Concept Note

Project "Water in the World We Want"
Phase 3: Accelerating the achievement of water-related SDGs

Asia Regional Workshop

Using SDG 6 Policy Support System (SDG-PSS) to facilitate countries in Asia for water-related sustainable development

23-24 November 2022, Daegu, Republic of Korea

Background

Achieving Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG 6) by 2030 is expected to allow countries to reach an important milestone in their journey towards sustainability, as successful water and sanitation management will be a foundation for the achievement of many other water-related SDGs directly or indirectly. Indeed, "*Ensuring availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all*" – SDG 6 – is a formidable challenge for many countries. Nevertheless, with challenges come also great opportunities.

Effective planning and policy implementation through strengthening and realigning enabling environments are critical to driving success in achieving sustainable development goals (SDGs), particularly water-related SDGs at the national level. However, evidence and appropriate data for policymakers and development actors to make this happen is missing, overlapping, or even fragmented in most countries in the Asian region. If the countries are to achieve SDG 6, they need to assess their current national progress effectively. This means defining gaps and weaknesses and addressing them with workable policies and action plans to promote strong enabling environments for the achievement of SDG 6. These countries also need to set their own national baselines, targets, and priorities in the general SDG process and focus on the ones that can be realistically achieved by 2030.

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. The SDG 6 Policy Support System (SDG-PSS),

the key output of this project, was developed during its first phase (2016-2018) to help create evidence on the enabling environment of SDG 6 at the national level in countries with limited or missing data. Five countries – Ghana, Tunisia, Pakistan, Costa Rica, and the Republic of Korea – implemented the first stones of the project in a 'champion system', in which one policymaker and one expert or scientist in each country were responsible for promoting the project and providing coordination for the development of the SDG 6 Policy Support System (SDG-PSS)[1], a web-based tool to help navigate limited data conditions, relying on trends, information and broader estimates.

SDG-PSS consists of the following components: Capacity Assessment; Finance; Policy and Institutional Assessment; Gender Mainstreaming; Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)/Resilience Mainstreaming; and Integrity. These components were chosen as they allow a better understanding of the enabling environment where water and sanitation policies are developed and implemented for achieving SDG 6, and were based on more than 20 well-established tools, processes, and practices already used by many countries. The questions proposed in the tool were discussed in the national workshops in five countries and went through a comprehensive revision process.

During the second phase (2018-2020), the tool was officially launched as an online platform and promoted during project-led workshops. Regional workshops were organized to extend the use of SDG-PSS in countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America and the Caribbean regions through broader cooperation and continuous learning resulting in further refinement of the SDG-PSS. In its final version, SDG-PSS permits answering the challenge of bringing data and information from multiple international and national tools and translating them into a 'fit-for-policy' evidence framework. With the SDG-PSS available in six languages (English, Spanish, French, Portuguese, Arabic, and Korean), more than 30 countries are using or considering using the tool.

The extended use of SDG-PSS requires the engagement of more water professionals, managers, policymakers, and more countries. The experience of organizing regional workshops in the second phase showed that strengthening regional partnerships and cooperation has been critical for the project's success. Thus, the organization of regional workshops will be continued in the third phase (2021-2023) to engage more countries, promote multinational collaboration, and ensure knowledge exchange for effective use of the tool while informing policy and decision-makers on the enabling environments of SDG 6.

Over the first two phases, the Republic of Korea and Pakistan have been actively committed to the implementation of SDG-PSS by playing a critical role in promoting the engagement of more Asian countries in the use and improvement of the tool. The Republic of Korea and Pakistan will continue to play the role of regional hub countries for the third phase of the project. In addition, two additional partners (UNESCO International Centre for Water Security and Sustainable Management, UNESCO i-WSSM; and the Korea Water Resources Corporation, K-water) have joined the project.

[1] SDG 6 Policy Support System (SDG-PSS) Available at https://sdgpss.net/en/

The discussions in this regional workshop are expected to feed into the extended use and implementation of SDG-PSS in Asia region. The event will gather representatives from the two Asia region hub countries (Pakistan and the Republic of Korea) along with those from the countries that participated in the Asia region workshop of the second phase of the project: Bangladesh, Cambodia, Mongolia, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, and Turkey. In addition, more countries interested in using SDG-PSS have confirmed their participation in this workshop. These countries are: Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, the State of Palestine, Uzbekistan, and Yemen. Each country will be given the opportunity to test SDG-PSS prior to the event, which will facilitate exchanging updates on the project status and the use of SDG-PSS across Asian countries. This will stimulate discussions and reflections on the use of the SDG-PSS and/or address challenges to SDG-PSS use while capitalizing on the opportunities for effective use of the tool.

Timeline, duration, and venue

This 2-day workshop will be organized during 23-24 November 2022 in Daegu, Republic of Korea.

Meeting language

This event will be conducted in English.

Participants

20 water professionals and policymakers from 11 Asian region countries will participate in the workshop as follows: Bangladesh, Cambodia, Mongolia, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, Turkey, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, the State of Palestine, Uzbekistan, and Yemen. Following the project strategy in the first and second phases, one to two policymakers and/or expert scientists from each of these countries will join the workshop.

Several researchers and policymakers involved in the use and promotion of SDG-PSS in the Republic of Korea and Pakistan will also participate in the workshop. Other participants in the workshop will be from the project implementing partners – UNOSD, UNU-INWEH, UNESCO i-WSSM, and K-water.

Objectives:

This regional workshop will contribute to

(1) sharing and discussing experiences, challenges, and possibilities in achieving SDG 6 at the national level.

(2) promoting SDG-PSS through discussions on how the tool could be used to produce evidence on water-related policymaking to strengthen the enabling environment of achieving SDG 6 at the national level.
(3) discussing ways for extended use of SDG-PSS through regional cooperation for accelerated achievement of SDG 6 in the region.

A workshop report with contributions from all participants and partners will be produced afterward.

Organizers

This regional workshop is co-organized by UNOSD, UNU-INWEH, UNESCO i-WSSM, and K-water.