

INTRODUCTION

This submission has been developed by Essential Need Projects, an established Australian Technology and Innovation not-for-profit organisation, mainly funded by experts and philanthropists, whose focus is to:



Innovate

sustainable solutions and systems using their proven Target 6.1 Management Software



Educate

Advancing education in public, private and government sectors about Target 6.1 and the sustainable solutions to achieve the Mission



Unite

highly developed countries to pool funding for the UN to achieve Target 6.1

Essential Need is represented at Executive Committee level in the Australian WASH Reference Group (WRG), a peak group in the WASH sector committed to sustainably delivering Australia's WASH contribution to the Asia and Pacific regions. Together with its 27 fellow WRG member organisations, including non-government entities, academic institutions and private consultants, Essential Need is striving to achieve UN SDG 6.1 through its *Innovate – Educate – Unite* approach as described above.

We are committed to working tirelessly through WRG and many other conduits for the Australian Government to raise its level of commitment and its fiscal contributions to the highly worthy target of "delivering universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all" (UN SDG 6.1) by its target date of 2030.

In partnership with other NGOs and the University of Technology Sydney, Essential Need is involved in Research and Development for algorithmic software to create artificial intelligence to determine the type and location of every potential and existing water project.

RESPONSE

In response to DFAT's invitation for individuals and organisations to contribute to the New International Development Policy, Essential Need offers the following submission – specifically in respect of achieving UN SDG 6.1.

1. What **key trends or challenges** will shape Australia's engagement in our region and globally over the next five to 10 years for SDG 6.1?

Without enhanced planned and carefully targeted commitment of allocated funds towards the achievement of UN SDG 6.1, the threat to the availability of clean drinking water in the Asia-Pacific region will worsen over the coming decade. There is currently insufficient funding dedicated to UN SDG 6.1 for it to be achieved by its target date. Additionally, nearly all funded water projects are unsustainable because of lack of **policy at government level for sustainability of projects** which causes weak planning, poor implementation and lack of ongoing maintenance support.

2. What risks and opportunities does this aid investment present for Australia's SDG 6.1 development assistance?

Risks. The risk of not investing aid for water projects wisely will:

- Further diminish Australia's reputation as a responsible donor
- Lead to an increase in water impoverished people in the region
- Fail to achieve UN SDG 6.1 by its target date of 2030
- Further deepen the existential problem

Opportunities. The opportunities which can accrue from properly coordinated Australian Government development assistance include:

- Enhanced reputation for Australia to be seen as a responsible, caring and active provider of targeted aid in the region
- A strong counter to growing Chinese influence in the region
- Improved outcomes for the recipients of the aid including:
 - Reduction of poverty
 - Enhanced health and longer life prospects
 - Reduced costs on treating and eradicating diseases caused by WASH challenges

- More time available for education and development of local economies by the recipient communities

3. What SDG 6.1 development capabilities will Australia need to respond to these challenges?

To ensure Australia's aid contributions provide better value for money (VFM) and that all funded projects are sustainable, a revised approach to assessing and analysing candidate projects will be required to ensure:

- Mapping and evaluation has been conducted before committal of funds or the provision of extended funding
- A unified approach to funding allocation and management of projects is created for all Government departments and associated agencies
- Needs are properly prioritised on VFM to be achieved with the target date of 2030
- Full project life costs including maintenance, expenses, or the attraction of additional or other sources of income are included to ensure every project remains sustainable

4. How can Australia best utilise its national strengths to enhance the impact of our SDG 6.1 development program and address multidimensional vulnerabilities?

Australia has an enviable reputation as a responsible and highly capable nation, particularly in the southern hemisphere. The Government can utilise and combine Australia's national strengths including its considerable professional expertise to ensure all aid projects are appropriately researched and planned to deliver the sustainable solutions required. Example contributors for UN SDG 6.1 could include engineers, geologists, IT specialists, scientists, medical and financial practitioners, plus many others to ensure the veracity of every project while also attracting the talents of professionals beyond the current inputs.

5. How should the new SDG 6.1 policy reflect the Government's commitments to build stronger and more **meaningful partnerships** in our region, founded on mutual trust and respect and shared values of fairness and equality?

Through targeted education and a comprehensive marketing campaign, the Government should inform the Australian public as well as the world at large of the prevailing WASH situation in our region. When an understanding of the problems and their associated needs has been created it should be easier to:

- Win support from interested parties in Australia and abroad to contribute to solutions in our region
- Demonstrate Australia's commitment to assist our regional partners and our country's willingness to help them improve conditions in their deprived areas
- More equitably allocate appropriate funds to agreed projects

Ensuring sustainable solutions are applied to every funded project using Australian aid funds will:

- Attract more committed support from the general Australian population which currently questions the VFM for many of the current and past projects
- Enable the Australian Government to feel fully justified that every UN SDG 6.1 project on which funds have been allocated has been justified

6. What lessons from Australia's past SDG 6.1 development efforts should inform the policy?

- Each project needs to have an agreed minimum life span
- Identify what the recipient community can do for itself to reach its own sustainable solution to the water challenges it is currently facing
- Every project must be continually monitored to ensure its sustainability. There must be no more 'fire and forget' projects
- A publicly available updated record of every project must be available to track funding, VFM and sustainability
- Projects must have established metrics for their levels of success to be judged
- When projects have failed to meet the revised criteria for sustainability, the proponent or manager of the project must expect consequences for their failure

7. What is Australia seen to be doing comparatively well in SDG 6.1 projects?

On a comparative level against other first world nations, Australia could be providing considerably more support to UN SDG 6.1 and WASH projects than it is currently achieving. An approach needs to be taken where it is not the amount of funds that is being expended but rather the effectiveness of the allocated funds that is measured to inform the effectiveness of a project. A sustainability index rating system should be introduced to measure the sustainability of every project and to rank it against its comparators.

8. How should the performance and delivery systems be designed to promote transparency and accountability in SDG 6.1, as well as effectiveness and learning in Australia's development assistance in SDG 6.1?

Every UN SDG 6.1 endeavour must be fully accountable through detailed analysis to its acceptance and onward management via a publicly available record enabling full monitoring of its VFM and sustainability. Every project must have its own identity. Example:

<https://target6.1map.management/swk.html?ProjectID=NG-OY-1353>

9. How should the new SDG 6.1 policy address the role of Official Development Assistance (ODA) and non-ODA in supporting the development of our regional partners?

It is recommended an approach be created with a centralised database that enables candidate projects to be proposed by a wide range of proponents including Government, NGOs, charities, commercial organisations and individuals. Every potential project should be recorded, considered, determined and managed (if selected) through to completion. Depending upon the level or value of each potential or agreed project it can be determined whether it should be an ODA or non-ODA managed commitment. Appropriate funding and the setting of specific requirements and expectations can then be agreed and allocated. The underlying and essential requirement of such a regime will be to prevent the overlap of aid, repetition of effort, and misuse of funds while monitoring the sustainability of every project.

We shall be interested to meet with you and your team to discuss our experience and strategy of SDG 6.1 for Australia's neighbouring countries.

Sincerely and on behalf of the Essential Need team,

Rez Haremi
EssentialNeed.org | CEO
rez.haremi@essentialneed.org | 0414 634 966