
GRoW position paper on SDG 6
Strengthening the evidence base for the SDG process

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To help achieve the ambitious targets of Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG 6), the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research has initiated the “Water as a Global Resource” (GRoW) funding measure. GRoW has created a network of more than 90 institutions that are active in research, business and practice. The partners collaborating within GRoW very much welcome the fact that SDG 6 will be a focus during the 2018 United Nations High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. They would like to take this opportunity to emphasise the significant role of science in sustainably managing global freshwater resources.

GRoW stands ready to provide support for a stronger science-policy interface that will ensure sound reviewing, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the ambitious targets for SDG 6 and related SDGs. With this position paper, GRoW would also like to highlight the challenges it sees with regard to achieving SDG 6, and to outline how its research programme can help achieve the SDGs in general and SDG 6 in particular.

KEY CHALLENGES TO ACHIEVING SDG 6

Agreeing on the SDGs was a tremendous accomplishment for the international community, and continuing on this path is essential for our joint future. Achieving the targets will require ongoing efforts and new approaches. Within this context, the GRoW research projects would like to highlight the following key challenges:

- **Competing or even conflicting targets in different SDGs result in trade-offs and synergies** (e.g. between SDG 6 and SDG 2, and SDG 6 and SDG 7). Trade-offs manifest differently depending on scale and region. These trade-offs need to be better understood and addressed openly with suitable governance structures to provide an integrated approach to achieving all SDGs.
- **Measuring progress on achieving SDG 6 needs improved methodologies.** Some of the existing indicators on achieving SDG 6 do not sufficiently represent the outlined targets, are not conceptually clear or measurable, or lack adequate data. Countries do not regularly record data for seven of the eleven SDG 6 indicators. In addition, indicators capturing potential synergies and conflicts between targets are largely lacking.
- The **global community of water researchers and practitioners** is rather **fragmented**. This results in fragmented knowledge and a high degree of uncertainty that paves the way for different interest groups to strategically misinterpret and even misuse water-related knowledge and data. Improved knowledge management is required to provide the evidence base for water as a global resource.

EFFORTS REQUIRED TO ACHIEVE THE SDGs IN GENERAL AND SDG 6 IN PARTICULAR

In order to respond to the challenges outlined above, more efforts are required in the fields listed below. GRoW will actively help to close these gaps through its various research activities. In particular, it will do the following:

- Provide **analyses for a better understanding of interlinkages between different SDGs**. These are important for developing integrated strategies to improve the management of synergies and trade-offs between different SDGs (e.g., SDG 6 and SDG 7).
- Support the development and implementation of **integrated governance** by improving the **understanding of factors that affect coordination and cooperation across different sectoral and administrative units**. This will help to overcome water sector fragmentation and address problems of competing demands.
- Conduct **in-depth assessments of data and methods for measuring progress on SDG 6**. GRoW will provide **new data, new information, and analysis and modelling tools to improve monitoring of SDG 6** and to help develop indicators that are currently lacking (e.g., for jointly monitoring goal attainment within SDG 6 and 7, or for assessing groundwater availability).
- **Further improve water footprint methods** to address cross-border water-related interdependencies and reflect information on local water scarcities and (in)efficient water use in, for instance, specific sectors or companies and their supply chains.
- Develop an **integrated diagnostic approach** that, rather than monitoring goals, diagnoses critical gaps that are impeding goal achievement and identifies ways of closing them.

STRENGTHENING THE ROLE OF SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE IN THE SDG PROCESS

The GRoW projects argue that we urgently need a more evidence-based approach to water-related decision-making. This approach should **bring together science, policy and practice to provide synthesis on key water topics, consolidate knowledge on implementing the SDGs and thereby strengthen evidence-based decision-making**.

The GRoW projects therefore support the suggestion from the United Nations Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Water & Sanitation to **set up a science platform on water for SDG implementation and recommend initiating a process designed to create such a platform**.

About GRoW

"Water as a Global Resource" (GRoW) is a research programme that the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) has set up to help achieve SDG 6. Over 90 institutions active in research, business and practice are involved in the funding measure through 12 joint research projects. GRoW projects collaborate with partners in over 20 countries around the world and develop new approaches for improving sustainable water resources management and water governance structures. The joint research projects examine local and regional solutions, and produce improved global information and forecasts about water resources and demand.

For more information and contact details see: www.bmbf-grow.de