



SDG 6 IWRM Support Programme: 2019-22 progress report

Introduction

The SDG 6 IWRM Support Programme (SP) assists governments in designing and implementing country-led responses to SDG indicator 6.5.1—the degree of implementation of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM)—as an entry point to accelerate progress towards the achievement of water-related SDGs and other development goals. This initiative is driven by UNEP-DHI Centre on Water and Environment, Global Water Partnership (GWP) and UNDP Cap-Net under the leadership of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), as the custodian agency for SDG indicator 6.5.1. The Support Programme has been operating since 2017 through three stages, as shown in figure 1.

SDG 6 IWRM Support Programme

Assists governments and other stakeholders in



Figure 1 Illustration of the three Stages of the SDG 6 IWRM Support Programme

This report highlights some of the key areas in which progress was made between 2019 and 2022, structured according to the three stages of the SP, with a focus on communication and partnership building activities and additional crosscutting activities. Some numbers which summarise the 2019-2022 activities are:

- **Stage 1:** the SP contributed to the preparation and launching of **one round of monitoring** on SDG 6.5.1, **through which 171 countries** reported on this indicator, directly facilitating **61 multi-stakeholder country processes**. It also contributed to one **global report** on the status of SDG 6.5.1, **directly supported three regions** and **one continent** in preparing and launching

regional reports, produced **two thematic reports** building on those same results, and prepared and ran a Support Package and an online **course for facilitators** in three languages;

- **Stage 2:** the SP supported **eleven countries** in preparing a national IWRM Action Plan¹, with ongoing processes in an additional **five countries** at the time of writing this report², as well as preparing and running an **Acceleration Package** and an **online course for IWRM Action planning** in three languages;
- **Stage 3:** the SP assisted **twelve countries** to implement prioritised IWRM actions, with processes still ongoing in an additional **four countries**³ at the time of writing.

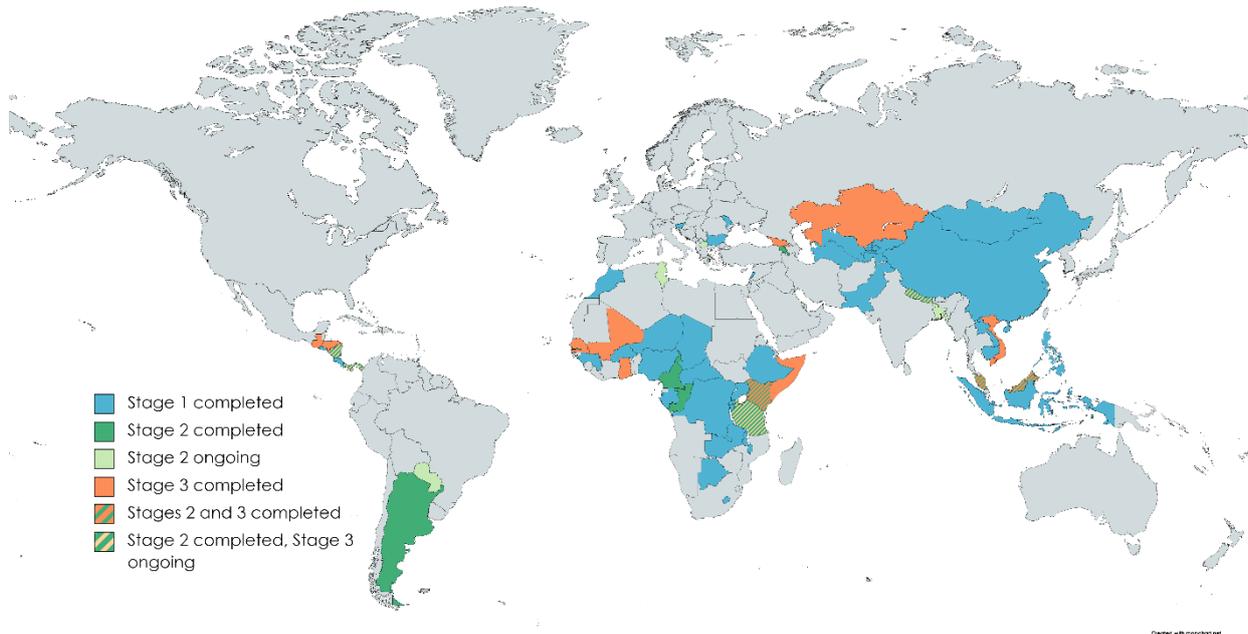


Figure 2 Map of countries assisted by the SDG 6 IWRM Support Programme, 2019-2022

Beyond these aggregate numbers, there have been many highlights during this period, some of which are shared below.

Stage 1 highlights

Progress achieved	61 countries directly assisted
--------------------------	--------------------------------

In Stage 1, the SP focuses on supporting countries in national reporting on the status of SDG 6.5.1. In 2019-20, the SP directly assisted 61 countries in this reporting process, and around 10 others were indirectly assisted, as captured in a series of 2022 communication products including: a [global report](#), two regional reports ([Central America](#) and [Pan Asia](#)) and two thematic reports ([Advancing towards gender mainstreaming in IWRM](#), [SDG 6 multi-stakeholder processes and consultations](#)). In 2022, a South Asia report was prepared and a report for the [Arab region](#) was launched in partnership with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. Some recent highlights include the following:

¹ The four Stage 2 pilot countries (Ghana, Guatemala, Kazakhstan, Viet Nam) are not included, as these were prepared before the current implementation period.

² The five ongoing countries should be concluded in the first half of 2023

³ Also to be concluded in the first half of 2023.

- Regional Report – Progress on IWRM in the South Asia Region:** In collaboration with the South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP), the SP produced a report on the status, challenges and recommendations on IWRM implementation in South Asia, based on the results of the 2020 monitoring on SDG 6.5.1 which will be launched in early 2023. The report highlights how IWRM can support advancing climate-resilient development in the region.



Figure 3 The Sri Lankan Prime Minister in meeting with the GWP South Asia Steering Committee, November 2022

- Re-launch of the online training of facilitators for reporting on SDG 6.5.1:** Forty-four participants engaged with the online course in 2022. Feedback from participants (n=13) is positive: 92% indicated that the course was very or somewhat beneficial to their work. Similarly, the course content was extremely relevant or relevant for 92% of participants. The course was re-launched in 2022 after a successful first run in 2020, which was taken by a total of 248 participants. Feedback from participants in 2020 was similar, with 96% stating that they found the course to be good or excellent. We expect the participation to be higher during an SDG 6.5.1 reporting year, such as 2023.
- Gender and SDG 6.5.1:** Following the 2021 report on [gender mainstreaming in WRM](#), the SP prepared a gender checklist as a proposed complement to the SDG 6.5.1 survey instrument. The gender checklist is being piloted in Brazil and Senegal, and will likely also be tested in Philippines, Spain and Palestine. The results of the piloting are expected for early 2023 and will inform the review of the SDG 6.5.1 survey instrument for the third round of monitoring.

Stage 2 highlights

Cumulative progress achieved (2019-22)	Support to 11 countries completed
Number of countries with ongoing Stage 2 processes (to be finalised in 2023)	Support to 5 countries ongoing
Total number of expected countries 2019-2022⁴	Support to 16 countries completed ⁵

In Stage 2, the SP supports countries in identifying solutions to overcome IWRM challenges, which usually takes the form of an IWRM Action Plan. A total of 16 such countries were assisted within the reporting period. These countries were assisted through an **IWRM Acceleration Package**, launched in 2021 based on the experiences of the first pilot countries, to guide countries in their IWRM action planning processes. In 2022, this package, now available in [English](#), [French](#) and [Spanish](#), was employed with a closer and more regular involvement in the action planning process from the SP.

Furthermore, in 2022, and based on the Acceleration Package, an **IWRM Action planning online course** was placed online in [English](#), [Spanish](#) and [French](#). Prepared in cooperation with UNDP Cap-Net and placed on its Virtual Campus, the interactive and multilingual Stage 2 training course aimed to streamline the multi-stakeholder process, format, and development of key elements of IWRM Action

⁴ Including countries with ongoing processes that will finish in 2023.

⁵ See Annex 1 for full list of countries.

Plans. The course attracted a total of 276 active participants (225 English, 23 Spanish, 28 French). Feedback from a participant survey (n=70) provides further insights on the quality of the course. 96% of participants stated that the course was extremely relevant or relevant. Content was very beneficial to 87% of participants. 88% of participants also reported that the level of knowledge acquired through the course was extremely or very high. In total, the course fully met or exceeded expectations of 92% of participants.

Using these tools, some of the recent national highlights achieved under Stage 2 include the following:

- In **Panama**, the IWRM action planning process concluded in 2022. The final 2022-2026 Action Plan is aligned with other existing planning instruments in Panama and aims to use IWRM to contribute to Panama's water security, based on climate change scenarios and the institutional and financial capacity for its implementation. A total of 35 actions were prioritised. Overall responsibility for implementation falls under the Ministry of Environment, as the coordinating entity. The overall budget for implementation of the plan is 3.36 million USD, of which 2.15 million is being requested from national budgetary resources, and the remainder from international cooperation.
- In **Nicaragua**, the 2022-2026 IWRM Action Plan covers a total of 16 priority/strategic actions over the four dimensions of IWRM, in line with national policies and strategies for water resources, environmental, forestry and climate change. The Action Plan will be implemented under a three-level governance model, bringing together the national and regional levels, specialists at the technical level, and communities of water users. Nicaragua did not report in the baseline exercise on SDG 6.5.1 in 2017, so the assistance of the SP has helped the country not just to establish its baseline (in 2020), but to use that to define its own roadmap, with a broad stakeholder consultation process at national and sub-national level.
- Another Stage 2 outcome in 2022 was the 2022-26 IWRM Action Plan in **Nepal**, which covers 20 priority actions across the four IWRM dimensions, and five actions targeted at showcasing how IWRM could be implemented and enhance impact of ongoing programmes or plans. Given that political will and awareness of IWRM challenges in the country were identified as crucial for the successful implementation of the IWRM Action Plan, the SP provided further assistance to Nepal in the form of a Stage 3 action, focusing on advocacy and awareness raising for the early endorsement of the Water Resources Bill, which is seen as key for further advancing on many of the identified actions in the IWRM Action Plan.
- **Bridging 6.5.1 and 6.6.1:** The pilot project on “Integrating freshwater data into sector-wide decision making to improve the protection and restoration of freshwater ecosystems”⁶ concluded in 2022, with freshwater ecosystem action plans defined in a multi-stakeholder process in all three pilot countries. In Kenya, the action plan focuses on the Ewaso Ng’iro North River Basin, in Kazakhstan on Lake Balkash, and in Argentina on the Esquel-Percy ecosystem and the Marapa-San Francisco River Basin. In Kenya, enhanced capacities and stakeholder

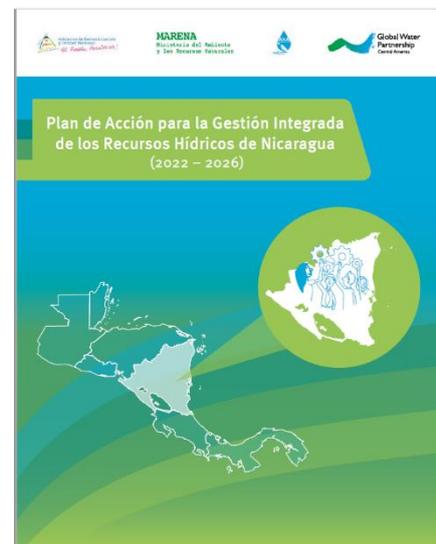


Figure 4 Nicaragua's IWRM Action Plan

⁶ Supported by UNEP and UNDP, and implemented by UNDP Cap-Net and GWP

mobilisation has resulted in increased budget allocations by some county governments for the protection and restoration of freshwater ecosystems. In Argentina, increased political commitment to implement freshwater ecosystem-related projects was reported. The project also produced a global curriculum on freshwater ecosystem protection and restoration, which was used to enhance the awareness of 130 decision-makers and build the technical capacity of 250+ key institutional actors. In Kazakhstan, this has led to increased attention by government institutions to integrating and improving data collection and monitoring for the management of freshwater ecosystems, and clarified institutional roles and responsibilities on SDG indicator 6.6.1 related data.

Stage 3 highlights

Cumulative progress achieved (2019-22)	Support to 12 countries concluded ⁷
Number of countries with ongoing Stage 3 actions (to be finalised in 2023)	4 countries expected
Total number of expected countries 2019-2022⁸	16 countries supported ⁹

Stage 3 of the SP focuses on assisting countries to advance in tangible areas that they have defined as priorities for advancing IWRM, also often in line with other SDG targets. The assistance of the SP enables countries to advance in a multi-stakeholder context in areas in which they were lagging behind in IWRM implementation, helping them to advance their SDG 6.5.1 score and on other related targets in the next reporting round. Below are some of the recent highlights:

- In **Tanzania**, the Ministry of Water engaged the SP to answer the simple question: how much does water contribute to Tanzania’s economy? The reason for the question was that there was a perceived mismatch between the importance of the topic and the current budget allocations for water, but it was unknown how much would be the right budgetary allocation to match the importance of water. The SP, with the Ministry of Water, thus initiated an analysis based on available data about water use and derived economic benefits in a limited number of sectors. The work, expected to conclude in early 2023, has a high degree of stakeholder involvement, and has been very well received. The results will be presented to the Ministry of Finance to make the case for increased future budgetary allocations for the water sector.



Figure 5 Presentation of preliminary results of the Stage 3 study in the 8th General Meeting of the Basin Boards, Tanzania, November 2022

⁷ Including some on which some follow-up activities are still expected to continue into 2023

⁸ Including countries with ongoing processes that will finish in 2023.

⁹ Please refer to annex 2 for the full list of countries, and annex 3 for a summary of the in-country activities directly assisted by the SP.

- Under the Funding Matchmaking Initiative¹⁰, the SP assisted **Kenya** to advance in raising funding for implementation of activities identified during Stage 2. The main objective was to integrate key stakeholders and partners to establish a multi-stakeholder platform in the Upper Athi catchment to develop shared priorities and work towards cost-effective solutions. Four bankable investment packages were developed for a total of 15.45 million USD, and pitched to companies, the National Water Sector Trust Fund, the National Bank of Kenya and other interested stakeholders. The Kenyan government has also committed to match funds for up to 18 million USD, which should be included in the national budget for 2023. Work to formalise the next steps, including turning interest from companies into formal commitments, will be ongoing in the coming months and years. Based on the results achieved so far, Uganda is requesting SP assistance to conduct similar activities in the future.
- Finally, also under the Funding Matchmaking Initiative, **Guatemala** requested the assistance of the SP to create mechanisms for the protection, conservation and improvement of water resources and strengthen partnerships to properly manage water resources, focusing on the La Pasión river basin. The SP helped the newly created Vice Ministry of Water to craft a pitch and define investment needs for the Technical Watershed Committee to be created, negotiating both with a private company (Reforestadora de Palmas del Petén S.A., or REPSA) and an international cooperation body (the Spanish International Cooperation Agency, AECID) to invest in the creation of the Committee and support pilot actions in the watershed¹¹. However, the positive potential of the initiative has already led to replication in Panama, also under Stage 3 of the SP, with assistance due to conclude in 2023.

Communication and outreach

The SP has defined a streamlined graphic identity and set of communication products and tools, as well as using them to strengthen its presence in strategic events and partnership opportunities with like-minded organisations.

- **Communications products and tools:** GWP has continuously updated the SP [website](#) in 2022, adding new material and thematic focus areas (such as on [freshwater ecosystems](#)). Please refer to annex 4 for the statistics on the website traffic. A SP mailing list is also being constantly updated, to communicate in a more targeted manner with our main constituencies. Another main communication tool is the [SDG 6 IWRM Community of Practice](#) (see below), which has been used to inform IWRM practitioners about events, resources, and particular focus themes (such as the first learning journey on financing for water security).

¹⁰ The Funding Matchmaking Initiative (FMI) was piloted by the SP to advance financing, as the dimension of SDG 6.5.1 that is most lagging behind in implementation. The FMI aims to address this barrier by matching country-defined water management actions that are lacking financial support, with local, regional and/or global funding sources, donors, and other funding agencies

¹¹It should be noted that, due to political changes in the government, progress has been stop-start, and the process will be resumed with new political authorities in the coming weeks and months.

- **Public events:** The SP has promoted its work strategically in appropriate [meetings and events](#) throughout this period, both within and outside the water community. Some 2022 highlights include a [session on Financing for IWRM at the 9th World Water Forum](#), two [sessions on IWRM and Climate Change at the Second International High-Level Conference on the International Decade for Action 'Water for Sustainable Development', 2018-2028, in Dushanbe, Tajikistan](#), two sessions on [SDG 6 Acceleration case studies and Cooperation Opportunities for Improved Integration Across SDG 6](#) at the 2022 Stockholm World Water Week, the [Strive2Thrive webinar on SDG 6](#), the [2nd International Forum on Big Data for Sustainable Development Goals](#), among many others. Consistent messaging and communication tools in these events have greatly increased the recognition of the SP among a wide range of target audiences.



Figure 6 Henk Ovink, Special Envoy for Water, Kingdom of the Netherlands, at the GWP-organised session on IWRM in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, June 2022

- The [IWRM Action Plan Searcher](#) and [Results Map](#) were launched in 2021, as a central repository of the actions defined by countries assisted by the SP. The Action Plans Searcher's aim is to present actions from IWRM Action Plans to potential investors and supporters, while raising transparency and accountability from countries, and ensuring the standardisation of actions and follow-up. The Action Plan Searcher currently includes 268 actions, including those that have been supported in the drafting process (Armenia) and implementation (Viet Nam) by an external partner, UNDP's GoAL-Waters programme, leveraging 200,000 USD. On other hand, the Results Map presents all SP outcomes in a more condensed, visually attractive and easily navigable way, thus increasing the visibility of SP activities. As of the time of writing, a total of 79 entries are displayed in the Results Map (57 for Stage 1; 12 for Stage 2; and 10 for Stage 3).



Figure 7 View of the Results Map

- [IWRM Data Portal](#). The IWRM Data Portal remains the main depository of all officially submitted 6.5.1 indicator data, containing interactive map for results view, the official national submissions and visual communication documents that support the Stage 2 and 3 activities of the countries, and other interested stakeholders. The portal had more than 1500 visitors and 2350 downloads of various documents in 2022.

Sharing experiences across and between countries

To foster learning between the countries and stakeholders that take part in the activities of the SP, the SP has contributed to the shaping of online tools and methods aimed at IWRM practitioners. In addition to holding experience-sharing webinars and events, the following tools are particularly worth mentioning:

- [The GWP Toolbox: IWRM Action Hub](#), launched in March 2022, has been updated to be fully aligned with SDG 6.5.1, and more interactive, now including [Communities of Practice \(CoPs\)](#), an online SDG 6.5.1 survey, and other features. On the Action Hub, to date, there are ten communities including a dedicated SDG 6 IWRM community (more below). The interactive SDG 6.5.1 survey version allows users to reflect upon the challenges around IWRM in their own country, and has been used for youth training purposes, for example with the [GWP WAY](#) programme in South Asia and South-East Asia.
- **SDG 6 IWRM Community of Practice (CoP):** This CoP was launched with the [Learning Journey on Innovative Financing for Water Security through an IWRM Approach](#) in May 2022 for stakeholders interested in IWRM and water security financing activities. To generate active engagement around the topic, a series of online events were organised, including a [global kick-off webinar](#), a webinar on the [Funding Matchmaking Initiative](#) with the governments of the two pilot countries, and two regional events, one in [Latin America](#) and another one in the Asia Pacific region. After the events, community members were invited to take part in online discussions on the topic. Furthermore, expert input was shared through six blogposts, authored by [The Nature Conservancy \(TNC\)](#), [the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development \(OECD\)](#), [the Water Integrity Network \(WIN\)](#), and [GWP itself](#), as well as from [Kenya](#) and [Guatemala](#) on the Funding Matchmaking Initiative. At the time of writing, there were 126 members of this CoP.

Regional partnerships

To increase the impact of the SP's activities at the regional level, in addition to regional reporting on SDG 6.5.1 as reported above under Stage 1, the SP has aimed to advance regional partnership with key institutions for supporting countries on IWRM, where opportunities exist both in terms of better supporting country needs and identifying strategic win-win entry points with the regional partners. This line of work will continue into the next collaboration period, but some highlights within the current period include the following:

- In the **Pan-Asian region**, the SP has collaborated in a number of key activities with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Asia-Pacific Water Forum (APWF) to position the SP as a mechanism for both parties to achieve their own water-related objectives within the context of the SDGs. The collaboration has mainly focused on joint regional and global events, such as the governance track at the [Asia-Pacific Water Summit](#), the [Asia Water Forum](#) and the Asia-Pacific focus sessions at successive editions of the World Water Week in Stockholm, as well as a specific [Asia-Pacific event](#) as part of the [Learning Journey on Financing for Water Security through an IWRM Approach](#).
- In **Latin America**, the Conference of Ibero-American Water Directors (CODIA) is the main regional water-related political and technical mechanism, with a special focus on SDG 6.5.1. The SP has initiated a collaboration with the CODIA, focusing so far on ensuring the SP is invited to take part and present in the meetings of the CODIA on the status of IWRM; a technical review of and provision of case studies for the Water Planning Guide, prepared by the CODIA and the Spanish International Cooperation Agency (AECID); the co-organisation of a [Latin America event](#) on creating an enabling environment for financing for water security [along with AECID and UNEP ROLAC](#); the CODIA's decision to create an IWRM working group among CODIA members; and a request formulated by the CODIA to provide a training course to CODIA members on water planning and climate change in 2023 (the latter two items being the subject of ongoing conversations at the time of writing).

- In the **Western Asia** region, following the preparation of a [regional report on the status of SDG 6.5.1 in Western Asia](#) by UNESCWA and UNEP-DHI, the SP took part with a presentation in the launch event in July 2022, to position the SP as a means of following up on the reporting exercise, turning the challenges identified into actionable opportunities for progress. Following the launch event, conversations have taken place with UNESCWA around future collaborations, with a specific funding opportunity and alignment of visions identified. Furthermore, the webinar has served to raise interest in at least one country in the region, Saudi Arabia, which has the intention of improving its reporting processes on all SDG 6 indicators, requesting GWP's assistance to that end.

Annex 1: Summary of Stage 2 countries assisted by year

2019	2020	2021	2022
	Armenia		
Argentina ¹²			
		Bangladesh	
			Botswana
Cameroon			
Congo-Brazzaville			
Grenada			
	Kenya		
		Nepal	
		Nicaragua	
			North Macedonia
		Panama	
			Paraguay
Sao Tomé and Príncipe			
		Tanzania	
			Tunisia

Key:

Completed during this period	11
Ongoing at the time of writing	5
Total	16

An additional 4 IWRM Action Plans were completed in the Pilot phase (2018-2019): [Ghana](#), [Guatemala](#), [Kazakhstan](#), [Viet Nam](#)

¹² Available for internal use only

Annex 2: Summary of Stage 3 countries assisted by year

2019	2020	2021	2022
	Georgia		
	Ghana		
	Grenada		
		Guatemala	
Honduras			
Kazakhstan			
		Kenya	
			Malaysia
		Mali	
			Nepal
			Nicaragua
			Panama
		Senegal	
Somalia			
			Tanzania
		Viet Nam	

Key:

Completed	12
Ongoing	4
Total	16

Annex 3: Summary of Stage 3 activities

Country	IWRM action supported	Status
Georgia	Developing the capacity of stakeholders in 2 River Basins - Enguri-Rioni and Mtkvari – to achieve SDG 6.5	Completed
Ghana	Improve IWRM implementation in the Pra and Tano basins by strengthening institutions and access to finance, building capacity of stakeholders, and mobilising partnerships.	Completed
Grenada	Increase public awareness of integrated water resources management by developing and implementing a communication strategy across all Grenadian society	Completed
Guatemala	Identification and Strengthening of Watershed Technical Committees (under Funding Matchmaking Initiative)	Completed
Honduras	Contribute to the institutionalization of the Water Law, through the preparation and socialization of the Water Law Regulation	Completed
Kazakhstan	Support the reform of the state water programme by setting up a scientific-technical council	Completed
Kenya	Incentive-based mechanism for private sector support (under Funding Matchmaking Initiative)	Completed
Malaysia	Development of a concept note for an IWRM Portal Development for Data Collection and Information Sharing in Monitoring the Implementation of IWRM, and related capacity building in Malaysia	Completed
Mali	Reinvigorate the multi-stakeholder National Water Council and the financial contributions to IWRM as a means of accelerating IWRM implementation	Completed
Nepal	Advocacy and awareness creation for the endorsement of the Water Resources Bill	Ongoing
Nicaragua	Produce a draft reform to the decree number 44-2010, Regulation of the General Law on National Waters of Nicaragua	Ongoing
Panama	Generating Partnerships for the Financing of Water Security with a focus on IWRM in Panama	Ongoing
Senegal	Accelerate the implementation of the national IWRM Plan, increasing buy-in from different stakeholders, revitalisation of the Technical Water Committee, and define the strategy and operational mechanism to follow up on the Plan	Completed
Somalia	Develop capacity and share international experiences to contribute to better water management	Completed
Tanzania	Establishing the Value of Water in Tanzania - Evaluating the contribution of water resources in the country's economy	Ongoing
Viet Nam	Enhancing local water governance in the Mekong Delta of Viet Nam	Completed