PROJECT: WATER IN THE WORLD THAT WE WANT

Under increasing urgency to respond to water-related sustainable development, the national governments need to accelerate progress on Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6 to assure a *sustainable management of water and sanitation for all*. Too often, however, governments are faced with competing priorities, limited budgets, and inadequate skilled human capacity. In such cases, systematic evidence provides a strong foundation for countries to build action plans for the achievement of SDG 6. However, deciding on which evidence is needed to support SDG 6 can be difficult, especially when there may be missing or even conflicting evidence.

Figure 1. Interface of SDG-PSS showing its main features.

Since 2016, a consortium of partners (United Nations Office for Sustainable Development, UNOSD; United Nations University Institute for Water, Environment and Health, UNU-INWEH; the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Korea, MOE; and the Korea Environment Corporation, K-eco) has been implementing 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. Two additional partners (UNESCO International Centre for Water Security and Sustainable Management, UNESCO i-WSSM, and the Korea Water Resources Corporation, K-water) joined the project in 2022, and the United Nations Environment Programme, UNEP, joined in 2023. The project has three regional hubs: Pakistan in Asia, Tunisia in Africa, and Brazil in Latin America and the Caribbean.

BRIDGING THE EVIDENCE GAP WITH THE SDG-PSS

A multi-partner team developed the **SDG 6 Policy Support System (SDG-PSS)** to help create evidence on the enabling environment of SDG 6 at the national level in countries with limited or missing data. This tool aims to help countries produce evidence on SDG 6 systematically. It comprises six policy components – Capacity Assessment, Finance Assessment, Policy and Institutional Assessment, Gender Mainstreaming, Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience, and Integrity Assessment – to capture critical dimensions of the enabling environment of SDG 6 (Figure 1). Access to the online SDG-PSS in English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Arabic, and Korean is free for all potential tool users. The SDG-PSS can be accessed online at the link: **https://sdgpss.net/**

KEY FEATURES OF THE SDG-PSS

Countries may choose different approaches according to their available human capacity and resources when using this tool. The approach adopted by countries needs to be discussed and decided between national partners interested in using the tool. However, it is anticipated that experts from different organizations will have to gather the required data. Each policy critical component of the SDG-PSS is organized around two main features: Questionnaire and Reporting.

The SDG-PSS uses questionnaires to make data entry more accessible and more systematic. Some questions may be easily answered, while others may take some time and discussions with experts from specific areas. It is possible to use the SDG-PSS without having all the data available – a particular question can be left blank when the answer is unknown or no data is available. The reporting page contains graphics developed with the data entered for each policy critical component. These graphics can be used in official reporting mechanisms to inform international donors, national authorities, and decision-making processes.

CREATING AN EVIDENCE FRAMEWORK

SDG-PSS provides countries with a collaborative platform where experts from different sectors and organizations work together to create an authoritative evidence framework on the enabling environment of SDG 6. As experts enter the data for each component of the SDG-PSS, the Summary View presents all the evidence generated for each SDG 6 target, indicator, and policy critical component of the tool (Figure 2).

This evidence framework allows users to identify strengths, weaknesses, and data gaps across the policy critical components and can be used for multi-sectoral collaborative planning to develop and implement water-related policies across critical dimensions of the enabling environment of SDG 6. Ultimately, the SDG-PSS aims to support evidence-based decision-making for the timely achievement of SDG 6, even with limited or missing data. Experts can establish priorities and action plans based on the pieces of evidence already available in the Summary View.

Indicator		Capacity		
		Current capacity	Overall Progress	Strengthening mechanisms
6.1.1	Proportion of population using safely managed drinking water services	No evidence	Adequate	Adequate
6.2.1	Proportion of population using safely managed sanitation services, including a hand-washing facility with soap and water	Inadequate	In progress	Inadequate
6.3.1	Proportion of wastewater safely treated	In progress	No evidence	Adequate

Figure 2. The Summary View shows the evidence framework produced by the SDG-PSS, where experts can identify where progress is adequate (green), in development (blue), inadequate (red) or evidence is missing (black) for all SDG 6 indicators and policy critical components.

PROJECT TIMELINE

In the **first phase (2017–2018)**, project partners organized national workshops to discuss their needs and challenges in the early stages of SDG 6 implementation. National water experts and policymakers from trial countries (Costa Rica, Ghana, Pakistan, Republic of Korea, and Tunisia) participated in conceiving the SDG-PSS and its critical policy components.

The **second phase (2019–2020)** led to the launch of the online and accessible tool. The project organized regional workshops in Africa and the Middle East, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean to engage with more than 30 countries in the tool to assess the national enabling environment of SDG 6.
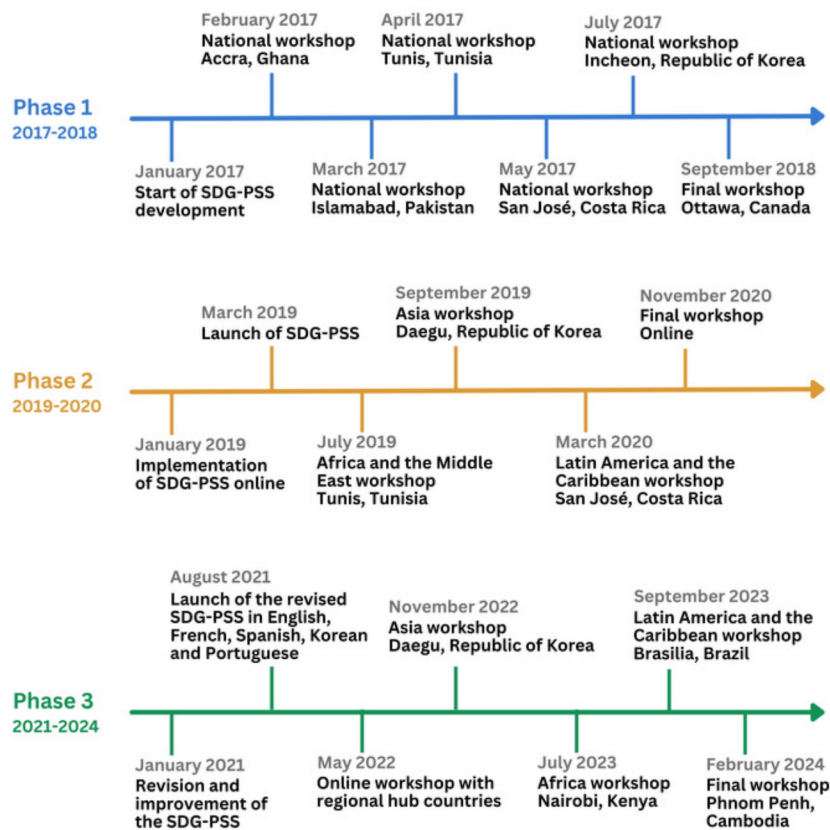
Figure 3. Project timeline with significant milestones (2017-2024)

In the project's **third phase (2021–2024)**, the improved version of the SDG-PSS aligned the tool with feedback from previous regional workshops (Figure 3). This phase targeted strengthening regional partnerships through collaboration with the regional hub countries (Brazil, Pakistan, and Tunisia). Three regional workshops were held in Brazil, Kenya, and the Republic of Korea, respectively, as well as a global workshop in Cambodia, which scaled up the use of the tool to over 60 countries.

During the **fourth phase of the project (2024 – 2026)**, the SDG-PSS tool will be further improved based on the feedback received during the third phase. The project will continue to build on the established partnerships with the regional hubs to deepen and increase engagement with the tool.
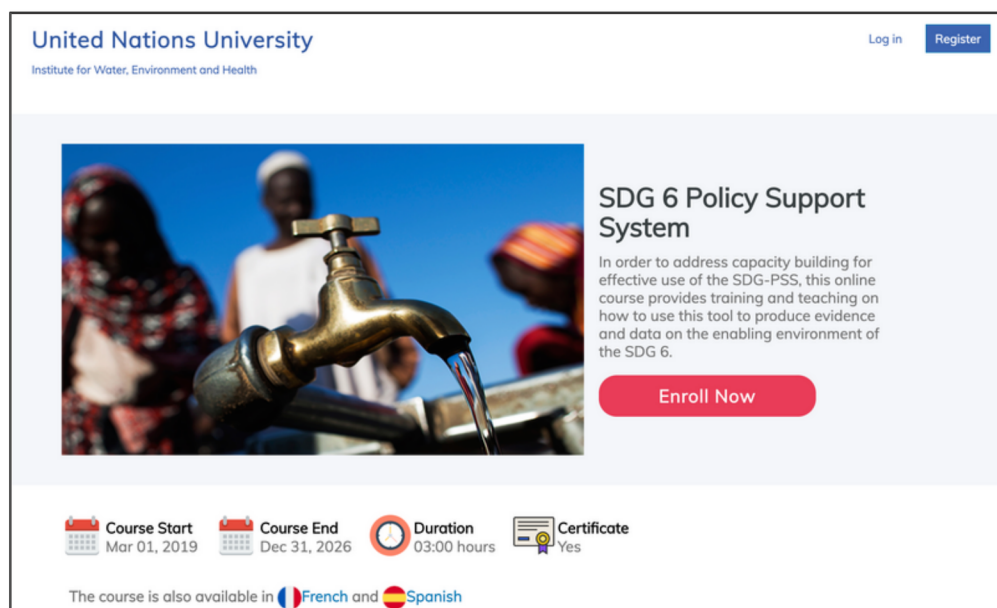
NATIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS AND OUTPUTS OF THE PROJECT

As the SDG-PSS has been adopted through different approaches to address the needs of national contexts, project partners have led important discussions on the enabling environment of SDG 6. In Tunisia, the national partners have created a multi-sectoral working group to gather experts from critical sectors to discuss the water-related data gaps and evidence generated by the SDG-PSS.

Brazil's National Water and Sanitation Agency has led an extensive consultation with experts from more than 20 organizations in the country to discuss the policy critical dimensions of the tool to be used to expedite the implementation of SDG 6 at the national level. They also shared the results of such consultation with the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP). In Pakistan, the SDG-PSS has contributed to the discussions led by the federal government to transform 'international SDGs' into 'national SDGs' and identify realistic aspirations for SDG 6 targets in the country. Such discussions have helped the country to undertake on-the-ground actions in their journey to achieve SDG 6. Water experts from the Republic of Korea built on national solid coordination to address the challenge of collecting data on the national enabling environment of SDG 6 and proposed a mechanism to validate the evidence produced while using SDG-PSS. In Costa Rica, using SDG-PSS helped strengthen inter-institutional coordination in the national water sector. It supported technical groups and local stakeholders working on SDG 6 achievement at the national level.

BUILDING CAPACITY FOR USING THE TOOL

The SDG-PSS is designed as an online user-friendly tool. Users are encouraged to learn to use the tool's main features quickly. However, filling the SDG-PSS with data may be complex for those unfamiliar with online tools like SDG-PSS. An online course is available to provide training on how to use the tool systematically and effectively. The course can be accessed via the *Water Learning Centre* hosted by UNU-INWEH.

Figure 4. Opening page of the SDG-PSS online course available at the Water Learning Centre

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