WaterAid's views on the UAE – Belém work programme on the UAE FGCR

COP28 was a groundbreaking moment for the Global Goal on Adaptation. Targets were set across 7 thematic and 4 dimensional areas. More importantly, a thematic target on resilient water supply and sanitation firmly placed water and sanitation on the global adaptation agenda. Water is synonymous with climate change impacts, experienced either as too much or too little water at a given time and place.

The two-year UAE Belem work programme set up to bring more granularity and measurability to the thematic targets is especially critical at this time. WaterAid through UN-Water and the Centre for Participatory Research and Development-CPRD[1], have submitted proposals to the UNFCCC to influence how the work program should be set up and the indicators needed to measure progress towards the thematic targets.

WaterAid emphasises the following key areas:

Debating indicators should be a technically sound process. Thematic working groups under each thematic target will facilitate expert and targeted discussions that lead to technically sound and inclusive indicators.

Building on existing water and sanitation indicators. With only a few years left before 2030, SDG indicators are an intuitive starting point for measuring progress towards the thematic targets. While there may still be needed to refine these indicators in line with climate resilient indicators, using SDG indicators as a starting point reduces the reporting burden on Parties and encourages faster collation of data towards the next Global Stocktake in 2028.

Facilitating cross-sectoral benefits. The most efficient climate adaptation efforts must simultaneously respond to various sectoral needs and choose the actions that can catalyse resilience for humans, societies and nature. Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) yields benefits for all other thematic targets in the UAE FGCR.

Modalities of the work programme

The experience of the water community in developing the global indicators for the monitoring of SDG6 is useful when developing the metrics for the UAE FGCR. Coherence with existing global frameworks will make the UAE FGCR easier to implement and lessen the "burden of reporting".

[1] This brief presents WaterAid's views on the UAE-Belém work programme. It is developed from the Joint UN-Water Submission co-coordinated by UNICEF and SWA, to which WaterAid as a committed member of the SWA Climate Task Force has contributed. The lobby brief is also based on WaterAid Bangladesh's contributions to the submission by the Centre for Participatory Research and Development-CPRD on behalf of Climate Justice Alliance- Bangladesh (CJA-B) and the network of WASH Networks (NofWN) [1]in Bangladesh. Network of WASH Networks include FANSABD, SWA, MHM Platform, FSM Network, IWA BD Chapter. For an extensive elaboration on the views presented in this brief, we refer to the mentioned submissions.

Following is a set of suggestions for consideration on the modalities of the UAE – Belém work programme:

- The 2/CMA5 decision on the GGA sets out an ambitious path to decide upon a robust and implementable adaptation goal at COP30, including an inclusive approach to the expertise of non-state actors. This approach is welcomed, and it is urged that the ambition is met with the planning and resources that can facilitate it.
- It is advised that the process of developing indicators within the UAE – Belém work programme starts in a technically robust manner and the final selection of indicators is made taking into account practical and political considerations.
- Thematic working groups should be convened for each thematic area. Because of the cross-sectoral nature of water, it is proposed that water experts are part of other thematic working groups. There may be a reference group looking across all thematic groups to ensure synergies and avoid a siloed approach to indicator development.
- The thematic working group on water and sanitation would further develop the concepts included in this brief and could build on existing working groups on the topics.
- The work programme should consider including thematic desk reviews and online sectoral consultations to ensure the views of different constituencies are captured. It is highly recommended to consider some form of indicator pilot testing.

Water and sanitation indicators

Article 9 of the UAE FGCR refers to the thematic targets of the framework, and it lists a water and sanitation-related target first (paragraph 9a):

> *Significantly reducing climate-induced water scarcity and enhancing climate resilience to water-related hazards towards a climate-resilient water supply, climate-resilient sanitation and towards access to safe and affordable potable water for all;*

The following indicators are proposed for each component of the water and sanitation target.

Significantly reducing climate-induced **water** scarcity;
Potential metrics towards **"significantly reducing climate-induced water scarcity"** can consist of a strong baseline of some of the existing Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6 indicators on water efficiency (SDG 6.4.1), water stress (SDG 6.4.2), water quality and treatment (SDG 6.3.1 and 6.3.2), governance (SDG 6.5.1 and 6.5.2), and international cooperation and stakeholder engagement (SDG 6.a.1 and 6.b.1). Taking into account that SDG 6 indicators may lack climate considerations and do not include a quantification of the contribution of anthropogenic climate change to current levels of water scarcity, it is recommended to research where water scarcity overlaps with high exposure to climate-related hazards and track progress towards SDG6 in those areas (as is being done by UNICEF).

In addition, there is a need to monitor how climate factors influence the hydrological cycle and consequently the status of water resources at different levels. Together with WMO, national meteorological and hydrological services (NMHSs) are instrumental for this purpose.

Enhancing climate resilience to **water**-related hazards

Potential metrics towards **"enhancing climate resilience to water-related hazards",** include existing sources of indicators and data:

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Online Monitoring Tool. In the Sendai framework, Priority 4 calls to promote resilience to water infrastructure and improve understanding of water disaster risks. Target D, calling for building resilience of basic services including health facilities, and E, calling for more national DRR strategies, have relevant indicators that could be duplicated for enhanced climate resilience to water-related hazards in the GGA.
The Early Warnings for All Initiative by WMO and UNDRR provides important data on water-related hazards and resilience, and SDG indicator 6.5.1 refers to actions to reduce water-related disasters, both relevant for the concerned GGA metric.
These suggestions provide a starting point and can be complemented with measures that would, for instance, capture: *the number of extreme events; the percentage of land affected by drought or floods; and the number of countries with prevention, response, and financing strategies to climate-induced water-related hazards; among others*.

Towards a climate-resilient **water** supply, climate-resilient **sanitation**

Concerning potential metrics **"towards a climate-resilient water supply, climate-resilient sanitation"**, the WHO-UNICEF Joint Monitoring Program measures progress against SDG6 targets 6.1-2 to ensure universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water and sanitation for all by 2030. While it provides a good basis, these SDG6 indicators should be modified to include specific climate resilience considerations.

UNICEF, WHO and the SWA Climate Task Team (of which WaterAid is part) are leading two processes in 2024 to agree on a new, sector-wide definition of climate-resilient WASH and accompanying tools and indicators. While this is under development, organisations are already working to advance climate-resilient WASH.

WaterAid integrates climate-resilient WASH in its programming and defines it as *"WASH services and behaviors that continue to deliver benefits, or are appropriately restored, within a changing climate context and despite climate-induced hazards".* The principles for locally-led adaptation guide WaterAid's work, as the organisation recognises that local stakeholders are best placed to understand the threats posed by climate change, given the contextual dependency of climate change vulnerabilities (geographical and societal).

The Green Climate Fund's Water Security Guidelines (2022) include recommendations for implementation of climate-resilient WASH with benefits for overall community resilience. Moreover,

the UN-Water Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking-Water (GLAAS) for 2024-2025 includes indicators to capture climate-resilience perspectives, which will be important to inform the new definition.

Towards access to safe and affordable potable **water** for all

Concerning potential metrics **"towards access to safe and affordable potable water for all",** the WHO-UNICEF Joint Monitoring Program already capture the similar goal of SDG6 *"achieving universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water"*. It would be beneficial if the GGA goal would reflect the same ambition and include a reference to *"equitable sanitation and hygiene for all"* as the same system could then be applied to measure progress for both SDG6 and the GGA.

Cross-sectoral considerations

In addition to water and sanitation, the UAE FGCR includes other thematic considerations. Water is a connector between these, and integrated water resources management would benefit the achievement of the GGA in its entirety. Below, the additional thematic targets listed in the FCGR are listed with their relevance to water, sanitation and hygiene services.

Food-agriculture: Climate change-induced shifts in the water cycle, such as rains and droughts, significantly impact agriculture. Agricultural water use is projected to increase globally due to cropland expansion and intensification of climate change. As water resources competition rises, the human right to clean water and sanitation must be observed. Developed wastewater treatment is a guarantor for healthy freshwater resources available for, among others, agricultural purposes.

Health: The influence of climate change on the human right to health is significant and varied. A primary impact is the spread of infectious diseases, many of which are waterborne and already present a major burden to vulnerable populations worldwide. Waterborne diseases such as cholera are highly sensitive to changes in temperature, precipitation and humidity. The spread of disease can be drastically reduced with basic water, sanitation and hygiene practices.

Ecosystems and biodiversity: This target explicitly refers to inland water ecosystems. Water and sanitation services and wastewater treatment are dependent on and impact these ecosystems. This is especially apparent in the event of climate change hazards and decreased water quality which can exacerbate social vulnerabilities and increase resource competition.

Infrastructure-human settlements: IPCC AR6 highlights with high confidence that rapid population growth and urbanisation are linked to, among others, changes in water use leading to increasing the vulnerability of urban and peri-urban areas to extreme rainfall and drought, particularly in less developed economies with limited governance capacity. Climate change will impact water quality and residential water demand, supply and management.

Poverty eradication-livelihoods: Locally led climate-resilient WASH services effectively mitigate climate change's adverse effects on people living in vulnerable contexts. By preventing water shortages, disease and malnutrition, WASH functions as an enabler for sustainable development, including poverty eradication, access to education and decent employment for women and men.

Cultural heritage: IPCC AR6 expresses with high confidence that climate-driven hydrological changes to cultural water uses and culturally significant ecosystems and species are projected to pose risks to the physical well-being of Indigenous Peoples, local communities and traditional peoples. Integrated water resources management is necessary to protect the cultural heritage of communities.