



Executive Summary



Status Report on the Implementation of Integrated Water Resources Management in Africa

A regional report for SDG indicator 6.5.1 on
IWRM IMPLEMENTATION



Decisions about how to allocate and use water in an efficient, sustainable and equitable manner are fundamental to sustainable development. Their significance is captured by Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG 6) – ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all – and numerous African political commitments and strategies over the last two decades.

More than half of global population growth between now and 2050 will happen in Africa. As demands on water increase in Africa to sustain this population growth and all areas of development, and as pollution levels rise, the goal of implementing effective water resources management remains a priority issue.

Constraints on effective water resources management in Africa include rampant poverty and the lack of water control infrastructure. This latter constraint is particularly critical given Africa’s significant variability in rainfall, which is worsening with climate change. The continent’s political instability is a key challenge, since water resources management requires strong political will and sustained long-term efforts to build viable water management institutions and legal frameworks. Other constraints include: low levels of funding to the water sector and specifically for governing water development and management; institutional and human resources capacity gaps at all levels; persisting and deeply rooted gender imbalances; and the marginal roles of the private sector and other non-state actors in water-related decision-making processes.

Implementing integrated water resources management (IWRM) not only supports targets for water security, but also targets related to sustainable agriculture and energy production, sustainable and resilient towns and cities, health and gender equality.

This report is based on data submitted by 51 African countries responding to the global survey to establish the SDG baseline for indicator 6.5.1 on the degree of implementation of integrated water resources management (0–100). This regional report for Africa has been prepared at the request of the African Ministers’ Council on Water (AMCOW).

This report focuses on the degree of implementation of 30 IWRM elements, from very low to very high implementation. These elements cover the enabling environment of laws, policies and plans, institutional arrangements and stakeholder participation, management instruments for informed decision-making, and financing for sustainable water management.

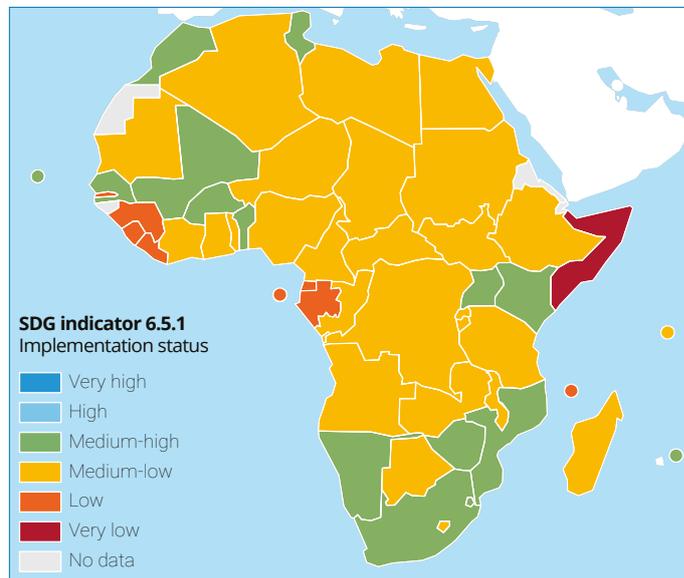
I Current status of overall IWRM implementation in Africa

Africa’s overall IWRM implementation score is lower than the global average (41 compared with 49), with country performances ranging from very low (lowest score: 10) to medium-high (highest score: 65).

Most African countries (71 per cent) are in the medium-low to very low categories of IWRM implementation, meaning that their capacity for effective implementation is largely inadequate, with most IWRM-related activities undertaken on an ad hoc basis using unsustainable financing. Considering recent trends and current stages of IWRM implementation, it is projected that almost three quarters of African countries (36 out of 51) will not meet the global SDG target 6.5 – by 2030, implement integrated water resources management at all levels, including through transboundary cooperation as appropriate – unless progress is significantly accelerated.

Such progress may be possible for many African countries, given that 82 per cent have institutionalized most IWRM elements, providing them with a solid foundation from which to accelerate implementation at all levels. To ensure that target 6.5 is met, countries should aim to set national or subregional targets based on the country context and (transboundary) basin level targets where appropriate.

Country implementation of IWRM in Africa (SDG indicator 6.5.1)



I Subregional differences in implementation

IWRM implementation differs markedly between subregions. On average, Northern and Southern Africa have the highest implementation scores (50 and 49), while the average scores for Eastern and Western Africa are approximately 10 points lower (37 and 42). However, country scores vary significantly within these subregions. The average IWRM implementation score of Central Africa (28) is almost 10 points lower than Eastern Africa, with a relatively even spread of scores across the countries.

I Varied implementation of the four IWRM dimensions

Across the four IWRM dimensions, implementation scores for Africa range from 33 for financing to 40 for management instruments, 46 for the enabling environment, and 47 for institutions and participatory processes. These scores are in the medium-low implementation category. Compared with the average global implementation score, Africa is behind by roughly five points for the enabling environment and institutions, eight points for financing, and 11 points for management instruments.

I Lagging IWRM elements

A staggering 98 per cent of African countries (50 out of 51) report insufficient funds reaching planned investments in water resources management, including for infrastructure, at the subnational or basin level. At the national level, 86 per cent of African countries are in this position. Furthermore, 44 per cent report no revenue raising from users.

Progress at the basin/aquifer level has been particularly slow in Africa, though there are positive examples. Average scores for institutions (37), plans (34), and management instruments for basins (38) and aquifers (30) are among the lowest. This means that, while basin or aquifer institutions may exist, capacity is generally insufficient to effectively develop IWRM plans and the use of management instruments is generally limited and for short-term, ad hoc projects.

Roughly 87 per cent of African countries report that ecosystem management instruments – where they exist – generally have inadequate coverage across different ecosystem types and the country. Furthermore, 71 per cent report that instruments for disaster risk reduction have inadequate coverage for at-risk areas.

On data-sharing arrangements, 68 per cent of African countries report that there is inadequate coverage across sectors and their country. There is a heavy reliance on external and short-term funding for investment in the critical and strategic area of water-related knowledge management.

Overall, Africa scores lower where IWRM implementation relates to practical activities for tackling actual water management problems, such as implementing and financing IWRM compared with establishing an enabling policy, legal and institutional environment, and implementing IWRM at the subnational level (on the ground) compared with at the national level.

I Transboundary cooperation leads the way

Transboundary cooperation is hugely important in Africa, with all 48 mainland countries sharing 134 transboundary basins or aquifers. Approximately 80 per cent of African countries report that arrangements have been adopted and that organizational frameworks are in place for the most important transboundary basins and aquifers. However, almost 60 per cent report that funding is less than 50 percent of agreed contributions and that data- and information sharing is limited.

I Regional and subregional support for accelerating progress

Initiatives and efforts to accelerate IWRM implementation in Africa are supported in several ways. Under the auspices of the African Union (AU) and AMCOW at the continental level, and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and transboundary river basin and aquifer organizations at the subregional level, strong commitments have been made in recent years at the highest political level to invest in water infrastructure and improve water governance. These commitments are backed by a series of strategies and plans. Since its creation in 2006, the African Water Facility has become a key financing instrument for water management in Africa.

I Recommended action areas for accelerating IWRM implementation

To progress with IWRM, African countries should shift their focus from developing national-level policies, laws and strategies to implementing water resources management activities on the ground.

Increase financing for water resources management, including water control infrastructure

1. Initiate and develop consultative processes and awareness-raising efforts at the AU and/or REC levels for a resolution on increased financing for water resources management from government budgets.
2. Document, share, and replicate good practices of implementing approaches and financing investment models for water management from water use and abuse practices (e.g. application of user pays and polluter pays principles).
3. Increase the financial contribution of RECs for water development and management in their respective member countries and river basins.

Strengthen regional capacity to support IWRM implementation

4. Strengthen the capacity of RECs to support IWRM implementation in their respective regions, and foster linkages across SDGs.
5. Launch a ten-year capacity development programme in support of IWRM implementation at all levels.
6. Harmonize water-related information management and reporting systems at the global (SDG-related), regional (AMCOW), subregional (RECs), transboundary basin/aquifer and national levels.

Further develop transboundary cooperation

7. Promote the establishment and operationalization of arrangements for transboundary cooperation where these are lacking.
8. Support existing transboundary organizations to strengthen inter-State cooperation and promote IWRM at the different levels.

Provide targeted support

9. Strengthen the governance of aquifers at the national and transboundary levels.
10. Support IWRM implementation at the subnational level (basin/watershed level, decentralized territories). Target countries include those within the medium-low and medium-high categories of IWRM implementation.
11. Provide concerted and targeted support to selected countries to accelerate IWRM implementation. Target countries include post-conflict countries and/or the 36 countries within the medium-low and lower level categories of IWRM implementation.

This report finishes with practical guidance for countries and transboundary and regional bodies on conducting more detailed analysis at the national level, setting national targets, developing workplans, and budgeting and securing finance, to help accelerate IWRM implementation. Involving government and non-government actors across sectors is critical to the success of most of these activities. Multi-stakeholder processes used in the reporting on SDG indicators 6.5.1 and 6.5.2, can be built on to continue the dialogue and achieve progress in the social, economic and environmental dimensions

This is the Executive Summary of the African baseline report for Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicator 6.5.1: Degree of integrated water resources management implementation. It represents the work of 51 African countries.

Although 82 per cent of African countries have institutionalized most elements of IWRM, most are not likely to reach the 2030 target. Accelerating the practical implementation of IWRM on the ground, with cross-sectoral coordination to secure financing and sustainable and equitable outcomes, must now be the focus.



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