

Closing the Investment Gap on Water Infrastructure: How Governments, Utilities and the Private Sector Can Achieve SDG 6

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At the very outset, I would like to thank all the organizers for hosting the event. Bangladesh is happy to be a part of this initiative as we put much emphasis on the implementation of the SDG 6. We aim at supplying safer water to all before 2030. By implementing our Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's "Vision-2021", we would be able to ensure safer water supply for all within 2021.

Bangladesh is a land of rivers. One-third of its total area is water resources. There are over 800 small and big rivers, and 57 trans-boundary rivers in our country. We always emphasized that proper management of rivers and water resources is closely inter-linked to all sorts of development of Bangladesh. Our government has already made remarkable success in ensuring safe water for the people. As per MDG, 84% people were set to be brought under safe water by 2015. But 87% people were brought under safe water supply in Bangladesh by the stipulated timeframe. At present, 98% urban population of Bangladesh is getting safe water.

On the other hand, 99% people of the country have been brought under sanitation coverage. Of them 61% people have been brought under cent percent healthy sanitation. The rate of excretion in open places has dropped drastically below 1% during the last 8 years. It was 42% even in 2003. Setting new target, a time-based action plan is being implemented in this regard.

We have laid special emphasis on preserving and using surface water decreasing the dependency on underground water. Our government has initiated a 100-year exemplary plan titled 'Bangladesh Delta Plan-2100' for the coordinated water resources management.

Generally, the main challenges in daily safe water use and management are arsenic, iron and salinity pollution, reduction of ground water, scarcity of preservation of surface water, misuse of water and pollution by industrial wastages and other sources. Our government has been implementing short-, mid- and long-term plans to overcome these problems.

We have formulated inter alia National Water Policy, Water Supply and Sewerage Act and National Policy for Arsenic Mitigation. The government has allocated considerable amount of money for implementing water related projects. It is to be noted that around 32,600 deep tube wells have been installed in the saline-affected areas in the recent past and 1100 ponds of district council have been taken as protected pond for re-excavation to use for water supply, which will help the recharge of groundwater as well.

Steps are underway to build reservoirs in industrial and housing areas, installing rainwater harvesting system and draining out wastes and polluted water. Dredging is underway in important rivers for maintaining navigability. These are only a few initiatives I have mentioned.

Our Prime Minister raised the funding issue in the international forums earlier. In the Climate Summit held in Marrakesh of Morocco on 15th November 2016 she proposed for creating a fund for safe water and sanitation for the countries whose water management systems are adversely affected by climate change.

Infrastructure is necessary for managing water resources and providing water services. Resilient water infrastructure is of vital importance for sustainable social and economic development. Moreover, advanced technology must be applied in building water infrastructure. It has to be smart and climate change resilient.

Regrettably, the investment gap is large and growing in water infrastructure. This infrastructure is expensive and water service charges are too low often to recoup investment costs. These disincentives prevent the private investors and financiers to invest in water infrastructure.

Financial mobilization is of utmost importance for putting in place adequate water infrastructure. Governments must prioritize public finance for water infrastructure. However, Governments alone cannot fulfill this task, given the wider breadth and width of the scope of SDG 6. Thus, realizing this SDG is a shared responsibility. Private sector has to come forward to complement the efforts of the Government. It can be a great carrier for transmitting new methods and new technology for implementing smart infrastructure for SDG 6.

Public-Private Partnership could be a great means to mobilize resources for the sustainable and resilient water infrastructure.

We are considering three ways while facilitating private sector involvement for achieving SDG 6:

- ✓ Create a conducive environment so that more businesses are encouraged;
- ✓ Engage private sector through incentive/disincentive mechanism through tax and subvention (subsidy) policies;
- ✓ Expand Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR);
- ✓ Enhancing the experience sharing activities among countries.

I thank you for your attention.