



## FACT SHEET

# The importance of an integrated approach to setting national Sustainable Development Goal targets

Developed by Mr. Javier Mateo-Sagasta, Senior Researcher and Dr. Kalanithy Vairavamoorthy, Deputy Director General, International Water Management Institute.

### A. National targets and indicators

An International Water Management Institute study concluded that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development must be managed as one system at each country level. Governments will need to set their own national targets, and they will need to be ambitious although realistic, maximize synergies<sup>1</sup> and minimize conflicts<sup>2</sup> with other targets. This will require an integrated approach and coordinated efforts at the national and subnational levels.

For example, for indicator 6.3.1, governments will need to set the percentage of the generated wastewater to be safely treated by 2030 and plan and invest accordingly. This national target will need to be ambitious so that it helps to substantially improve human and environmental health at the national level and contributes towards the global target, which all countries have committed to help achieve. At the same time, the national target needs to be within reach, reflective of national capacities (including financial) and supported by the buy-in of national stakeholders.

The setting of national targets will need to consider the interactions with other targets so that synergies are maximized and conflicts minimized and thus investments are optimized. For example, an analysis of the national targets that will be associated with the SDG 6 global indicators can show that an increase in wastewater treatment (indicator 6.3.1), together with increased access to sanitation (indicator 6.2.1), will support good ambient water quality (indicator 6.3.2) and healthy water-related ecosystems (indicator 6.6.1).

Additionally, good ambient water quality (indicator 6.3.2) will improve the provision of safe drinking water (indicator 6.1.1), which needs to be provided efficiently (indicator 6.4.1) and without negative impacts on water-related ecosystems (indicator 6.6.1).

Conflicts between goals and targets also need to be assessed with care. For example, achieving SDG 2 (on ending hunger) will require an increase in agricultural productivity, which may lead to an increase in water demand and the overuse or misuse of agrochemicals (pesticides and fertilizers). And this may have

1 Situations in which achieving one target or goal may negatively impact the achievement of another.

2 Conditions in which the achievement of one target or goal may favour the achievement of another.



a consequent decline in water quality and quantity, if resources are not properly managed and sustainable agricultural practices are not adopted.

### SDG 6 global indicators and United Nations custodian agencies, as of April 2016

No	SDG 6 global indicators	Custodian (v25Apr16)
6.1.1	Safely manage drinking water services	WHO UNICEF
6.2.1	Safely manage sanitation services	WHO UNICEF
6.3.1	Wastewater safely treated*	WHO UN-Habitat UN-DESA
6.3.2	Good ambient water quality*	UNEP
6.4.1	Water use efficiency*	FAO
6.4.2	Level of water stress	FAO
6.5.1	Intergrated water resources management	UNEP
6.5.2	Transboundary basin area with an operational arrangement for water cooperation*	UNECE UNESCO
6.6.1	Water-related ecosystems*	UNEP
6.a.1	Water and sanitation-related official development assistance that is part of a government coordinated spending plan	WHO UNEP OECD
6.b.1	Participation of local communities in water and sanitation management	WHO UNEP OECD

Source: UN-Water.

## B. Recommendations

Setting national targets and plans needs to be done in an integrated and coordinated manner, whereby a given government agency takes the lead for a given target but brings in other stakeholders in the planning and implementation processes. The success of these processes depends on an initial analysis of synergies and conflicts between targets, together with a thorough stakeholder analysis.

Once all relevant stakeholders are involved, they can jointly generate hypothetical targets and assess, with the appropriate tools and technical support, the costs and benefits associated with their implementation to select ambitious targets that maximize the positives to society at minimal cost.

Edited by Ms. Karen Emmons.

Layout by Mr. Jeff Williams.