G E M I

Integrated monitoring of water and sanitation related SDG targets
As the Post-2015 Development Agenda takes shape, water and sanitation at large require a coherent monitoring framework with improved data acquisition and analysis to track progress and provide a platform for action. At present, there is no global monitoring mechanism to track progress in water resources development, management and uses. Credible data will underpin sector advocacy, stimulate political commitment, inform decision making on all levels and trigger well-placed investment towards optimum health, environment and economic gains.

GEMI complements and builds on the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply and Sanitation (JMP), which has demonstrated that credible monitoring focuses national and global policies and resource allocations and facilitates the achievement of set objectives. JMP has made significant contributions to the progress observed towards the drinking water and sanitation target under the MDGs. Since 1990 more than 2 billion people have gained access to improved drinking-water sources and over a quarter of the world’s population has gained access to improved sanitation. Yet, almost 750 million people lack an improved source of drinking water and one billion people still resort to open defecation.

GEMI builds on a wide range of other monitoring initiatives and data centres in the water sector, such as FAO AQUASTAT and UNEP’s GEMStat to name some.
With the MDGs coming to term and the new Post-2015 Development Agenda coming to light, there is an unprecedented opportunity to address the management of the whole water cycle holistically.

The process of formulating goals, targets and indicators for the proposed framework of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has been formally on-going since the Rio+20 Conference in June 2012. The Open Working Group of the UN General Assembly (OWG), established by UN Member States with the purpose of leading a consultative process for the design of an SDG framework, delivered its recommendations for goals and targets in July 2014, adopted by the UN General Assembly in September 2014.

In the OWG proposal, freshwater and sanitation issues are addressed by a dedicated goal (SDG 6), with six technical targets and two related to Means of Implementation. The first two technical targets (6.1 and 6.2) build on the MDG drinking-water and sanitation targets, providing continuity while expanding their scope and refining definitions. The other four technical targets (6.3 to 6.6) address the broader water context that was not explicitly included in the MDG framework, but whose importance was acknowledged at the Rio+20 Conference, such as wastewater management and ambient water quality, water efficiency, integrated water resources management, and protection of water-related ecosystems.
A partnership to kick start new monitoring

GEMI is an inter-agency initiative composed of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), co-operating under the umbrella of UN-Water.

Early 2014, UNEP, UN-Habitat and WHO, later joined by FAO, UNESCO, UNICEF and WMO, agreed on a concept and roadmap for the development and testing of indicators for the proposed targets 6.3 to 6.6 and of mechanisms for their monitoring. The Swiss Government has supported the initiative from the start, later joined by the German Government. The indicators are to fit seamlessly with those developed by the WHO/UNICEF JMP for the proposed targets 6.1-6.2.

GEMI and JMP are contributing directly to the UN-Water proposal for a coherent framework of indicators as a basis for the integrated monitoring of progress towards SDG 6.

The proposed indicators address critical issues in wastewater, water quality, water efficiency, water resources management and water-related ecosystems to complement existing drinking-water and sanitation monitoring. The parameters to be measured have been defined in a way that will allow Member States to enter the monitoring framework at a level appropriate to their national capabilities and capacities, and gradually ascend the “monitoring ladder”. The framework allows for Member States to pursue their national monitoring interests with flexibility and address national and regional issues while maintaining compatibility to contribute to the global monitoring framework.
Objectives

1. Enlarge and complement existing successful efforts of monitoring water issues;
2. Provide the necessary evidence of feasibility and measurability of targets under a global water and sanitation goal and align data collection and reporting;
3. Fill the gaps in the existing monitoring framework in an efficient way;
4. Provide policy- and decision-makers at the national and international level with a basis to make informed decisions in the allocation of resources for activities to achieve the water and sanitation related SDG targets;
5. Explore options to cross-link proposed SDG 6 targets/indicators to water and sanitation associated targets/indicators under other SDGs, with a view to achieving optimal efficiencies and synergies in overall SDG monitoring.

Key activities in 2015-2017

- Develop a coherent monitoring framework based on the agreed SDG indicators. This will be done through proof-of-concept testing in a handful of pilot countries, connecting existing databases to each other, and filling data gaps through innovative data acquisition.

- Improve country-level capacity to collect, analyse, report and use water and sanitation related data. This will be done through early country level involvement in the process, creating partnerships between governments, the civil society and international organizations, to merge the understanding of the local water setting with scientific rationale and global monitoring experience. Specific activities include country-level assessment, training and outreach.

- Establish baseline estimates and mechanisms for global and regional reporting. Data and reports to track targets’ progress will be made available online.
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