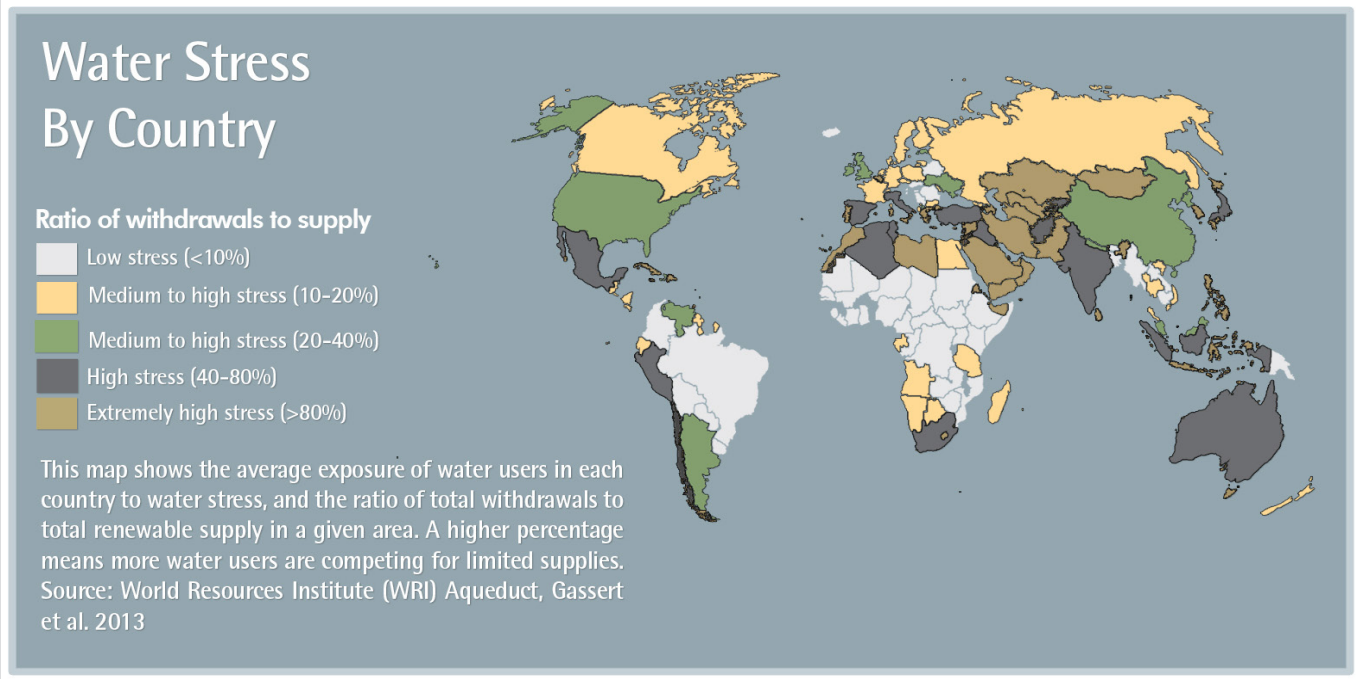
Monthly Sustainability Newsletter

HOW ARE NATIONS RESPONDING TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 6?

Chairman's Message

Dear members, partners and friends,

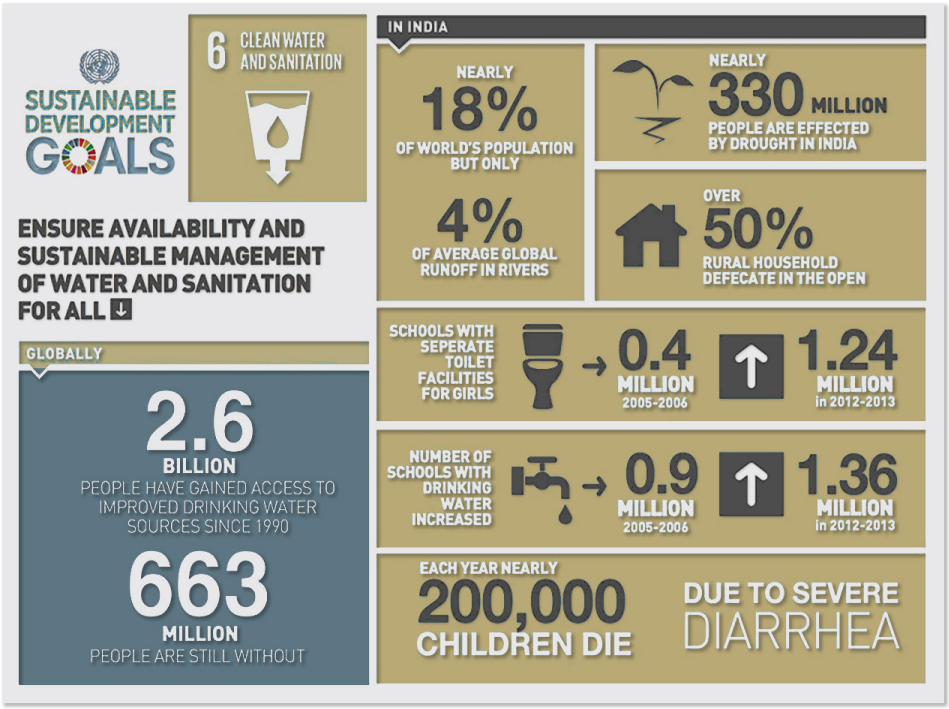
By the year 2050, the UN estimates that 1 in 4 people will be affected by recurring water shortages. With an estimated global population of 9.7 billion in 2050, there will be close to 2.5 billion people facing acute water shortages and lack of access to hygienic sanitation. The 2.5 billion figure is a conservative estimate. Climate Change, pollution and increasing per-capita water consumption could in fact hamper access to regular clean drinking water for more than 5 billion people. Developing countries will be hit hardest, as increasing prosperity puts a stress on rivers, lakes and reservoirs. Some of these water resources face a different threat altogether: pollution. Not only is water going to be scarce, there's a high chance that the water that is available will increasingly be unsafe for consumption. In this month's issue of the Al-Attiyah Foundation Monthly Sustainability Newsletter, we will explore some of the policies implemented by different nations towards achieving SDG6.



As more countries prosper, the current rate of development puts large population groups at severe risk. Lack of access to clean water can, by itself, halt progress and growth, hindering communities' prosperity. Economic development is crucial for better standards of living, but this needs to happen sustainably to safeguard a better future. United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals 6 (SDG6), which aims to: Ensure Availability and Sustainable Management of Water and Sanitation for All, presents an ambitious yet achievable strategy to guarantee clean water and sanitation to everyone by 2030. In its plan SDG6 is global, but its implementation is local. Governments are encouraged to find customisable sustainable solutions for their community's problems and hence contribute to the overall SDG6 goal.

National & Regional Strategies

India



India currently is one of the most vulnerable developing countries facing acute water shortages. Depleting rivers, lakes and underground water, all jeopardise the lives of 1.1 billion people. Ensuring water security and good sanitation for it's citizens is critical, as India pushes towards development. India's national mission to attain SDG6 includes programs like the 'Clean India Initiative', which aims to cleaning the urban and rural infrastructure. Such as the plan to build 90 million toilets for rural India by 2019 to eliminate open-defecation.

Already, better waste management systems have been set up to prevent untreated and hazardous chemicals from polluting water resources. The government is also expanding its clean water distribution program and currently, 76% of Indian inhabitants have full access to it.

European Union

The European Union (EU) is far ahead of the rest of the world in guaranteeing its residents sanitation and clean drinking water. Only 2% of the population lack clean sanitation facilities, a problem restricted to only a few of its member nations.

However, water quality is still a primary concern. The EU plans to half its untreated wastewater and reduce the number of dangerous contaminants entering water bodies. To protect environmental well-being, all settlements with more than 2000 residents are obligated to collect and treat their waste-water discharge.

Under the Water Framework Directive, water bodies are required to have a good ecological chemical status, and environmentally sustainable agricultural practices are being encouraged to lower the nitrate levels in ground-water. Water used for bathing is also required to meet a specified quality standard.

Peru

Peru's National Water Authority, with help from the UN and the World Health Organisation (WHO) launched a monitoring framework to achieve SDG 6. The goal of this plan is to collect, monitor and improve key indicators that contribute towards regional and global sustainability goals.

66% of Peruvians live in slums, where water utilities are inadequate or poor at providing citizens with clean drinking water. Piped water access to slums has increased over the years, but with water scarcity and low water quality, work has been undertaken to improve clean water supply. Water utilisation efficiency is being encouraged in both the government and private sector.

Australia

For the world's driest continent, Australia has managed its water resources extremely well. But, with climate change, droughts and variable rainfall, the continent's water security faces an uncertain future.

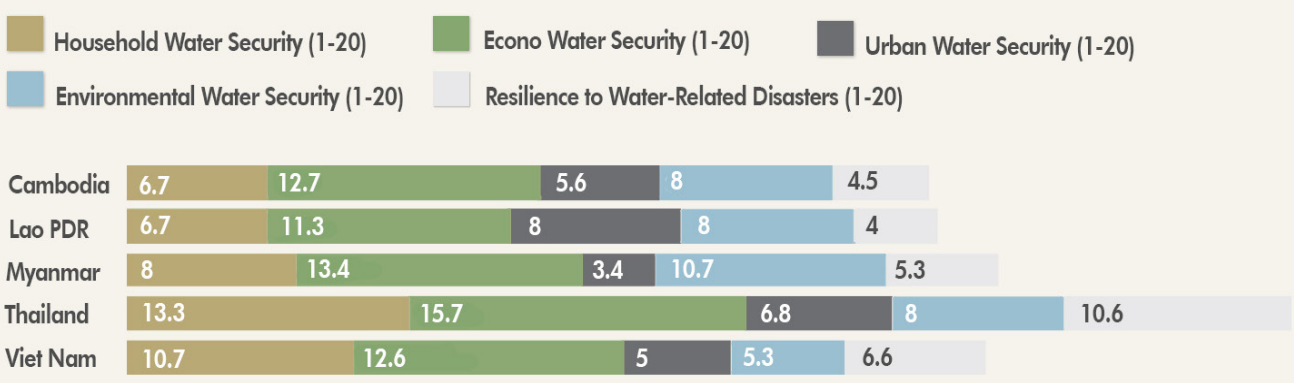
In 2017, the Australian government began conducting an inquiry to reform its water supply and distribution. The inquiry involves measuring the impact of businesses on water resources and local communities. Businesses are asked to use water responsibly and minimise pollution of the water bodies. An accounting method is being designed to determine the economic value of water, which will be used in strategizing water and sanitation infrastructure. Business, government and the residents are encouraged to disclose their environmental impact and strive towards improving their energy efficiency.

South East Asia

For nations in South-East Asia, the lack of finance to advance policies that meet SDG6 is a huge obstacle. The will exists, but funding water and sanitation projects is proving to be incredibly difficult. Like Africa, the lack of data indicators in evaluating project feasibility, progress and benefits hinder project implementation.

Water Stress By Country

Despite the integrated monitoring program, data on water security is not easily comparable, without more. Asian Development Bank has developed a system to compare the relative levels of water security across countries. Below, Household Water Security and Urban Water Security use Joint Monitoring Programme (WHO/UNICEE) data for SDGs 6.1 and 6.2. Each country can receive a maximum score of 100. The higher the number, the grater the water security.



To overcome this issue, regional governments, with help from Global Analysis and the Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking-Water (WHO department), are testing innovative methods of financing, implementation and data-collection procedures. With help from the UN, Asian Development Bank (ADB) and WHO, countries dependent on development assistance for building clean water and sanitation infrastructure are using more accurate regional data to make a stronger argument for funding.

Achieving SDG6

The five countries and regions mentioned above are examples of how different parts of the world have a distinct issue with respect to water access and sanitation. Each country has committed to SDG6 with tailor-made solutions and making substantial contributions to the overall goal of providing the world's population with clean water and sanitation. However, certain challenges remain including lack of funding, challenges with the scale of implementation and inaccurate indicators. However, the world is hopeful that with inter-governmental and inter-agency support, the traditional barriers to progress will be steadily overcome. Achieving SDG6 is still a huge task, but despite the challenges, the world remains optimistic.

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