



*Multi-stakeholder Dialogue: Water-Energy-Food (WEF) Nexus and SDGs Implementation*

**Thursday March 22, 9:00 – 10:30, Aguas Claras Auditorium**

This HLP session complemented and built upon other, previous events to provide the opportunity for stakeholders beyond the water sector to engage in dialogue and address topics that cut across the multiple themes of the Brasilia forum and addressing: water for energy, water for food, governance, financing, and communication. The lessons learned from the case studies presented at the session and throughout the Forum highlight the need coherent, cross-sectoral policies that address and achieve the closely related SDGs and the WEF Nexus challenges they address. Stakeholder diversity and the cross-cutting topics discussed helped facilitate a broader dialogue: one that extends beyond the scope of any single session. The session included discussion and examples of the use of the tools of science and dialogue in pursuit of the implementation of SDGs. Building upon the strong policy messages and the momentum established with a growing coalition of global partners in [Stockholm \(2016\)](#) and [Cancun \(2017\)](#), this session linked to the theme of *Development* (Water for Sustainable Development), and to the subthemes of *water for food* and *water for energy*. A primary objective of the coalition is to provide a policy brief to the High Level Political Forum, in July 2018, including a list of recommendations for moving forward with the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Relevant materials and a copy of the session presentation are available at the current [website](#).



**Figure 1: Major Coalition Milestones**

*Session Co-organizers* include: Texas A&M University, International Food Policy Research Institute, Global Water Partnership, OCP Policy Center, International Water Management Institute, World Wildlife Fund, International Union for Conservation on Nature, Stockholm Environment Institute, The World Bank, Asian Development Bank, World Water Council, International Water Resources Association, Global Environmental Facility, Water Foundry, Circle of Blue, and GIZ, UNU Flores, The International Commission on Irrigation and Drainage (ICID), Daugherty Water for Food Global Institute (DWFI) at the University of Nebraska, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (UN FAO), International Water Association(IWA), The Joint Programming Initiative (Water JPI) and the American University of Beirut (AUB).

**Session objectives:**

- 1) **Share** WEF Nexus *lessons learned across scales and sectors* toward implementation of the SDGs;
- 2) **Facilitate** dialogue about *the role of WEF Nexus in SDGs implementation* between the stakeholders: funding agencies, banks, academics, private and public sectors, technology providers, entrepreneurs and civil society;
- 3) **Discuss** ways to *improve policy coherence across WEF sectors and scales*.



**Key Questions addressed** during the facilitated audience engagement dialogue between stakeholders on the topic: *the role of WEF Nexus in implementing the SDGs*

- 1) *How might scientific tools, technology (particularly information and communication technologies), data, and case studies contribute coherence to WEF systems and SDGs implementation?*
- 2) *What policies and incentives are needed to promote the implementation of SDGs in the context of WEF systems?*
- 3) *What are some successful, cross-scale governance and technological lessons learned in WEF nexus implementation?*
- 4) *How can we communicate the complexities of the WEF systems and share positive messaging while maintaining momentum toward change for a sustainable future?*
- 5) *How do we maintain the integrity of human rights issues in the context of WEF systems solutions?*
- 6) *How can we better promoted and coordinate opportunities between cross-sectoral players at different scales?*

Rabi Mohtar (AUB and TAMU) framed the session and introduced the Keynote speaker, Jerson Kelman (SABESP) who set the stage for the panel discussions that highlighted various examples of the water-energy-food nexus from different experiences from across the world. Panelists represented different sectors and regions globally and included Claudia Sadoff (IWMI), Claude Nahon (EDF Group), Gustavo Fonseca (GEF), Jean Comby (ESF). Moreover, the “empty chair” was identified as “Amina” and represented the voices of stakeholders unable to join the discussion. Panel members endeavored to answer, on behalf of Amina, questions posed by the audience.



**Figure 2:** Amina and the Panelists

The panel discussions identified, from the perspective of different stakeholders, opportunities associated with investment in Nexus solutions, the roles of these stakeholders in the implementation of the solutions, and issues related to financing, governance, and types of interventions that might be carried forward.



**The Panel's key messages:**

- 1) *The importance of needed infrastructure to ensure reliable water supply.* This precursor allows proper planning for water allocation across different activities, including irrigation, hydropower, and urban centers.
- 2) *Awareness to shifting the challenge from one resource system to another.* For example, shifting to solar groundwater pumping (i.e. providing a reliable, clean source of energy), may become a water challenge (over pumping as a result of making such technology available).
- 3) *The importance of inclusive utilities participation in the discussion* (i.e., not limiting the discussion to water utilities but including also energy utilities).
- 4) *The integration of planning across sectors.* (i.e. from a financier's perspective, the objective is to optimize the use of resources while mobilizing private and public actors by prioritizing: integrating planning across sectors, integrating spatially, integrating financial streams).
- 5) *The challenge of coordinating between institutions.* (not a centralized WEF planning institution, but rather the right mechanisms to allow coordinated planning across existing institutions).
- 6) *The important role of Private-Public partnerships in supporting WEF Nexus projects.*
- 7) *Discussion of the basic values around the 3 securities* (water, energy, and food) and their broader social impacts.
- 8) *Shifting from efficiency focused discussion to exploring the social and policy incentives* lying at the interfaces of the different resource systems.
- 9) *Providing inexpensive, locally produced infrastructure and technologies,* supported by microfinancing programs.
- 10) *The challenges of addressing different scales of impact and decision making for different resource systems* (water is much more local, energy is broader scale).
- 11) *The important role of education* (creating a new generation of integrative thinkers).
- 12) *The role of women* in addressing water related issues in different capacities.
- 13) *The challenges remaining to governing the implementation of nexus strategies.*
- 14) *The knowledge gap between understanding* of the interconnections between resource systems and *integrative governance of implementation* of different interventions.
- 15) *The need to better understand and quantify the trade-offs* between alternative interventions (understanding the decision making process through network analysis).



**Figure 3:** The Panel. Credit: J. Carl Ganter/Circle of Blue / circleofblue.org



The debate that followed the panel focused on two perspectives: the “water centric” perspective, presented by Patrick Lavarde (IWRA) and Thadeu Abicalil (WorldBank); and the “nexus centric” perspective by Sarah Davidson (WWF). The audience used red and blue cards (representing a vote in favor of “water centric” or “nexus centric” respectively) to vote before and then following the debate for the perspective they subscribe to.



Figure 4: The Debate. Credit: J. Carl Ganter/Circle of Blue / circleofblue.org

- Water Centric:** "Current and future resource allocation challenges are water allocation challenges at their core, and should be addressed from within the water sector"
- Nexus Centric:** "Linear and siloed resource allocation strategies challenge progress toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals"





Figure 5: Voting before and after the debate

**Highlights of the debate:** The nexus adds complexity to water management, on the other hand, water management is already complex: creative solutions are needed. The nexus offers a different way of thinking. While engaging with multiple sectors requires both time and resources, a multi-sectoral approach offers long term sustainability and can improve efficiencies. Water flows through everything, impacting the resources across sectors: acknowledging and working with this reality facilitates better management. There are multiple ways to bridge sectors, including education, political persuasion, and conflict resolution: the nexus offers a means for inclusiveness. The SDGs promote this interconnectedness, and the nexus is a useful reminder to connect between ministries at the national level to ensure the right people and units are managing the resources toward achieving all SDGs.

**The voting** showed a higher number for “nexus” perspective supporters in the pre-debate vote than after the debate was over. Many members of the audience appeared to shift perspective, sympathizing with the barriers highlighted by the panelists including institutional, human resource, and time challenges which make working across disciplines more challenging.

**Pre and Post Session Reflections for the Nexus Community**

- The importance of moving beyond silo-ed planning toward more integrative planning must be better communicated.
- Barriers that exist at the institutional level challenge those who work within a single sector. Serious effort needs to be focused on better understanding and overcoming those barriers.
- Improved levels of communication and coordination between institutions contribute to better integrative planning.
- The Water-Energy-Food Nexus serves as platform for identifying and quantifying synergies and competition across goals, which could be adopted while implementing SDGs 2, 6, and 7, but also goes beyond that to include the broader list of SDGs.

**Next Steps**

- **Policy Brief** summarizing key policy messages and recommendations from the session to the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in July 2018.
- **Coalition Website:** Keep track of key milestones and summaries for the activities of the growing coalition of partners. This website will continue to include links to case studies and relevant publications from partners on the topic [wefnexusgroup.org/wwf8](http://wefnexusgroup.org/wwf8)