Thematic Discussion Series: Synthesis

Synthesis **SDGs: Enough to end the sanitation crisis?**
- A Thematic Discussion Series hosted by End Water Poverty and SuSanA -

Contents

End Water Poverty is a global civil society coalition made up of more than 340 members from around the world, all working toward ending the water and sanitation crisis.

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SuSanA's Thematic Discussion Series
SuSanA's Thematic Discussion Series is an initiative to organise discussions on the SuSanA Discussion Forum which address intersectoral topics and involve collaborative efforts from thematic leads, the relevant SuSanA working groups, SuSanA's members, and a coordination aspect. More information can be found at www.susana.org/resources/thematic-discussion-series.

sustainable sanitation alliance

SDGs: Enough to end the sanitation crisis?

This thematic discussion series addressed the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with regard to whether they will be able to provide momentum to ensure successful sanitation outcomes within their 15-year time period. In particular, the discussion examined the SDG indicators on sanitation, efforts to prioritise those most in need within the SDG process, civil society's role in monitoring the outcomes as well as basic sanitation versus safely managed sanitation. From 1 September to 14 September 2015, sanitation in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals was discussed on the SuSanA Discussion Forum and led by several sanitation experts.

Source: WHO/UNICEF 2015

Theme 1: SDG indicators (September 1 to September 17)
Rose Osinde Alabaster, Operations Desk Officer: Water Lex
Martin Gambrill, Lead Water and Sanitation Specialist, Water and Sanitation Program, World Bank
Theme 2: Prioritising those most in need (September 1 to September 16)
Louisa Gosling, Programme Manager for Principles: WaterAid
Theme 3: Civil society's role in monitoring (September 1 to September 18)
Graham Alabaster, Programme Manager: United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT)
Hanna Woodburn: Global Public Private Partnership for Handwashing
Theme 4: Basic v. safe sanitation (September 1 to September 17)
Tim Brewer, Policy Analyst: WaterAid
Eddy Perez: Center for Global Safe Water, Sanitation and Hygiene at Emory University (Former Lead Sanitation Specialist, Water and Sanitation Program, World Bank)

The individual themes were running concurrently on the SuSanA Forum and, indeed, the individual topics show many interconnections that this synthesis aims to highlight. The following graph visualizes the main points addressed during the discussion.
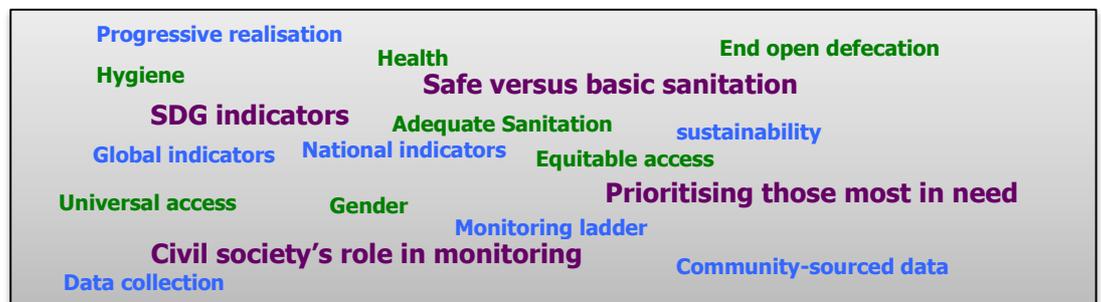
The discussion on SDG indicators addressed the question of whether the current indicators are adequately phrased to enable countries to effectively deliver on the target with regard to sanitation in Sustainable Development Goal 6 on water and sanitation. Looking at the terms "equitable access" and "universal access", among others, participants investigated in closer detail which concrete actions have to be taken to deliver on these key terms.

Taking a look at data collection, monitoring and the role of civil society in these areas, the discussion called for enhanced data collection, the integration of monitoring frameworks and new partnerships in monitoring. Participants evaluated the potential of using community-sourced data and also investigated the concept of "monitoring ladders" to track progress on the SDGs.

How we ensure that the SDGs prioritise, and monitor progress, for those most in need of safe sanitation was another issue addressed during the thematic discussion series. Looking at the potential barriers, the discussion highlighted that a multitude of factors interact to result in exclusion from basic rights to water and sanitation and also critically assessed the claim that those most in need should be prioritised.

Trying to achieve universal coverage, basic sanitation services have to play an important role, participants stressed. Yet how can this strategy be reconciled with the aim to increase access to safely managed services? This seeming conflict was addressed during the discussion on "Basic v. Safe Sanitation" which concluded that both forms are needed in order to progressively realise universal access to safely managed services.

The synthesis ends by taking a closer look at sanitation in the broader SDG context and provides some food for thought from the discussion leads. A list of contributors can be found on the last page.

The following is a synthesis of the posts published during the discussions. The synthesis does not necessarily express all the standpoints expressed in the discussion nor can it take up all the issue raised during the two weeks of debate. If you are interested in participants' postings in closer detail, please refer to the weekly summaries.

SDG Indicators on Sanitation

Given that the MDGs did not succeed in ensuring that everyone has access to safe sanitation, a discussion on whether the SDGs will be able to end the sanitation crisis requires taking a look at the SDG indicators on sanitation and asking the question whether they will increase progress to ensure that everyone has their right to water and sanitation realised.

> **17 Sustainable Development Goals**
>
> > **Goal 6:** "Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all."
> >
> > > **Target 6.2:** "By 2030, achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations."
> > >
> > > > **Indicators:** (a) Percentage of population using safely managed sanitation services
> > > > (b) Percentage of population with a hand washing facility with soap and water in the household*
> > > >
> > > > *This indicator is not yet agreed upon and has not been supported by the IAEG as a mandatory global indicator at this point.

As Rose Osinde Alabaster highlighted, there is broad support for further disaggregation of all indicators used for SDG reporting by location, age, sex, ethnicity, disability, migration status and other local forms of disadvantage. WHO/UNICEF's Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) for Water Supply and Sanitation proposes to progressively disaggregate indicators by affordability, place of residence (rural/urban) and socioeconomic status (wealth, affordability) in all countries. Disaggregation by other stratifiers of inequality (subnational, gender, disadvantaged groups, etc.) will be made where data permit.

Are the indicators adequately defined/phrased?

Are the [two] indicators (and the additional indicators) adequately defined to enable countries to effectively deliver on the three key aspects listed in Target 6.2, namely:

Access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all	End open defecation	Paying special attention to women, girls and those in vulnerable groups

To be able to effectively measure Target 6.2. in accordance with the normative and procedural framework of the Human Right to Water and Sanitation, it is important to unpack the language of Target 6.2. That means, the precise meaning of terms employed in the definition of targets has to be determined.

➢ Example: Equitable access

Achieving equitable access will require progressive reduction and elimination of inequalities between population sub-groups over the 15-year implementation period of the SDGs. This includes addressing inequality in coverage between the poorest and the richest, between rural and urban populations, and between ethnic groups, among others.

JMP data shows that in many countries, the gap in access between the bottom 40% and the top 40% income groups is wide both in terms of access but also in terms of the level of sanitation service provided to each group from along the sanitation ladder.

How can equitable access be achieved?

Establishing a baseline
As a first step to achieving the SDGs, countries will need to establish a baseline to help determine the existing structural, process, and outcome indicators that correspond to the SDG target on sanitation. Without the definition of a baseline, challenges may arise with respect to the definition of meaningful indicators and their subsequent development/refinement at the country level.
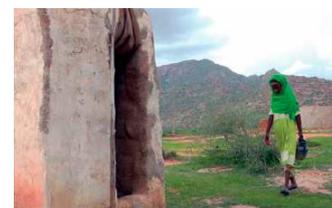
"Raise your hand for hygiene"

The Global Public-Private Partnership for Handwashing (PPPHW) is advocating for hygiene to be measured as a global-level indicator. As PPPHW states, in the current draft of the SDGs, hygiene is neglected at the indicator level and would thus not be measured globally – despite the fact that hygiene is one of the most important interventions for human health and development and a truly universal necessity.

See:
http://globalhandwashing.org

Two levels of indicators

Global indicators: all countries are to report on the global indicators.

Local/regional indicators: These indicators will be selected by countries and tailored to their specific context.

Source: UNICEF/WHO 2015

Source: UNICEF/WHO

Need for proper targeting and prioritisation of sanitation interventions

Baselines will be useful in identifying who the different actors are and what the current provisions are in terms of budgeting and actual service delivery arrangements. This may often require a re-engineering in the planning, implementation and monitoring processes at the country level if the element of equity is to be effectively addressed. This in turn means that countries will have to be able to identify the gaps in their current indicator framework for measuring sanitation progress in order to be able to effectively implement and monitor the sanitation and hygiene targets.

➢ Example: Universal access

Will the indicators as currently phrased provide the necessary incentives for the progressive realisation of universal access or do they only incentivise the highest level of service and thus ignore progress with regard to basic services which are an essential part to achieve universal coverage? Should revised indicators be recommended to capture this nuance? As participants emphasised, it has to be ensured that global monitoring is *mandated* to count progress up the service ladder, by disaggregating the data by service level (according to JMPs proposed ladder) and by location (home, school and health centres as a first priority).

Progress on both basic services and safely managed services should be tracked.

Preserving original thinking on SDG indicators

The challenge is to preserve as much of the original thinking on the SDGs as possible. The JMP proposals were based on an extensive period of consultation and discussion, producing some of the most considered indicator proposals across the SDG framework. The subsequent political process finalising the SDGS, however, has pushed and compressed those proposals.

A Word from JMP

Safely managed sanitation services

JMP is proposing the term "safely managed sanitation services" to include use of (not access to) improved facilities which are not shared (same as the MDGs so far) and where excreta is safely disposed in situ or transported and treated off-site. Both basic and safely managed services will be tracked and reported in JMP's future publications.

Service levels

The data collected by JMP yield information about different service levels for water supply and sanitation. The core proposed indicators for SDG monitoring of drinking water and sanitation are 'safely managed drinking water services' and 'safely managed sanitation services', respectively. JMP will also report lower service levels, such as basic water and sanitation services (similar to the 'improved' classification used for MDG tracking) and no services (e.g. open defecation or use of surface water as a drinking water source). Countries will need to reach universal coverage with a basic level of service before universal coverage of 'safely managed services' can be attained, and progress towards universal basic coverage should be seen as an important and necessary step towards reaching the SDG targets.

Location

The core proposed indicators for SDG monitoring of drinking water, sanitation and hygiene refer to services at the household level. JMP will also report on access to basic water, sanitation and hygiene services outside the home, focusing on schools and health facilities.

Civil Society & Data Collection

In order to verify whether the SDG targets on sanitation have been met, data collection is essential. This raises the question of how the numerous data sets and data collection/management systems will be harnessed in a way that allows for effective verification and in-country utilisation and what role the private sector, CSOs and other entities can play in promoting this monitoring? In particular, civil society's role in monitoring has to be addressed and the question of how civil society can contribute to the monitoring of goals and targets and how it can ensure improvements for all.

Enhance data collection

There is the need to enhance data collection, data management systems and verification mechanisms. Effective monitoring is a prerequisite for making human rights meaningful and for ensuring accountability when laws and policies create, perpetuate or exacerbate deprivations. As a consequence, data will need to be properly and effectively disaggregated, e.g. by sex, age, and wealth.

Integrate monitoring frameworks

The monitoring frameworks of the human rights world have to be harmonised with the sanitation sector monitoring frameworks (also given that the right to sanitation is derived from the group of economic, social, and cultural rights). This raises the question how the two (i.e. the Human Right to Water and Sanitation monitoring framework and the water and sanitation monitoring framework on access) can be effectively linked in a mutually reinforcing way as part of in-country capacity strengthening

Concept of "monitoring ladders"

To monitor the proposed indicators, Member States will be able to start their monitoring efforts at a level appropriate to their country's capacities and capabilities. They can then gradually ascend the "monitoring ladder." Thus, if a complex indicator is very difficult to measure, it is better that countries start to measure a few parameters and *progressively* advance up the ladder, Graham Alabaster suggested.

Partnerships in monitoring are called for

Monitoring is not for free and will require investment, mainly funded by governments, in addition to technical assistance. The implementation of good monitoring frameworks will need to be driven by national governments and ownership is critical. The idea of governments becoming progressively engaged is regarded positively. At the same time, there is also the need for community-collected information and data which can easily be updated in real time to web-based platforms together with more formal monitoring.

Community-sourced data

Using community-sourced data and seeing where it can effectively be combined with more traditional forms of data collection to link the pieces of the jigsaw will constitute an important resource with regard to monitoring, discussion participants agreed. Communities can thus play a key role in both ensuring the details of the indicators are not forgotten *and* in seeing how they can contribute to measuring. There is thus a need for both sorts of monitoring, a combination of community-collected information and data, which can easily be updated in real time to web-based platforms together with more formal monitoring.

Why is community-sourced data important?

Using community-sourced data is important as information becomes available that otherwise would not have become available at all or to such a detailed extent. Not taking into account such community-collected data, in turn, results in communities (e.g. slum communities) remaining under-represented and un-seen in large surveys, which in turn results in inequalities between such communities and the rest of the city being obscured.

The problem with community-sourced data

It is difficult to integrate such community-collected findings with census results because they do not constitute representative samples and might not employ a standard set of questions. This "standardisation problem" also poses a main hindrance to community-collected data finding entrance into statistical reports.

Suggestions how problems with community-sourced data can be overcome

We need to find a way to get "official" offices of statistics and ministries to become more appreciative of community-collected data, understanding its limitations while using it to guide choices. The way ahead is to provide links between the "formal" monitoring methods with the goal of integrating community-collected data into the monitoring ladder structure. These non-traditional methods can interpolate and extrapolate in more formal surveys. Furthermore, despite many barriers to participation (including government non-responsiveness, technical

Source: UNICEF/WHO

CHALLENGE: MONITORING AT COUNTRY LEVEL

As one participant writes, the real challenge with the achievement of the targets specified for sanitation is the dynamics of monitoring at country level. As the participant argues, all the monitoring efforts at the moment are placing more energy on impact level type of indicators, yet change at government level can only be realised if the monitoring process also tracks the inputs, processes, outputs, outcomes, and of course at a later stage, the impact. Monitoring processes with the sole focus on impact will be a futile exercise in the first three years of the implementation of SDGs because governments may not have started realising the much desired results of their effort at impact level.

If we are to track progress (as in "progressive realization"), then it will be important to place focus on monitoring the means of implementation (policies, capacity, finances) which would mean tracking inputs, processes (activities), outputs and to some extent outcomes.

To sum up, monitoring efforts in the first two years of implementing SDGs will require a set of indicators that probably are not being captured at the global level as the emphasis is on impact level indicators. The focus on impact level indicators excludes from view the important lower levels, the participant criticises.

Source: UNICEF/WHO 2015

limitation, etc.), much hope is still placed in citizen engagement using ICTs. Barriers have to be reduced and as one participant suggested, the WASHWatch Platform provides a positive example in this regard:

> ➢ **Example: WASHwatch**
>
> The WASHwatch platform allows CSOs to share findings, which may confront or corroborate governments' reported progress on the different commitments they tabled at the global, regional and national levels. Concretely, the website displays all country commitments and there is a space for citizens to comment on governments' progresses or shortfalls, corroborated by evidence. These comments can be brought to the attention of governments by sector partners in various sector meetings, and if evidence is strong it will be hard to ignore. That way, governments are made aware of the shortfalls perceived by CSOs and a combination of public pressure and peer pressure can encourage them to take action.

Further roles of Civil Society

Civil Society has a number of additional roles to play in monitoring the SDGs. Among those are:

| Advocacy | Make data available to policymakers | Identification and promotion of optional indicators | Holding governments accountable |

Prioritising those most in need

How do we ensure that the SDGs prioritise, and monitor progress, for those most in need of safe sanitation? How do we ensure that they realise the human right to water and sanitation? The checklist developed by the Equality and Non Discrimination (END) working group of the Joint Monitoring Programm (JMP) highlights who to focus on in the SDGs.

> **Equality Checklist**
>
> When examined as a whole, do the goals, targets, and indicators:
>
> ✓ Prioritize basic access and focus on progressive realization toward safe and sustainable water, sanitation and hygiene for all, while reducing inequalities
>
> ✓ Address spatial inequalities, such as those experienced by communities in remote and inaccessible rural areas and slum-dwellers in (peri-)urban areas?
>
> ✓ Focus on inequities, shining the light on the poorest of the poor?
>
> ✓ Address group-related inequalities that vary across countries, such as those based on ethnicity, race, nationality, language, religion, and caste?
>
> ✓ Attend to the impacts of individual-related inequalities that are relevant in every country of the globe, such as those based on sex/gender, age, disability, and health conditions imposing access constraints—as they are experienced both inside and beyond the household? Do they address menstrual hygiene management?

Are we really focusing on those most in need?

As one participant wondered, are development efforts indeed targeted towards those most in need given that market-based approaches to sanitation are prominent, yet those living on less than $1/day will not be able to invest in better sanitation services. Addressing this problem, Louisa Gosling emphasised that in order to achieve universal access the way services are designed should take into consideration the barri-

ers that people face. Given that there is a danger that market based approaches exclude those living on $1/day or less, the question has to be how can they be reached? What different ways of financing services will enable them to get on the first rung of the sanitation ladder? What combination of support and incentive will work in different situations? What is the role of the state in making sure services are affordable for all?

Controversy: Should those most in need really be our priority?

During the discussion, a debate erupted on whether those most in need should indeed be a priority in our efforts to improve sanitation services. Two issues were raised to rethink the claim:

Focusing on other groups first might guarantee more success
As participants noted, focusing on other groups first might guarantee more success and as a consequence make it easier to reach those harder/hardest to reach (assuming that those are equivalent to those most in need). Louisa Gosling agrees that the poorest might not be the ones that are most able to respond to triggers, which is critical for progress. Yet unless there is a focus on the most marginalised they will continue to be left further and further behind.

Focusing on those most in need creates tensions with other parts of the population
As participants remarked there seems to be an inevitable conflict between addressing the needs of the majority and the conflicting needs of a minority. Moreover, participants noted that if we assist, financially or otherwise, the people we classify as "most in need", we probably end up excluding a large amount of people who are "much, but not most, in need." This may create tensions in communities. If you take the poverty line as a cut-off for an assistance programme, for example, you risk disheartening a very large sector of society who feels that they don't have the resources to build toilets, but who still are "too well off" to fall under your programme, a discussion participant stressed.

Louisa Gosling commented on these points by emphasizing that the "hard to reach" are called that for a reason, but that the SDGs represent a global commitment to reach everyone, so the challenge must be met by practicioners, governments, development partners, and everyone involved in the delivery of safe services to all. While the SDGs clarify the need to prioritise those most marginalized, they do not expect everyone else to be ignored. To achieve universal access means ensuring services are for everyone, and experience shows that special attention needs to be paid to those who have been consistently left out due to their lack of voice and influence.

Problems/Challenges

Trying to address the inequalities that are, for example, listed in the checklist developed by the JMP END working group, several challenges arise. Among those are:

Inequalities are unaccounted for in official data

Addressing inequalities brings in many challenges precisely because so many aspects of lives affected by marginalization, poverty and social exclusion are under-reported and even invisible in official data.
- People in informal settlements
- Taboo Factors (illness, age, gender, disability, etc.)
- Specific population groups (caste, ethnic, religious groups)

Finding financing solutions for those most in need

- Reaching scale in sanitation: As a participant remarked, reaching scale in sanitation requires that supply and service chains are set up. Private sector involvement might be beneficial for the supply chain. Building a private sector based supply chain, in turn, would initially rely on customers who are able to pay, the participant suggested. Once a market exists, pro-poor subsidy programmes can work through the same supply chain. The problem of this approach is that initially those who cannot afford services are left out. On the other hand, building a supply chain for hardware around subsidies for the poor may result in a "private sector" that cannot live without these subsidies.
- Offering low cost options: Low cost options that are affordable to the great majority of the populations, that people can identify with and that for environmental reasons do not pollute the groundwater have to be offered, a participant stressed.

Source: UNICEF/WHO

Addressing those most in need also means targeting open defecation. However, will this lead to a large number of people being given low quality (but cheap) sanitation facilities, which they must empty themselves (which is a high risk activity), one participant wondered. Improving sanitation services for those most in need means that, at the most basic level, sanitation services will be provided to end open defecation. Yet how safe do these services have to be? Will access be prioritised over safety here?

Safety should be a top priority over and above cost, a participant stressed. A low cost system, which just ends up spreading material, and infection, is not worth having, he argued. Whether there are sanitation services, like ecological sanitation for instance, that can provide both is an issue of debate.

Louisa Gosling argued that the point about prioritising basic access is based on the principle of non-discrimination and equality, recognising the reality that for people who have nothing there has to be a step to something, along with a plan to incentivise and support progress towards improved services for all. States have an obligation to progressively realise human rights to water and sanitation, which means having a plan to move forward and not to slip backwards, she highlighted.

A Note on Terminology

As Rick Johnston from JMP noted during the discussion, JMP avoids using the terms "safe sanitation"/"safe water", using instead the term "safely managed services" which can be more clearly defined and measured.

Basic v. Safe Sanitation

Discussing the issue of basic sanitation on the one hand and safe/safely managed sanitation on the other, the question is what the difference between the two is, why the distinction is important and how it can be ensured that we reach those most in need.

What does safe/safely managed sanitation services mean?

As Eddy Perez explained, the core principle of "safe" sanitation is that it is a higher level of sanitation service that reduces the public health risks associated with human contact with faeces. The main reason that "safe" was included in the SDGs was a recognition by the global community that in particular in poor urban areas, households may have access to "basic" sanitation at the household level but that the related poorly functioning sanitation value chain of containment, pit emptying, transport, and treatment/disposal creates a health hazard for households and communities and hence would be considered "unsafe".

Shit Flow Diagrams (SFDs)

SFDs aim to provide a more comprehensive understanding of excreta management throughout the sanitation service chain. SDFs clearly and simply show how excreta is or is not contained as it moves along multiple pathways from defecation to disposal or end-use.

"Safe" sanitation also implies "safe behaviours". In rural areas, having access to basic sanitation facilities is ultimately not safe if the sanitation facilities are not *used* by all household members all of the time. Household, community and private sector behaviours thus also contribute to sanitation not being safe.

Safe = improved with FSM (Faecal Sludge Management)	Basic = improved

The difference between safe and basic, in this sense, is that safe is the goal, basic is a step on the way, but if we only incentivise the goal, we may inadvertently encourage inequitable and inefficient means of getting there, Tim Brewer states.

"Core Principle": Progressive realisation

The discussion should not be about "basic" versus "safe" sanitation as,, ultimately, both forms are needed, Eddy Perez stressed. The sustainable development goals on WASH call for a complete end to open defecation and for access to "basic" sanitation for all. Moving up the ladder to safe sanitation during the next 15 years will be important but is not the main priority at this point. The core principle of the SDGs with regard to sanitation remains: basic sanitation for all as the priority – and safe sanitation for as many as possible. This implies that the sector should avoid investing in safe sanitation for some at the cost of basic sanitation for all and, instead, should work towards a progressive reduction of the equality gap between the rich and poor in access to basic sanitation.

Put differently, the definition of *success* for the WASH SDGs rightly is universal access to safely managed services. However, the definition of *good progress* should be progressive realisation of universal access to safely managed services, which should be defined as disproportionate improvements in the level of service for the poorest – so increasing the number of poor people with ODF (open defecation free) / basic services / shared safely managed is recognised as a priority, Tim Brewer wrote.

Source: UNICEF/WHO 2015

Long-term holistic strategic plan needed

As participants noted, every sanitation intervention should be part of a long-term holistic strategic plan, linking and sequencing interventions and infrastructure development to maximise the benefits and minimise the harm. Wherever possible, more time and effort need to be devoted to supporting the development of integrated plans, whether city-wide, district-wide or nation-wide, and then to ensure that all interventions, whether government-led or not, are part of the plan and not just ad-hoc. More in-depth and critical analysis that considers who wins and who loses with a given intervention may contribute to reducing unsafe situations for some groups (particularly the most vulnerable or marginalised) and could potentially highlight a better option.

If we are truly talking about sustainable development goals, then identifying who/what benefits or is negatively impacted should include environmental and social dimensions as well (e.g. protecting ecosystem integrity, guaranteeing safety for women to access at night, etc.). We need to remember that the SDGs themselves are a sort of milepost in the journey towards achieving sustainable sanitation for all, rather than the destination or end point. Keeping an eye on longer-term goals also reduces the risk of making investments that take us in the wrong direction, participants stressed.

This longer-term vision also has to be kept in mind for sanitation with FSM: Safe sanitation with FSM is fine as long as we leave allowance to progressively upgrade towards sustainable sanitation, one participant stressed. Sustainable sanitation will in turn
(1) keep people apart from excreta pathogens,
(2) safeguard water resources and the environment, and
(3) enable resource reuse.

The key challenge is how to share this longer-term vision for sanitation and holding this in mind while adopting the SDGs for 2030.

Sanitation in the broader SDG context

Linking SDG on sanitation with other SDGs

Discussion participants emphasised that there are important linkages between the realisation of sanitation targets and targets for other SDGs. Equitable access forms one example. Indeed, universal access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene is essential for the achievement of other targets proposed, namely:
- Poverty (1.2.);
- Nutrition (2.2);
- Health (3.2, 3.3, 3.8, 3.9);
- Education (4.1); gender 5.2);
- Infrastructure (9.1);
- Inequalities (10.2);
- Human settlements (11.1).

Thus, the discussion on sanitation has to be broadened, participants agreed. Looking at the SDGs as a whole and not just at sanitation in isolation is essential. Doing so, it becomes apparent that the SDGs aim for a broad definition of sustainability, i.e. addressing health, gender equity, sustainable rural and urban development, sustainable production, improving water quality, conserving natural ecosystems.

Hence, what we really need to be talking about is access to sustainable sanitation, which not only cares for the different user needs but in addition protects natural environments and as far as possible safely recovers natural resources to produce these multiple benefits, e.g. improved nutrition, food security, water security, energy security.

> **ADVANTAGE:** This opportunity can also **potentially attract new sectors and new investments to the sanitation sector**, since it can address a broad sustainable development agenda.

As participants emphasised, this is going to be even more relevant at country level since resource constraints are already a challenge in the WASH sector. Hence, an integrated indicators approach will enable the WASH sector to identify new ways of collaborating to leverage resources and attract new investments to achieve target 6.2.

Financing the SDG on sanitation

Scaling up to achieve universal coverage
Given that target 6.2. aims for universal coverage and ending open defecation, countries will need to go to scale in their sanitation programmes which means there will be a need for enhanced capacities and additional targeted resources to ensure sustainable investments are made, including for

Source: UNICEF/WHO

CHALLENGE: COUNTRY LEVEL
As Rose Osinde Alabaster highlightes, at country level, drawing linkages between different goals and pursuing a multi-purpose indicator approach means: scrutiny of policies, mandates, coordinating roles and responsibilities of different sectors, explicit budget allocations to public and school sanitation, further profiling sanitation, developing holistic programming, and reviewing guidelines, among others. This is going to call for a lot of unified action not only from government sectors but also from partners in the way programming for sanitation is done. How the national planning for the actual realisation of sustainable sanitation in Target 6.2. is to be achieved is something that has not yet been discussed.

Integrated Indicators
Participants agreed that the links between sustainable sanitation and the fulfillment of other SDGS should be stressed. However, whether this should result in integrated indicators is debated. As Martin Gambrill wrote, "it would seem too complicated to me to generate indicators that cut across several SDGs." Instead, he suggested that the linkages with these other SDGs might be better used in situations of advocacy rather than for actual monitoring purposes.

Source: UNICEF/WHO

wastewater management/safe disposal of effluent, for example, in addition to the provision of adequate sanitation access.

Scaling up efforts, on other hand, are accompanied by a number of challenges:

> Do developing countries have the necessary capacities and resources for such scaling up efforts, and are the UN, the donors and other development partners willing to make adjustments in their approach to funding and programming in order to help the country achieve the target?

> We need to look more closely at financing mechanisms that enable access for the poor

> We need to be aware and work on some major challenges beyond financing (behavioral change, institutional capacity, sustainability).

Global costs of WASH-related targets

Discussing the question of the level of sanitation services, financing different sanitation options was identified as a vital issue. Distinguishing between basic (or adequate) sanitation and safely managed excreta is also critical because of the different cost implications. These different cost implications are also highlighted in a new World Bank report, conducted with JMP, that estimates global costs of the WASH-related targets 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3.

In brief, adding safe faecal sludge management will cost three times as much as the cost of having basic (on-site) sanitation, one participant noted. Therefore, the discussion participant expressed doubt whether it will be possible to bring safely managed sanitation for all by 2030. While we can surely meet universal basic sanitation, we should not endanger meeting this goal. Last but not least, meeting the targets is partly a resource (and willingness to pay issue), but it is also about having institutions that set and implement the policies and regulations. And to achieve this is significantly more challenging for safely managed than basic sanitation, she added.

Food for Thought

Although the indicators have not yet been finalized and we still have a little more time, it is vital to ask whether the targets have the correct wording to enable us to include all we want to monitor. National governments might find it useful and important to "unpack" the indicators further through additional disaggregation or the inclusion of additional information. This may not be reported in a global monitoring instrument but will nevertheless find its way into national monitoring frameworks. Much of this could be monitored from community-based sources. Even if a particular indicator does not "make it" to the global list there is nothing to stop a national movement from monitoring it if civil society feels it is useful for national planning, Graham Alabaster stressed.

Considering that sanitation was not considered as part of the MDGs until the Johannisburg Summit in 2002, we have come a long way. There is a lot of opportunity to make similar advances over the new few years. Advances both in monitoring tools and data platforms will no doubt be necessary; as will be a more concerted effort to ensure that services are indeed inclusive. This also requires broadening our view from the technical aspects of sanitation to addressing the social and political elements of ensuring access for all. Simple technical solutions will not work by themselves. Those of us working in this sector must build on a more holistic analysis of why people are excluded from water and sanitation and other human rights in different contexts, Rose Osinde Alabaster emphasised.

In many ways, "progressive realisation" is a key term when it comes to the SDGs. It may not be possible to do everything from day one, but we should not allow "perfection" to be the enemy of "good", Eddy Perez wrote. The SDG era will be launched very soon and the indicators and ways of monitoring will certainly improve over time as the sector gains more experience civil society will have an important role to play in advocacy, measurement, and accountability. Strong networks of actors that are engaged in these topics will be important to ensuring that we implement the right solutions in the smartest way possible. Strong civil society partnerships and collaborations will be essential. Furthermore, having forums, such as the SuSanA forum, to discuss, debate, and question will help push us forward, Hanna Woodburn is convinced.

Moving forward, the challenge is to support countries in achieving the SDG sanitation goals and targets. This will include engaging governments and other stakeholders in discussions on topics such as the difference between safe and basic and moving forward with policy and sector reforms that will be needed to implement strong programmes.

Contributors

Discussion Contributors

The following contributors made one or more posts on the forum. There were over 80 posts made by the participants during the two-week period. The contributors are listed in order of first posting.

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The Thematic Discussion Series Hosts

The Thematic Discussion Series on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was organised and hosted by the Sustainable Sanitation Alliance (SuSanA) in cooperation with End Water Poverty on the SuSanA Discussion Forum Platform.

Source: Flickr/SuSanA

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Quick Links to the Thematic Discussion

Background Readings

Weekly Summaries

Theme I: SDG Indicators

Theme II: Prioritising those most in need

Theme III: Civil Society's Role in Monitoring

Theme IV: Basic v. Safe Sanitation