



# Data for Now Initiative Strengthening the measurement of SDG 6 in Paraguay

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# Data for Now: Levering the power of data to achieve the SDGs

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development establishes a transformative guide towards economic, social, and environmental sustainability for the Member States that signed up the agreement in 2015 (CEPAL, 2018). The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) that are part of the Agenda outline the way forward for the next 10 years to promote prosperity, natural environment conservation, and eradication of poverty in all countries. They are a tool to measure the progress of countries and a means to formulate public policies focused on the most vulnerable groups in an inclusive and distributive manner to achieve sustainable development.

However, achieving the SDGs requires timely, disaggregated, and reliable data that reflects the reality of the territories and enables evidence-based decisions that improve citizen's life in each country.

When analyzing the data and information available to measure the SDG, some challenges are identified: Outdated data, and the lack of inclusion of a significant portion of the most vulnerable population. This scenario, makes it difficult to know exactly whether public policies are having a significant impact on the achievement of the SDG.

This poses major challenges for all actors, but especially for governments and national statistical offices. Fortunately, technological advances make it possible to take increasing advantage of traditional and non-traditional data sources, as well as to create spaces for sharing reliable methodologies developed around the world by strengthening national, regional, and global partnerships.

Providing a unique opportunity to close information gaps.

Under this context, the [Data for Now initiative](#) was born, with the aim of supporting National Statistical Offices, together with different partners and experts, to consolidate access to timely data. The initiative is led by the Global Partnership (GPSDD), the United Nations Statistics Division, the World Bank, and the Data and Statistics Research Network (TReNDS) of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN). They have pooled their technical capabilities in a collaborative process tailored to the needs of amplifying, and expanding the availability and use of data.

In this first phase of the initiative, Bangladesh, Colombia, Ghana, Mongolia, Nepal, Paraguay, Rwanda and Senegal were selected as the eight pioneer countries from the three participating regions. In the case of Latin America, the [Centro de Pensamiento Estratégico Internacional \(Cepei\)](#) leads the mapping of activities related to gaps and data needs through the consolidation of partnerships, the strengthening of capacities and the implementation of new methodologies for monitoring the SDGs in Colombia and Paraguay.

These processes seek to strengthen existing systems and institutional capacity, leverage proven innovations, and develop new solutions to improve data to monitor the SDGs.

## The phases include the following milestones:

- i. In 2019, political support was secured for Data for Now getting hold of commitments and resources. Partnerships were forged with the governments of Ghana, Rwanda, Colombia, Paraguay, Mongolia, Senegal, Bangladesh, and Nepal to define priorities and pathways for greater access to data.
- ii. In 2020-21, regular collaborative meetings will be held to share knowledge, develop data partnerships, conduct training, and institutionalize proven approaches.
- iii. From 2022 to 2023, the results will be applied on a larger scale and their impact will be noticeable. Timely methods and data sources will be widely used in our first group of pioneer countries and it is expected that collaborations will be replicated in at least ten additional countries.

In the case of Paraguay, led by the [General Directorate of Statistics, Surveys & Censuses \(DGEEC\)](#), defined priorities include land use issues and human mobility, with special emphasis regarding water measurement, considering the country's water wealth, its impact in climate change, and its socio-economic impact on the country's dynamics.

## Addressing the challenge to measure SDG 6

Access to safe water, sanitation, constant and adequate hygiene are essential to ensure the health and well-being of the entire population. Water is a vital input for households, industrial production, food and energy, and other sectors. However, such uses generate wastewater, which can lead to pollution if not properly managed.

The effects of climate change are often reflected in changes in water availability, such as increasing drought in some regions and more frequent flooding in others. Thus, water is a key factor in managing risks related to famines, epidemics, migration, inequalities within and between countries, political instability, and natural disasters (Guijarro, Rivero & Villalba, 2016: 13).

If water and sanitation management is to be sustainable for all, it is essential to examine the entire water cycle, including all its uses and users. This is precisely the purpose of *SDG 6: To ensure the availability of water and its sustainable management and sanitation for all*. Bringing all these aspects together under a single objective is a first step towards ending the fragmentation of the sector and enabling coherent and sustainable management and, therefore, the implementation of SDG 6 is a major step towards a sustainable future.

### UN-Water's SDG 6 Integrated Monitoring Initiative

To help countries monitor their progress towards the achievement of SDG 6, UN-Water has launched the Integrated Monitoring initiative, based on the experience and lessons learned during the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) period. All the depository agencies of the SDG 6 global indicators have been brought together under the initiative, which covers the work of the [WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply and Sanitation \(JMP\)](#), the Integrated Monitoring of the SDG targets related to water and sanitation (GEMI) and [UN-Water annual global assessment on sanitation and drinking water \(GLASS\)](#).

The objectives of the initiative are the following (see [SDG 6 Integrated Monitoring Guide, page 5](#)):

- Develop methodologies and tools to monitor global indicators for SDG 6
- Raise awareness at the national and international levels about monitoring SDG 6
- Improve countries' technical and institutional capacities to monitor SDG 6
- Collect national data and report on progress towards achieving SDG 6

## Water as a source of progress: Paraguay's current status and challenges

Within the framework of the Data for Now initiative, the Centro de Pensamiento Estratégico Internacional (Cepei), as the Coordinator of activities in Latin America, together with the General Directorate of Statistics, Surveys and Censuses (DGEEC) has carried out a series of activities to strengthen the technical, normative and organizational capacities of the water information system in Paraguay, such as multi-stakeholder work tables, peer-to-peer exchanges with Mexico and the Dominican Republic, and workshops on governance and indicators, as well as a diagnosis of the availability of data, sources and structure of the water sector in the country.

When analyzing the 11 indicators that must be reported for SDG 6 and the sources of information used to report the situation in Paraguay, not having permanently updated national information becomes an obstacle.

These difficulties are also reflected in Paraguay's SDG 6 reports, where only 2 out of 11 SDGs indicators

have already been constructed, SDGs 6.1.1 and 6.2.1. The indicators to measure the progress of other SDGs are under development <sup>1</sup>.

When monitoring indicators 6.1.1 and 6.2.1, the input used was the Permanent Continuous Household Survey (EPHC), which is updated quarterly, and the so-called Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), which was carried out only once in 2016 and has not been replicated since then.

Paraguay has not yet implemented a comprehensive approach to water, since the Ministry of the Environment and Development (MADES) is the Enforcement Authority for water resource management and conservation, while the Ministry of Public Works and Communications (MOPC) is responsible for drinking water and sanitation services, through its technical body, the Drinking Water & Sanitation Directorate (DAPSAN). Thus, to report on the indicators, the information must be generated by two different subsystems: The water and sanitation services subsystem and the water resources management subsystem -which monitor water availability and use-

Both sub sectors have their particular limitations:

- a. In the area of water and sanitation services, there are a variety of institutions that intervene, since there is no single information system, and they do so in a poorly coordinated manner. At present, two sectoral information systems are in the process of consolidation. The first one is the Unified Information System (SIU), which is managed by the Water Services Regulator, and the Rural Water and Sanitation Information System (SIASAR)<sup>2</sup>, which is managed by the MOPC.

To facilitate sectoral coordination, the Interagency Coordination Committee of the Water & Sanitation Sector (CICOSAPS)<sup>3</sup> has recently been established.

- b. About water resource management and conservation, the MADES faces resources constraints to generate comprehensive information that covers both surface and groundwater sources, especially for monitoring aquifers and water management in the various watersheds, since MADES only monitors critical watersheds, such as the Tebicuary River and the Patiño Aquifer, but cannot yet issue reports at the national level as required by SDG 6.

## SDG 6 measurement challenges in Paraguay

When considering existing regulations and institutional areas of action, it will be necessary to consolidate a comprehensive approach for the sector to promote the sustainability of the indicators available, and those that need to be built for an adequate report of the level of compliance with SDG 6.

In the water and sanitation services sector, various institutions with different mandates intervene, therefore, the need to coordinate and harmonize the criteria for the generation, validation, dissemination, and updating of sectoral information is a priority. The body that can contribute to this end is the

Interagency Coordination Committee of the Water & Sanitation Sector (CICOSAPS).

To facilitate the interaction of the Committee entities it is necessary to:

- Define relevant indicators to monitor SDG 6 and to measure the effectiveness of policies, plans, and programs.
- Establish quality criteria to collect, validate, process and update data and information on the sector.
- Share information and ensure the interoperability of the entity's databases.

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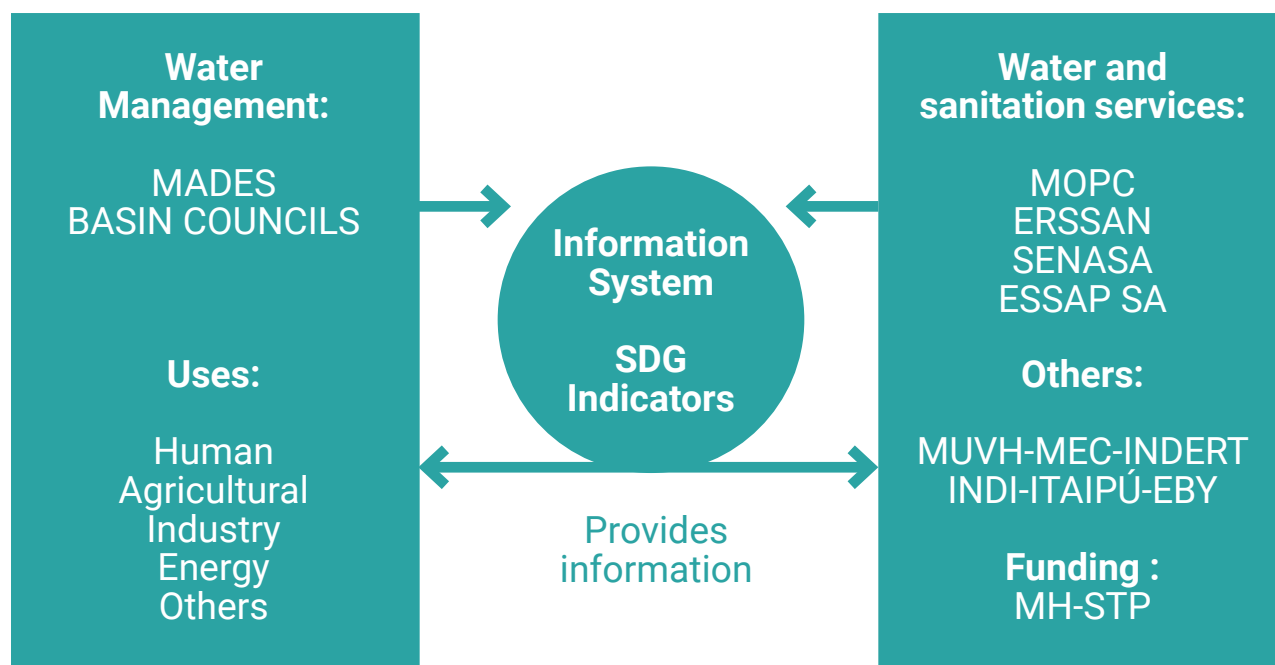
1. The remaining SDG 6 indicators that are under review are: 6.3.1 Proportion of wastewater treated adequately; 6.3.2 Proportion of good quality water bodies; 6.4.1 Change in the efficient use of water resources; 6.4.2 Level of water stress; 6.5.1 Degree of implementation of the integrated management of resources; 6.5.2 Proportion of the surface of transboundary basins subject to operational arrangements for cooperation in water matters; 6.6.1 Change in the extent of water-related ecosystems over time; 6.A.1 Volume of official assistance for water and sanitation; 6.B.1 Proportion of local administrative units that have established operational policies and procedures for the participation of local communities.

2. To facilitate the implementation of SIASAR, the Executive Power promulgated Decree No. 3180, of November 2019.

3. It consists of 14 entities: Ministry of Public Works and Communications, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare, Technical Secretariat for Planning (STP), Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (MADES), Water Services Regulator (ERSSAN), Water Services Company of Paraguay (ESSAP), Ministry of Urbanism, Housing and Habitat (MUVH), Ministry of Education and Science (MEC), National Emergency Secretariat (SEN), Paraguay's Directorate of Itaipú Binacional Hydroelectric Plant, Paraguay's Directorate of the Yacyretá Binacional Hydroelectric Plant, National Institute of Rural & Land Development (INDERT) and Paraguayan Institute of Indigenous Affairs (INDI).



Graphic 1. Information flow on water resource management



Source: own elaboration, 2020

Concerning information on access **to drinking water from safe sources and adequate sanitation in homes**, the main information systems that can complement the periodic information of the EPHC are the SIU and the SIASAR, both of them going through a consolidation process. Complementarity between the two systems must be guaranteed at all times, otherwise, enormous efforts will be made, resulting in information that will remain partial in scope, since:

- The SIU covers water systems throughout the country but does not capture the full spectrum of the access to safe drinking water sources and adequate sanitation. For example, in the area of sanitation, it only considers the provision by sanitary sewerage networks, whose regulation is attributed to the regulatory body, but not other sanitation solutions.

- The SIASAR presents the challenge of generating a large amount of information, but only for the rural area, leaving out the urban sector which concentrates the largest proportion of the population.

In the process of setting up and consolidating both systems, local governments (Governments and Municipalities) are relevant actors that can provide updated information, on these services to consolidate both the SIU and the SIASAR. This will also be a step towards the implementation of Indicator 6.b.1 “Proportion of local administrative units with established policies and operational procedures for the participation of local communities in water and sanitation management”.

When considering the information needed to report on SDG 6 indicators it is clear that a large part of them refer to water resource management

and information on its uses. The lack of resources faced by the MADES has already been mentioned, and based on this fact, we suggest the following:

- i. To disseminate and raise awareness about the importance of water rational use, adopting a comprehensive vision, especially in a country with high dependence on agriculture and hydropower generation.
- ii. The MADES should work closely with Paraguay's National SDG 2030 Commission<sup>4</sup>, and be part of the many international cooperation initiatives to strengthen its capacities and explore innovative options to obtain relevant information.
- iii. Generate strategic partnerships with the private and public sectors, representing the interests of the various users of the resource in each basin, who could benefit from the rational use of the resource.

There is a major challenge in moving from a fragmented system, with very little investment in the generation of timely and updated statistics, to a single water information system, based on a comprehensive approach that articulates the interests of the various stakeholders. Fortunately, at the time this report was being written, two situations can be observed that are auspicious for moving towards the construction of an information system:

- i. A growing awareness between stakeholders that the generation and use of relevant and timely data is an unavoidable need for efficient planning towards a sustainable water future;
- ii. The opportunity to learn from the knowledge and experiences provided by the different global and regional initiatives mentioned. The MOPC and the MADES, have a unique chance to direct their institutional efforts and coordinate their actions towards the aforementioned objective.

The foregoing represents a crucial moment to empower the 2030 Agenda in the country through the implementation, measurement and monitoring of the SDG indicators using real-time data and generating strategic partnerships, such as the Data for Now initiative, with the participation of government actors, the private sector, civil society, academia and, the commitment of all citizens.

MOPC and MADES have a unique opportunity to orient their institutional efforts and coordinate their actions towards the aforementioned objective.

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4. MADES was recently included among the member institutions of the Board of Directors of High Level of the ODS Paraguay Commission, according to Decree No. 3581, of May 04, 2020.

# Bibliographic references

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