

Measuring what matters: analysis and proposals for indicators on water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

A working briefing note prepared by WaterAid for use by member states in discussions on targets and indicators

Summary analysis and proposals

Analysis and proposals for targets within Goal 6 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Recent discussion in the UN Inter-Governmental Negotiation (IGN) meetings on the post-2015 framework and requests by the facilitators of the IGN imply that some member states wish to see a small number of indicators for each goal and/or target set – possibly even one core indicator per target.

Responding specifically to requests from the co-facilitators for a small number of indicative global indicators, UN agencies and specialist entities have made proposals, which have been communicated to member states by the UN Statistical Commission. These proposals formed the basis for discussions during the third IGN meeting in late March 2015 and the first Inter-Agency Expert Group meeting in June 2015.

Given that the proposals of the Open Working Group (OWG) for a drinking water target (6.1) include at least five elements, and the proposed sanitation target has seven to ten, WaterAid believes it is crucial that member states do not reduce the sophistication of the targets by including an insufficient number of core indicators to be globally monitored. It is also a key necessity that the SDGs are not less ambitious than are existing commitments, which means they must reinforce the requirements of the human right to water and sanitation.

While we accept that in some areas too many indicators would be burdensome for countries to implement and report on, WaterAid believes:

- **A single core indicator, as proposed in the aforementioned indicative indicators, would be insufficient** to deal with the complexity implied by the current wording of the water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) targets.
- Core indicators proposed later in this document, and by the WASH sector Technical Experts' consultation process,¹ which need be monitored at national level, are already monitored and can be aggregated to a global level. **They would not be an additional burden on countries.**
- The ambition of the target language of "safe" or "adequate" in 6.1 and 6.2 is in no way reduced by inclusion of additional indicators. It is supported by provision of intermediate steps which can incentivise 'some progress for all'.

We propose that member states consider a 'ladder of access', with a minimum set of three core indicators for each target, which, combined, fully capture most of the aims and the most important elements of the proposed target. These are based on indicators which have garnered wide agreement through the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP)-led WASH sector technical experts consultation process.²

Further, we note that, by including a target for 'sanitation **and** hygiene', the OWG have of necessity included two aims; sanitation and hygiene are not the same, and therefore must each have a set of core indicators.

WaterAid's proposal does not conflict with the option to include a wider set of supporting indicators at national level. It simply addresses the importance of monitoring, reporting and providing accountability on progress towards a minimum level of access for the largest number of people, in line with the ambition of post-2015 discussions to date. During the OWG process, member states repeatedly discussed the importance of putting measures to tackle inequality at the heart of the framework. If we are to "leave no one behind", there must be clear incentives to deliver for all. To ensure we are moving all populations up a ladder of access to water and sanitation we must measure progress on reaching the most important rungs.

Based on analysis of the proposed targets, we propose the following core indicators, which are already defined, measurable and necessary for national-level progress. Of these, almost half are already proposed within the paper from policy and statistical experts from specialised agencies and entities (marked in bold):

- For water (target 6.1):
 - 1) % of population using a basic water service at home
 - 2) % of population using a safely managed water service at home**

¹ Recommendations of the consultation of WASH sector technical experts, including proposed targets and indicators, can be found at <http://www.wssinfo.org/post-2015-monitoring/>

² Full proposals can be found at http://www.wssinfo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/resources/post-2015-WASH-targets-factsheet-12pp.pdf

- 3) % of schools and hospitals offering safely managed water, sanitation **and** hygiene services
 - For sanitation (target 6.2):
 - 1) % of people using basic sanitation at home
 - 2) % of people not using safely managed sanitation service at home**
 - 3) % of schools and hospitals offering safely managed water, sanitation **and** hygiene services
 - For hygiene (target 6.2):
 - 1) % of schools and health centres offering safely managed water, sanitation **and** hygiene services
 - 2) % of people who have a handwashing facility with soap and water at home**

We also believe it is important for member states to agree what it would mean for the targets to be successfully achieved. If we are to learn from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), we must have clear targets that can be achieved and incentivise progress at a national level. The proposed 'pass or fail' marks below are based on the internationally recognised work on the WASH sector technical experts' consultation. All of these proposals are based on the understanding that data will be disaggregated as standard, and that "all" includes the full set of socio and economic groupings that have been identified in the national context.

Targets 6.1 and 6.2 could be considered successful if:

1. 100% of people use basic WASH services at home.
2. The proportions of people not using safely managed water and sanitation services at home are halved.
3. 100% of schools and health centres offer safely managed WASH services.

In addition, we believe the monitoring body for this target (WHO/Unicef JMP) should be required to report thematically on equity and affordability, progress towards open defecation free (ODF) status and additional thematic studies, using the disaggregated data collected and additional country studies, to ensure progress meets the human right obligation to be delivered in a participatory, accountable and non-discriminatory manner. We support the use of the UN-Water-proposed supplementary indicators to reinforce this.

Analysis and proposals for WASH indicators determines outcomes under other goals

Achieving access to WASH will also play a key role in achieving many other targets across the framework. In particular, this includes Goal 2 on nutrition, Goal 3 on health and wellbeing, Goal 4 on education, Goal 5 on gender equality and Goal 11 on cities and human settlements.

WaterAid welcomes the inclusion of indicators for WASH within the UN agencies' and specialised entities' preliminary proposals for goals other than water and sanitation. The framing of these indicators is a model for the objective of an

integrated sustainable development agenda. The two indicators which best demonstrate this are:

- Indicator 4.A.1 – Percentage of schools with access to i) electricity, ii) drinking water and iii) single-sex sanitation facilities (as per the WASH indicator definition)
- Indicator 5.4.2 – Proportion of households within 15 minutes' walk of nearest water source

In addition to these two indicators, we believe that the framework could still better recognise the importance of WASH by including the following:

For Goal 3 on health and wellbeing

- Include a supporting indicator for targets 3.1 and 3.2, recognising the critical role of WASH in reducing maternal and child mortality.
 - We proposed that the indicator should be the percentage of schools and health centres offering basic water, safely managed sanitation and hygiene (repeated from 6.1 so no need for additional measurement).
- Include an indicator for waterborne diseases under target 3.3
 - It should be noted that all other elements under this target have an indicator.
 - We propose that a proxy indicator should be used, which is the percentage of schools and health centres offering basic water, safely managed sanitation and hygiene (repeated from 6.1 so no need for additional measurement).
- Include an indicator for access to WASH under target 3.8 on Universal Health Coverage
 - We proposed that the indicator should be the percentage of schools and health centres offering basic water, safely managed sanitation and hygiene (repeated from 6.1 so no need for additional measurement).
 - We would also support a more general composite indicator that takes into account a range of environmental determinants of health (such as air pollution) rather than the focus on financial protection.

For Goal 4 on education

- Retain Indicator 4.A.1 which measures the percentage of schools with access to i) electricity, ii) drinking water and iii) single-sex sanitation facilities.
 - Note that the inclusion of this indicator relies on the measurement of our proposals for including an indicator on access to WASH in extra-household settings.

For Goal 5 on gender equality

- Include an indicator for the proportion of the population with access to basic WASH under target 3.2 on eliminating violence against women.
 - We propose the core WASH indicator to be percentage of population with access to basic sanitation.

- Retain the indicator as proposed within target 5.4.2, which measures the proportion of households within 15 minutes' walk of the nearest water source.
 - Note that the inclusion of this indicator relies on the measurement of our proposals for including an indicator on access to basic WASH.

For Goal 11 on cities and infrastructure

- Include an indicator for the proportion of the population with access to basic water and sanitation under target 11.5.
 - We propose the core indicator to be percentage of population with access to safely managed sanitation.

Finally, we call on member states to explicitly recognise the crucial importance of disaggregating data across these targets in particular and the full framework in general. Although each country is likely to define specific inequalities of access within national contexts, we expect countries to at least disaggregate by economic status (based on relative wealth quintiles), gender, rural versus urban and formal settlement versus informal settlement.

These core areas of disaggregation could be referenced as a footnote or annex to the declaration, and should be included against each of the individual targets.

Analysis and discussion of the component elements of proposed targets 6.1 and 6.2, with proposals for effective global indicators

OWG target

6.1 By 2030, achieve **universal** and **equitable access** to **safe** and **affordable** drinking water for all.

Discussion on drinking water

Safe – The fundamental challenge for member states to consider here is the meaning of “universal and equitable safe water”.

The proposed goal includes two ideas which the WASH sector technical experts’ consultation found to be, in a certain sense, contradictory: universal access by 2030, and ‘safe’ water.

Taking ‘safe’ to mean ‘guaranteed free of contamination’, a level of service above the current ‘improved source’ proxy, it is extremely unlikely that sufficient progress could be made in a 15 year timeframe to meet such a target.

Further, taking such a standard as the ‘minimum unit’ of water improvement risks improvements to equitable access – i.e. ‘some for all’ rather than ‘all for some’. If providing improved sources to the poorest and hardest to reach people (e.g. rural communities using surface water only) does not count towards the global target, we are concerned that this might create a disincentive for national ministries and partners to provide these improvements. This goes against the intended outcome of much of the WASH sector’s recommendations on building a pro-poor post-2015 framework.

However, universal access also requires steady improvements in the level of service to ensure sustained services and guarantee water quality.

To measure the goal, if the text of the target does not change, we therefore propose that at least three core indicators are absolutely necessary. It is reasonable, given the broad understanding of the water and sanitation ladders in the sector and concept of a ‘minimum threshold service’ in general, to interpret ‘safe’ as having different levels:

‘Basic’ – This should be universally available by 2030.

‘Safely managed’ – This should be the aim for all countries and should be reached in accordance with the requirement for progressive realisation of the human right to water. This aim is necessary to ensure global efforts and monitoring promote sustainability and strong sector performance in service delivery and monitoring. It also ensures the goal is applicable to all countries.

Differentiated indicators for water access are in keeping with a concept used often in the post-2015 discussions, namely that different countries have different

contexts but we need to set global minimums. Achieving universal access to 'basic-safe' would be what many member states have called 'setting a universal floor', and 'safely managed' would refer to using the ambition of the SDGs to 'raise the ceiling'.

Affordable, universal and equitable – These three elements of the goal can all be captured by ensuring the core indicators are collected and reported in an appropriate way, without needing additional indicators, and therefore can be lower priority in the discussion.

Access – This can be captured by measuring 'use', as now, which is arguably better than access and is acceptable at global level.

Affordability – This can be captured by measuring 'use', as now, which is a crude proxy for affordability that is acceptable enough at global level – if someone uses source x, they are at least able to afford it, even if it's proportionally expensive.

The JMP should commit to additional thematic studies on affordability using more nuanced measures that factor in opportunity cost (money or time), such as average cost as percentage of poverty line, and water outside the home.

Universal – This should be understood to include access outside the home, so the core indicators should be reported for homes, schools and health facilities. These two settings are prioritised over others because they are high-use, high-risk settings and can be influential in behaviour-change programmes.

Equitable – This should be understood as it is in the WASH sector technical expert consultation proposals, so the core indicators should be reported with sufficient definition to report on equity.

This proposal captures the five elements of the goal in two indicators, so the pass/fail for the SDG would be:

1. 100% use of basic safe water service in homes, schools and health centres.
2. Halve the proportion of homes, schools and health centres not using safely managed water services.

To pass, a monitoring structure would be required to report thematically on equity and affordability using the disaggregated data collected and additional country studies.

OWG target 6.2

By 2030, achieve access to **adequate*** and **equitable sanitation and hygiene for all**, and **end open defecation**, paying special attention to the needs of **women and girls** and those in **vulnerable situations**.

*Under the human right to sanitation, adequate means “Physically accessible, affordable, culturally acceptable, safe and sufficient and delivered in a participatory, accountable and non-discriminatory manner.”

Discussion on sanitation

Sanitation has historically been measured by assessing the likelihood that certain facilities will safely separate human waste from the population.

Adequate – According to the human right to sanitation, adequate services must be safe, physically accessible, affordable and appropriate or culturally sensitive. Basic sanitation can cover these areas, but ODF does not suggest safety. This requires an indicator for ‘basic sanitation facility at home’.

The minimum threshold of adequate sanitation agreed by the WASH sector technical experts’ consultation is ‘basic sanitation’. The indicator for this is measurable and well understood: “Percentage of population using a basic sanitation facility at home”.

Equitable – This should mean that the monitoring of whatever indicator is chosen should be reported with sufficient disaggregation to assess the equity of progress. The definition of ‘access’ should not incentivise levels of service above the minimum threshold which satisfies the human right. This threshold cannot be ODF, because that does not satisfy the human right requirement of ‘safe’. This requires an indicator for ‘basic sanitation’.

The importance of faecal sludge management (FSM) has been strongly argued. Only the proposed indicator “Percentage of population using a ‘safely managed’ sanitation service” includes a measure of FSM. This measure is additionally very important for the ‘universality’ framing of the SDGs, as FSM is an environmental challenge for nearly all countries. It also contributes to targets for health (3.1, 3.2, 3.3) and the environmental water targets (6.3) and urban targets (11.1,11.3,11.5,11.6).

For all – We propose that this should be interpreted, as with water, to include access outside the home. The core indicators should therefore be reported for homes, schools and health facilities.

End open defecation – There are three proposed specific indicators for ending open defecation, all of which are imperfect proxies for the subject. The best measure of this would be ‘percentage of people living in ODF communities’. In a sense the inclusion of ‘access to adequate sanitation for all’ necessarily entails the elimination of open defecation, especially if the measure used is ‘use’ of adequate services. For these reasons, we propose that ODF be reported as part

of JMP monitoring, but is not one of the headline indicators.

Women, girls, vulnerable situations – The use of ‘vulnerable situations’ exists in several of the goals, and we believe it covers a wide range of inequalities, such as people with a disability and those discriminated against because of their caste, ethnicity or religion. We believe these requirements can all be met in a top-line indicator, as long as the sector monitoring body, the JMP, is required to disaggregate data to a sufficient level. The inclusion of menstrual hygiene management (MHM) and the human rights definition of ‘adequate’ (which includes ‘culturally appropriate’) would both also be good proxies for whether these elements are being met, which would mean no additional indicators would be required.

Discussion: hygiene

In the discussions before the drafting of target 6.2, hygiene has covered two distinct areas – handwashing at critical times and MHM.

It is very difficult to avoid these being separate indicators, and we recommend member states ensure hygiene is adequately covered as the indicative indicators progress and not omitted, as happened in the MDGs.

In order to adequately measure both of these, we recommend that handwashing facilities at home be the core indicator for hygiene, supported by the common indicator percentage of schools and health facilities offering safely managed WASH (which includes MHM) facilities.