



SDG 6 Capacity Development Initiative

Concept Note

1. Overview

Since 2016, every year at the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, UN Member States report on their progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, including SDG 6 - ensuring availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all. Many governments regularly inform of their struggle with SDG 6 implementation and achievement due to a lack of institutional, human, financial and technological capacity. Insufficient resources in these critical areas are detrimental for responding to water and sanitation challenges and to the achievement of sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.

Overall action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals is not yet progressing at the necessary speed or scale. To rectify this, in September 2019, the UN Secretary-General called on all sectors of society to mobilize for a decade of action on three levels: global action to secure greater leadership, resources and solutions for the SDGs; local action to embed the required transitions into policies, budgets, institutions and regulatory frameworks; and action by all stakeholders to generate an unstoppable movement pushing for the required transformations.

As a response, the UN system and its multi-stakeholder partners have launched the SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework, which identifies capacity development as one of the five key areas the international community will unify to support countries for SDG 6.

Capacity development is assumed to be a demand-driven, iterative learning process with clear incentives and benefits for learners. Rather than being a simple transfer mechanism, capacity development is defined as the process through which **individuals, groups, organizations, institutions, and societies increase and are acknowledged for their abilities to: (i) perform core functions, identify and solve problems, define and achieve objectives; and (ii) understand and deal with their development needs in a broad context and in a sustainable manner** (adapted from UNDP, 1997; UNESCO, 2006).

Within UN-Water¹, there is a wealth of capacity development expertise and activities related to, and sometimes extending beyond, SDG 6. UN-Water Members and Partners have implemented many SDG 6-related capacity development activities in response to the needs

¹ The coordination mechanism for UN entities and international organizations working on water and sanitation issues.



of countries, beneficiaries and each individual Member's or Partner's constituency, and generally to one or two specific SDG 6 targets. A preliminary review of capacity development programmes by UN-Water Members and Partners², mostly in the form of face-to-face, virtual or e-learning-based trainings, illustrates that there is a vast array of successful capacity development work being implemented, including by custodians of SDG 6 indicators; however, there could be better and clearer coordination of what is being offered in support of SDG 6. This lack of coordination can make it difficult for individual countries to navigate through the offerings for the purpose of designing a comprehensive programme to develop capacities at different levels to reach SDG 6 in a holistic way.

To bridge this navigational gap, UN-Water is launching the SDG 6 Capacity Development Initiative (CDI) to support coordination on SDG 6-related capacity development work, facilitate uptake and deployment of capacity development activities, and through this help, accelerate implementation of SDG 6 and related targets as part of the UN Decade of Action and the SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework.

2. Objective

The UN-Water SDG 6 Capacity Development Initiative (CDI) serves as the inter-agency coordination platform on freshwater, sanitation and hygiene-related capacity development work. The Initiative enables the UN system and its multi-stakeholder partners to align efforts and 'deliver as one' in support to countries in developing capacities to accelerate implementation of water and sanitation related goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Initiative will be demand driven, respond to specific country's capacity development needs by facilitating support from the UN system and other development partners at various levels of operation, and encourage national-level ownership.

The CDI aims to:

1. Provide a coordinated entry point for countries requesting UN-Water's support to identify capacity gaps hindering the implementation of SDG 6.
2. Support the countries in undertaking a capacity gaps assessment based on inter-sectoral/inter-ministerial and multi-stakeholder approaches.
3. Facilitate access to capacity development offerings of UN-Water Members and Partners, tailoring them as needed, and support follow up of capacity development activities.
4. Raise awareness of the indispensable role that water and sanitation play within sustainable development, in particular for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and

² 1st mapping and analysis of existing United Nations water and sanitation related courses: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1HKVOldIXW9BJMCUOvExlsoQSlfOZU1jBuqrE2NSJt4M/edit?usp=sharing>

for the realization of all human rights, and of the importance to involve other key stakeholders in capacity development initiatives as appropriate, such as civil society, academia, TVET, the private sector, local government, technicians and operators, including those in the informal sector.

With the successful implementation of the Capacity Development Initiative, it is expected that there will be accelerated progress towards the accomplishment of SDG 6 as well as other water-related SDG targets at the country level.

3. Scope and Theory of Change

The scope of the Initiative is to, based on country demand, support the gaps assessment and integrated planning, provide access to capacity development expertise available within the UN-Water family, and raise awareness of inter-sectoral capacity development needs. In collaboration with the UN Country Teams, this initiative will provide the opportunity for countries to develop or augment a national SDG 6 capacity development plan, as needed, based on a gaps assessment and country priorities. The Initiative can support the country to set up a capacity development plan that not only translates to one-off trainings/interventions, but moves towards systemic strengthening and national capacity development ownership to ensure sustainability and longer-term results.

The main focus will be on SDG 6 but also on fostering cross-sectoral collaboration, interlinking to key issues such as climate change, human rights, energy, finance, food, gender equality, social inclusion, integrity and source-to-sea approaches.

Training packages and initiatives from UN-Water Members and Partners will both inform, and be included, in the list of so-called “modules” to ensure that the sector efforts are captured and to inform relevant potential beneficiaries about the current “off the shelf” offerings. The modules will be made available to countries as a resource and as such help countries to better access and tailor activities from across the UN-Water family.

As a result, the UN Country Teams will have the tools to tailor responses to a Member State’s specific needs and realities, ensuring that all entities, whether present on the ground or not, can effectively support national implementation of the water and sanitation-related goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda.

In addition, the Initiative will help countries ensure that their capacity development plans consider the principles defined in the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework guidance document as well as the guiding principles of the SDG Global Acceleration Framework: having a human rights-based approach; leaving no one behind and prioritizing the vulnerable; putting gender equality at the heart of programming and unleashing female and

youth potential; inclusivity; conflict sensitivity; planning for resilience/sustainability; and making scientific evidence a prerequisite.

4. Implementation

The CDI is designed as a medium- to long-term engagement, starting with a request from Member States. Depending on the specific request of the country, it may comprise as an initial step a workshop called “Module A”, which is organized with the national authorities at the highest levels aimed at building ownership, support and political will across national government ministries and other key national stakeholders on the capacity development process.

At country level the CDI will start preparatory activities in coordination with the Resident Coordinator system (the UN Resident Coordinator, the UN Country Team and Resident Coordinator’s Office) and in line with the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework and the UN Common Country Analysis as appropriate.

Module A will start the process to support the country in preparing its gaps assessment and capacity development plan and will serve as an introduction to the entire Initiative. It will play a significant role in promoting the idea of integration between thematic areas related to water and sanitation, serving as an awareness-raising and cooperation mechanism for positioning SDG 6 within the wider scope of sustainable development and the 2030 Agenda. Where feasible, countries would have an outline of their gaps assessment ready for discussion in Module A.

Upon completion of Module A, a report will be prepared that will serve as basis for the gaps assessment and, as needed, the elaboration of a national SDG 6 capacity development plan. In support to its implementation, CDI will facilitate coordination to allow the country to benefit as needed of the support from the UN-Water family, including through additional modules and other Initiative-related activities.

In general, the level of support by the CDI will depend on the specific needs and demands of the requesting country. For example, some countries may ask for capacity development support only in a specific area, while others will require a comprehensive capacity gaps assessment and development of an SDG 6 capacity development plan. As such the CDI will, to the best of its abilities, cater its support activities to the varying demands and contexts, while at the same time also raising awareness about water and sanitation-related capacity development needs and opportunities.

4.1 Monitoring and evaluation

The CDI will need effective and timely monitoring in order to ensure that the gaps in the water and sanitation enabling environment are bridged and that the intersectoral linkages required



for a coordinated approach in water and sanitation are established. The UN-Water Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking-Water (GLAAS) and other monitoring activities of the SDG 6 Integrated Monitoring Initiative will be leveraged to monitor progress in the UN-Water capacity development initiative and its contributions towards the realization of the SDG 6 targets.

4.2 Mobilizing UN-Water's Members and Partners

A central element of the Initiative's implementation is the opportunity to bring the UN-Water Members' and Partners' capacity development expertise together, and make it more accessible, to support countries' accelerated progress towards SDG 6 achievement. The Initiative will not replace UN-Water Members' and Partners' respective capacity development programmes, but it will maximise their synergies in support of countries' needs. The Initiative's main focus in this respect is on the coordination of existing activities and on making them readily available as needed in response to Member States' demand.

4.3 Supporting the United Nations Reform

The UN-Water SDG 6 CDI aims to contribute to the UN Reform process by strengthening the role of the UN Resident Coordinators and of the UN Country Teams in providing coordinated and coherent support to maximize country ownership and impact. The Initiative will work in complete coordination with the UN Country Teams and will be able to provide access to the full expertise available in the UN-Water family to respond to countries' capacity development needs.

The UN Development Coordination Office will be a key partner to ensure the successful implementation of the Capacity Development Initiative.

5. Governance and operations of the Initiative

The CDI was established in March 2021 by the UN-Water Senior Programme Managers as a UN-Water Initiative (similar to the UN-Water Integrated Monitoring Initiative for SDG 6). The CDI membership will be one of the main elements of the Initiative and it will be coordinated by UN DESA and UNESCO. The governance of the Initiative builds on lessons learned from the UN-Water Decade Programme on Capacity Development³.

The guiding governance elements of the CDI are defined as the following:

³ **Key lessons learned include:** Mandate to be in complete alignment with the objectives and mission of UN-Water; reporting lines to be directly to UN-Water; roles and responsibilities to make clear what is required by UN-Water Senior Programme Managers (SPMs), Management Team/Technical Advisory Unit etc.; accountability to UN-Water; monitoring and evaluation to show whether what is being carried out has any impact and, if not, how to make it so; management either collectively by the UN-Water SPMs through the UN-Water Joint Steering Group, or through a few Members and/or Partners on behalf of the UN-Water family.

- **Membership:** The Initiative is open to all interested UN-Water Members and Partners and it will operate in the most transparent, inclusive and collaborative manner.
- **Organizational arrangements:** UN DESA and UNESCO will create a small coordination team to serve the Initiative. The UN-Water Technical Advisory Unit will participate *ex officio* in the coordination team to ensure the liaison with other relevant UN-Water activities. Additionally, in each participating country, an RCO/UNCT focal point can be included in the country coordination team if possible, to ensure coordination across the UNCT. UN-Water SPMs will act as the steering group for the Initiative for any major decisions (e.g. changes to its mandate, periodic review of achievements).
- **Meetings of the Initiative:** UN DESA and UNESCO will convene regular meetings with the Initiative members.
- **Reporting:** The Initiative will report progress at each UN-Water Meeting.
- **Branding:** The Initiative’s documents will be branded according to UN-Water’s Publications Policy. The actual document’s publication category will be decided on a case-by-case basis.
- **Principles of work:** To guide its work, the Initiative will deploy the following principles of work:
 - Maximise the core strengths of UN-Water Members and Partners: Untap the collective expertise and knowledge across the UN-Water family by being an enabler and catalyst of coordinated action that ensures value addition and avoids duplication.
 - Maximise country ownership: Be demand-driven and based on country needs and build ownership of the Initiative among the government, the UNCT and other actors in each country through a consultative approach.
 - Learn continuously: Apply nimble, evidence-based implementation and ensure purpose-driven collaboration towards the Initiative’s overall objective, including through innovative ways of delivering learning and results and addressing gaps in the available capacity development offerings.
 - Be responsive to changing needs: Apply flexibility in terms of thematic focus and methodologies both on the global and local levels.
 - Ensure integration and coherence: The Initiative will be sensitive to and integrated with country contexts, for example through alignment with the Common Country Analyses, Cooperation Frameworks, and national development plans, as well as cross-sectoral dimensions.

An overview of overall roles and responsibilities for the Initiative operations are outlined below:

Role	Responsibility
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<u>Initiative coordination</u>	
Day-to-day operations and coordination activities (day-to-day communication, membership list, organising meetings, note taking, etc.)	Coordination team
Fundraising and allocation of funds	Initiative members
Oversight and strategic steering of Initiative	UN-Water Meetings
<u>Initiative activities</u>	
Receiving requests, organising initial activities in countries and support overall coordination and knowledge exchange	Coordination team, RCO
Country gaps assessment and SDG 6 capacity development plan	SDG 6 CDI, Government counterparts, UNCT, other country partners
Implementing capacity development activities	UNCT, Initiative members and other country partners, individually or in partnerships
Monitoring, reviewing and revising progress	SDG 6 CDI, Government counterparts, Initiative members, RCO, UNCT, other country partners, including through UN-Water GLAAS and other SDG6-IMI data

6. Budget

In addition to UN-Water Members' and Partners' existing in-kind and financial capacity development resources and fundraising, it is envisaged that additional voluntary contributions will be necessary to realise the full level of ambition of the Initiative.

In general, the following main budget items should be considered:

1. Coordination of the Initiative.
2. Support to Member States and to UN-Water Members and Partners for planning and implementation of CDI-related activities.

To raise funds for the above budget items, the Initiative will require launching a fund-raising campaign. These additional voluntary contributions will be used to strengthen already existing structures and activities rather than create new ones. Budgets at country level will be tailored to the request and the need of the country.

The funds raised for coordination will be used to cover coordination activities of the Initiative coordination team, while funds that support planning and implementation of Initiative-related activities will be allocated as decided by the Initiative members. Allocation of funds will be based on each country's capacity development plan.

Once the Initiative membership is established, the Initiative will develop its detailed work plan, timeline and budget.

Donors are encouraged to use the UN-Water Inter-Agency Trust Fund to support the Initiative. This Trust Fund provides an efficient and economic coordination instrument to channel resources effectively among UN agencies and partners.

7. CDI steps

1. Presenting an update of the Initiative at the SDG 6 Special Event at HLPF on 9 July 2021. (Completed)
2. Finalization of Initiative membership, by end of July 2021. (Completed)
3. Finalization of Initiative's concept note and public two-pager. First draft by end of July final draft by end of August 2021.
4. Communication and coordination with UN DCO and UN Country Teams (e.g. through dedicated webinars), by fall 2021.
5. Mapping of UN-Water family's capacity development resources and exploring feasibility, functionality and demand for dedicated online platform, by end 2021.
6. Kicking off Module A in selected initial implementation countries having expressed demand (e.g. in Nepal), by end 2021, and preparation of a full proposal for the selected countries
7. Presentation of the Initiative at the annual UN-Water Donor Dialogue, October 2021.
8. Presentation of the Initiative in relevant events (e.g. in the framework of the Bonn Water Dialogues, World Water Week in Stockholm, Planet Budapest 2021, 9th World Water Forum, high level international conference in Dushanbe).

Annex 1: Preliminary draft (non-prescriptive) Capacity Development Initiative Modules

The following are preliminary example modules of the Capacity Development Initiative. A comprehensive mapping of on-going capacity development efforts by UN-Water Members and Partners will follow in 2021 to develop the list of modules that will be made available and regularly updated, also including training materials. Specific modules based on country demand and availability of in-house expertise can be designed as needed.

Module	Indicator/ topic	SDG 6 Indicator/topic (Custodian Agency/responsible)
A	UN/SDGs /SDG 6	Global overview of the United Nations System, 2030 Agenda and SDG 6 (UN DESA/UN-Water)
B.1	6.1.1	Safely managed drinking water services (WHO, UNICEF)
B.2	6.2.1	Safely managed sanitation and hygiene services (WHO, UNICEF)
C.1	6.3.1	Wastewater safely treated (WHO, UN-Habitat, UNSD)
C.2	6.3.2	Good ambient water quality (UNEP)
D.1	6.4.1	Water use efficiency (FAO)
D.2	6.4.2	Level of water stress (FAO)
E.1	6.5.1	Integrated water resources management (UNEP)
E.2	6.5.2	Transboundary basin area with water cooperation (UNECE, UNESCO)
F.1	6.6.1	Water-related ecosystems (UNEP)
G.1	6.a.1	Water- and sanitation-related official development assistance that is part of a government coordinated spending plan (WHO, UNEP, OECD)
H.1	6.b.1	Participation of local communities in water and sanitation management (WHO, UNEP, OECD)
I.1	11.5	Disaster risk reduction (UNDRR)
J.x	Various	Selected by water- and sanitation-related topics not covered by SDG 6 and SDG target 11.5 (UN-Water Members and Partners)

Module E.1:
SDG indicator 6.5.1 on integrated water resources management (IWRM)

Module E.1.a:
Technical training on IWRM

Module E.1.b:
Institutional training on IWRM

Module E.1.c:
Training on monitoring and reporting for SDG indicator 6.5.1