SETTING THE SCENE: IMPORTANCE OF REGIONAL COOPERATION IN CLIMATE ACTION, ENVIRONMENT, RESILIENCE AND NEXUS INITIATIVES FOR SOUTH ASIAN TRANSBOUNDARY RIVERS

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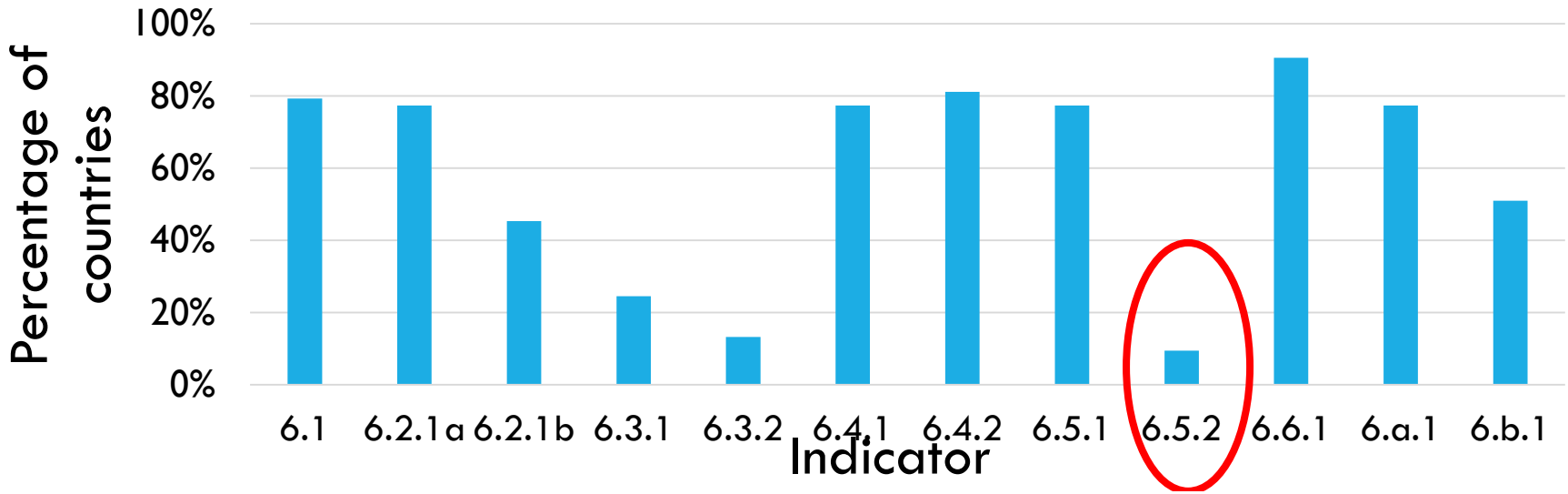
ESCAP & ITS WORK ON WATER

- **Promotes regional collaboration** on various issues including the environment throughout Asia and the Pacific
- **Facilitates the UN-Water regional coordination group** on SDG 6 and contributes to global processes: global reports informing policy ,monitoring and follow-up, inspire action (World Water Day, Decade on Water for SDGs), etc.
- **Leads the regional follow-up and review** of all SDGs including SDG 6
- **Provides support for stakeholder engagement in water issues** (Bangladesh industrial water pollution)
- **Promotes integrated environmental approaches** (nexus) including for water

ASIA PROGRESS ON SDG INDICATOR 6.5.2

- UNECE and UNESCO are the custodians of indicator 6.5.2. measuring transboundary water cooperation
- 2nd reporting cycle happening now, 1st cycle in 2017



- Better so far in cycle 2, but still urgent need to enhance data collection and better monitor SDGs and indicator 6.5.2 in the region
- Reporting will ultimately support more sustainable transboundary water cooperation and decision making on sustainable & inclusive growth, water conflicts managements, climate change adaptation, etc

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WATER ISSUES IN SOUTH ASIA

- ‘ high to extremely high water stress’
- Water scarcity (drinking and agricultural purposes)
- Uneven access
- Over-exploitation and fast depletion of groundwater
- Pollution and contamination of surface water resources
- High incidence of water-borne diseases and deaths;
- Impact of climate change on the volume and pattern of rainfall, river courses, sea level and ground water resource stress
- Frequent floods and droughts could cost South Asia as much as US$215 billion each year by 2030.

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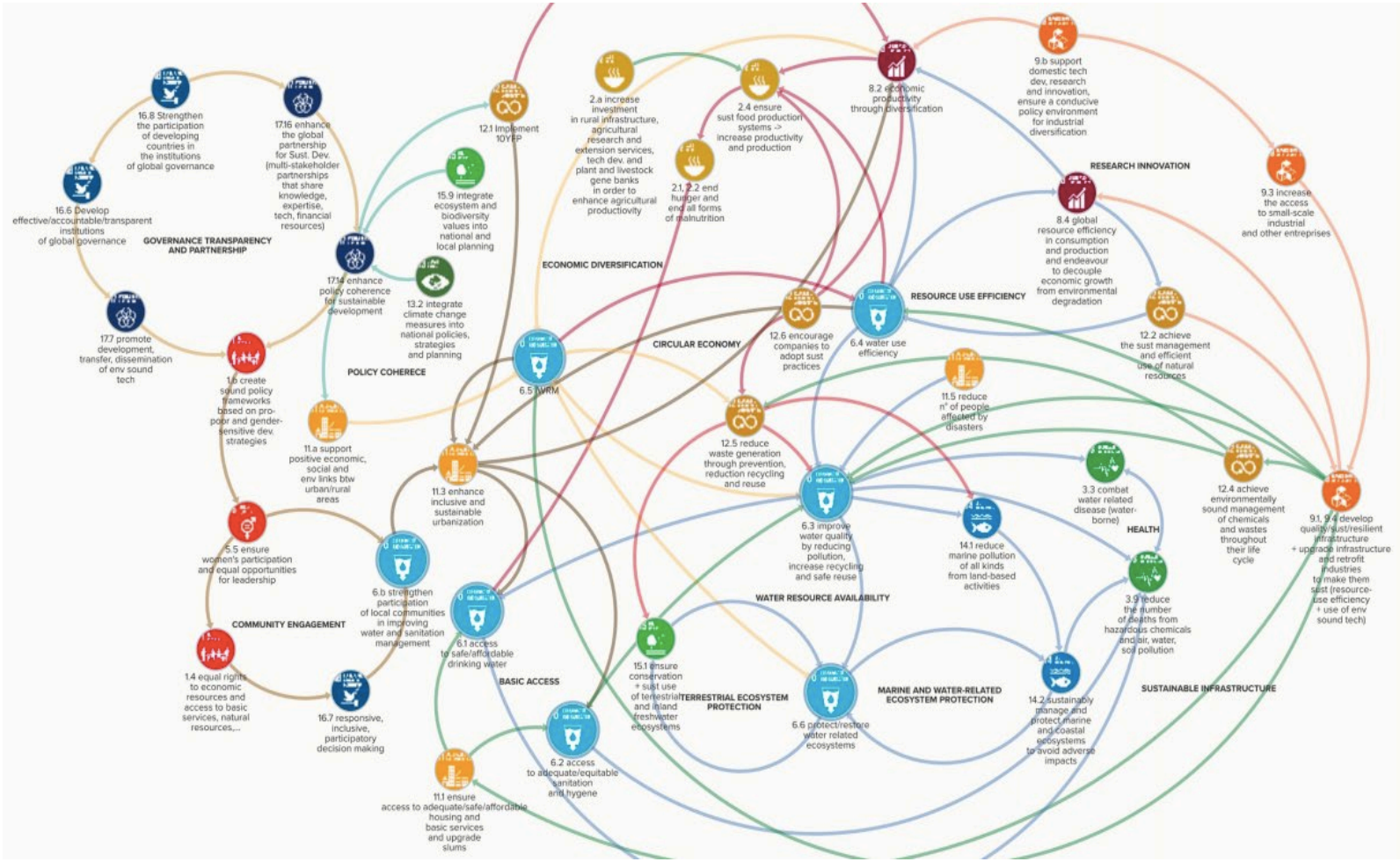
IMPORTANCE OF TRANSBOUNDARY WATER COOPERATION

- 60% of global freshwater is in shared basins and needs to be managed collaboratively for transboundary rivers (in South Asia, e.g. Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna and Indus basins)
- In an region that has the lowest per capita water availability/person, water stress and pollution, integrated water resources management is exceedingly vital especially when dealing with climate change, increasing populations and economic growth, as well as competing uses of water
- Depleted transboundary water supplies have the potential to cause social unrest and spark conflict within & between countries but can also be a **catalyst for cooperation among** nations for peace and sustainable development
- **Integrated SDG 6 planning and implementation is essential**, at the local, national and transboundary levels and to address upstream and downstream dynamics

THE WATER NEXUS THROUGH THE LENS OF THE SDGS



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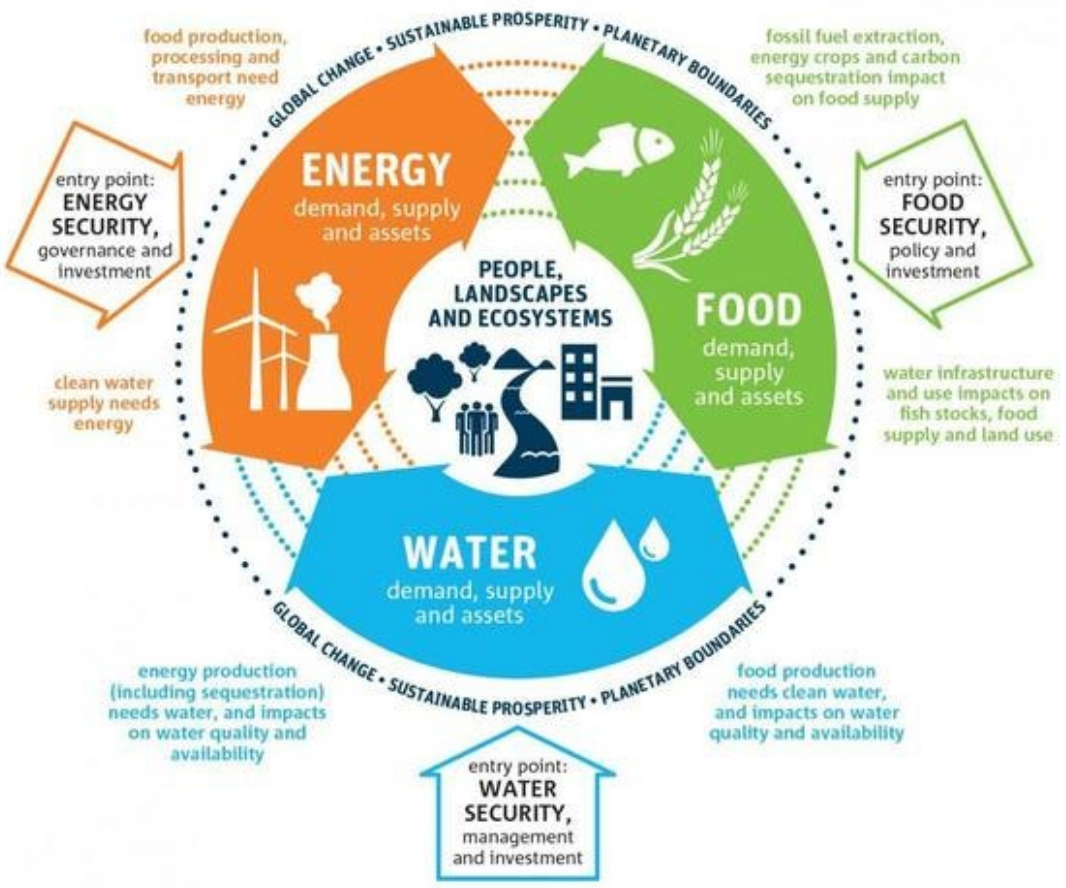
- The achievement of some of the SDGs depends highly on the achievement of the others.
- Water, climate/disaster risk reduction/resilience, poverty, agriculture and food security, ocean/fisheries, and energy are closely linked, as well as gender, finance and integrated policy issues
- Need to arbitrate the synergies and trade-offs in a nexus and transboundary approach when making decisions on water, especially in shared river & aquifer basins



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URGENT ACTION & COOPERATION NEEDED AT TRANSBOUNDARY SCALE

- Very urgent need to **adopt adequate and adaptive integrated water resources management approaches**, supported by political commitment for transboundary cooperation and at the national levels, appropriate governance, effective financing and effective monitoring.
- This will **enhance action SDG6 and related SDGs** on international trade, climate change adaptation, resilience, economic growth, and food security
- **Hydro-diplomacy:** cooperation over water can prevail over conflict over water. Example of the 1960 Indus Water Treaty between India and Pakistan that has survived disputes between the two countries, providing a framework for resolving disagreements over water use).
- **Transboundary water agreements & institutions** can help to facilitate cooperation and support larger diplomacy and peace building efforts at different scales.

WHY DO WE NEED MULTILATERAL AND GLOBAL FRAMEWORK INSTRUMENTS?

They are **useful** in situations:

- Where there is **no specific legal and institutional arrangement at the basin level** (in more than 60% of all basins)
- Where **weak legal and institutional arrangements exist at the basin level** (e.g. agreements that do not provide for regular data exchange)
- In basins where **not all states are Parties to the basin agreement** (in more than 80% of basins).

These instruments **support** ≠ **don't replace** what exist already:

- Provide a common language and shared understanding
- Promote coordination at basin and regional level (for regional agreements/guidelines)
- Strengthen implementation (e.g. global platform for sharing experiences and good practices)
- Strengthen the profile of 'transboundary waters' at the global level
- Facilitate negotiations (tools and procedures available)

WATER CONVENTION

A legal and institutional framework for **transboundary water cooperation** contributing to **sustainable development**, international **peace** and **security**.

A **unique platform** to discuss progress of **transboundary water cooperation** worldwide under the umbrella of the **United Nations**

Opened to all interested countries, with **more than 100 countries** exchanging experiences and knowledge to prompt progress in cooperation

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WATER CONVENTION: A PLATFORM FOR TRANSBOUNDARY COOPERATION

"The global opening of the Water Convention, the accession of the first countries from outside the UNECE region and the momentum in support of the Convention are promising developments. Along with the Watercourses Convention, the world has the ability to strengthen the rule of law in transboundary cooperation worldwide. I call on Member States to join both Conventions and to strive for their full implementation."

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres in October 2018 at the 8th Meeting of the Parties of the Water Convention

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ESCAP RESOURCES

- Join the UN-Water Expert Group on Regional Level Coordination
- Join water-related regional lesson and best practices sharing platforms/workshops
- Online learning through the SDG HelpDesk: http://sdghelpdesk.unescap.org/
- Ask for specific capacity building support

THANK YOU

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