

Summary of Side Event

High Level Policy Dialogue: Accelerating SDG 6 through Multi-stakeholder Partnerships

31 January 2023, 1900-2015HRS (IST)

Background on the event (one paragraph)

This high level policy dialogue on Accelerating SDG 6 through Multi-stakeholder Partnerships was organised by India Water Foundation and supported by UN ESCAP. SDG 6 is to ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all by 2030. However, SDG 6 goes far beyond water and sanitation services to cover the entire water cycle. Aside from domestic purposes, water is needed across all sectors of society, to produce food, energy, goods and services. These uses also generate wastewater which, if not properly managed, can spread diseases, and introduce excess nutrients and hazardous substances into rivers, lakes and oceans. Ultimately, as ecosystems provide water to society, a significant share of the water needs to stay within the ecosystems for them to remain healthy. Healthy ecosystems in turn safeguard the quantity and quality of freshwater, as well as overall resilience to human- and environmentally-induced changes. There is need to increase investment in water-use efficiency, wastewater treatment, and reuse, while financing the protection of water-related ecosystems. Integrating our approaches with improved governance and coordination across sectors and geographical borders is an imperative to accelerate SDG6 achievements. The main objective is to identify and find solutions on several bottlenecks impeding greater progress on SDG 6 acceleration. Policy and institutional fragmentation between levels, actors and sectors means that decisions taken in one sector (e.g. agriculture, energy, health, and environment) often do not consider the impacts on water availability and water quality in other sectors. Funding gaps and fragmentation impede progress across levels, while data and information often are not available or not shared between sectors and across borders to effectively inform decision making. Meanwhile, gaps in institutional and human capacity, especially at the level of local governments and water and sanitation providers, slows implementation of SDG 6 along with outdated infrastructure and governance models. Hence there is an urgent need to accelerating effective partnerships across all stakeholders to deliver on the SDG6 which in turn would contribute to a range of other SDGs including on climate action. Promoting sustainable use of resources and enhancing investments in sectors vulnerable to climate change, such as the water sector and water dependent sectors is a priority for India's climate adaptation action.

Key Issues discussed (5- 8 bullet points)

1. Why is SDG 6 cross sectoral in nature?
2. What are the linkages of SDG 6 with other SDGs and does the acceleration of SDG 6 need cross sectoral partnerships?
3. Discussion on the key success factors as well as key challenges for building successful multi-stakeholder partnerships to achieve SDG 6.
4. What role can local partnerships play to support national priorities and foster collaboration among cross sectors and stakeholders?
5. Why there is a critical need for multi-stakeholder, multi-disciplinary collaboration at all levels to build capacity and support networks that can ensure the SDG 6 acceleration?
6. How significant is strengthening linkages between environmental, development and people centered approach for SDG 6 progress and achievement?
7. At regional level to create partnerships or foster cooperation in a region as volatile like South Asia how is it possible to do it effectively but without ruffling any feathers?

Key recommendations for action (5 - 6 bullet points)

1. For localizing and strengthening SDG6 proper integrated water policy framework which integrates agriculture, industry and energy sectors if we want to really adopt sustainable consumption and production. Institutional arrangement is imperative in order to implement this integrated water policy.
2. We have to identify opportunities to integrate water management into sectoral programmes and planning processes – such as climate change, agriculture and poverty reduction – and establish formal coordination mechanisms, with clear institutional mandates, responsibilities, and incentives for coordination.
3. Broader partnerships between governments, international development organizations, private sector, Civil Society Organizations and communities should be given more space and scope in order to address regulatory and resource mobilization challenges. Communities should be involved in decision making from inception, planning till implementation phase.
4. Cooperation and partnerships at all levels from local, national, regional and global levels between basins, along supply chains, as well as within and among sectors is very crucial because freshwater is the backbone of economic and environmental value creation.
5. The new thing that emerged from the discussion was that there is a need to go beyond the concept of integrated water resource management which is a vertical concept but adopting horizontal approaches. Customized as per contemporary needs in an integrated manner incorporating ‘Transversality approach by interlinking vertical linkages between water- food-energy nexus with horizontal indicators like Health, Education, Agriculture, Gender etc.