finance				Gender Mainstreaming		
			% Goal	Overall current capacity	Strengthening mechanisms	Overall Progress	Adequacy of financial flows	Accountability	Funding Sources	Financing for equity	National policy	Governance	Organization
6.1	By 2030, achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all	**100%** of population is using safely managed drinking water services	No evidence	Adequate	No evidence	Inadequate	No evidence	Inadequate	Adequate	Inadequate	Inadequate	No evidence	Adequate
6.2	By 2030, achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation, paying special attention	**80%** of population using safely managed sanitation and hand-washing services	-20%	Adequate	Adequate	Inadequate	Inadequate	Adequate	Adequate	Adequate	Inadequate	Inadequate	Adequate
6.3	By 2030, improve water quality by reducing pollution, eliminating dumping and minimizing release of hazardous chemicals and materials, halving the proportion of untreated wastewater and substantially increasing recycling and safe reuse globally	**100%** of wastewater safely treated	No evidence	Adequate	Adequate	No evidence	Adequate	Inadequate	Adequate	Inadequate	Inadequate	Inadequate	Adequate
		95% of bodies of water with good water quality	41%	Significant	Inadequate	Inadequate	Adequate	Inadequate	Adequate	Inadequate	Inadequate	Significant	Adequate
6.4	By 2030, substantially increase water-use efficiency across all sectors and ensure sustainable withdrawals and supply of freshwater to address water scarcity and substantially reduce the number of people suffering from water scarcity	**30%** change in water use efficiency	33%	Adequate	Inadequate	Significant	Adequate	Adequate	Inadequate	Adequate	Adequate	Adequate	Adequate
		2% of total available water resources used	97%	Adequate	Inadequate	Adequate	Adequate	Inadequate	Adequate	Inadequate	Adequate	Inadequate	Adequate
6.5	By 2030, implement integrated water resources management at all levels, including through transboundary cooperation as appropriate	Score of **47.5** for IWRM implementation	75%	Inadequate	Significant	Adequate	Inadequate	Inadequate	Inadequate	Inadequate	Inadequate	Adequate	Adequate
		100% transboundary basins have water cooperation arrangements	100%	Adequate	Inadequate	Inadequate	Inadequate	Inadequate	Inadequate	Inadequate	Adequate	Significant	Adequate
6.6	By 2020, protect and restore water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes	**12%** change in the extent of water-related ecosystems	15%	Adequate	Inadequate	Adequate	Inadequate	Inadequate	Inadequate	Inadequate	Inadequate	Adequate	No evidence

Built on outputs including the SDG PSS as well as new analysis, briefs and recommendations, the **final outcomes** of the project will be:

1. more comprehensive and effective evidence-based policy and decision making at national levels;
2. A learning network of national SDG PSS users who exchange knowledge, promote evidence-based policy and collaborate around water-related evidence based decision making at the national level.

The anticipated **impact** of the project is accelerated, water-related SDG success.

Annexe 1: SDG SWOT for five countries

Strengths

- All countries identified that SDGs have high level of national ownership;
- Three countries reported that, post-MDGs, there are already significant institutional frameworks, processes, strategies and mechanisms in place in the water sector;
- One country reported that there are well defined regulatory and legislative frameworks and mechanisms;
- Two countries reported that there are existing monitoring and evaluations frameworks and platforms for WASH information collection and exchange;
- One country reported that there are sufficient experts in water sector who can constitute a national think-tank for water-related SDGs.

Weaknesses

- All countries identified weaknesses in the quality, coverage (comprehensiveness) or type of data and information available; inadequate funding for monitoring and evaluation was also highlighted.
- Two countries identified that the water and sanitation sector suffered from less resource allocation and less political support than other development sectors;
- Two countries noted the importance of a participatory approach and the involvement of wider stakeholders, but identified these as a challenge to implement;
- An inability to bring the many water-relevant agencies together was seen as a weakness by one country.

Opportunities

- Two countries noted an opportunity to improve data and the right to access data, as Government partners will be seeking to establish baselines against SDG 6 and water-related SDGs;
- One country suggested that SDG processes may strengthen democratic processes;
- One country noted that development partners stood ready to assist SDGs overall;
- One country noted an opportunity to strengthen participatory approaches.

Threats

- Two countries noted competing interests for resources from other SDGs, as well as other sectors and initiatives;
- One country reported that water sector staff and experts were becoming overburdened;
- Three countries noted that political instability and unpredictable changes in Government priorities were threats;
- Two countries reported a lack of real stakeholder engagement and a lack of commitment by different institutions.

Hutton, G. & Varughese, M., 2016. *The Costs of Meeting the 2030 Sustainable Development Goal Targets on Drinking Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene - Summary Report*, Available at: http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/water/publication/the-costs-of-meeting-the-2030-sustainable-development-goal-targets-on-drinking-water-sanitation-and-hygiene?CID=WAT_TT_Water_EN_EXT.

Nicolai, S. et al., 2015. Projecting progress: Reaching the SDGs by 2030. Flagship Report. , (September), p.48. Available at: http://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/9839.pdf.

Stuart, E. et al., 2016. *Leaving No one Behind: A critical path for the first 1,000 days of the Sustainable Development Goals*, Available at: https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/10691.pdf.