

When water is life, knowledge is king

What countries can do to accelerate efforts in implementing water SDGs



Quantifiable progress towards SDG 6 through measurable and consistent data



Improved water management to ensure availability when and where most needed



Data and science-driven policy making and actions – for outcomes that matter

Challenge

Water is the source of life. That is why water-related targets are a significant part of the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and essential for meeting many of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). But the current reality is that the world is off-track to meet these water targets by 2030. Ensuring countries get the support to meet these goals is a priority for agencies like the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), which works closely with the UNEP-DHI Centre on Water and Environment to help countries track and accelerate progress towards many water-related SDGs.

The SDGs are a call for action to improve health and education, reduce inequality and spur economic growth while tackling climate change and protecting our ecosystems such as water bodies, oceans and forests. To meet these objectives in a sustainable way, we must address the environmental, social and economic dimensions of development and advance them in tandem with each other. Three specific targets under SDG 6 emphasise the need to manage water resources, address water quality and ensure water ecosystem health. UNEP is the organisation responsible for helping countries to track and progress on these three targets.

Solution

One of the first steps towards sustainable water management is involving users of water in the decision-making process. This includes creating multi-stakeholder engagement processes in countries to understand barriers to better water management, and to identify actions to prioritise when developing and managing water resources. Solution highlights:

- **[SDG6 IWRM Support Programme](#)**
The support programme assists governments to accelerate sustainable water management implementation by identifying challenges, developing concrete action plans and implementing specific solutions to ensure measurable progress.
- **[Regular UNEP-led SDG 6 progress reports](#)**
These reports, such as the ones on water resources management and water-related ecosystems, provide decision-makers with reliable evidence on where acceleration is most needed, so they know where to prioritise their efforts.
- **[Freely accessible data and tools](#)**
Various data and tools have been developed to address challenges in water-related SDGs.

'It is critical that countries have the necessary methodologies, guidance and tools to help them track and report on the status of their water management and freshwater ecosystems. We see that countries which have these tools and insights are better able to prioritise their efforts in reaching their water targets at local and global levels. With proper data and systems, we can have tangible outcomes.'

Joakim Harlin, Chief of Freshwater Ecosystems
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