

ACCELERATING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF WATER-RELATED SDGS IN TUNISIA

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 Tunisia

As one of the project’s pilot countries in the [first phase \(2017–2018\)](#), Tunisia welcomed 60 water experts and policymakers from different institutions to a national workshop (20–21 April 2017, Tunis). Participants discussed aspects and prioritization of SDG-PSS components considered critical yet challenging to accomplish in the Tunisian context. A key outcome of the Phase I national workshop was the creation of a Tunisian Expert Working Group from governmental and non-governmental water-related institutions.



In the [second phase \(2019–2020\)](#), Tunisia engaged in the project as a regional hub for Africa and the Middle East. A regional workshop (3–4 July 2019, Tunisia) was attended by participants from Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Madagascar, Morocco, Mozambique, Saudi Arabia, Tanzania, and Tunisia along with representatives from UN, international and regional organizations. The workshop helped participating countries learn from Tunisia’s experience in developing and implementing SDG-PSS. Tunisia has been actively using SDG-PSS since 2019.

Tunisia plays a critical role in the project’s [third phase \(2021–2023\)](#) implementing SDG-PSS at the national and regional levels. This phase targets strengthening partnerships in Tunisia with continued support from a multi-sectoral working group and stronger regional cooperation with countries willing to use SDG-PSS.

MECHANISMS FOR IMPLEMENTING SDG-PSS IN TUNISIA


The Tunisian Expert Working Group is championing SDG-PSS by compiling data, reporting on SDG 6 progress, and raising funds for activities leading to sustainable water development in the country.


The project has brought together at least 13 experts and professionals from four leading ministries and 12 national institutions and departments. SDG-PSS is still not yet (January 2022) officially implemented by the Tunisian government at a policy level. However, SDG-PSS has strong political support from the Ministry of Agriculture. There are ongoing efforts to make it a national tool for all SDG 6 pillars.


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

PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS


Implementing SDG-PSS has benefited Tunisia in five dimensions (i) developing capacity, (ii) improving SDG 6 data reliability, (iii) supporting national policies, (iv) defining national targets, and (v) stimulating reflections on gender mainstreaming.

 **Capacity Building:** SDG-PSS activities have deepened understanding of SDG 6 Targets and Indicators within the Tunisian public administration. The participation of policy and decision-makers in collaboration with researchers and experts was crucial in capitalizing on collective knowledge and expertise and raising awareness about SDG 6 among the society. SDG-PSS also fostered internal collaboration and cross-learning processes.

 **Improving SDG 6 Data Reliability:** SDG-PSS facilitated the assessment of specific SDG 6 Targets and helped identify gaps and establish international benchmarking. The gaps stimulated data research, collection, assembly, and cross-checking between different sources and institutions to ensure quality and reliability. This resulted in identifying indicators with the most limited data available (Indicators 6.2.1, 6.3.1, and 6.6). The identification of these gaps helped foster discussions on how to tackle the problem. For example, the Tunisian team is working on engaging more resourceful and motivated experts within the National Working Group for the third phase (2021–2023) to support data collection and interpretation of the reports..

 **Helping Define National Targets:** SDG-PSS has contributed to disseminating the provisional objectives of specific indicators. Some targets are numerically defined (Target 6.1, 6.2, 6.4, 6.5). Among them, 6.1 and 6.2 are on track to be achieved by 2030. Others need more attention (Target 6.3, 6.4, 6.5, and 6.6). Members of the SDG-PSS Expert Group involved in the monitoring of environmental water quality helped numerically define indicators for Target 6.3.2 for 2017–2019. This helped formulate conclusions, including the need to define specific ambient water quality standards.

 **Supporting National Policies:** A major achievement of this project is reflected in the contributions of the tool to support the National Committee for the Preparation of the National Voluntary Review of Tunisia for SDGs 2019 and 2021 with an assessment of evidence gaps in their current SDG 6 campaign.

 **Stimulating Reflections on Gender Mainstreaming:** The multi-sectoral Working Group strengthened its liaison with civil society and with the Bureau for Rural Women Out Reach to inform on water and gender issues, especially in the agricultural sector, and to tackle data gaps on SDG 6. This effort identified critical gaps, such as the lack of gender-disaggregated data and the limited access women have to loans, subsidies, technologies, and information compared to men. More generally, and to fill these gaps, the government has taken decisions for the generation of quantitative and qualitative indicators and the integration of gender dimensions into water-related socioeconomic and political activities.

PERSPECTIVES

During Phase III, Tunisia will continue to promote the SDG-PSS among political decision-makers by making it more accessible to high-level officials. More effort is needed to produce more gender-oriented data, better mechanisms for data collection, and strengthen the national Tunisian working group.



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