

UN-WATER SDG 6 PUBLIC DIALOGUE REPORT

6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION



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Public dialogue on the SDG 6 Synthesis Report; 2nd May to 14th September 2018. UN Photo/UN-Water.

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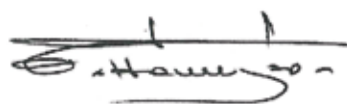
FOREWORD

Water is at the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It underpins our livelihoods, our health, our environment and our economies. To sustainably manage water is to invest in the future of not only the current generation, but for all generations to come. Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG 6), Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all, is essential to shift the world onto a resilient path leaving no one behind.

In June 2018, UN-Water released the first SDG 6 Synthesis Report 2018 on Water and Sanitation where we review progress on SDG 6. Representing a joint position from the United Nations family, the report offers guidance and identifies where efforts are required to close the gaps on the targets related to water and sanitation.

To enable feedback on the process and findings of the report, UN-Water invited stakeholders to a Public Dialogue aimed at extracting lessons learned and best practices. Over the course of five months, stakeholders at all levels, from decision-makers to students, provided their insights on monitoring, data collection and the reporting process through an online platform, international events and a questionnaire.

This UN-Water SDG 6 Public Dialogue Report gives an overview of the many positive suggestions that could be taken into consideration for future reviews. Having such feedback is invaluable for improving processes, engaging with stakeholders and moving forward to ensure the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all by 2030.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In September 2015, all 193 Member States of the United Nations General Assembly unanimously agreed to *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (the 2030 Agenda). The 2030 Agenda outlines an ambitious framework for people, the planet and prosperity, acknowledging the key roles of peace and partnerships.

The establishment of SDG 6, *Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all*, reflects the increased attention on water and sanitation issues in the global political agenda. To present the global review of SDG 6, UN-Water prepared the first *Sustainable Development Goal 6 Synthesis Report on Water and Sanitation*, released in June 2018. The report reviews the current situation and trends regarding water and sanitation at the global and regional levels.

At the twenty-eighth meeting of the Senior Programme Managers of UN-Water, it was decided that in light of the comprehensive nature and importance for policymaking of the first baseline report on SDG 6, feedback involving a “Public Dialogue” was needed to further increase the Synthesis Report’s transparency, credibility and accountability.

The Public Dialogue on the SDG 6 Synthesis Report was open from May to September 2018 to discuss the report and its main messages. This primarily took the form of three online forums, moderated for a month each, on the UN-Water website in addition to an online questionnaire, which targeted various stakeholder groups for feedback on the Synthesis Report. Feedback was also collected at events where the report was presented. The results of the Public Dialogue will be taken into consideration during the next SDG 6 reporting cycle.

On the whole, the feedback on the UN-Water *SDG 6 Synthesis Report on Water and Sanitation* was very positive. It was “consistent”, “covered all issues”, “comprehensive” and a “great synthesis”, and is a fantastic starting point for discussing the implementation of SDG 6. The effort to interlink it with other aspects of the 2030 Agenda was appreciated, as it clearly showed the importance of water and sanitation to other elements of sustainable development, and vice versa.

The main messages for how to improve and strengthen the report were clear and fell within three categories:

A. Process, structure and presentation

- **Shorten the report:** Feedback suggested that the report was too long and should be shortened for easier reading (although this would go against many other recommendations that identified certain gaps).
- **Incorporate and/or include easier access to more national-level data:** While this baseline report provided a global overview of SDG 6, there was a request for more national-level data to be included.
- **Include more cases/boxes in the text:** The respondents appreciated the cases that were shared in the boxes throughout the report. However, they thought that more real-life examples of efforts being made to close the gap on various SDG 6 indicators and their interlinkages with other areas of the 2030 Agenda would be useful.
- **Open up the opportunity to provide feedback earlier and in different ways:** It was recognized that the publication timeline did not allow time for consultation prior to the SDG 6 Synthesis Report being published. It was hoped that this would be possible in the next reporting and publishing cycle.
- **Include more information on nationally tailored targets:** Further information on cases where countries have used the global targets to tailor their national targets would be appreciated.
- **Improve the indicator methodologies so they are more easily learned:** Make the methodologies more easily understandable and accessible for those who want to use them.

B. Data

- **Disaggregate data:** A more extensive disaggregation of the data was requested to give a more nuanced idea of where the largest gaps are and the vulnerable populations that are the furthest behind.
- **Harmonize data collection to reduce the burden on national governments:** This effort was already under way leading up to and during the data drive for the 2018 SDG 6 Synthesis Report. It needs to continue until SDG 6 data and complementary data already collected on water and sanitation are harmonized in a way that does not create a significant additional burden on national governments.
- **Create multi-stakeholder partnerships for data collection:** As partnerships are one of the unifying forces for enabling and achieving SDG 6, it is important to utilize all available institutional, intellectual and technical resources to both implement and monitor SDG 6.

C. Content

- **Go beyond SDG 6:** SDG 6 is not the only SDG to include or directly relate to water and sanitation. An effort to include these other targets (e.g. SDG target 3.3 (water-borne diseases), SDG target 11.5 (water-related disasters), SDG target 13.2 (climate change adaptation)) would therefore provide a more comprehensive assessment of the water- and sanitation-related targets of the 2030 Agenda.
- **Focus on the intra-linkages between SDG 6 targets:** These were largely not addressed in the report and should be included in a next phase.
- **Strengthen certain topic areas:** Certain topics were thought to be insufficiently integrated in the Synthesis Report, including groundwater, smallholder farmers, small island developing states (SIDS) and ageing infrastructure.
- **Explain how to implement SDG 6:** There was a strong sense that while the data were useful, the report was lacking in guidance on how to implement SDG 6. While detailed implementation guidelines are outside the scope of the Synthesis Report, such an endeavour is the natural next step after showing what the gaps to reaching the targets are.
- **Share more lessons learned and best practices:** Sharing lessons learned and best practices in terms of both monitoring (data collection, reporting, etc.) and implementation of SDG 6 could significantly assist those looking to make a larger impact on the long road to 2030.

1. BACKGROUND

A. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

In September 2015, all 193 Member States of the United Nations General Assembly unanimously agreed to *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (the 2030 Agenda). The 2030 Agenda outlines an ambitious framework for people, the planet and prosperity, acknowledging the key roles of peace and partnerships. Member States resolved to “end poverty in all its forms”, to take bold and transformative steps to “shift the world on to a sustainable and resilient path” and to ensure that “no one will be left behind” (United Nations, 2015).

The 2030 Agenda established 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 global targets, relating to development outcomes and means of implementation (Moi), for the period 2015–2030. These were designed to be integrated and indivisible and to balance the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. The 2030 Agenda further seeks to realize the human rights of all, and to achieve gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls. This ambitious universal agenda is intended to be implemented by all countries, regardless of their level of development, with multi-stakeholder partnerships the key to unlocking potential opportunities and resources (United Nations, 2015).

The 2030 Agenda emphasizes that governments have primary responsibility for “follow-up and review” of progress towards the SDGs and their targets at the national, regional and global levels. To ensure this, it encourages Member States to establish regular and inclusive review processes and highlights the need for “high quality, accessible, timely and reliable disaggregated data” to measure progress.

The United Nations High-level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development is the main global platform on sustainable development and has a central role in follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda. It meets annually under the auspices of the United Nations Economic and Social Council for eight days, including a three-day ministerial segment, and every four years at the level of

Heads of State and Government under the auspices of the United Nations General Assembly for two days. The theme of each HLPF, and a subset of goals to be reviewed, is agreed in advance. Member States present Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) of progress on the SDGs, and there are a variety of sessions and contributions from countries and stakeholders to support the 2030 Agenda (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, n.d.).

B. UN-Water SDG 6 Synthesis Report on Water and Sanitation

The establishment of SDG 6, *Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all*, reflects the increased attention on water and sanitation issues in the global political agenda. To maximize its scope, the goal concentrates on all aspects of the water cycle: water, sanitation and health (WASH); water resources management and water-use efficiency; wastewater management; water quality and protecting freshwater ecosystems. Associated Moi targets on cooperation and participation are intended to help nations achieve SDG 6.

With the 2030 Agenda recognizing rising inequalities, natural resource depletion, environmental degradation and climate change as some of the world’s greatest challenges, water is inextricably linked to all of these subjects. At the same time, social development and economic prosperity depend on the sustainable management of freshwater resources and ecosystems. The interlinkages between these pressing issues mean that water cannot be ignored.

SDG 6 was reviewed for the first time at the HLPF in July 2018, under the theme *Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies*, together with a pre-selected set of SDGs on affordable and clean energy (SDG 7), sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11), responsible consumption and production (SDG 12) and life on land (SDG 15). The goal on partnerships (SDG 17) is reviewed annually at each HLPF.

To present the global review of SDG 6, UN-Water prepared the first *Sustainable Development Goal 6 Synthesis Report on Water and Sanitation*, which reviews the current situation and trends at the

global and regional levels. It compiles the latest data available for the 11 global indicators for SDG 6 to track progress towards its eight global targets, by creating the global baseline for SDG 6 and showing what more needs to be done, and draws complementary data and evidence from a wide range of sources. This Synthesis Report on SDG 6 sought to not only inform discussions among Member States during the HLPF and the in-depth review of SDG 6, but also to help Member States and stakeholders start to develop the ways and means of closing the gaps reported through this review.

C. Public Dialogue on the SDG 6 Synthesis Report

At the twenty-eighth meeting of the Senior Programme Managers of UN-Water,¹ in February 2018, the issue was raised that the very tight deadline for the SDG 6 Synthesis Report to be drafted, edited and published prior to the HLPF did not allow enough time for anyone other than UN-Water to provide feedback on the report. Nevertheless, it was decided that in light of the Synthesis Report's comprehensive nature and importance for policymaking, feedback involving a "Public Dialogue" was subsequently needed to further increase its transparency, credibility, accountability and impact, and to help improve its quality for when SDG 6 is reviewed again at a later date. Given that this is the first time such an endeavour has been undertaken, there are many lessons to be learned from the process.

The Public Dialogue on the SDG 6 Synthesis Report was open from May to September 2018 to discuss the report and its main messages. This primarily took the form of three [online forums](#), moderated for a month each, on the UN-Water website.

Each discussion period centred around a certain aspect of the SDG 6 Synthesis Report, as follows:

Part 1: Report feedback and discussion

Moderated: 2 May–31 May

This part focused on collecting overall feedback on the report with questions such as: How did you like the report? Are there areas, topics or messages that are missing from the report, or that you would like to modify or highlight? What could be improved in possible future editions of the report?

Part 2: Preparing for the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development

Moderated: 25 June–20 July

This part took place between the International High-Level Conference on the International Decade for Action "Water for Sustainable Development", 2018–2028 and the High-level Political Forum (HLPF). It focused on the main messages for the HLPF: What messages do you think should be emphasized at the HLPF? What additions or modifications would you make on the messaging? Participants were encouraged to share relevant examples and lessons learned.

Part 3: The way forward

Moderated: 31 August–30 September

After World Water Week in Stockholm, this final part concentrated on looking forward and next steps, building on the outcomes from meetings arranged during the dialogue period.

¹ UN-Water coordinates the efforts of UN entities and international organizations working on water and sanitation issues. It is a coordinating mechanism comprising 32 Members (UN organizations) and 40 Partners (other international organizations, professional unions, associations and other civil-society groups).

These online discussions were complemented by events organized at several international meetings: the Member States briefing in New York (May 2018) prior to the HLPF in the United States, Dushanbe Conference in Tajikistan (June 2018), Global Water Partnership-Central and Eastern Europe (GWP-CEE) Summer School in Poland (July 2018), presentation of the report at HLPF (July 2018), UN-Water Stakeholder Dialogue at Stockholm World Water Week in Sweden (August 2018), Regional Training Workshop on Effective Management of Water Quality and Emerging Pollutants in Water and Wastewater in Sub-Saharan Africa in Ghana (September 2018), XIII Meeting of National Committees and Focal Points of the International Hydrological Programme for Latin America and the Caribbean (IHP-LAC) (October 2018), and several other stakeholder meetings that took place across the globe (e.g. Brazil, Netherlands, Poland, Ghana, Ecuador).

In addition, UN-Water conducted an online questionnaire with questions relating to different aspects of the Synthesis Report, as well as how progress on SDG 6 implementation could be accelerated.

The primary target audience of the Public Dialogue included:

- Policy advisers in national ministries and agencies;
- Permanent Missions to the United Nations;
- Water and sanitation portfolio managers in international development cooperation organizations;
- Water and sanitation professionals across all levels and organizations;
- Civil society, private sector and the broader public; and
- UN-Water Members and Partners.

The Public Dialogue has culminated in this publication, which takes a critical yet constructive look at the structure and presentation of the SDG 6 Synthesis Report, the SDG 6 monitoring process, and the content of the report itself. Chapter 2 focuses on the online forum dialogues and the events that took place, while chapter 3 considers the results of the online questionnaire. The document ends with recommendations on how to learn from developing the first SDG 6 Synthesis Report, in order to improve the process the second time around. While it is recognized that the feedback provided may not represent a global perspective on the Synthesis Report due to the nature of the Public Dialogue, these recommendations will be analysed and taken into consideration when SDG 6 is next reviewed.



UN Photo/Kibae Park, Access to water and sanitation in developing countries. Children collecting water in Kallayanpur slum, one of the urban slums in Dhaka.

2. FEEDBACK ON THE UN-WATER SDG 6 SYNTHESIS REPORT ON WATER AND SANITATION

A. Overview

On the whole, the feedback on the UN-Water *SDG 6 Synthesis Report on Water and Sanitation* was very positive. While the Public Dialogue focused on how future editions could be improved and what was missing from the Synthesis Report, this did not prevent respondents from including notes of congratulations on and praise of the report. The significant amount of work taken to compile such a report was acknowledged, and the UN-Water family's effort to put together such a report for the first time was deemed a great success.

The report was deemed "interesting", "relevant" and "excellent", with some stating they would not change anything about the document. The participatory nature of its compilation process was welcomed, with several comments claiming it was the best United Nations report to date. It was "consistent", "covered all issues" and "comprehensive", a "great synthesis", and a fantastic starting point for discussing the implementation of SDG 6. Its efforts to link this goal with other aspects of the 2030 Agenda were appreciated, with it clearly showing the co-dependence of water and other elements of sustainable development.

At the same time, it was appreciated that the report humbly recognized the significant amount of work still needed not only to achieve SDG 6, but also to put in place the mechanisms and trained people required to properly monitor and report on the goal.

While the report was deemed an overall success, the Public Dialogue sought to critically and constructively examine how it could be improved upon in future reporting on SDG 6. The following two chapters of this feedback report will outline the many comments and discussions that took place from May to September 2018. They will mainly focus on reactions to the report's content and the way forward for SDG 6 implementation. Equally important, but with fewer contributions during the Public Dialogue, will be sections on the structure and presentation of the document, as well as the data collection and monitoring of SDG 6. These chapters will present only the feedback, while recommendations will be highlighted in the last chapter of the document.

B. Structure and presentation

Although there was very limited feedback on the actual structure and presentation of the report, the few comments that did emerge are to be taken into consideration when preparing for the next reporting cycle of the SDG 6 Synthesis Report.

First, it was noted that the report was too long and very dense. At almost 200 pages, it was difficult for anyone to read in its entirety. Feedback suggested that even providing comments on such a long report was difficult and time-consuming. In an age of short attention spans, this might limit the report's impact.

Second, it was suggested that more graphics, tables, illustrations and maps could make it less dense. Although a great deal of attention had been given to this, especially in chapter 2 when reviewing the individual indicators, going further with this could help better communicate the report's information. Further to this, more case studies (e.g. in text boxes) could illustrate the report with real-world examples and showcase success stories, failures and lessons learned.

Third, and contrary to the first point about the size of the document, there were comments about the need to include other SDG targets directly related to water and sanitation (i.e. target 3.3 on water-borne diseases, target 11.5 on water-related disasters). Despite a section (chapter 4 in the Synthesis Report) focusing on interlinkages between targets, the Synthesis Report could reflect these to a greater extent.

Fourth, and also complicating the first point above, was a wish for more country-level information in the Synthesis Report. While this does not fall within its scope, given that it is a global report and that such information is indeed available on the UN Stats website, more examples and data from the country level would provide a more nuanced picture of where the world stands with regards to SDG 6 and its indicators.

Lastly, there was a sense that the report was missing the "how". How are countries, international organizations, civil society, companies, local governments, academia and the general public supposed to help achieve SDG 6? While this question was outside the scope of the Synthesis Report, readers were left wondering what they could do to assist in closing the gap on the various indicators and supporting implementation.

C. SDG 6 monitoring

The respondents involved in the Public Dialogue were not necessarily engaged in monitoring SDG 6 – including data collection and analysis – but those that were included respondents from government agencies charged with monitoring SDG 6 or partner organizations associated with supporting such efforts. While some information was new, many comments also mirrored the experience of the United Nations in gathering and analysing the data for the 2030 Agenda water and sanitation indicators.

Several strong messages emerged from the Public Dialogue, firstly about the difficulty of integrating SDG 6 monitoring and reporting processes into national monitoring and reporting processes. This calls for a national-level prioritization of targets as well as potentially cumbersome harmonization of the data that are being collected for different target audiences. In many cases, these monitoring and evaluation frameworks are simply not in place, making it unclear where the gaps in water information systems are (not only in terms of SDG 6) and what can be done to improve them.

Some of the respondents had engaged in the UN-Water's GEMI² piloting exercise of the SDG 6 indicator methodologies and had found its use of multi-stakeholder platforms highly participatory and beneficial to their own reporting efforts. This is a lesson to be learned for helping to build momentum and capacity around SDG 6 monitoring at the national level.

Throughout the course of the five-month dialogue, funding, capacity-building and technical support were repeatedly cited as necessary to ensuring proper data collection and monitoring of SDG 6. Without more support, partnerships and optimizing the financial and human resources available, simply knowing where the world stands on the eight SDG 6 targets will be difficult, let alone implementing them.

There was therefore a call to improve data collection for some of the water and sanitation indicators. This includes (1) strengthening local government data collection and monitoring, (2) developing the use and incorporation of citizen science into monitoring mechanisms and (3) furthering Earth observations and satellite data, linking existing initiatives and programmes to SDG 6 monitoring to optimize resources.

i. Targets and indicators

As the SDG 6 targets and indicators raised many issues in the Public Dialogue, they will be subdivided into three sections: (1) Overall issues, (2) Individual indicators and (3) Methodologies:

Overall issues

One of the main issues emerging from the Public Dialogue was the need to tailor the SDG 6 targets and indicators to national priorities and goals. Given that the report sought to inform on global progress on SDG 6, it did not report on the extent to which countries have “nationalized” SDG targets and indicators. However, one of the main differences between the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the SDGs is the opportunity for countries to tailor the goals to their realities (social, political and economic), with the global targets intended to be useful guidelines. It was therefore recommended that a small section of the report could be dedicated to this unique element of the SDGs.

While the report examined interlinkages with other elements of the 2030 Agenda, it did not fully address the intra-linkages between the SDG 6 targets and indicators themselves, although it recognized the limited time available to collect and analyse the relevant data, which were entirely new for some indicators. The 2030 Agenda calls for integration, which was also identified as one of the most important steps for achieving SDG 6 within the larger Agenda 2030 context. However, even within SDG 6 itself, the targets are conceptualized and presented differently in the SDG 6 Synthesis Report. In addition, respondents thought that it would be useful to see how SDG 6 contributes (if indeed it does) to the different nexus and resilience concepts that also claim to support the 2030 Agenda.

It was also noted that efforts should be made to align the monitoring and reporting of the SDGs as much as possible where goals overlap, so as to reduce the reporting burden on countries. This is particularly important for many low-income countries with limited capacity for monitoring and reporting.

² GEMI was established as an inter-agency SDG 6 monitoring initiative comprising: FAO, UNECE, United Nations Environment Programme, UNESCO, UN-Habitat, UNICEF, WHO and the World Meteorological Organization. The first phase of GEMI implementation (2015–2018) focused on developing and testing monitoring methodologies and other support tools for countries, global implementation of SDG 6 monitoring and the start of a long-term process to build monitoring capacity in countries, as well as establishing a global baseline for SDG targets.

Specific feedback on individual targets/indicators

Small notes made on targets:

6.2:

- The discussion on sanitation and drinking water neglected the infrastructure networks that support them and their sustainability and resilience, especially in the face of climate change.

6.3:

- While there is a focus on reusing water from wastewater, more information on reusing nutrients from wastewater would be appreciated;
- There should be more emphasis on agricultural pollution, pharmaceutical pollution and emerging pollutants; and
- Different quality levels of reused water for agricultural should be more clearly stated.

6.4:

- There should be more of a focus on “better use of the available resources”, rather than finding other avenues where water can be used;
- Indicator-based statements such as “the global average water stress is only 11 per cent” or “31 countries experience water stress between 25 per cent (when stress begins) and 70 per cent” are misleading, particularly for non-expert audiences, considering how severe global/regional water stress is;
- Summarizing water-use efficiency to a value in US\$/m³ without distinguishing per sector is not informative and can be misleading;
- Concerns were expressed about how 6.4.2 should be measured at the basin level; and
- There is a failure to introduce a 6.4.2 monitoring ladder, which calls for higher resolution data, i.e. modelling and remote sensing data.

6.a

- Revisions of the target are suggested to reflect the following:
- To achieve SDG 6, more than official development assistance (ODA) will be necessary;
- Government leadership and planning, and the need for entities wishing to accelerate progress on SDG 6 to foster them;
- Breadth of international cooperation, disaggregating financial and capacity-building assistance; and

- Indicators should be adopted that are applicable to governments in both aid-providing and aid-receiving countries, as well as non-governmental aid-providing entities, in the spirit of mutual accountability.

6.b

- Revise 6.b to better reflect the rights to information, voice and remedy. Develop an associated indicator that would better reflect the proportion of the population with effective access to these rights, rather than the proportion of administrative entities with policies and procedures whose level of implementation is unknown.

The SDG 6 means of implementation (MoI) targets, 6.a and 6.b on international cooperation and local participation, respectively, drew a large number of comments. While target 6.a mentions “capacity-building support”, no aspect of the indicator focuses on capacity-building, focusing only on external support (ODA). There were suggestions that an indicator to help reflect the development of strengthened local capacities should therefore be created.

It was also suggested that target 6.5 on integrated water resources management (IWRM) should be converted into an MoI target that reflects the role of the state and the need for (1) national planning, (2) innovation and (3) capacity-building, with a focus on renewing and updating capacities. This target would also include indicators to help accelerate progress, including resilience and adaptability to stressors such as climate change and population movements.

Methodologies

Linked to the targets and indicators of SDG 6 are their methodologies, which received some attention during the Public Dialogue. Two stand out:

The most common observation regarding these methodologies was their complexity. Even with the step-by-guides provided by UN-Water/GEMI, they are difficult to comprehend and require technical capacities that are not readily available within national governments. Support is therefore required from external sources such as the SDG 6 Custodian Agencies.

Overall, groundwater was considered to be under-represented in the monitoring of SDG 6. It was also noted that some of the methodologies that include groundwater may not clearly specify its contribution in the weighted calculations. There should be adequate groundwater measurement and monitoring methodologies to collect the necessary data on a regular basis and in a manner that can easily be applied at the national level.

ii. Data

Several key topics emerged in the Synthesis Report feedback with regards to its data. Firstly, given that less than 50 per cent of countries have comparable baseline estimates for the majority of SDG 6 global indicators, the report should explain more clearly how the global trends and estimates are calculated. While this is done in Table 2 of the report, it could be explained in each of the individual indicator sections in chapter 2 as well, for people going straight to these sections.

The most commented-on aspect of the data for SDG 6, and their analysis, was regarding their disaggregation, especially for gender. The gender aspect was important not only for 6.1- and 6.2-related indicators, but also in terms of capacity development and human resources. There were also suggestions to disaggregate data between (1) urban and rural and (2) national and municipal levels, to better assess the needs of communities, in the hope of targeting assistance where the needs are the highest. Disaggregation by country type was also suggested (small island developing states (SIDS), landlocked states, etc.).

For some respondents, the Synthesis Report has created a misperception that countries are lacking data, since it is missing data from a number of countries on several indicators. Countries have been collecting water-related data for a long time, and have a significant amount, but some of the data that are being collected for the SDG 6 indicators are entirely new, as the methodologies were only recently developed. Therefore, it is no surprise that not all data for SDG 6 are present in the baseline report, given the amount of time countries with limited resources have had to incorporate collecting SDG 6 data as well.

This is linked to data sharing, which was also mentioned in the Public Dialogue. As one participant from Africa stated in one of the dialogue sessions, "Africa has data. We're just not sharing it". This demonstrates some of the hurdles countries have to overcome to make data available to all for public information and use.

D. SDG 6 Synthesis Report Content

Over the course of the five months of the Public Dialogue, many issues were raised about the content of the Synthesis Report. What was missing? What was underemphasized? Which elements could be improved upon and made more robust, or provide better reality checks? With water touching all aspects of sustainable development, this open forum for feedback led to a wide variety

of responses in terms of thematic areas and topics that should be addressed when thinking about future SDG 6 Synthesis Reports. This section attempts to bring all these reactions together in as coherent a manner as possible based on the volume of the responses, but also not leaving out very insightful suggestions that were made by just a single person.

i. Global concepts

Interlinkages and the centrality of water

Throughout the Public Dialogue, respondents stated that the Synthesis Report needed to include more of the specific interlinkages between the various SDGs and SDG 6 on water and sanitation, as chapter 4 included only some of them. While difficult to capture all of these interlinkages adequately in a concise report, it was suggested that it could dedicate more space to these connections, including the trade-offs required to implement each. In other words, more in-depth reporting is required, taking the SDG 6 data and going one step further than UN-Water's *Water and Sanitation Interlinkages across the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (UN-Water, 2016).

There were several comments about how the SDG 6 Synthesis Report did not state strongly enough the centrality of water to (1) achieving the other SDGs, (2) climate change or (3) peace and security, and how all of these issues require a multi-sectoral approach, as the water community cannot act in its own silo to achieve its targets: "There is a need to ACT on this interdependency and engage the water sector in having a greater impact on other SDGs". To go beyond conceptual linkages, a more practical approach must be taken to fostering these connections between SDG 6 and the other SDG targets.

Leave no one behind

One of the main mottos of the 2030 Agenda is "Leave no one behind". This aim is no different for SDG 6, but many challenges will have to be overcome to make this happen. The dialogue recognized that the first step was to identify who is at risk of being left behind. This issue was also touched upon in the data section above, in terms of disaggregation.

Along these lines, it was believed the Synthesis Report gave insufficient attention to people in vulnerable situations who present specific challenges, such as refugees, displaced populations, elderly people, minorities and people in humanitarian crises and conflicts. Targets on universal access to WASH will not be possible unless specific strategies are developed for these populations. In addition, the links between emergency mechanisms and development

mechanisms need to be strengthened, particularly in the post-crisis phase, in order to provide a structural and sustainable response to people's WASH needs.

In relation to other groups, small-scale farmers were also identified as at risk of being left behind. For example, the monitoring and implementation of SDG target 6.4 does not give enough consideration to the needs of small-scale farmers in adequately addressing a population affected by hunger and food insecurity.

Human rights

The human rights to water and sanitation were raised in several places in the Synthesis Report, but some respondents thought it could go further in presenting the linkages between the SDG framework and these rights. It could explain if and how the human rights approach is taken into account in the SDGs, and how SDG 6 and other SDGs contribute to the progressive realization of the human rights to water and sanitation. Also noted was the omission of sharing water to ensure other human rights – especially with regards to vulnerable rural populations' right to food. More examples of how the human rights to water and sanitation are being applied at the national level were also requested.

From a different perspective, some commented on the importance of examining how actions in support of SDGs, including SDG 6, potentially impact the human rights to water and sanitation.

Global water governance to strengthen SDG 6 implementation

From the Public Dialogue, as well as from the review of SDG 6 during the HLPF, there emerged quite a strong sense of the inadequacy of (1) what currently exists within the United Nations to coordinate and integrate its activities and (2) a proper review of SDG 6. The world lacks an effective United Nations-based framework for implementation of SDG 6.

Suggestions ranged from establishing an "intergovernmental forum on water" to organizing a "United Nations Water Conference" in order to provide a platform to review progress on SDG 6 and act as a regular, formal policy dialogue at the highest levels around the subject of water. There were also requests for the United Nations to provide leadership to strengthen intergovernmental coordination on water-related issues, through robust multi-stakeholder engagement. Similarly, there were several mentions of strengthening UN-Water in this regard.

ii. Thematic areas

Agriculture

Several pieces of feedback indicated that the report does not adequately reflect the challenges of water use in agriculture, nor does it take into sufficient consideration water use by different farming systems, especially in terms of smallholder/small-scale farmers, and the need to support rain-fed agriculture and small-scale irrigators.

Respondents highlighted the need to give more importance to the negative impact of high-input farming systems on ecosystem degradation, water cycles, local water use and food systems. Moreover, as the solutions presented in the Synthesis Report focus on more efficient and smart irrigation and farming technologies, they miss out on recommendations for achieving better water resource management in rain-fed agriculture. Examples include increased water harvesting, supplementary irrigation, and water storage infrastructure, including improving soil moisture retention capacity.

To make more headway on the agriculture-related water goals and targets, benchmarks for better international coordination are needed to:

- a) reduce excessive water use within globalized agricultural production chains;
- b) increase support to rehabilitate water bodies; and
- c) ensure appropriate cooperation on infrastructure development to assure adequate servicing of people in vulnerable situations, including subsistence and smallholder farmers in water-stressed countries and regions.

Groundwater

Groundwater has already been mentioned in the methodologies section of section 2 above, but several comments from the dialogue went beyond questioning its under-representation in SDG 6 monitoring. There is a strong sentiment that groundwater is often ignored and/or given low priority in IWRM planning and implementation. However, with groundwater depletion and degradation impacting water security, food security, urban security, drought resilience and critical ecosystem health, pro-active groundwater management is in fact key to water security and resilience, which underpin SDG 6 implementation.

Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH)

A key element in ensuring the achievement of SDG 6, and the entire 2030 Agenda, is the sustainability factor: will what is being implemented now last in the long-term? The answer depends on operations, maintenance, training, education, an enabling environment, policies, and so on. The dialogue identified a lack of reporting, discussion or recommendations on how to ensure the sustainability of WASH services. As one respondent noted, “SDG 6 cannot succeed without planning for the long-term”.

Also, the Synthesis Report does not give sufficient mention or weight to the self-supply of drinking water, which has contributed significantly to achieving universal access in some parts of the world. Part of the problem is the lack of official monitoring of and access to data on self-supply in many countries. Furthermore, monitoring and regulation of the water quality of such sources is often limited, even in high-income countries. Self-supply in rural areas is an opportunity to unlock unconventional WASH investment.

Great strides have been made in sanitation worldwide since the inception of the MDGs, but clearly much more work remains to be done, with 4.5 billion people worldwide still lacking safely managed sanitation services in 2015. Some respondents therefore felt that, especially in the key messages and recommendations sections of the report, sanitation came secondary to the strong focus on water. Therefore, future reports should place more emphasis on the importance of achieving the sanitation target.

Wastewater

Wastewater is one of the very positive thematic areas that was included in the SDGs that had not been readily addressed at the global level previously. SDG 6 target focusing on water quality and wastewater was warmly welcomed by respondents. However, several comments were made that the report gives the impression that only conventional wastewater treatment utilized in industrialized countries is the “right” way to treat wastewater. Some respondents argued that centralized wastewater plants are often costly and may not be the best solution for all scenarios, specially related to their flexibility to population increases and weather events.

There was an observation that the report also focuses primarily on household and industrial wastewater, but does not mention the other forms of wastewater pollution, such as wastewater deriving from harmful chemical substances and heavy metals, used not only by industry, and the pollution from agricultural and household use of pesticides, biocides, pharmaceuticals, (micro)-plastics and mineral production. Ultimately, however, preventing pollution is the most efficient and affordable solution to wastewater management.

Dams

A critical view of dams was presented by a few of the Public Dialogue participants, citing the negative impacts of existing and proposed dams and how this in turn impacts the implementation of SDG 6, most notably target 6.6 on protecting water-related ecosystems. The suitability of water storage in dams and reservoirs as a tool to fulfil SDG 6 was called into question.

Protection of water resources

Many respondents stated that the report should focus more on SDG target 6.6 on the protection and restoration of water-related ecosystems, and include more case studies and boxes showing examples of good practice (from all regions of the world) that would help make water management more sustainable.

Gender

Issues around gender appeared several times throughout the dialogue. While there is a section on water and gender in the Synthesis Report (chapter 4), there was a sense that the message was not urgent enough and that the fact that women and girls are more impacted by and vulnerable to issues regarding access to water and sanitation did not come across as strongly as it could.

It was also stated that greater priority should be given to incorporating gender objectives into the work on SDG 6, given the importance of gender in meeting water and sanitation targets. Being successful on WASH targets also requires women to take a stronger role in decision-making processes, including in leadership positions. There is still a general mindset that water is a purely technical issue, but this approach foments a system where the needs of women and girls in particular are not met. Furthermore, stressing a human rights approach to water and sanitation helps improve women’s empowerment and safety.

Transboundary waters

Several instances in the Public Dialogue promoted the furthering of transboundary cooperation and consideration of indigenous populations and initiatives when developing the operational arrangements (indicator 6.5.2).

Water footprint

With two mentions regarding water footprints in the Synthesis Report – one linked to diets and the other to food waste – it was noted that this portrayal of water footprints, while not incorrect, was very narrow in terms of its potential contribution towards SDG 6.

Integrated water resources management

Part of the water governance equation is integrated water resources management (IWRM), which has a dedicated target and indicator (6.5 and 6.5.1, respectively) for its implementation. As the only progress indicator under SDG 6, the Public Dialogue repeatedly heralded different elements of IWRM as key factors in achieving SDG 6 and simultaneously having a positive impact on other SDGs. Sustainable management of water resources requires “effective coordination” in the planning of water and sanitation activities, strengthening “cross/intersectoral collaboration”, a “more coherent approach to decisions on water use and allocation” and looking “beyond water policies to agriculture policies and other sectoral policies that impact water supply and use”.

Nevertheless, it was noted that this is not easy, considering fragmentation, the “silo” approach to different thematic areas and the complexity of IWRM, which makes investment in the area difficult.

Accountability/transparency

More specific aspects of water governance that were raised during the dialogue were accountability and transparency, and their necessity if SDG 6 is to be achieved. On the accountability side, this is to ensure that countries invest in and have in place accountability mechanisms so that they are held accountable to their commitments with regards to SDG 6 implementation. As this requires engagement from multiple stakeholders and participation, it also contributes to SDG target 6.b.

Accountability mechanisms beget transparency and there were numerous calls for more transparency related to the water and sanitation data that are collected and shared. The dialogue also linked transparency to financial sectors and disclosing water-related information.

Reducing inequalities

While a significant amount of the Synthesis Report (including some of its main messages) was dedicated to inequalities, the dialogue stressed the need to address these in order to achieve SDG 6. A first step in many places is simply to identify vulnerable groups.

Financing

Issues around finance were heavily commented on during the Public Dialogue. Echoing much of what was reported on in the Synthesis Report, the respondents’ priorities ranged from increased budget allocation for and investment in the water and sanitation sector to ensuring a better balance between financing to urban and rural areas, thereby eliminating inequalities.

Improving resource allocation, efficiency in the use of funds and poor financial performance were also identified as key activities in removing obstacles on access to finance. Increasing integrity and transparency with regards to finance was also mentioned, while improving the enabling environment could unlock more and blended finance, from both international and domestic sources. Developing more bankable projects was mentioned several times, alongside improving how the water community markets investments, which has much room for improvement. Overwhelmingly, a key message that emerged was that water and sanitation should be prioritized higher in budget allocations at all levels, but this was mentioned most often with respect to the local level.

Capacity development

Throughout both the SDG 6 Synthesis Report and the Public Dialogue, capacity was repeatedly mentioned as one of the most important limiting factors to achieving SDG 6. Several different aspects of capacity development were raised, with strong emphasis on the need for capacity development among people in local communities and governments, where many of the gaps in SDG 6 implementation are found.

One suggestion was to undertake a national analysis of capacity gaps, and to make targeted investments from the technical to the academic level in order to ensure that countries have the institutional and human capacity to ensure effective water management.

Beyond the need to develop capacity, those who are trained must also be incentivized to stay in their countries and flourish, by creating an enabling environment for the brightest minds: “If low-income countries are to move away from donor-dependency then investment in skills, training and careers is essential, accepting that there will be inevitably be some brain drain of talent.” These issues are particularly poignant for rural communities. A collaboration with SDG 4 on education could be mutually beneficial for the different constituencies.

Multi-stakeholder partnerships

Although only two of the 19 targets of SDG 17 on the means of implementation (MoI) of the 2030 Agenda refer to partnerships, the concept is so important that the entire SDG is called, in short, “Partnerships for the Goals”. And while one of the key messages of the SDG 6 Synthesis Report focused on how multi-stakeholder partnerships can unlock potential, this still emerged during the Public Dialogue as a tool of significant importance for SDG 6 monitoring and implementation.

The dialogue provided more details on areas in which multi-stakeholder partnerships could prove to be beneficial, from transboundary cooperation to ensuring human rights, and from policymaking to data collection and monitoring. Partnerships also reinforce and promote the idea of participation, another one of the enablers (and targets) for SDG 6 implementation.

Participation

Participation, one of the MoI of SDG 6 (target 6.b), was raised in various forums during the Public Dialogue. The overall sentiment is that there is a need for higher quality participation, which would help achieve 6.b. This requires training, awareness-raising and a concerted effort for effective participation in decision-making processes.

Education

The importance of education for the successful monitoring and implementation of SDG 6 was emphasized throughout the dialogue. This included educating decision makers on policy development and the benefits of investing in water and educating the water community to think outside its own silo. The Public Dialogue suggested that education campaigns should target national government staff, local governments and the general public.

Technology

While “smart technologies” emerged as one of the main messages of the SDG 6 Synthesis Report, there was very little substance on the issue within the text itself as to how, as an MoI, technology could truly help achieve SDG 6. Not only is investment in technology itself required, but also investment in the research on and adaptation/application/use of technology and innovation. While technology is one of the solutions for water and sanitation, capacity around existing and new technologies must be built, particularly in developing countries, to implement, maintain and operate technologies effectively.

Political will

Political will was mentioned quite frequently in the feedback on the report, with most of the comments citing a lack of political will and commitment on the part of governments as a clear obstacle to SDG 6 implementation. Dedicated political will can bring real transformations for the benefit of society and the environment and is a prerequisite for SDG implementation. On the surface, political will does not fit into any of the reported targets and indicators in the Synthesis Report, but it does hugely impact the quality of the data presented by national governments. Without political will to provide resources, both human and financial, or continuity of such

will between changes in governments, both the quantity and quality of the data provided for the Synthesis Report will suffer.

iv. Actors

Local governments and decentralization

Two aspects of a more local approach to SDG 6 implementation were raised in the discussions: local governments and decentralization.

There was a perception that the importance of local governments for SDG 6 implementation was under-represented in the report. As the level of government closest to the citizens, they often enjoy devolved competences to provide access to water and sanitation. This requires technical and institutional capacity development.

Decentralization was seen as a means to both “leave no one behind” – as this will help address water and sanitation issues in areas and communities that are often neglected, especially rural areas – and to increase participation and engagement on SDG 6 implementation.

Stakeholder groups

Several inputs suggested that there should be further mention of indigenous peoples in the Synthesis Report regarding their contributions to the protection and management of water resources. In addition, despite their unique social, cultural, economic and political characteristics making them a unique category of stakeholder group, in some instances the report grouped “indigenous peoples” under the “civil society” category.

In addition, the feedback mentioned that faith communities should be more involved in the implementation of SDG 6. It was argued that their vast and structured networks are important means of channelling key messages on sustainable water management, access to drinking water, sanitation and hygiene.

Private sector

Private sector engagement in SDG 6 implementation was one of the areas most frequently commented on during the dialogue. As the private sector is seen to have a valuable part to play in SDG 6, there needs to be a better dialogue with this sector.

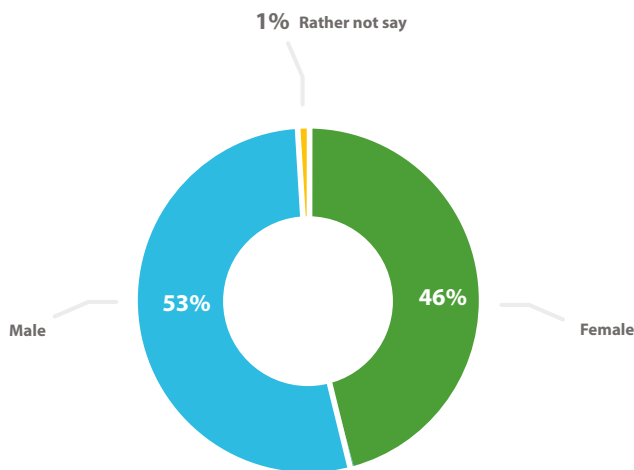
It is not only stand-alone action by the private sector that is being called for, but also better links and mechanisms for cooperation between the public and private sectors to create better conditions for private sector investment. Building institutions that are strong and trustworthy would make the private sector more willing to invest. A strong enabling environment is required to do this.

3. RESULTS OF THE ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE SDG 6 SYNTHESIS REPORT

Starting on 22 June 2018, UN-Water and its Members and Partners distributed a questionnaire via various channels to gain more quantitative and region/country-oriented results regarding the Public Dialogue on the SDG 6 Synthesis Report. The questionnaire was designed to have respondents select options on the challenges and needs related to SDG 6 for their countries and was closed at the end of the Public Dialogue on 30 September 2018. What follows is a presentation of the questionnaire results, first showing the composition of the respondents (118 in total), followed by their responses.

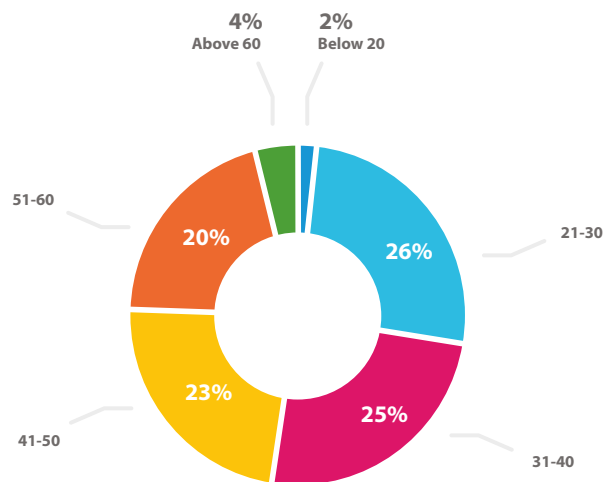
i. Demographics and other information about the respondents

Figure 2. Gender of respondents



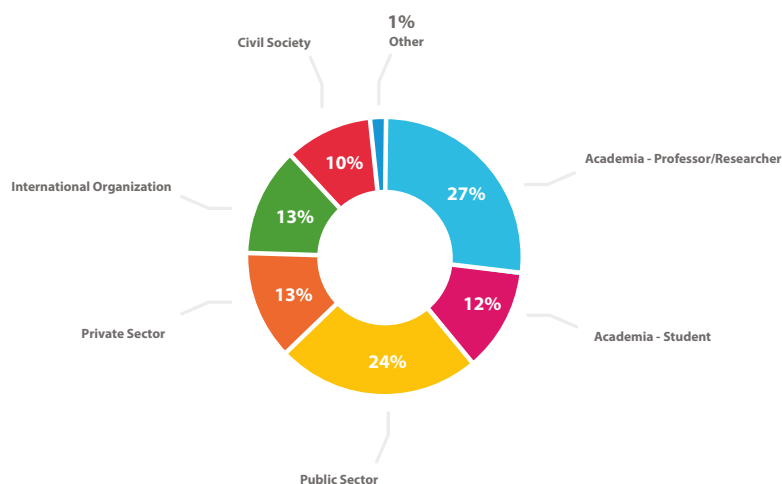
Overall, slightly more men (53 per cent) than women (46 per cent) responded to the questionnaire.

Figure 3. Age group of respondents



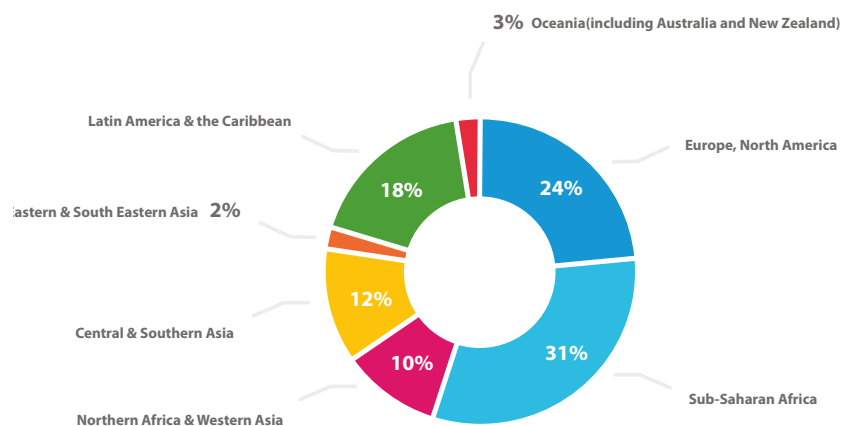
The age groups were fairly evenly distributed, with the largest group of respondents being 21 to 30 years of age (26 per cent) followed closely by those a decade older (31 to 40 years of age) at 25 per cent. The respondents covered several professional occupations.

Figure 4. Occupation of respondents



The largest group came from academia (27 per cent), closely followed by those working in the public sector (24 per cent). Respondents from international organizations, the private sector, students and civil society all came close in their percentage coverage, from 10 to 13 per cent.

Figure 5. Geographical distribution of respondents according to United Nations SDG regions



Lastly, the largest region³ answering the questionnaire came from Sub-Saharan Africa (31 per cent), followed by Europe/North America (24 per cent), and Latin America and the Caribbean (18 per cent) and Central and Southern Asia (12 per cent).

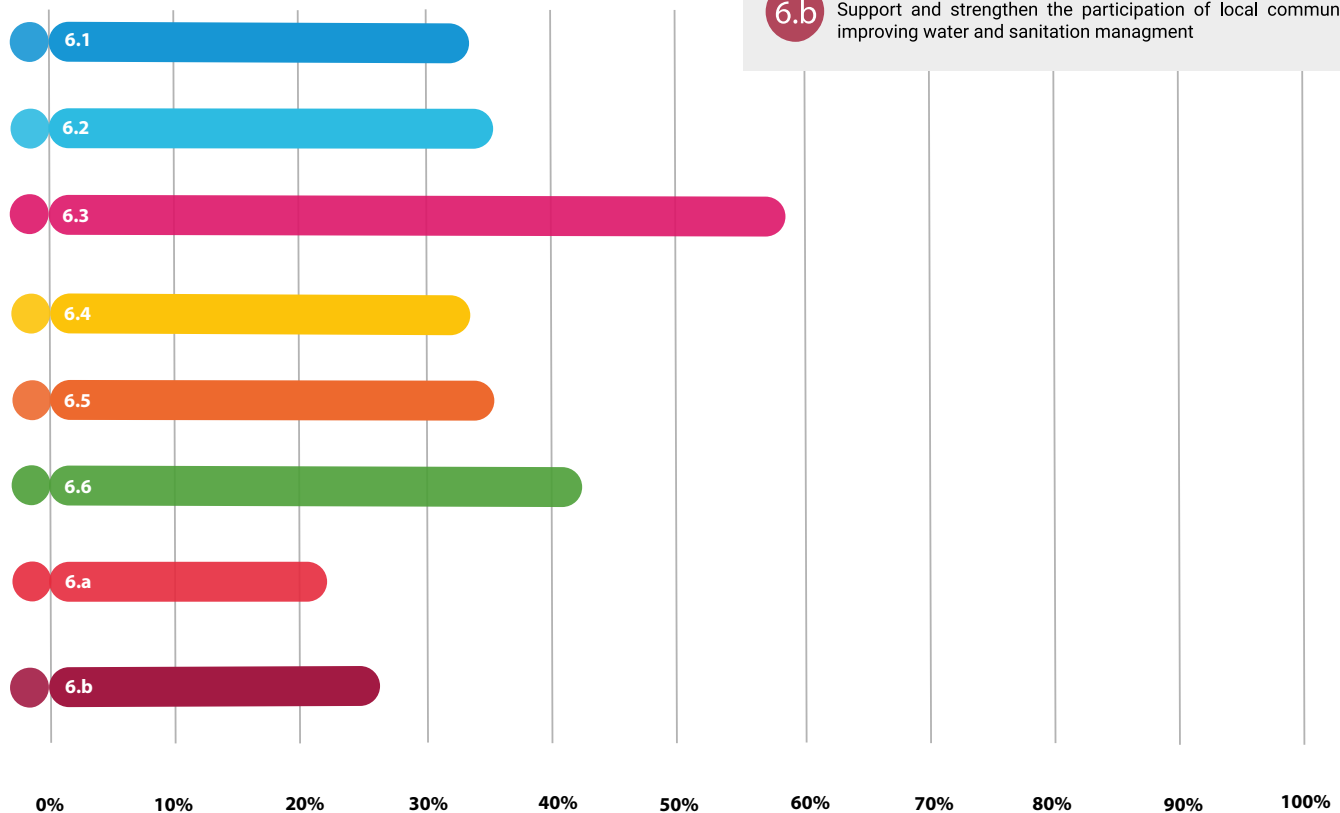
ii. Questionnaire results

The questionnaire asked respondents to answer nine questions. The following section will show the results from each question in graph form, with a very brief explanation of the results. In most cases, the questions were accompanied by open-response boxes to allow respondents to add to their response in written form anything that might not have been included among the pre-selected options (and the last two questions were completely open, with no pre-selected options). Responses that were not included in chapter 2, and/or other interesting/unique responses, will be presented to capture the richness of reactions to the report.

The questions ranged from prioritizing the biggest challenges represented by SDG 6 targets, to key issues that are missing from the Synthesis Report, to looking at obstacles for SDG 6 implementation.

Question 1: Select up to three SDG 6 targets that represent the biggest challenge in your country.

Figure 6. SDG 6 targets perceived as the biggest challenge by respondents



This was the only question that did not have an open-response format. Quite ahead of the other targets was target 6.3 on water quality and wastewater, with 58 per cent of the respondents choosing this target, followed second by target 6.6 addressing the protection of freshwater ecosystems (43 per cent). The four remaining non-means of implementation targets (6.1, 6.2, 6.4 and 6.5) were all relatively close together (34 to 36 per cent), with the SDG 6 Mol targets on cooperation and participation rounding out the group (22 and 27 per cent, respectively).

- 6.1** By 2030, achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all
- 6.2** By 2030, achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations
- 6.3** By 2030, improve water quality by reducing pollution, eliminating dumping and minimizing release of hazardous chemicals and materials, halving the proportion of untreated wastewater and substantially increasing recycling and safe reuse globally
- 6.4** By 2030, 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
- 6.5** By 2030, implement integrated water resource management at all levels, including through trans-boundary cooperation as appropriate
- 6.6** By 2020, protect and restore water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes
- 6.a** By 2030, expand international cooperation and capacity-building support to developing countries in water and sanitation-related activities and programmes, including water harvesting, desalination, water efficiency, wastewater treatment, recycling and
- 6.b** Support and strengthen the participation of local communities in improving water and sanitation management

Question 2: What are key issues you would like to highlight from your country/region that are missing in the report? (Open question)

While it would be difficult for the Synthesis Report to capture absolutely all thematic areas related to water, especially when there is a focus on the SDGs, many questionnaire responses merit a mention in this feedback report, because they are valid and more relevant to an individual's country and/or region rather than a global amalgamation. There were many interesting responses that were not included in other parts of the dialogue, so they are worth noting here.

There was disappointment that more of the report was not dedicated to small island developing states (SIDS), because they have unique issues related to water and sanitation.

It was believed that migration was not addressed enough in the report as one of the current pressing issues that has many water-related aspects.

Some respondents noticed that issues around drainage and greywater were barely mentioned in the report, and that menstrual hygiene management was not discussed enough, despite being a large part of SDG target 6.2. Furthermore, the report did not give enough attention to traditional knowledge.

Strong reiterations of a lack of education and awareness around the SDGs and the need to have more country data available in the report were made.

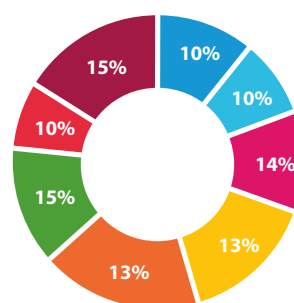
Question 3: Select up to three statements that best fit the situation in your region/country.

Again, for this question, the respondents had the opportunity to select up to three answers, which were presented by taking the key messages from the Synthesis Report that matched the eight SDG 6 targets. While all choices were mentioned by between 10 and 15 per cent of people, target 6.b on the lack of participation and target 6.6 on the loss of freshwater ecosystems were in tied position as the number one response (both 15 per cent), showing that these issues affect many around the world. Clumped together were issues around water quality/wastewater (6.3), IWRM (6.5) and water-use efficiency (6.4), and finishing out the list were, surprisingly, the gaps in WASH (6.1 and 6.2) and cooperation (6.a).

The additional text provided by the respondents identified two main problems to explain these situations. First, there is a lack of awareness and education around SDG 6 and the gaps the goal is

trying to close. Second, while there are mechanisms in place to address the issues listed in the question, implementation of those mechanisms has not yet occurred. More action on existing laws and policies is therefore required.

Figure 7. Statements that best fit the situation in respondents' countries/region



- 6.1** Extending access to safe drinking water presents a huge challenge. Achieving universal access to safe and affordable drinking water means providing basic water services to 844 million people and improving service quality to 2.1 billion people who lack safe drinking water.
- 6.2** Billions of people still need access to basic toilet and hand-washing facilities. Over 2.3 billion people lack basic sanitation services, 892 million still practice open defecation and 4.5 billion people lack safely managed sanitation services.
- 6.3** Improving water quality can increase water availability. Worsening water pollution must be tackled at source and treated to protect public health and the environment and increase water availability.
- 6.4** Agriculture offers opportunities for significant water savings. The agricultural sector accounts for nearly 70 percent of global freshwater withdrawals. Saving just a fraction of this would significantly alleviate water stress in other sectors.
- 6.5** Implementing IWRM is the most comprehensive step towards achieving SDG 6. Integration across the water and water-using sectors is essential for ensuring that limited water resources are shared effectively among many competing demands.
- 6.6** Sustaining water-related ecosystems is crucial to societies and economies. The world has lost 70 percent of its natural wetlands over the last century. Sustaining and recovering water-related ecosystem are vital for societal well-being and economic growth.
- 6.a** Improved international cooperation and more and better use of funding is needed. Over 80 percent of countries report insufficient financing to meet national WASH targets. ODA funding is important, but so too is stronger domestic financial engagement.
- 6.b** Public participation is critical to water management. Community participation in decision-making can yield many benefits, but better means of measuring quality and effectiveness of such participation are needed rather than just relying on quantity of engagement.

Question 4: What are important messages that are not captured in the “Key Messages” of the SDG 6 Synthesis Report? (Open question)

Similar to Question 2, this section will focus on areas that were not brought up in the other elements of the Public Dialogue or that had an overwhelming number of responses that is too large to ignore.

There needs to be a stronger message around ageing infrastructure, which was barely mentioned in the report, as this is becoming a big issue for many countries.

Linked to information, there was a call for more evidence-based water-related decision-making, but also to look at tools and technology such as blockchain for water data and a push for an increased ability to access water information.

The large challenge that is SDG 6 requires systemic change. Every SDG requires large changes in our culture to be able to achieve them, especially to get all sectors to work together in an integrated manner.

There were also several responses regarding making the necessary linkages between WASH and climate and disaster risk resilience, addressing the development, emergency response and climate-adaptation nexus.

And, lastly, as mentioned in the previous chapter, it was believed that there should have been a key message on how a United Nations mechanism on water and sanitation to regularly discuss SDG 6 challenges with major stakeholders should be developed, in the form of a conference or a committee.

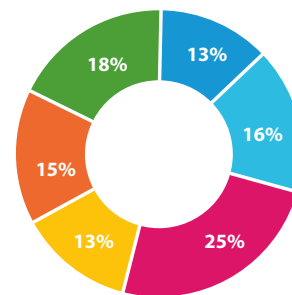
Question 5: Select up to three main messages on enabling and accelerating progress towards SDG 6 that are the most relevant to your region and country.

In this question, six of the messages from the SDG 6 Synthesis Report that had to do with enabling and accelerating progress were listed and the respondents were asked to choose up to three that were relevant to their region and country. Not surprisingly, given that the highest amount of feedback on the report during the Public Dialogue referred to issues of water governance, people saw this as the most relevant message for making progress on SDG 6 (25 per cent). Leading the rest of the choices in a tight group, capacity development (18 per cent) took second place and multi-stakeholder partnerships third (16 per cent). More surprisingly, financing came fourth (15 per cent), despite it being frequently communicated as

being central to achieving the SDGs. Eliminating inequalities and technology tied for the last two spots (13 per cent).

In the open-response part of this question, other ways to enable and accelerate progress were identified, including the engagement of youth and, linked to this, addressing intergenerational equity in all water-related decisions. And, although linked to good water governance, several quotes mentioned specifically that tackling corruption can significantly help countries achieve SDG 6.

Figure 8. Most relevant messages on enabling and accelerating progress towards SDG 6



- 

Good water governance is essential. Good water governance provides the political, institutional and administrative rules, practices and processes for taking decisions and implementing them. It is key to implementing IWRM.
- 

Inequalities must be eliminated. Effective policies, strategies and subsidies must be developed to ensure that no one is left behind. The 2030 Agenda will not succeed if governments fail to support the most vulnerable people.
- 

Water and sanitation require a new financing paradigm. This means increasing the efficiency of existing financial resources and mobilizing additional and innovative forms of domestic and international finance.
- 

Capacity must be developed. A serious lack of institutional and human capacity across the water sector is constraining progress, particularly in developing countries. Investing in capacity development requires a long-term view as well as quick fixes.
- 

Smart technologies can improve management and service delivery. Smart technologies supported by information technology can effectively improve all aspects of water resources and WASH management.
- 

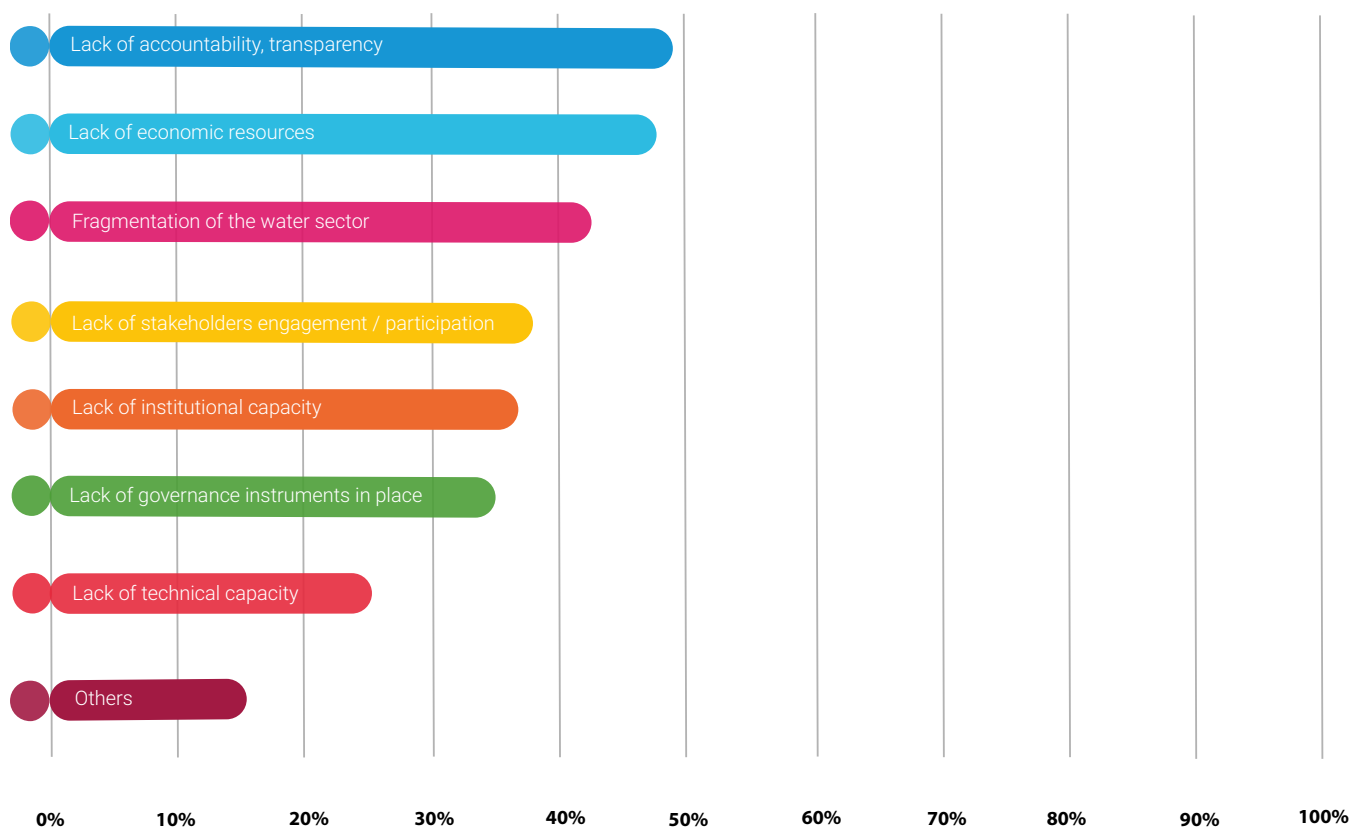
Multi-stakeholder partnerships can unlock potential. Sharing, accessing and adapting new solutions needs cooperation. SDG 6 provides the ideal platform for multi-stakeholder partnerships to ensure more effective and efficient progress on poverty reduction.

Question 6: What are the main obstacles for implementation of SDG 6 in your country? Select up to three.

It is clear from these responses that issues around water governance provide some of the largest obstacles to SDG 6 implementation in the respondents' countries. Accountability and transparency lead the way (48 per cent), followed by fragmentation of the water sector (42 per cent), lack of stakeholder engagement/participation (36 per cent) and lack of governance instruments in place (34 per cent), all of which fall under poor water governance. Also ranking very high, a close second, 47 per cent of respondents stated that a lack of economic resources was the primary obstacle to achieving SDG 6. Capacity, both institutional (36 per cent) and technical (25 per cent), also play significant roles in preventing countries from reaching the targets on water and sanitation.

In the open-ended category "Other", several interesting answers were filled in, including the fact that there is a deficit in innovation in the water and sanitation space where respondents still "face the fundamental challenge to do more with less". There is also no "long-term vision" nor "forward thinking and planning", a problem of "lacking leadership". Water and sanitation are just "not a priority" where a "lack of political will" may be influenced by a "lack of societal concern" that makes progress slow.

Figure 9. Main obstacles to the achievement of SDG 6 perceived by respondents



Question 7: Which sector/actors should play a stronger role in the implementation compared to current conditions? Select up to three.

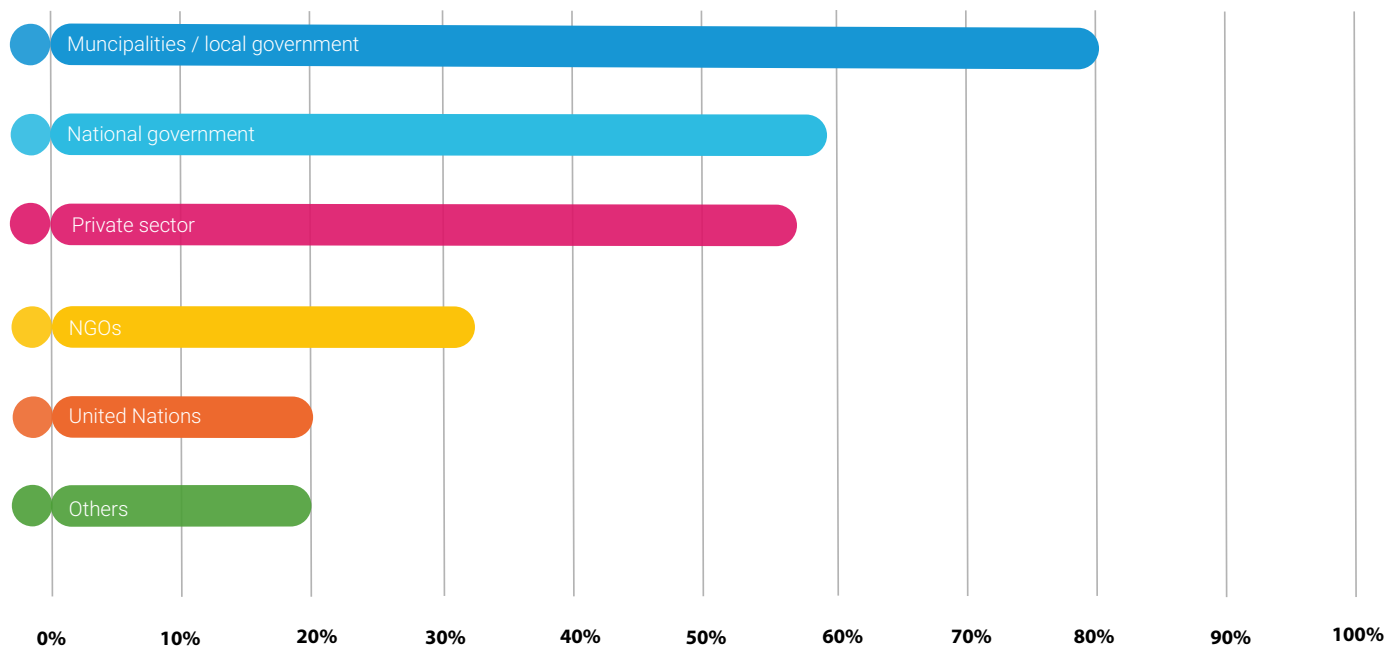
Coinciding precisely with what arose repeatedly during the other elements of the Public Dialogue, the results of this question show that the vast majority (81 per cent) of respondents believe that municipalities and local governments should play a stronger role in SDG 6 implementation than they currently do. This supports the need to strengthen their capacities to help achieve SDG 6. Also, national governments, who hold the major responsibility for SDG 6 implementation, came in second with 59 per cent and the private sector came a close third (also reinforcing messages that came out of the Public Dialogue) at 56 per cent. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) came next with 33 per cent and the United Nations came in last with 20 per cent, which supports the fact that it is the United Nations’ job to support and facilitate action around SDG 6, but not to implement it, which is up to the Member States and their subnational entities.

Of the “Other” responses provided by respondents, almost half of them mentioned that it is the citizens’, or the wider public’s, responsibility to play a stronger role in SDG 6 implementation, or, as one respondent stated, “Everyone. That’s why we are here”. Other groups mentioned that could play a stronger role were indigenous groups and universities.



UN-HABITAT/Julius Mwelu, Filling up with water

Figure 10. Roles in the implementation of SDG 6



Question 8: In the report, we highlight some of the intra-linkages between SDG 6 and other SDGs. In your country and region, which of the other SDGs have a great impact on SDG 6 and why? See here the list of SDGs. Select up to three and explain. (Open question)

In the responses to this question, all of the other 16 SDGs were mentioned, which once again validates the idea that water and sanitation are strongly linked to all other aspects of the 2030 Agenda.

The single highest response was not a stand-alone SDG, however, but those who chose the "Other" option and wrote that there are sets of other SDGs that impact SDG 6. These responses were not just "energy and water" or "education and water", but also answers such as, "SDG 2 (food), SDG 3 (health) and SDG 12 (responsible production and consumption) because availability of food, good health and human well-being and efficient consumption patterns and production are all linked to availability of adequate potable water for all and at all levels". Answers like these, which were the majority, really show the understanding that the interlinkages are multiple and not just binary.

Of single-issue SDGs, those receiving the most responses were SDG 2 (food), SDG 5 (gender), SDG 11 (cities), SDG 13 (climate) and SDG 15 (land). Some interesting individual responses were:

- SDG 5 (gender): "Strengthening WASH requires stronger roles of women in decision-making"
- SDG 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure): "Most of the infrastructure put in place to treat water are not functional or well taken care of and most of the workers lack the technical know-how on how to use them"
- SDG 11 (cities): "Making cities inclusive and resilient is absolutely one of the biggest linkages to the SDG 6 in future cities"
- SDG 12 (responsible production and consumption): "People must be informed on their water footprint, and on how they can decrease their water consumption without affecting their level of life"
- SDG 17 (means of implementation): "Strengthening means of implementation such as governance, finance, capacity development and data acquisition and monitoring will enable accelerated progress towards achieving availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all"

Question 9: General comments and suggestions: What surprised you about the report? What would you change about the report? (Open question)

As expected, there was quite a wide range of responses to the general comments question. Many of the comments were issues repeated from earlier in the questionnaire and the other elements of the Public Dialogue itself. Those that came out very strongly nevertheless deserve to be noted in this report, as do the new contributions.

The most poignant message to come out of the general comments was, "What we now need are decisions and actions and no more reports". This was echoed in almost a dozen different comments, which is notable when the question was so wide open. This applied equally to statements reinforcing the idea that the laws and policies exist, but now it is time to act on them and to act on and implement SDG 6.

Data was another message that appeared throughout the Public Dialogue, including this section of the questionnaire, from more effective water and sanitation data collection to using the data that do exist more effectively for decision-making purposes. There was also an argument that there are a lot of data that are not used, showing a lack of coordination between entities to properly communicate what the data illustrate.

The last area of response, where some of the new comments emerged, was on education-related remarks. There was a real desire to share lessons learned through the experiences of other regions and countries to help with SDG 6 implementation. This should include South-South collaboration to share the valuable insights and experiences that are emerging from developing countries. Also linked to education was a recognition that a change in behaviour, at all levels, will be necessary to achieve SDG 6 by 2030.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE NEXT SDG 6 SYNTHESIS REPORT

A lot happened in the year or so it took for the data drive for SDG 6 and the ensuing preparation and publication of the UN-Water *Sustainable Development Goal 6 Synthesis Report on Water and Sanitation*. There will be a period of reflection and processing for some time to come by national governments, SDG 6 indicator Custodian Agencies and other stakeholders engaged in the monitoring and reporting of SDG 6 to see what can be done to improve subsequent Synthesis Reports.

Lessons will be learned from the experience of the 2018 report to ensure that future data drives and publications make more effective and efficient use of the massive amounts of data that exist to close the gap on achieving the water- and sanitation-related targets of the 2030 Agenda.

The experience of the Public Dialogue has allowed the UN-Water community to gather feedback on the Synthesis Report and its development. This last chapter will provide a series of recommendations that emerged from the dialogue to be taken into consideration when the time comes for the next review of SDG 6 under the HLPF.

A. Process, structure and presentation

- Shorten the report:** Feedback suggested that the report was too long and should be shortened for easier reading (although this would go against many other recommendations that identified certain gaps). More graphs and illustrations, rather than so much text, would help communicate the information more easily.
- Incorporate and/or include easier access to more national-level data:** While this baseline report provided a global overview of SDG 6, there was a request for more national-level data to be included. This could be comprised of readily available hyperlinks in the (online) text to national data sets and showing more relevant complementary data sets to help assess SDG 6 progress and linkages.
- Include more cases/boxes in the text:** The respondents appreciated the cases that were shared in the boxes throughout the report. While it was sometimes difficult for individual readers to identify with the text on the global amalgamation of data, the cases presented real-life examples of efforts being made to close the gap on various SDG 6 indicators and their interlinkages with other areas of the 2030 Agenda. Implementation success stories – or failures with lessons learned – would support related actions in other countries.
- Open up the opportunity to provide feedback earlier and in different ways:** It was recognized that the publication timeline did not allow for consultation prior to the SDG 6 Synthesis Report being published. It would be positive to build into the next reporting and publishing cycle not only consultation on the SDG 6 report, but also to have smaller expert groups contribute on specific thematic areas related to the various targets in conjunction with the Custodian Agencies. This could also take place at the regional level.
- Include more information on nationally tailored targets:** A unique aspect of the SDGs is countries' ability to use the global targets to tailor their national targets. While this is mentioned in the Synthesis Report, there is no information on cases where this has occurred and what can be learned from that experience.
- Improve the indicator methodologies so they are more easily learned:** Some of the methodologies were deemed difficult to understand and learn, so an effort should be made to make them more easily accessible for those that want to use them. This may include improving the step-by-guides or more (online) trainings for those handling data collection at the national and subnational levels.

B. Data

Disaggregate data: A more extensive disaggregation of the data was requested to give a more nuanced idea of where the largest gaps are and the vulnerable populations that are the furthest behind and why, so that efforts can target those populations. This will be the only way to reach universal coverage for the WASH targets and address other targets that are impacted by marginalized groups being left behind.

Harmonize data collection to reduce the burden on national governments: This effort was already under way leading up to and during the data drive for the 2018 SDG 6 Synthesis Report. It needs to continue until SDG 6 data and complementary data already collected on water and sanitation are harmonized in a way that does not create a significant additional burden on national governments. Attempts should be made to harmonize and integrate efforts across different water- and sanitation-related SDG targets that call for similar data sets, in order to maximize available resources. Data that have already been collected through other entities and processes (private sector, water stewardship platforms, etc.) should be utilized.

Create multi-stakeholder partnerships for data collection: As partnerships are one of the unifying forces for enabling and achieving SDG 6, it is important to utilize all available institutional, intellectual and technical resources to both implement and monitor SDG 6. Multi-stakeholder partnerships have great capacities – human, technical and financial – to improve monitoring.

Focus on the intra-linkages between SDG 6 targets: These were largely not addressed in the report and should be included in a next phase. The goal of the 2030 Agenda, and SDG 6, is to avoid silos, so if the report had demonstrated an integrated approach to SDG 6 itself, this would have provided policy coherence and leadership on efforts that are easily discussed, but not easily implemented.

Strengthen certain topic areas: While not all the thematic areas that were addressed in the Public Dialogue and outlined in detail in Chapters 2 and 3 can be included in the final recommendations, certain topics were thought to be insufficiently integrated in the Synthesis Report, including groundwater, smallholder farmers, SIDS and ageing infrastructure.

Explain how to implement SDG 6: There was a strong sense that while the data were useful, the report was lacking in guidance on how to implement SDG 6. While detailed implementation guidelines are outside the scope of the Synthesis Report, such an endeavour is the natural next step after showing what the gaps to reaching the targets are. It was suggested that an associated “Implementation” or “Solutions” Guide accompany the Synthesis Report so that countries, municipalities and organizations (public, private, civil society, etc.) can see how they can contribute to realizing SDG 6.

Share more lessons learned and best practices: With so many gaps to close before 2030, those trying to do so need all the help they can get. So, similar to the above, sharing lessons learned and best practices in terms of both monitoring (data collection, reporting, etc.) and implementation of SDG 6 could significantly assist those looking to make a larger impact on the long road to 2030.

C. Content

Go beyond SDG 6: SDG 6 is not the only SDG to include or directly relate to water and sanitation. An effort to include these other targets (e.g. SDG target 3.3 (water-borne diseases), SDG target 11.5 (water-related disasters), SDG target 13.2 (climate change adaptation)) would therefore provide a more comprehensive assessment of the water- and sanitation-related targets of the 2030 Agenda. Working with the Custodian Agencies of these targets would be more inclusive and promote the integration that the 2030 Agenda strives for.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

HLPF	High-level Political Forum
IWRM	Integrated water resources management
Mol	Means of implementation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SIDS	Small island developing state(s)

The establishment of SDG 6, *Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all*, reflects the increased attention on water and sanitation issues in the global political agenda. To present the global review of SDG 6, UN-Water prepared the first *Sustainable Development Goal 6 Synthesis Report on Water and Sanitation*, released in June 2018. The report reviews the current situation and trends regarding water and sanitation at the global and regional levels.

UN-Water decided that, in light of the comprehensive nature and importance for policymaking of the first baseline report on SDG 6, feedback involving a “Public Dialogue” was needed to further increase the Synthesis Report’s transparency, credibility and accountability.

This publication summarizes the feedback received during the Public Dialogue, which included three moderated online forums, an online questionnaire and comments received during events. The results of the Public Dialogue will be taken into consideration during the next SDG 6 reporting cycle.