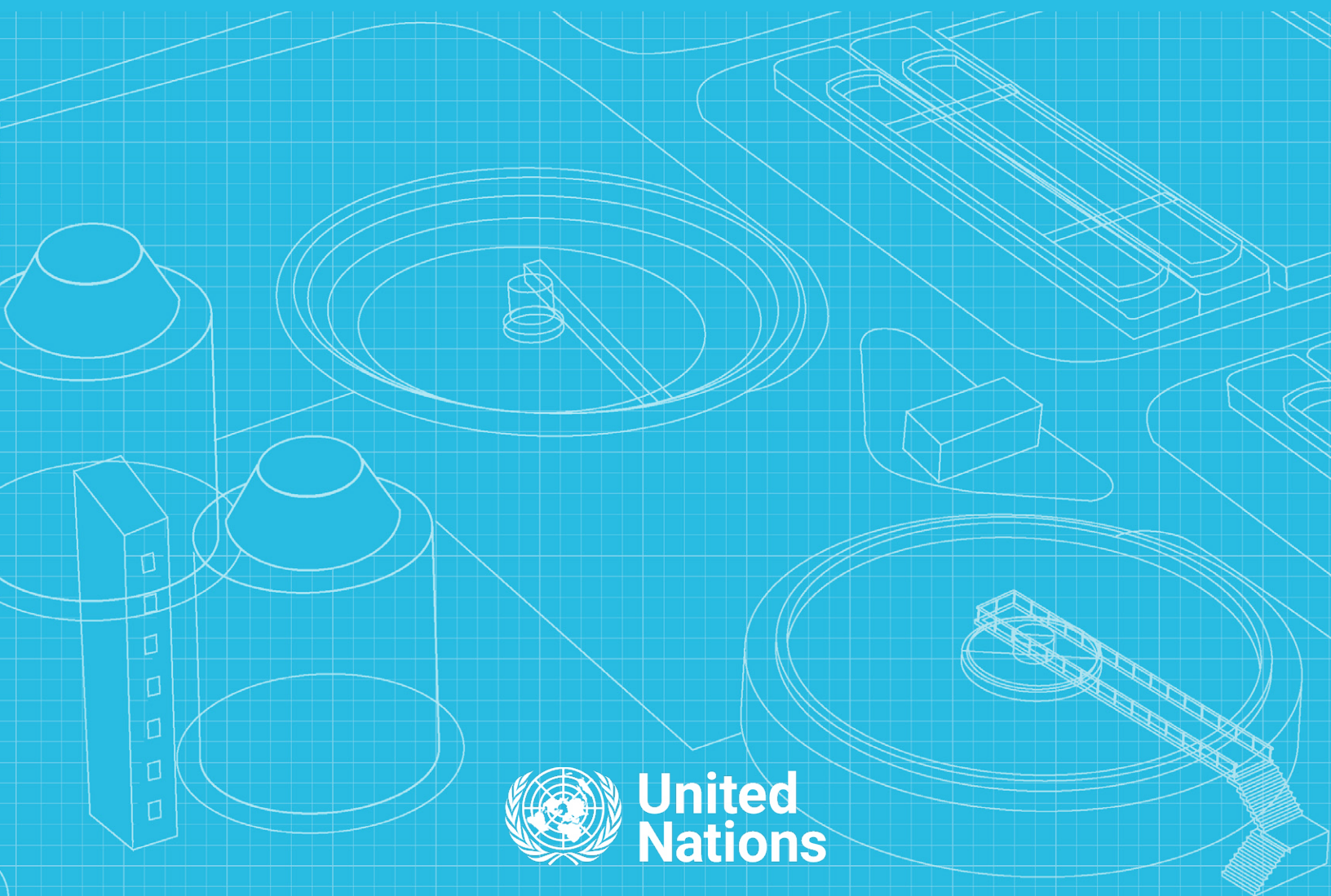




**Blueprint for Acceleration:
Sustainable Development Goal 6
Synthesis Report on Water and
Sanitation 2023**

**THE MESSAGE:
KEY FINDINGS AND
RECOMMENDATIONS**



**United
Nations**

In 2018, the *SDG 6 Synthesis Report on Water and Sanitation* showed the world is not on track to reach SDG 6 (UN-Water, 2018). In 2021, the UN-Water Integrated Monitoring Initiative's *Summary Progress Update* demonstrated that the world needs to accelerate, on average, four times faster if SDG 6 is to be reached by 2030 (UN-Water, 2021b).

Two years later, the UN 2023 Water Conference generated renewed commitment across sectors to address the global water crisis as a top priority. In response, this *SDG 6 Synthesis Report on Water and Sanitation 2023* presents a blueprint for SDG 6 acceleration.

At the midpoint of the journey to 2030, the world has come a long way, but...

- > **We need to move much faster.** We need to work six times faster on drinking water, five times faster on sanitation and three times faster on hygiene. At the current speed, in 2030, 2 billion people will still be living without safely managed drinking water, 3 billion without safely managed sanitation, and 1.4 billion without basic hygiene services.
- > **Water quality is suffering.** Forty-two per cent of household wastewater is not treated properly, damaging ecosystems and human health. Significant data gaps on ambient water quality leave many at risk of exposure to pollution.
- > **Climate change is hitting hard.** Rising water stress is affecting food security and biodiversity. There are rapid changes in surface water in one fifth of river basins. Floods and drought are becoming more frequent and extreme, increasing the number of water-related disasters.
- > **Silo thinking is holding us back.** Implementation of integrated water resources management (IWRM) needs to double. Only one SDG region is on track to have all its transboundary rivers, lakes and aquifers covered by cooperation arrangements by 2030.
- > **We are heading in the wrong direction.** Financing needs have gone up and official development assistance (ODA) disbursement is going down.
- > **We are not walking the talk on inclusivity.** Inclusive governance is recognized but not implemented. National policies and laws increasingly recognize participatory procedures, but implementation has been insufficient.

Obstacles blocking progress

> **Not enough money flowing to water.** Enabling environments for efficient investment and spending are absent. Lack of well-prepared bankable projects and sustainable financing models make the water sector unattractive for investment.

> **Not enough data.** In too many countries, policymakers lack credible and timely data for decision-making due to inadequate monitoring and reporting systems, and insufficient resources.

> **Not enough capacity.** Gaps in the water and sanitation workforce are growing due to limited access to education, weak supportive frameworks, and poor rates of recruitment and retention of skilled staff, particularly women.

> **Not enough innovation.** From planning to implementation, innovation is too limited and slow to meet the need for rapid, transformative change.

> **Not enough coherence.** Water governance is ineffective due to institutional weakness and fragmentation, and poor regulation, accountability and transparency.

The blueprint for acceleration

> **Pour in more funds.** New investments must be attracted by better enabling environments, and existing finances must be used more efficiently and effectively. The global development finance architecture needs to be reformed to provide more funding to governments.

> **Fill the data gaps.** National monitoring, reporting and data dissemination systems must be strengthened to cover all SDG 6 global indicators, combining data sets from all stakeholders. Earth observation technologies and improved data practices, such as standardization and disaggregation, can enhance decision-making and reduce inequalities.

> **Invest in the workforce.** Education and employers need to collaborate to promote water and sanitation “literacy” in curricula and to attract, train and retain workers, especially women and youth. There is a need for national-level workforce assessments and studies to determine current in-demand and future skills with a view towards emerging technologies.

> **Boost innovation.** Innovative approaches must be sped and scaled up through supportive policies, utilizing technology, such as artificial intelligence, and customizing innovations to local contexts.

> **Maximize cooperation.** Collaboration across different sectors and national borders magnifies the effectiveness of water and sanitation management and supports social cohesion and international peace.

The United Nations system we need

To meet the ambition of the UN 2023 Water Conference and deliver the Water Action Agenda, we need:

- > **Water mainstreamed in all relevant intergovernmental processes.** United Nations leadership, United Nations entities and Member States can play a fundamental role in integrating water into the agendas of global and regional efforts on climate change, health, biodiversity, food, energy and disaster risk reduction, among others.
- > **Regular intergovernmental meetings and conferences.** These can ensure progress is measured and momentum maintained at the top of the global political agenda.
- > **United Nations leadership convened at the highest level.** United Nations executive heads can help accelerate progress on SDG 6 and drive the Water Action Agenda through regular dialogue and decision-making.
- > **A more effective country-level coordination interface.** The interaction between United Nations entities working on water and the United Nations development system, through the resident coordinator system, can be enhanced to bolster and upscale country-level SDG 6 acceleration.
- > **A dedicated system-wide water and sanitation strategy.** The SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework can be elevated and transformed into a United Nations system-wide strategy to operationalize inter-agency coordination for SDG 6 acceleration.
- > **Strengthened United Nations agency water and sanitation programmes.** The upscaling of current programmes and developing new ones to address gaps and respond to emerging needs can augment United Nations system capacity to deliver on SDG 6 implementation.
- > **A United Nations coordination office to enhance the UN-Water inter-agency mandate.** The addition of a coordination office to UN-Water resources can strengthen the United Nations system's capacity to deliver results. Such a coordination office would serve the UN-Water inter-agency mechanism.

> Explore the full report:



www.unwater.org/publications/sdg-6-synthesis-report-2023