

2021 African progress on implementing IWRM in the 2030 Agenda BRIEFING NOTE

Summary: African countries have demonstrated a strong commitment to implementing integrated water resources management (IWRM) in accordance with global (SDG), regional (AU) and sub-regional frameworks. Despite significant efforts, the regional rate of IWRM implementation needs to double to meet SDG target 6.5. To address this, it is imperative for AMCOW to avail the AU Assembly with authoritative information on the multi-sector benefits of water resources management.

IWRM: a keystone enabler for sustainable development

1. IWRM is a critical enabler for genuine sustainable development in Africa, from regional to local levels. Action on IWRM directly supports numerous political frameworks, including Agenda 2063, Agenda 2030, Africa Water Vision 2025, the UN Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030), and the 2017 Durban Political Declaration to accelerate progress on SDG 6 in Africa.¹
2. Countries have made significant efforts to implement IWRM processes and activities over the last 20 years. However, under increasing stresses from unsustainable and uncoordinated development, and climate change pressures, the level of IWRM implementation and capacity in most countries is insufficient to cope with these multiple stresses, and avoid negative and potentially irreversible environmental damage and social inequality.
3. Political will to implement IWRM is strong within the water ministries in most countries. However, political buy-in, and appreciation of the value of implementing IWRM to support multiple sustainable development objectives, is needed at the highest level of national development planning and finance, to empower the water ministries with the necessary mandate and resources to secure engagement across sectors and at all levels.
4. In terms of key priorities mentioned by African countries for overall advancement on IWRM implementation, a rapid assessment was conducted where countries were asked to identify their main barriers and next steps for advancing IWRM. The analysis shows that capacity building is the second most important need of the countries.

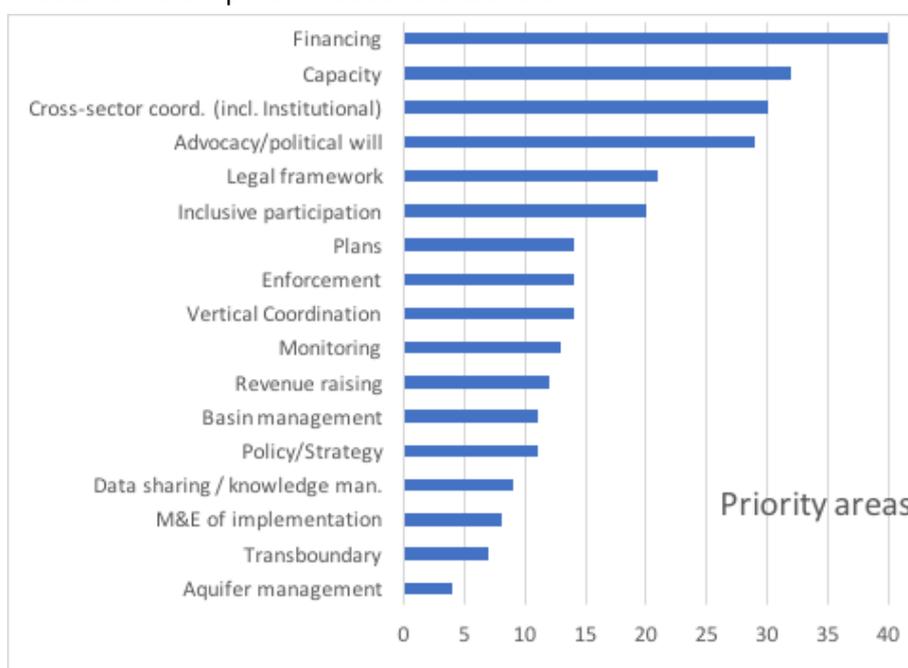


Figure 1: Rapid assessment to identify priority areas (x-axis shows number of countries listing each priority).

¹ Recalling numerous African declarations (including Sirte 2004, Tunis 2008, Sharm El Sheikh 2008, eThekweni 2008, N'gor 2015, <https://bit.ly/3pjQd9G>), and requesting AMCOW, AfDB and AUC to convene meetings of ministers responsible for Water and Finance to develop and implement appropriate financing policies and models for water and sanitation.

Measuring progress on IWRM: is undertaken through SDG indicator 6.5.1 – degree of IWRM implementation – from data submitted by 52 African countries across 2017 and 2020. Results are based on country responses to 33 questions on different elements of IWRM implementation, covering policies and plans, institutions, stakeholder participation, management instruments and financing. The degree of implementation is assessed on a scale of 0-100, with a global target of at least 91 (very high implementation) by 2030.

Progress towards SDG target 6.5

1. Across Africa, the rate of implementation of IWRM urgently needs to double.

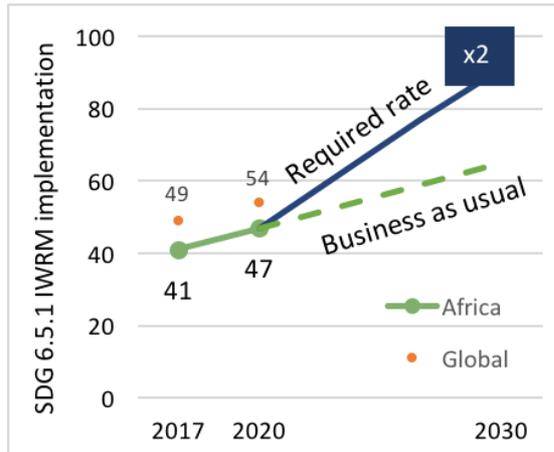


Figure 2: Rate of implementation of IWRM

2. The range of country scores (from 15 to 71), points to opportunities for country-to-country learning, targeted support, and acceleration.

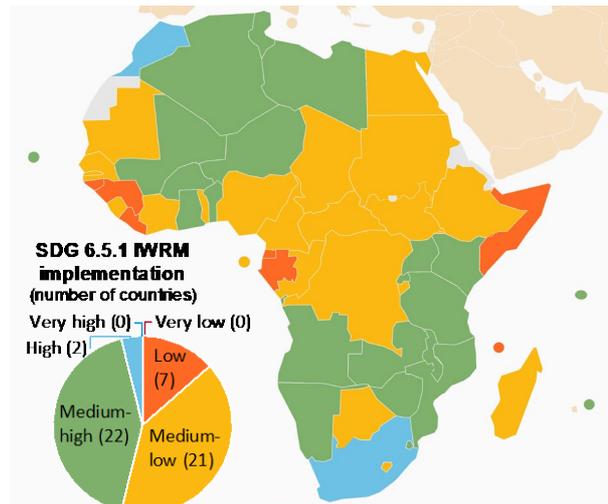


Figure 3: countries score

Three highly interdependent key enablers for accelerating IWRM implementation

- Strengthening political will and advocacy:** those in the water “sector” need to clearly communicate and demonstrate the value of implementing IWRM – for achieving multiple sustainable development targets – to key stakeholders at all levels and across sectors. This includes targeted communication to high-level political actors in planning and finance, involving and empowering them as champions for IWRM implementation.
- Coordination within and across sectors:** this lies at the heart of integrated water resources management, yet most countries still report this as a significant challenge in practice. Addressing this will heavily depend on strengthening political will and advocacy (above). Measures include: (a) adopt integrated approaches to policies, programmes, and investments related to water supply, wastewater treatment and reuse, water use and water-use efficiency in agriculture, industry and energy production, ecosystem protection and restoration, and water-related disasters (i.e. SDG 6); and (b) identify opportunities to integrate water resources management into sectoral programmes and planning processes – such as climate change, agriculture and poverty reduction (i.e. across SDGs) – and establish formal coordination mechanisms, with clear institutional mandates, responsibilities, and incentives for coordination.
- Financing** is the only one of four IWRM dimensions where progress seems to have stagnated between 2017 and 2020. Over 90% of African countries report insufficient funding reaching planned projects/programmes for water resources infrastructure at either national, sub-national, or basin levels. Again, heavily dependent on strengthening political will and coordination (above), options include: high-level prioritisation, from planning and finance ministries, of IWRM implementation and coordination, for increased and more efficient budget allocation; leveraging climate financing and post-Covid “build-back-better” financing to achieve integrated objectives; increasing capacity to design and implement revenue raising mechanisms; transparency and accountability measures; enable RECs to avail and coordinate funding to countries; and improve capacity and the enabling environment for blended finance mechanisms, also involving the private sector.



Communication and decision-making based on robust data and information sharing

To support the above three key enablers, it is imperative that we enhance the capacity of ‘water’ people to be able to communicate the value of implementing IWRM to ‘non-water’ people, through targeted communication at various levels. At the continental and sub-regional levels, harmonized data and information provide the foundation for this. In 2015, AMCOW launched the Pan-African Water and Sanitation Sector Monitoring and Reporting System ([WASSMO](#)), to support and strengthen the decision-making processes at national, sub regional and continental level. A critical aspect of WASSMO is that data is owned and submitted by countries. Whilst the indicators in WASSMO are harmonized with key African and global commitments to a certain extent, this aspect can be strengthened. In addition, the scope of the system could be expanded to include water-related indicators – such as those on climate, agriculture, poverty, and gender mainstreaming – to facilitate the necessary cross-sector communication and engagement.

Increasing the impact of regional and sub-regional organizations

1. AUC, in collaboration with the AU delivery mechanism on Water and Sanitation, should continue strengthening capacity of stakeholders on WASSMO parameters, which include IWRM.
2. Regional Economic Commissions (RECs): undertake regional analysis of status and challenges of IWRM implementation; facilitate country-to-country learning; develop and/or implement regional strategies and policies to enable and advance IWRM; foster transboundary cooperation; ensure that IWRM is considered and included in related regional policy dialogues (e.g. climate, disaster risk reduction, socioeconomic development); coordinate funding across countries and sectors, including through establishing or encouraging use of donor coordination platforms, and support countries to access this funding.
3. Drawing on the UN and other sustainable development partners at regional and national levels: ensure that IWRM principles are embedded in the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks in each country; engage with and utilise the [SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework](#) and the [SDG 6 IWRM Support Programme](#).