

## COMMENT



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# ACHIEVING SDG 6 AMID COVID-19

THE growing spread of the Covid-19 pandemic risks interfering with the implementation of a number of global development interventions, particularly Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6 as adopted by the UN.

Four years after the adoption of SDG 6, South Africa and other developing nations have not only embraced the goal but had to do more with little resources to make a meaningful impact on the lives of their people.

The outbreak of Covid-19 has not made the lives of many people in developing countries easier nor has it presented the opportunity for them to meet their targets because of the competing financial intervention priorities that have been laid bare by the raging pandemic.

SDG 6 is one of 17 which provide a common plan and agenda to tackle some of the pressing challenges facing the world, including poverty, climate change and conflict.

Indeed, the issue of water and sanitation is not confined to SDG 6 but rather plays a key role within all other SDGs and the entire programme.

September last year marked a key milestone as the first reporting cycle wherein participating countries produced a country report which highlighted progress regarding all 17 SDGs, including 6, towards the 2030 goal.

Doing more with little resources, South Africa managed to record some good progress which put it on some firm ground in the face of the pandemic.

More specifically, SDG 6 has eight targets that must be reported on to the UN and these are key to achieving the overall goal of the SDG 6 by 2030.

These targets cover sector components such as safe drinking water for all, sanitation, better water quality, increased water use efficiency, integrated water management, protection and restoration of ecosystems, international co-operation and local participation.

The targets contain 11 indicators given to South Africa by the UN, but with an opportunity for the indicators to be domesticated within the South African context.

This has already been addressed.

To facilitate the implementation of the SDG6 programme, the Department of Water Sanitation's SDG 6 Working Group has been established within the Branch Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation.

The group is an overarching forum that provides strategic direction to various task teams of the different SDG 6 targets.

Of critical importance, by institutionalising the SDG 6, the department had to work towards changing the inevitable results of a society that frowned on the culture of human rights.

The department has over the last three years worked hard to gear itself towards dealing with the dreadful previous disproportionate development that has sidelined many communities.

In this way, the department carved out clear guidelines and targets in accordance with the priorities of the country and the environmental challenges of the world at large.

In addressing the myriad challenges that the SDG 6 seeks to resolve, the department has done far more than setting itself up to achieve significant numbers but to make a material difference in improving the lives of the people.

The motto "Leaving No One Behind" is engraved within the precept of the SDG 6 programme besides driving the message that all sector partners are responsible and accountable for reaching the country's objectives.

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