

CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN ASIA

Indicators Covered

6.4.2 WATER STRESS

Target 6.4 of the Sustainable Development Goals aims to substantially increase water-use efficiency across all sectors by 2030 and ensure sustainable withdrawals and supply of freshwater to address water scarcity, thereby reducing the number of people suffering from it. This target is monitored through two indicators, with indicator 6.4.2 focusing on water stress levels. Water stress is assessed by comparing the total freshwater withdrawn by all major sectors of the economy to the total renewable freshwater resources available. Water stress is categorized into five levels categorized by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nation based on percentages, ranging from no stress to critical.

Given that only a small fraction of the world's water is freshwater, with an even smaller percentage accessible to humans, maintaining water withdrawals below rates of replenishment is vital for sustainable water resource management. The availability of renewable freshwater resources is influenced by factors such as geographical position, rainfall variability, and shared water bodies with neighboring countries.

Agriculture is the largest consumer of global freshwater resources, accounting for about 70% of withdrawals, although this percentage varies among countries based on income levels. Population growth, economic expansion, and climate change are significant drivers of increased water demand, posing challenges for water resource management. Despite improvements in water use efficiency, continued growth in population and economic activities is expected to strain water resources further. Monitoring water stress levels is crucial for early identification and mitigation of potential water scarcity issues.

