

Accelerating Success for Water-related Sustainable Development Goals

A project by UNU-INWEH

The Challenge

Water is inextricably linked to the development of all nations. At the same time, unsustainable development places pressure on water resources.

Around 663 million people in the world still do not have access to an improved source of drinking water; and agriculture, which currently consumes around 70% of all water used, will face a 70% increase in food demand by 2050.



The Solution

In 2015, world leaders adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Within this, there are 17 Sustainable Development Goals that cover an ambitious global agenda: from ending poverty to regaining peace and stability, whilst leaving no-one behind.

The “water goal” - SDG 6 - aims to ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all. SDG 6 is strongly linked to all other SDGs, and water underpins – explicitly or implicitly – many other SDGs such as those for health and education. Meeting SDG 6 and other water-related SDGs would go a long way towards achieving the 2030 Agenda.

The Project

This project supports UNU-INWEH’s contribution to water related sustainable development goals and targets, particularly SDG 6 targets and indicators, and other global sustainability processes such as Paris Climate Agreement, New Urban Agenda, and Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. In addition, the project covers most action areas highlighted in the Canada’s Feminist International Assistance Policy, particularly ‘Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls’ and ‘Inclusive Governance’.

It is internationally recognized that there is an urgent need to provide policy makers and government leaders in the water and sanitation sector with ways to accelerate the progress towards water-related SDG success. This Project integrates three different initiatives to support this.

Initiative 1 [2016-2018]: The key activities to be completed by 2018 are grouped under the title “Water in the World We Want”. This initiative was developed because although data are the lifeblood of decision-making, it has been internationally recognised that too often, existing water and sanitation data remain unused because they are not accessible, not of high quality, not well harmonized, or not available at the level of detail or in the form required for decision making.¹ There is also a need to move from collecting and analysing data from different tools separately, to using a single, agreed evidence base that is fit-for-policy.

The key product of this initiative is the SDG Policy Support System (SDG PSS). After existing data are collated into the SDG PSS, the system automatically synthesises and evaluates that data against SDG 6 targets and indicators and fit-for-policy evidence are reported to decision makers in easily referenced summaries. The data that are targeted

¹ United Nations, 2014, A World That Counts: Mobilising the data revolution for sustainable development

by the SDG PSS are water-related, but cover a range of policy-critical themes, including gender mainstreaming, financing, disaster risk reduction/resilience mainstreaming, capacity assessment, and policy and institutional assessment. The 'generic' version of the SDG PSS draws from, for example, the UN-Water Integrated Monitoring Initiative, the Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking-Water (GLAAS, WHO and UNICEF), to the OECD Toolkit for Integrity and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

The SDG Policy Support System is being trialed in five countries – Republic of Korea, Ghana, Costa Rica, Pakistan and Tunisia. In 2018 it will be freely available online in English, French and Spanish.

Initiative 2 [2017-2019]: In some countries, it took up to 10 years for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which were active from 2000 to 2015, to become established in the form of institutional commitments.² In addition, there is little comparative knowledge and evidence on how and for what reasons certain countries were effective, and others not successful in meeting water-related MDG targets. Initiative 2 aims to identify key gaps among countries with different economic levels and fill those gaps in the new SDG era.

The key product of this initiative will be a comparative analysis of the development of water-related SDG policy in 5 countries over the first two years of the 2030 Agenda. It is anticipated that the results of this analysis will assist national governments to improve their SDG planning and policy frameworks over the critical first years of the SDGs.

Initiative 3 [2017-2019]: Apart from Agenda 2030, 2015 saw the emergence of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development, and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change (COP21). The New Urban Agenda was also adopted in 2016. These all build on the existing Convention on Biodiversity and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets that run from 2011 to 2020, as well as national and regional agreements, strategies and targets that have been developed both pre- and post- 2015. This initiative will examine how the consensus achieved around these recent, global water-related or water-informed development agreements is being translated into policy and action at the national level in different countries. A critical facet of this initiative will be to identify the challenges, failures and successes encountered by the institutions responsible for multiple and multi-sector water-related development targets and goals for their country.

The key product of this initiative will be an extension of the SDG Policy Support System beyond water-related SDGs to the goals and targets of other water-related agreements. Additional products will include policy briefs and recommendations that will advise and support, as practically as possible, national level policy to comprehensively address policy options in this complex international context.

Water in the World We Want

From 2016-2018, the United Nations University Institute for Water, Environment and Health (UNU-INWEH) the Korea Environment Corporation (KECO), the Ministry of Environment, Republic of Korea (MOE) and the United Nations Office for Sustainable Development (UNOSD) have partnered to operationalise initiative 1 of this project – “Water in the World We Want”.

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² ODI, 2015, National MDG implementation: Lessons for the SDG era. Moizza Binat Sarwar, Working Paper 428