

# Water in the World We Want

Phase 3

## Final Technical Report

**Using SDG 6 Policy Support  
System (SDG-PSS)  
to support countries  
for water-related  
sustainable development**

## Note

This report was prepared by UNU-INWEH in collaboration with UNOSD.

### About UNU-INWEH

UNU-INWEH's mission is to help resolve pressing water, environmental, and health challenges that are of concern to the United Nations, its Member States, and their people through critical analysis and synthesis of existing bodies of scientific discovery; targeted research that identifies emerging policy issues; application of on-the-ground scalable science-based solutions; and global outreach. The institute is an integral part of the United Nations University (UNU) – an academic arm of the UN, which includes 13 institutes and programmes located in 12 countries around the world and dealing with various development issues. UNU-INWEH was established in 1996 as a public service agency and a subsidiary body of the UNU. The Institute is located in Richmond Hill, Canada, and its operations are secured through long-term host-country and core-funding agreements with the Government of Canada.

### About UNOSD

The purpose of the United Nations Office for Sustainable Development (UNOSD) is to support UN Member States in planning and implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals, through knowledge sharing, research, training and partnerships.

UNOSD was established in 2011 by the United Nations and the Government of the Republic of Korea. The tripartite partners of UNOSD are Incheon Metropolitan City, Yonsei University and the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Korea.

The Office is part of the Division for Sustainable Development Goals (DSDG) of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA).

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# Abbreviations

DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
K-eco	Korea Environment Corporation
K-water	Korea Water Resources Corporation
MOE	Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Korea
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SDG-PSS	SDG 6 Policy Support System
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNESCO i-WSSM	UNESCO International Centre for Water Security and Sustainable Management
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNOSD	United Nations Office for Sustainable Development
UNU-INWEH	United Nations University Institute for Water, Environment and Health

This document presents the concluding technical report of the project "**Water in the World We Want**", which has developed the **SDG Policy Support System (SDG-PSS)** – a platform designed to assist countries in improving their data analysis, reporting, and progress towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6 and other water-related SDG targets.

# Executive Summary

While the world has passed through the halfway mark of addressing the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, strengthening enabling environments to drive the achievement of water-related sustainable development is becoming a critical step for many countries, particularly low- and middle-income economies. The evidence for SDG 6 and pertinent data for policymakers to make this happen are missing, overlapping, or fragmented as the urgency for actions grows.

In addressing the need for policy actions under limited data conditions, a multi-institutional team of water professionals and policymakers developed the [SDG 6 Policy Support System \(SDG-PSS\)](#), which is an answer to the challenge of bringing data and information from different sources and translating them into a 'fit-for-policy' evidence framework. The critical components of SDG-PSS include Capacity Assessment, Finance, Policy and Institutional Assessment, Gender Mainstreaming, Disaster Risk Reduction/Resilience, and Integrity.

The extended use of SDG-PSS requires the engagement of more water professionals, managers, policymakers, and more countries. The project's experience of organizing regional workshops has shown that strengthening regional partnerships has been critical for the project's success. Thus, during the third phase (2021-2024), the project partners continued to organize regional workshops 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.

In the project's third phase, 31 more countries joined the project through their participation in the regional workshops: Belize, Benin, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Central African Republic, Côte D'Ivoire, Cuba, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ethiopia, Guyana, Iraq, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Liberia, Mauritania, Namibia, Nigeria, Peru, Rwanda, Saint Lucia, Samoa, Sierra Leone, South Africa, State of Palestine, Suriname, Uganda, Uzbekistan, Yemen, Zimbabwe. By the end of the project's third phase, 65 countries have participated in the project-led workshops on the use of SDG-PSS to support the achievement of SDG 6 at the national level.

There is an e-course on SDG-PSS to address capacity building for systematic and practical use of the tool. [The e-course](#) provides training and teaching on using this system to produce evidence and data on the enabling environment for achieving SDG 6. The SDG-PSS online course consists of 5 modules that are 2-3 hours in length. They are available in English, French, and Spanish, and the system issues a certificate upon completion of all modules. By the end of the project's third phase, the SDG-PSS online course had 1430 enrolments, with Africa having the highest number of course participants.

The countries prioritized the SDG targets based on their national contexts and relevance to their planning to achieve SDG 6 at the national level. Despite progress noted by all countries for SDG 6.1, SDG 6.2, and SDG 6.3, these targets remain the most pressing for most countries. They are often implemented in the national planning to ensure water quality protection and access to drinking water and sanitation for all.

While considering the critical importance of the SDG-PSS components, the countries recognize the importance of all components. However, certain countries prioritized specific SDG-PSS components based on their national contexts and relevance in their national-level planning to achieve SDG 6 by 2030. The countries consider Finance and Capacity as the most prominent components, followed by the component of Policy and Institutions.

Strengthening institutional leadership within countries, mapping potential national partners, and identifying resources available for implementing and using the tool are critical steps. In addition, supporting and facilitating data collection for the critical components of the SDG-PSS is a common challenge experienced by the countries. As the tool builds upon six policy-critical components aiming to capture critical dimensions of enabling environments of SDG 6, data required by the tool might be unavailable or fragmented across multiple databases and monitoring mechanisms. SDG-PSS users have reported difficulties in gathering the data and information needed, which might undermine the potential use of the tool for generating evidence to support pertinent decisions and policymaking processes.

Regional cooperation, knowledge exchange, and support from regional hubs are vital for promoting SDG-PSS and achieving SDG 6. The organization of regional workshops has shown that the workshops addressing the effective use of SDG-PSS came up with several critical points for consideration, such as (1) an increase in the awareness about SDG-PSS in terms of its use and operational aspects; (2) a better understanding of the SDG-PSS to produce evidence for all SDG 6 targets and indicators; (3) ownership of the project and SDG-PSS at the national level; (4) establishment of a team of policy and professional expertise to provide pertinent information and data to be used in SDG-PSS at the SDG 6 indicator level; (5) cross-learning and sharing relevant information within the national teams; (6) looking beyond national dimensions and collaboration between countries; (7) understanding and appreciating diversity in implementing SDG 6 at the national level in different countries; and (8) Regional Hubs playing a flagship role in promoting SDG-PSS at the national and regional levels.

Given the engagement of the countries in using SDG-PSS and their continued interest, the project consortium partners have agreed to continue with the project into its fourth phase during 2024-2025. The project consortium during its fourth phase will consist of a consortium of partners (United Nations Office for Sustainable Development, UNOSD; United Nations University Institute for Water, Environment and Health, UNU-INWEH; UNESCO International Centre for Water Security and Sustainable Management, UNESCO i-WSSM; and Korea Water Resources Corporation, K-water).



# 1 Introduction

The world faces a growing number of complex and interconnected challenges. Water is among the top global risks in terms of impacts caused by changes in the water cycle, climate change, extreme weather events, and population increase, causing profound effects on human health, well-being, and ecosystems. Water is pivotal in the Global Sustainability Agenda, with Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG 6) intricately woven into and synergizing with all other SDGs outlined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Effectively managing water and sanitation emerges as a fundamental solution to confront urgent global challenges. These challenges encompass but are not limited to addressing climate change, advancing affordable and clean energy, combatting biodiversity loss, mitigating food insecurity, countering the spread of diseases during pandemics and epidemics, managing natural disaster risks, fostering peace and stability in conflict zones, reducing extreme poverty, and addressing gender inequality. Failures in achieving SDG 6 have far-reaching consequences, compromising the integrity of societal, economic, and environmental facets of sustainable development. Furthermore, these shortcomings erode human rights and threaten peace and security.

As it stands, achieving SDG 6 by 2030 remains a grand challenge for the world. Its timely achievement will allow countries to reach an important milestone in their journey towards sustainability, as successful water and sanitation management will be a foundation for achieving many other water-related targets embedded in other SDGs directly or indirectly.

Effective planning and policy implementation through strengthening and realigning enabling environments are critical to driving success in achieving water-related SDGs at the national level. However, evidence and appropriate data for policymakers and development actors to make this happen need to be included, overlapping, or even fragmented in many countries across the world. If the countries are to achieve SDG 6, they need to assess their current national progress effectively. Thus, defining gaps and weaknesses and addressing them with workable policies and action plans promote enabling environments for achieving SDG 6. These countries must also set their national baselines, targets, and priorities in the general SDG process and focus on the ones that can be achieved realistically by 2030.

## 2 Project Background and Status

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-PSS, a web-based tool to help navigate limited data conditions, relying on trends, information, and broader estimates.

During the second phase (2018-2020), the tool was officially launched as an online platform and promoted during project-led workshops. The project partners organized regional workshops to extend the use of SDG-PSS in countries in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Latin America, and the Caribbean through broader cooperation and continuous learning among project partners and participating countries. In total, 34 countries participated in the regional workshops organized during its second phase and engaged in the use of SDG-PSS: Armenia, Bangladesh, Bahrain, Brazil, Cambodia, Chile, Costa Rica, Colombia, Egypt, Ethiopia, El Salvador, Ghana, Guatemala, Iran, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Madagascar, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Republic of Korea, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, and Vietnam. These countries included those five countries from the project's first phase.

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, during the third phase (2021-2024), the project partners continued to organize regional workshops 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 (Figure 1).



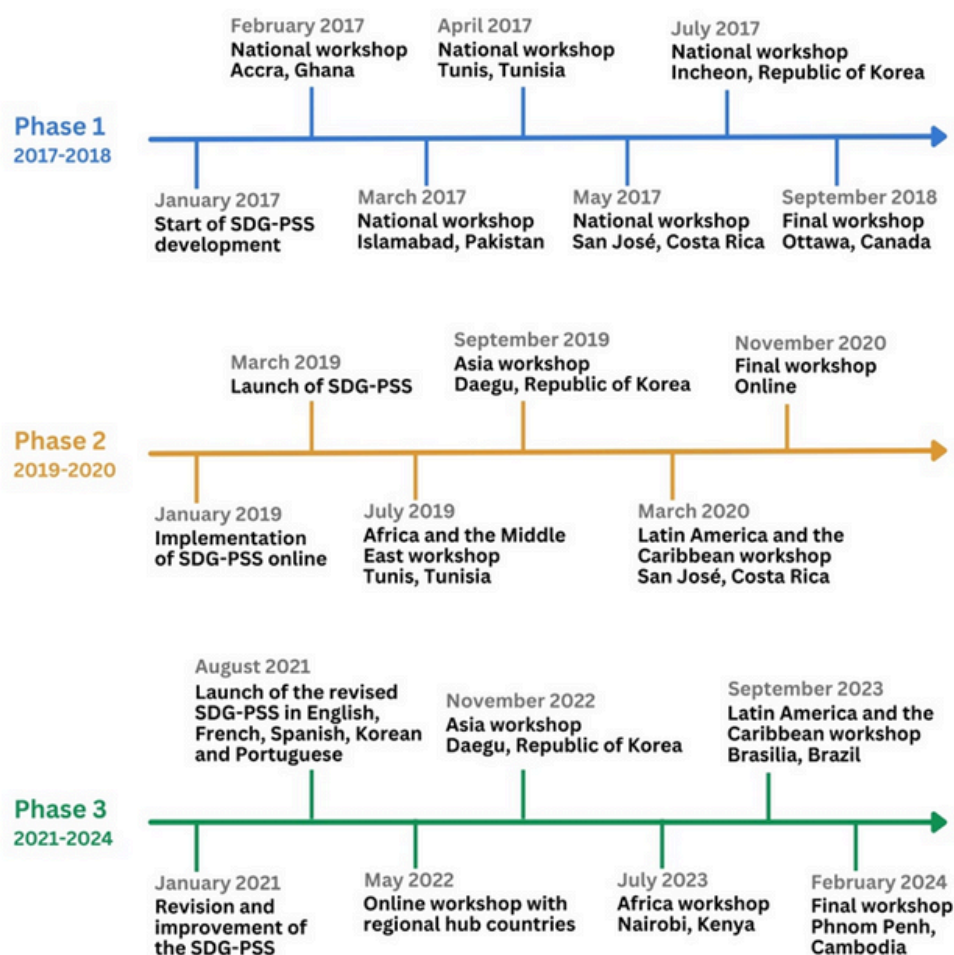


Figure 1 - Project timeline with significant milestones (2017-2024).

In the project's third phase, 31 more countries joined the project through their participation in the regional workshops: Belize, Benin, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Central African Republic, Côte D'Ivoire, Cuba, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ethiopia, Guyana, Iraq, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Liberia, Mauritania, Namibia, Nigeria, Peru, Rwanda, Saint Lucia, Samoa, Sierra Leone, South Africa, State of Palestine, Suriname, Uganda, Uzbekistan, Yemen, Zimbabwe.

In the second phase, 29 countries joined the project: Armenia, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Brazil, Cambodia, Chile, Colombia, Egypt, El Salvador, Guatemala, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Jordan, Kenya, Madagascar, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Panama, Paraguay, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Trinidad and Tobago, Türkiye, United Republic of Tanzania, Viet Nam.

In its first phase, the project engaged five countries consisting of Costa Rica, Ghana, Pakistan, Republic of Korea, and Tunisia.

Thus, by the end of the project's third phase, 65 countries have participated in the project-led workshops on the use of SDG-PSS to support the achievement of SDG 6 at the national level (Figure 2).

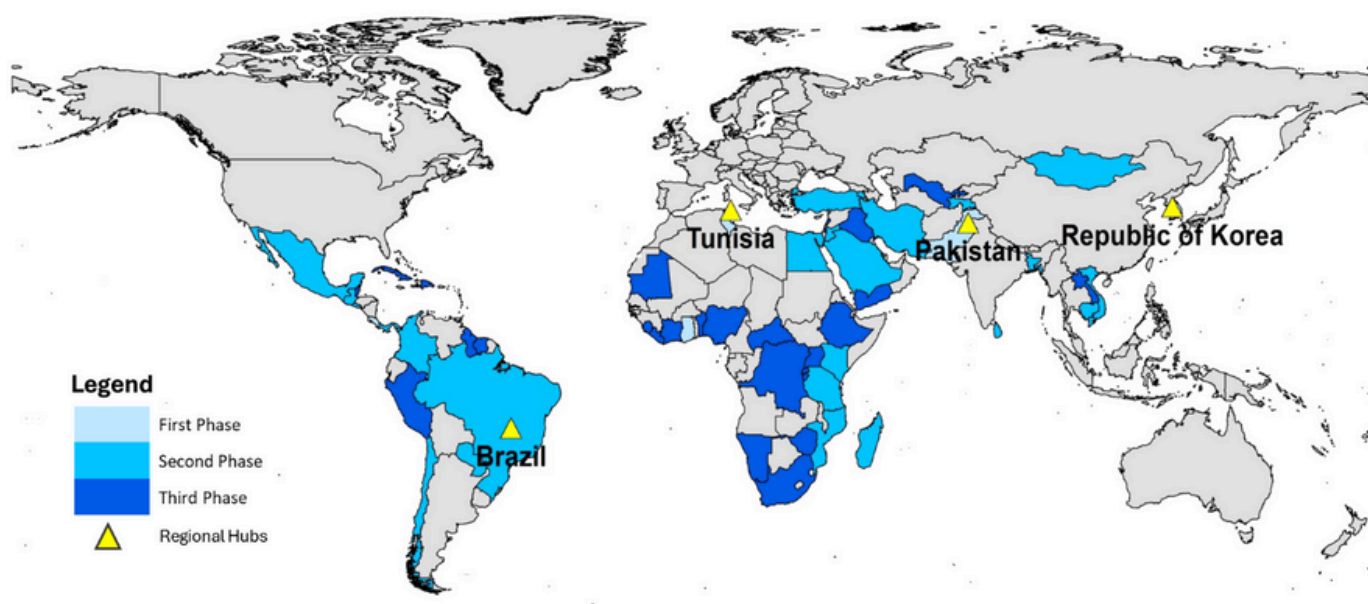


Figure 2 - Countries participated in the project-led workshops on the use of SDG-PSS to support the achievement of SDG 6 at the national level.

The project consortium also expanded during its third phase as 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's founding members (UNOSD, UNU-INWEH, MOE, and K-eco) to strengthen collaboration across partners and countries.

### 3 SDG 6 Policy Support System (SDG-PSS) - Key Product of the SDG Project

The [SDG 6 Policy Support System \(SDG-PSS\)](#) comprises the following six components: Capacity Assessment, Finance, Policy and Institutional Assessment, Gender Mainstreaming, Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)/Resilience Mainstreaming, and Integrity (Figure 3). These components allow a better understanding of the enabling environment where water and sanitation policies are developed and implemented for achieving SDG 6. These components and associated questionnaires were developed in an extensive consultation process with five countries during the first phase and further revised in the subsequent stages of the project.

Following the contributions of many countries using the tool during the project's regional workshops, the current version of the SDG-PSS answers the challenge of producing evidence with a systematic approach for all SDG 6 targets and indicators. The system allows countries to bring data and information from multiple international and national databases and translate 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 60 countries are using or considering the tool.



Figure 3 - Interface of SDG-PSS showing its main features.

There is an e-course on SDG-PSS to address capacity building for systematic and practical use of the tool. [The e-course](#) provides training and teaching on using this system to produce evidence and data on the enabling environment for achieving SDG 6. The effort required by the SDG-PSS to get all the evidence together is an essential step for countries to evaluate better which data is missing and where gaps in policymaking exist. The SDG-PSS online course consists of 5 modules that are 2-3 hours in length. They are available in English, French, and Spanish. The system issues a certificate upon completing all modules (Figure 4).



### SDG 6 Policy Support System

In order to address capacity building for effective use of the SDG-PSS, this online course provides training and teaching on how to use this tool to produce evidence and data on the enabling environment of the SDG 6.

**Enroll Now**

 **Course Start**  
Mar 01, 2019

 **Course End**  
Dec 31, 2026

 **Duration**  
03:00 hours

 **Certificate**  
Yes

The course is also available in  French and  Spanish

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

By the end of the project’s third phase, the SDG-PSS online course had 1430 enrolments (Figure 5). Categorized by region (Africa, Americas, Asia, Europe, Oceania, and Unknown Region) and gender (Female, Male, and Not Mentioned), the data reveals that Africa has the highest total number of participants at 560, with 108 females and 298 males. In addition, 154 participants did not mention their gender. Asia follows with a total of 507 participants, consisting of 87 females, 243 males, and 177 with unspecified gender. The Americas have 141 participants, with 44 females, 40 males, and 57 not specified. Europe has 91 participants, split into 31 females, 23 males, and 37 not mentioned. Oceania has the fewest participants, with 16 equally divided between four females, four males, and eight unspecified.

One hundred fifteen participants did not mention their region, including 26 females, 49 males, and 40 who did not mention their gender. This data indicates significant regional differences in participation, with Africa and Asia contributing the most participants and Oceania the least.

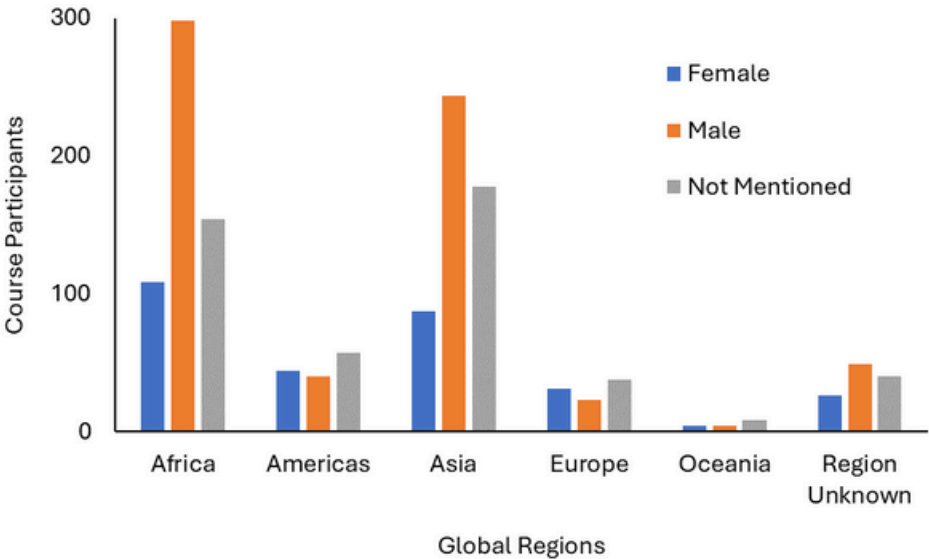


Figure 5 - Number of participants in the SDG-PSS online course by global region and gender.

The number of course participants (1430) represents participants from the second and third phases of the project. In the second phase, there were 174 participants, while in the third phase, the number significantly increased to 1258, revealing a 7-fold increase in the number of SDG-PSS course participants in the third phase over the second phase of the project. Such an increase in the number of the course participants is mainly due to the ability of the tool to help create evidence on the enabling environment of SDG 6 at the national level in countries with limited or missing data, potential benefits from policy-level decision-making, and exposure of the professionals to the tool through the project-led workshops.



## 4 Project Workshops

Building on the success of the regional workshops in the second phase, the project engaged more water professionals, managers, policymakers, and countries in its third phase through regional workshops.

As the first among the regional workshops, the Asia Regional Workshop was held in Daegu, Republic of Korea, on 23-24 November 2022. The event gathered representatives from the two Asian region hub countries (Pakistan and the Republic of Korea) and those from the countries participating in the Asia region workshop of the project's second phase: Bangladesh, Cambodia, Mongolia, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, and Turkey. In addition, five countries new to the project (Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Palestine, Uzbekistan, and Yemen) participated in the workshop. Other participants in the workshop were from the project implementing partners – UNOSD, UNU-INWEH, UNESCO i-WSSM, and K-water.



Participants of the Asia Regional Workshop  
23-24 November 2022, Daegu, Republic of Korea

The Africa Regional Workshop was held in Nairobi, Kenya, 5-7 July 2023. The event gathered representatives from the Africa region hub country (Tunisia) along with Morocco, who participated in the Africa region workshop for the project's second phase. In addition, 14 countries new to the project (Benin, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Ethiopia, Mauritania, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Uganda, and Zimbabwe) participated in the workshop. Other participants in the workshop were from the project implementing partners – UNOSD, UNU-INWEH, UNESCO i-WSSM, and K-water. In addition, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Regional Centre on Groundwater Resources Education, Training, and Research (RCGW) supported the workshop.



Participants of the Africa Regional Workshop  
5-7 July 2023, Nairobi, Kenya



The Latin America and Caribbean Regional Workshop was held in Brasilia, Brazil, 20-22 September 2023. The workshop gathered representatives from the Latin America and Caribbean region hub country (Brazil) along with 15 countries from the region, including Belize, Chile, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago. In addition, Cape Verde, which is from Africa but is a Portuguese-speaking country, participated in the workshop. Other participants in the workshop were from the project implementing partners – UNOSD and UNU-INWEH. In addition, the National Water and Sanitation Agency (ANA), Brazil supported the workshop.



Participants of the Latin America and Caribbean Region Workshop  
20-22 September 2023, Brasilia

The Final Workshop held in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, on February 20-22, 2024, was the last activity of the project's third phase. The workshop gathered representatives from the regional hub countries (Brazil, the Republic of Korea, Pakistan, and Tunisia) and other countries (Cambodia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, Sierra Leone, and Samoa). Other participants in the workshop were from the project implementing partners – UNOSD, UNESCO i-WSSM, K-water, and UNU-INWEH. The Ministry of Environment was the collaborating institution that facilitated the organization of the workshop on behalf of the Government of Cambodia. Among the United Nations agencies in Cambodia, the United Nations Regional Coordinator's Office collaborated with the workshop organizers to support the workshop. This workshop provided the opportunity for the participants to discuss the extended use of the tool across the world.



Participants of the Final Workshop  
20-22 February 2024, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

These workshops contributed 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; and
- 3 discussing ways for extended use of SDG-PSS through regional cooperation for accelerated achievement of SDG 6 in specific regions.

## 5 Synthesis of countries' prioritization on the status of SDG 6 and SDG-PSS

Based on the feedback from the countries participating in the workshop, one to four high-level policy institutions (ministry or equivalent authorities) are responsible for monitoring and reporting on SDG 6 targets and indicators, which are supported by other ministries with specific functions, such as the ministries dealing with finance, planning, education, economic development, and woman affairs. In addition, almost half of the participating countries indicated the existence of an official supporting organization as a data storehouse dedicated to data synthesis, statistics, and analysis. In contrast, other technical or capacity-building national organizations support most of the countries.

Based on the country-specific feedback, the countries considered rating SDG 6.1 (*Universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all*) as the most critical target in their journey to achieving SDG 6 by 2030 (Figure 6) followed by SDG 6.2 (*Access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all*) and SDG 6.3 (*Improve water quality by reducing pollution, eliminating dumping, minimizing the release of hazardous chemicals and materials, halving the proportion of untreated wastewater, and substantially increasing recycling and safe reuse globally*). These targets were followed by SDG 6.4 (*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*) and SDG 6.5 (*implementing integrated water resources management at all levels, including through transboundary cooperation*) while SDG 6.6 (*protecting and restoring water-related ecosystems*) was considered as the least prioritized target across the countries. Only one-third of the countries prioritized SDG 6.6.

The countries prioritized the SDG targets based on their national contexts and relevance to their planning to achieve SDG 6 at the national level. Despite progress noted by all countries for SDG 6.1, SDG 6.2, and SDG 6.3, these targets remain the most pressing for most countries (prioritized by 43, 38, and 38 countries, respectively). They are often implemented in the national planning to ensure water quality protection and access to drinking water and sanitation for all (Figure 6).

Unlike most countries, some did not prioritize SDG 6.1 and SDG 6.2. This trend is because progress on these targets in such countries is considered at a satisfying level and relatively high compared with other countries. However, there are still disparities in these targets' progress, particularly in rural areas and informal settlements, where access to clean water and sanitation facilities still needs to be improved. These countries tend to focus more on other SDG targets in the face of challenges related to water quality, the sustainability of access to limited amounts of water resources amid water scarcity, and the impact of climate change. More attention is also needed to increase wastewater treatment rates and challenges related to water stress and water efficiency (irrigated agriculture), especially under agrometeorological conditions (drought periods) and economic crises.

On the other hand, more than half of the countries consider measures leading to a substantial increase in water-use efficiency across all sectors and addressing water scarcity (SDG 6.4) in their national contexts. These countries face challenges related to water availability, and focusing on SDG 6.4 is critical to address water security, support socioeconomic development, and promote the well-being of the people.

Other examples of the importance of national context in the prioritization exercise refer to the countries sharing river basins, as there are transboundary issues with water resources regarding quality and quantity (SDG 6.5). Transboundary cooperation is explained by the shared rivers' importance and seasonal nature for integrated water resource management and consideration of the cooperation around transboundary water resources. The island countries do not consider SDG 6.5 an important SDG 6 target as they do not share freshwater resources with other countries.

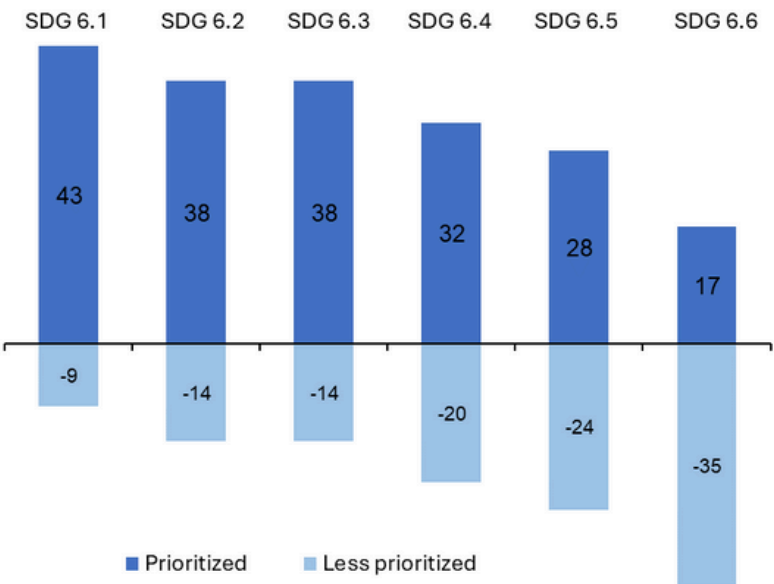


Figure 6 - Countries' prioritization status of SDG targets in their journey to achieving SDG 6. Numbers in the case of each bar indicate the number of countries prioritizing or less prioritizing a specific SDG 6 target.



While considering the critical importance of the SDG-PSS components, the countries recognize the importance of all components. However, certain countries prioritized specific SDG-PSS components based on their national contexts and relevance in their national-level planning to achieve SDG 6 by 2030. Finance and Capacity were the most prominent components, followed by Policy and Institutions (Figure 7). The Finance component is crucial to accomplish concrete progress in SDGs as there is a need to bridge financial gaps to guide governments and decision-makers on resource allocation and identifying strategies to achieve SDG 6. In addition, several countries need economic and political challenges translated through limited financial resources and insufficient investments for SDGs, specifically SDG 6. The Capacity component is essential to accomplish concrete progress in SDGs as there is a need to fill the capacity gaps to ensure the availability of skilled human resources to achieve SDG 6. Capacity development is critical, especially in resource-constrained environments, as it empowers individuals and organizations to effectively plan, implement, and monitor water-related initiatives, including water resource management and sanitation infrastructure.

In addition to the Capacity and Finance components, the Policy and Institutions component is Africa's third most important component. Together, these three components provide the most important and straightforward information on the status of SDG 6. The importance of the Policy and Institutions component could be explained by ineffective and outdated policies and their weak implementation, and lack of harmony between institutions or the dilution of specific sectors in the national framework for SDG 6 – all play a role in hindering the progress on achieving SDG 6 at the national level.

These two components are crucial to accomplish concrete progress in SDGs as there is a need to reach the capacity and financial gaps needed for planning, guide governments and decision-makers on resource allocation, and identify strategies to achieve SDG6. This trend also reflects the challenges encountered by the different countries, mainly related to the lack of sufficient mechanisms to achieve SDG6.

Half of the countries consider the Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)/Resilience and Integrity components necessary for achieving SDG 6 at the national level. Gender is the least prioritized component by the countries, as only one-third prioritize it. The countries not prioritizing the gender component report have taken several initiatives and measures to disaggregate data by gender in the water sector while considering gender across all indicators. Some countries have drafted gender policies and implemented gender units necessary to effectively implement SDG 6 at the national level.



Figure 7 - Countries' prioritization status of SDG-PSS components in achieving SDG 6.  
Numbers in the case of each bar indicate the number of countries prioritizing or less prioritizing a specific SDG-PSS component.

## 6 Current Status and Way Forward

The project's third phase has allowed the project consortium partners and the project countries to reflect on essential learnings to ensure the tool's effectiveness in supporting countries to achieve SDG 6 at the national level. During this phase, the project partners expanded the use of SDG-PSS by engaging with new countries around the SDG-PSS Regional Hubs. This approach allowed countries to learn from the experience of implementing and using the tool in the Regional Hubs – Brazil, Pakistan, Republic of Korea, and Tunisia – while promoting knowledge and technical exchange between water experts and development actors from different countries.

According to the experience of SDG-PSS Regional Hubs, assuring support from government actors to pursue the implementation of SDG-PSS is a challenge in the early stages of using the tool for implementation at the national level. Engagement with countries from Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean has helped project partners understand the difficulties water experts encounter in raising awareness and promoting political will for championing the implementation of SDG-PSS.



Strengthening institutional leadership within countries, mapping potential national partners, and identifying resources available for implementing and using the tool are critical steps. Experience from Tunisian partners, for instance, shows that this can be achieved by defining a national SDG-PSS focal point responsible for leading discussions and promoting the tool among key stakeholders. National focal points can prioritize SDG 6 indicators and policy critical components that best address the needs of the country to showcase the use of the tool to potential professionals and policymakers.

Some countries have published their reports and policy briefs related to SDG-PSS. For example, in the case of Brazil, the government has integrated SDG-PSS in its SDG 6 planning through a systematic follow-up with the policymakers. The project team has published a comprehensive report on the [application in Brazil of the decision-making support tool related to SDG6 \(SDG-PSS\)](#). The project team from Pakistan has developed an [explanatory handbook driven by the user experience for understanding SDG-PSS](#) for a better understanding of SDG-PSS features for its effective implementation.

Supporting and facilitating data collection for the critical components of the SDG-PSS policy is a common challenge experienced by the countries. As the tool is built upon six policy-critical components aiming to capture critical dimensions of enabling environments of SDG 6, data required by the tool might be unavailable or fragmented across multiple databases and monitoring mechanisms. SDG-PSS users have reported difficulties in gathering the data and information needed, which might undermine the potential use of the tool for generating evidence to support pertinent decisions and policymaking processes.

Available data on the enabling environments of SDG 6 may need to undergo some level of adaptation before being used to answer the tool's questionnaires. In this context, SDG-PSS users have provided significant feedback, suggesting improving and updating the questionnaires, adding new reporting features, and revising the Summary View as the main output of the tool. The project team has addressed such aspects and suggestions in the current version of the tool.

The organization of regional workshops has shown that participants often need help with the tool's main features, such as questionnaires, reporting pages, and Summary View. The online English, French, and Spanish course addresses these concerns while addressing the capacity-building of professionals and policymakers from new countries engaging with the tool. Hence, building capacity to effectively use the SDG-PSS is essential for countries aiming to implement the SDG-PSS in their SDG 6 planning. Thus, there is a need to promote SDG-PSS training activities at the country level and support blended learning opportunities (online courses, webinars, and in-person training) to foster using SDG-PSS at the national level.



Interaction discussions in breakout groups address collaboration, potential use of SDG-PSS, and learning alliances across project countries to support SDG 6 achievement.

The workshops addressing effective use of SDG-PSS came up with several critical points for consideration, such as

- 1 Increase in the awareness about SDG-PSS in terms of its use and operational aspects;
- 2 Better understanding of the SDG-PSS to produce evidence for all SDG 6 targets and indicators;
- 3 Ownership of the project and SDG-PSS at the national level;
- 4 Establishment of a team of policy and professional expertise to provide pertinent information and data to be used in SDG-PSS at the SDG 6 indicator level;
- 5 Cross-learning and sharing relevant information within the national teams;
- 6 Looking beyond national dimensions and collaboration between countries;
- 7 Understanding and appreciating diversity in implementing SDG 6 at the national level in different countries; and
- 8 Regional Hubs playing a flagship role in promoting SDG-PSS at the national and regional levels.

Data privacy and protection were the primary concerns shared by the participants in terms of using SDG-PSS. The project partners have assured the countries that datasets entered in the SDG-PSS are password-protected in the system, and only one can access them if given access by the national focal point of the project. The tool and all its components are available in the public domain. Still, once a professional creates an account to log into the system for data entry and generation of graphs and trends, there is complete privacy and protection of the data and its reports.

Regional cooperation based on collaboration around policy and institutional mechanisms and the exchange of scientific knowledge across countries in a geographical region is crucial for the UN Member States in their journey to achieve SDG 6 by 2030. Thus, building regional cooperation is the key to promoting SDG-PSS as a tool for strengthening the enabling environment of SDG 6. The countries implementing and using SDG-PSS can rely on support from the regional hub countries regarding knowledge exchange. This exchange between countries could be a two-way learning experience, as user feedback may contribute to improving and enhancing the SDG-PSS. Providing government support to use and institutionalize the SDG-PSS in these countries legitimately would be an essential feature of the project.





## Contact

### **United Nations University Institute for Water, Environment and Health (UNU-INWEH)**

225 East Beaver Creek Road,  
Richmond Hill,  
Ontario, L4B 3P4,  
Canada

[www.unu.edu/inweh](http://www.unu.edu/inweh)  
[Contact.INWEH@unu.edu](mailto:Contact.INWEH@unu.edu)  
[facebook.com/@UNUINWEH](https://facebook.com/@UNUINWEH)  
[instagram.com/unuinweh](https://instagram.com/unuinweh)  
[x.com/UNUINWEH](https://x.com/UNUINWEH)  
[linkedin.com/company/unu-inweh](https://linkedin.com/company/unu-inweh)

### **United Nations Office For Sustainable Development**

Yonsei University International Campus  
Room 205, Libertas Hall A  
85 Songdo Gwahak-ro, Yeonsu-gu  
Incheon 21983  
Republic of Korea

[www.unosd.un.org](http://www.unosd.un.org)  
[unosd@un.org](mailto:unosd@un.org)  
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